

OBSERVATIONS  
ON  
THE FAMINE OF 1846-7,  
IN THE  
HIGHLANDS OF SCOTLAND AND IN IRELAND,  
AS ILLUSTRATING THE  
CONNECTION OF THE PRINCIPLE OF POPULATION  
WITH THE  
MANAGEMENT OF THE POOR.

BY  
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*"A calamity like the present ought to be improved, but there is great danger of the lesson taught  
"by it being misread, and the opportunity lost, of introducing a sounder policy of management into the  
"Highlands."—Memorial of the Central Relief Board to the Lords of the Treasury.*

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS,  
EDINBURGH AND LONDON.  
MDCCCXLVII.

**THE FAMINE OF 1846-7,**

**IN**

**THE HIGHLANDS OF SCOTLAND AND IN IRELAND.**

PRINTED BY WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS.

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# OBSERVATIONS

OF

## THE FAMINE OF 1846-7.

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SEVERAL events have occurred in this country within the last few years, the nature of which may be exhibited by precise statistical statements, and which seem to me to lead, by a very short and conclusive process of reasoning, to a certain and positive conclusion, as to the general principle on which the management of the Poor, in a country in an advanced stage of civilization, ought to be conducted. Indeed, the importance and urgency of some of these events have been such as to lead most persons, I believe, to regard that question as, at least for a time, taken out of the hands of philosophers and economists, and decided for us by Nature; and the measures lately adopted for the relief of distress in Ireland have been considered by many as demanded by justice and humanity, and by a sense of religious duty, but not as justified by Science or Reasoning.

Painful, however, as the contemplation of these events must be to all, they are equally subjects of scientific

inquiry as any others in nature; and repulsive as this department of political economy has been rendered by some of the speculations which have been (hastily and incorrectly, as I believe) hazarded in regard to it, still it is only by assiduously cultivating the science by the same method which is recognised in others,—by patient investigation of facts, and rigid adherence to truth and reason,—that principles can be established, which may be held in future as the permanent basis of national policy, and may be relied on as tending to the prevention, in all time coming, of those evils which it is now found so difficult to relieve.

In stating, therefore, some facts in regard to the famine lately existing in certain parts of this country, as confirming, in a very striking manner, the views which I have repeatedly laid before the public, as to the influence of Poor Laws on population, I hold to the maxim that, “when Reason and Philosophy have erred, it is by themselves alone that the error can be corrected.” I firmly believe, that all the sciences, when fully and fairly prosecuted, will be found to be in strict accordance with the fundamental precepts of Religion; and the confirmation which they afford of religious truth, is probably the most useful and important result that can be derived from them. But in order that they may furnish this result, it is quite essential that they should be left to their own resources, and intrusted to the guidance of human intellect only;—otherwise it may always be said, or suspected, that Reason teaches one thing, and Revelation another. In exposing what I maintain to have been an important error of certain speculators on this subject, I have, therefore, never wished to appeal from the decisions of political economy to the dictates of justice or humanity, nor even to the precepts of Religion; but simply,

from a principle in that science, which I believe to rest on hypothetical assumption, to one which I hold to be founded on a sufficient induction of statistical facts. I have confidence in the principles which I have stated, in regard to the proper management of the poor (by which I understand the mode of management, under which the sufferings of poverty, and the injury to any country thence resulting, are the least), chiefly because the direct relief of suffering among the poor is uniformly represented in Scripture as one of the first of Christian duties ; while, at the same time, the experience of mankind amply testifies, that it is only by incorporating this duty with Law, that we can have any security for its regular and uniform fulfilment ; but I do not state this as any reason for exempting those principles from the same rigid scrutiny, to which any proposition, held to be a principle in science, must be subjected.

Very little reflection appears to be sufficient to show, that the best system of management of the poor (*ceteris paribus*) must be that which gives the least encouragement to redundancy of population. I have always regarded, therefore, the doctrine of Malthus—by which all such questions are held to be inseparably connected with the theory of population—to be the true basis of all speculative inquiry on this subject ; and I cannot help saying again, that in consequence of some hasty expressions which he used, and of the great practical error, which, as I believe, and as he himself evidently suspected in the latter part of his life, he had committed in the application of his principle, justice has not yet been generally done to the truth and importance of that fundamental principle itself. In the present state of this country, and indeed of every civilised country, and with a view to the happiness of the human race upon earth, it

seems hardly possible to exaggerate the importance of any inquiries, which promise to indicate the conditions by which the relation of the population to the demand for labour, and the means of subsistence there existing, is determined, and may be regulated.

We cannot indeed expect, that so striking results can follow from this or any other principle in political science, as have already rewarded the labour of man in investigating the laws of the material world. The beautiful expressions of Cicero, in describing the power which man has acquired over Nature, are more applicable to the present age, than to any one that has preceded it. "Nos campis, nos montibus fruimur ; nostri sunt amnes, nostri lacus ; nos fruges serimus, nos arbores ; nos aquarum inductionibus terris fecunditatem damus ; nos flumina arcemus, dirigimus, avertimus ; nostris denique manibus in rerum naturâ quasi alteram naturam efficere conamur." We can hardly anticipate, that science shall acquire a similar power of regulating the condition of human society or the progress of human affairs. In regard to the changes which these affairs undergo in the progress of time, we are all of us agents, rather than contrivers. "L'homme avance dans l'exécution d'un plan qu'il n'a point conçu, qu'il ne connoit même pas ; il est l'ouvrier intelligent et libre d'une œuvre qui n'est pas la sienne ; il ne la reconnoit, ne la comprend que plus tard, lorsqu'elle se manifeste au dehors et dans les réalités, et même alors il ne la comprend que très incomplètement."—(GUIZOT.) Still we may observe, that in all applications of science, moral and political, as well as physical, to the good of mankind, the same principle holds true, "Natura non vincitur nisi parendo ;" and that even in those cases where man is the agent, he may likewise be the interpreter and the minister of Nature.

It is only by acquiring a knowledge of the natural laws of motion, of heat, of chemical action, that we acquire that power, "quasi alteram naturam efficere," which Cicero describes; and those events which are due to the agency of free, and intelligent, and responsible human beings, although liable to the influence of a greater number of disturbing forces, and therefore requiring careful investigation, are still subject to laws, which are imposed on the constitution of the human race, and which may be ascertained by observations belonging to the department of statistical science.

That the natural tendency of the human race is to increase on any given portion, or on the whole, of the earth's surface in a much more rapid ratio than the means of subsistence can be made to increase, I apprehend to be an undeniable fact. I am aware of various objections which have been stated to this principle, but shall not enter on these objections farther than to state, that two considerations appear to me to have been overlooked by those who have advanced them. *First*, That the term "means of subsistence," is not to be restricted to the raising from the land of articles of food, but applies to the extraction from the earth's surface, and the preparation for the use of man, of all productions of Nature which are either necessary to human existence or adapted for human comfort, and which have, therefore, an exchangeable value;—*secondly*, that the question regarding these, which concerns us in this inquiry, is not how much a given number of men may raise, but how much a given portion of the earth's surface can supply; and what relation this quantity bears to the power of reproduction granted to the human race. When these considerations are kept in view, it does not appear to me that the objections to the general principle

laid down by Malthus are of any weight ; and the truth of the principle appears to be strongly illustrated by the care taken by Nature to have a certain number of carnivorous genera, in every order of animals, and among the animated inhabitants of every portion of the earth's surface,—whereby the tendency to excess in every class of animals is continually checked and repressed. And although it is certain that the causes of human suffering of all sorts, as of human diseases, are very generally complex, yet we may certainly assert, that this principle is essentially concerned, as a great and permanent predisposing cause, in all those sufferings which result from poverty, and must be carefully kept in view in all wise regulations for their relief.

Neither is it incumbent on those who acquiesce in this general principle, to assert that the natural checks on this tendency to excessive reproduction in the human race have been well named or fully expounded by Malthus. But the great distinction, which he pointed out, of the *positive* and the *preventive* checks on population, is undoubtedly of extreme importance. And in regard to the positive checks, by which it is easy to see that the progress of the human race upon earth has been hitherto rendered so very different from what might have been expected from its powers of reproduction,—when we reflect on the effects of War, of Disease of all kinds, and especially of Pestilence, of Famine, of Vice, of Polygamy, of Tyranny, and misgovernment of all kinds, —while we can easily perceive that all these may be ultimately instruments of good in the hands of Him who can “make even the wrath of man to praise him,”—yet we must acknowledge that all, if not properly ranked together under the general name of Misery, are yet causes of human suffering,—so general, and so

great, that the most meritorious of all exertions of the human mind are those, which are directed to the object of counteracting and limiting the action of these positive checks on population ; and on this consideration it is wise for us to reflect deeply, because it is thus only that we can judge of the value of the great preventive check of Moral Restraint, by which alone the human race can be duly proportioned to the means of subsistence provided for it, without suffering the evils which are involved in the operation of the different positive checks above enumerated.

I consider, therefore, the general principles of Malthus as not only true, but so important, that the exposition and illustration of them is a real and lasting benefit to mankind. The real error of Malthus lay simply in his supposing, that moral restraint is necessarily or generally weakened by a legal provision against destitution ; and this is no part of his general theory, but was, as I maintain, a hypothetical assumption, by which he thought that his theory was made applicable in practice. His argument against Poor Laws was this syllogism. Whatever weakens the moral restraint on population must ultimately injure a people ; but a legal protection against destitution weakens that moral restraint ; therefore Poor Laws, giving that legal protection, must ultimately injure any people among whom they are enforced. The answer, as I conceive, is simply "Negatur minor." How do you know, that a legal protection against destitution must necessarily weaken moral restraint ? The only answer that I have ever seen, amounts only to an *assertion* or conjecture, that more young persons will marry, when they know that they may claim from the law protection against death by cold and hunger, than when they have no such protec-

tion. But this is only *an opinion*, supported perhaps by reference to a few individual cases, but resting on no foundation of statistical facts. Where are the facts to prove, that early marriages are more frequent, and that population becomes more redundant, among those who have a legal provision against destitution, than among those who have none? I have never seen any such facts, on such a scale as is obviously necessary to avoid the fallacies attending individual observations; and the facts to which I have now to advert, are on a scale the extent of which we must all deplore, and all tending, like many others, formerly stated, to prove that the greatest redundancy of population in her Majesty's dominions exists among those portions of her subjects who have hitherto enjoyed *no legal protection* against destitution.\* As it is generally avowed that it is for the sake of the poor themselves,—with a view to their ultimate preservation from the evils of destitution,—that the law giving them protection in the meantime is opposed, these facts must be regarded as decisive of the question.

These facts indeed establish more than was necessary in order to refute the position of Malthus. That position being a positive one, that a legal provision against destitution must necessarily weaken the preventive check on population, it is sufficient to set it aside to prove, on a large scale, that those parts of the country which enjoy that protection *do not show more indications* of redundancy than those which are deprived of it. But the facts prove unequivocally, that *they show much less*;—that in the unprotected districts, and among the indigent poor for whom the law makes no provision, there are lament-

\* It is necessary to observe, that I use the term redundancy, in-reference only to the *existing* demand for labour in those parts of the country, not to the demand for labour which might be excited there by the application of capital and skill.

able proofs of a degree of redundancy, which is unknown where an effective legal provision exists. On this consideration it is of the utmost importance to dwell, because the recent condition of Ireland and of the Highlands (as is well stated in the memorial lately presented to Government by the Committee for their relief) ought not to be regarded merely as a visitation of Providence, calling for temporary aid from the rest of the nation, but as an indication of a previously unsound condition of the population,—of a redundancy which demands permanent remedies, as it threatens permanent misery to a part, and permanent injury to the whole, of this nation.

It is generally allowed, and has indeed been stated by Malthus himself, that there are no better tests of redundancy of population than Pestilence and Famine,—by which we mean, not that a redundant population must necessarily, and at all times, be afflicted with these evils, but that when these evils, resulting as they generally do from a combination of causes, attack a country, they will always select that portion of the population which is redundant, and there commit the greatest ravages. Now, since I first took upon me to lay before the public the results of observations and reflections on this subject, we have had in Scotland memorable examples of both these evils, and statistical observations in regard to both amply confirm what I have stated above.

The Epidemic Fever of 1843 is now generally admitted to have been a new pestilence, hardly any where seen in England, and not known in Scotland before that year, extending rapidly and generally in Scotland, but fortunately causing in itself no great mortality; and I proved by personal inquiries made in upwards of 1700 cases of that epidemic, in Edinburgh, Glasgow, and Dundee (partly in cases in hospital, partly at their

own homes), that *more than two-thirds* of the cases of that fever were furnished by that portion of the population (fortunately even at that time a *small fraction* of the whole) who were unemployed and destitute,—therefore redundant,—and at the same time *unprotected by the law*.

I can now add, on the authority of the medical attendants in the fever hospitals both of Edinburgh and Glasgow, that the fever thus originating has kept its ground, although with great fluctuations of intensity, since that time; and that, at this moment, at least in Edinburgh, a great cause of embarrassment in the management of these hospitals is, that patients with two kinds of fever—not to be clearly distinguished from one another in the early stage—are daily admitted, and each of these forms of fever appears to be easily communicated in the hospital itself to convalescents from the other. And of the connection, still observed, of both forms of fever with destitution, more remarkably than any other predisposing cause, I need hardly give any farther proof than the following table, showing how much more numerous the cases are among the poor Irish (most of them lately arrived in town, and all, when they left Ireland, unprotected by the law,) than among any other class of inhabitants.

Fever Patients in the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh,  
12th June, 16th July, 20th Sept. 1847.

Scotch, .....	87	186	132
English, .....	7	10	5
Foreigners, .....	—	2	—
Irish, .....	379	410	379
	473	608	516*
Total, .....	473	608	516*

\* The recent diminution is the effect only of the number of beds having

This Epidemic, therefore, although burdening the Infirmary more than any other which I recollect, has not for many months spread to any formidable extent among the working classes of the city, but is to be regarded as merely the effect of the unavoidable connection of this country with the destitution of Ireland.

It is well-known that in this, as in other cases of the same kind, fever (probably in both the forms stated above) has extended itself far and wide, in connection with the famine which has afflicted Ireland; and the number of victims to this fever among the Irish poor themselves, and among the clergy, particularly of the Roman Catholic Church, and the medical men, who have come in contact with them,—in Ireland itself,—in some of the English and Scotch cities,—and still more in Canada, has strongly attracted public attention. But the mode of connection of the fever and the famine (on this, or many former occasions), is still somewhat doubtful, and therefore the following observations bearing on it are important.

1. There seems to be sufficient evidence from the history of this famine in the Highlands, that the mere deficiency of nourishment does not, *per se*, necessarily engender fever. We cannot, indeed, assert, that fever may not be generated spontaneously in some of the people most weakened by want of food, as several authors have supposed, on at least probable grounds, that it may be in persons weakened merely by long-continued mental depression; but the general absence of continued fever in the Highland districts—even in those

been reduced, on account of the evil effects of their being crowded, and many applicants therefore refused admission. The mean residence of each case of fever in the Hospital is 29 days, so that the admissions there are at present at the rate of more than 6000 in the year.

where there had been extreme distress, and where scurvy, obviously chiefly dependent, in one way or another, on the change of diet, consequent on the failure of the potato, was very prevalent,—must be allowed to show that this is not a necessary result of destitution as to food—even when extending to large numbers of people.

For example, Captain Elliott, in his general Report on the state of Wester Ross, says, “I am glad to say, that I have heard of no exception to a state of *general healthfulness*.” (Appx. to 3d Report of Highland Destitution Committee, p. 31.) In his account of the state of Skye, he particularises the sufferings of a considerable part of the population from scurvy, but from that only. (Do. p. 10.) In his Report from Lerwick, in Shetland, he says, “As in all cases where soup kitchens are in operation, the health “is *well preserved*.” (4th Report, Appx. p. 13.) Not until the 22d July, when the distress had been considerably diminished, Captain Elliott reports from Skye, “At Duirinish, I am “sorry to say, I hear of typhus fever making its appearance.” (6th Report, p. 20.)

Although, therefore, the fever has prevailed so extensively among the destitute and almost starved population of Ireland, we cannot assert that it is simply a necessary effect of their destitution.

2. In like manner, when we inquire into the other peculiarities in the condition and circumstances of those masses of mankind, among whom continued fever has been so constantly prevalent, we shall find reason to believe that there is not one of those, on which we can fix as the *fons et origo mali*, except the specific contagion—the true *origin* of which, like that of small-pox or measles, is still obscure, but fortunately is rare. The

disease has spread chiefly among people who are dirty, among people who are much crowded, particularly in their sleeping apartments, and among people who breathe polluted air; and again, this pollution of the air is sometimes produced by the effluvia from living human beings, crowded together but healthy, or at least unaffected with fever, sometimes by effluvia from animal or vegetable substances undergoing decomposition. Still, all these are causes applied frequently, on a large scale, for years together, to masses of mankind, without fever following. But when we inquire into the cases, where a number of persons have breathed, for a much shorter time, air polluted by the effluvia from living human beings, *affected with continued fevers*,—especially if concentrated by the number of these patients, or the defective ventilation of their rooms,—we always find the proportion of those persons who become affected with similar fevers themselves, to be so great, as by a simple calculation of chances, to put beyond all doubt the efficacy of *that cause* in producing the disease,—or in the present case, we should say, the diseases in question.

It does not appear possible to express these facts (all of which are fully ascertained) otherwise than in the terms which I formerly employed, viz., that *intercourse with persons already sick of the disease* is the only exciting cause of continued fever, of the efficacy of which we are certain; and that all the others which have been mentioned are to be regarded as predisposing causes, which act either by so concentrating, or otherwise modifying, the specific poison thrown off from the bodies of fever patients, as to make it peculiarly virulent,—or else by so influencing and injuring the human constitution, as to make it peculiarly liable to suffer from this specific

exciting cause. Whether under any conditions, these circumstances of predisposition, or any one of them, can acquire the power of generating the disease, is an ulterior question, which may be of great importance in certain times and situations, but is really of little practical importance in reference to the continued fevers now prevalent in this country ; there being good evidence that such a contingency as the *original excitement* of continued fevers in this climate, otherwise than by contagion, is not of sufficient frequency, and the conditions under which it may occur not sufficiently understood, to be a proper object of legislative measures ; and that in this case, just as in the view of preserving a community, as far as possible, from plague, small-pox, or measles, the object to be held in view is simply to prevent intercourse from taking place between the sick and healthy, particularly in the circumstances stated above as predisposing causes, favouring the diffusion of the disease.

3. This being so, the grand practical question as to these last, is merely this, which of these different predisposing causes is the most formidable, the most general, the most remediable, and especially the most fundamental ? And in this view, although all demand attention, and ought as far as possible to be removed, there can be no doubt of *Destitution* being that which demands the chief attention. While people are in a state of unrelieved destitution, nothing that can be done will prevent their suffering that depression of strength and spirits which results from imperfect nourishment, nor from crowding together, and inhabiting the poorest and worst aired parts of towns, and breathing polluted air,—even although the streets, lanes, or courts, *exterior* to the rooms in which they live, are thoroughly cleaned and aired ; and all measures which are directed merely to these last objects

must necessarily have only a trifling effect. The prudent and economical, but effectual relief of destitution, must therefore be the first object of all measures intended to diminish the tendency of a population to suffer from contagious fever ; and the present epidemic distinctly shows how important it is, not only that these provisions should exist, but that they should be acted on *uniformly* in every part of a country. That the continual recurrence of fever in Ireland, is to be ascribed to the degree in which all the circumstances of predisposition above mentioned, and particularly the fundamental evil of destitution, dependent on redundant population, there exist, I believe no one can doubt ; and it is equally certain, that unless means can be found of correcting that fundamental evil, frequent and disastrous contagious fevers, spreading from Ireland, must be looked for in various parts of this island.

A single fact, on a small scale, may be here noticed, which shows how easily medical men may be led to suppose that fever *originates* in some of those conditions which have been stated above, as only concurrent and necessary causes of its *diffusion* ; the removal of which can be of little avail so long as the grand fundamental evil of destitution prevails. Burt's Close, in the Grassmarket, one of the worst aired and dirtiest in Edinburgh, was noticed by me, thirty years ago, as was stated in a paper in the Edinburgh Medical Journal, as being peculiarly affected with fever ; but I likewise then stated the evidence which I had obtained by watching the succession of cases there in two successive winters, that the disease had been *imported* in both seasons. It had affected on both occasions, not the inhabitants of the close generally, but, in the first winter, the inmates of one lodging-house, all in extreme poverty, into which

the importation had taken place, and afterwards, their immediate neighbours under the same roof, to the number of 15,—and, in the second winter, 9 persons in another lodging-house; the tenement thus affected in each winter, remaining unaffected in the other, although equally dirty and ill-aired, and equally crowded by a succession of the lowest of the people. On the present occasion, the same close was soon found to furnish a large number of cases of fever to the Infirmary; and any one who had only observed this fact, might have supposed now (just as a superficial observation might have led him to suppose then), that there was a *local* cause, some kind of malaria, capable of exciting fever in that close. But on repeatedly visiting the place this season, I found still stronger evidence than formerly, that the disease had been imported, not endemic, and that no *local* cause for it was indicated by the succession of fever cases. For at present, neither of the tenements, in which the fever formerly prevailed, and which are in the centre of the close, and near to the ground, is used as a lodging-house; but there are lodging-houses on the third and fourth flat, in the two common stairs at the entrance of the close, in rooms high above the surface of the earth, and fully exposed to the air, at least whenever the windows are opened; into these lodging-houses, Irish families from Glasgow had been admitted early in the winter, and among these, as usual, fevers had soon shown themselves. From them they spread, and no less than seven fatal cases were transferred from thence to the Infirmary, while (just as in many other cases which I formerly described), the lower stories of the same tenements, *nearer to the ground*, and to the accumulation of putrescent matters there existing,—and the tenements formerly affected—remained free from the disease for

many weeks. Ultimately, some cases did occur in one of these last houses, but not until there had been so much intercourse between them and the inmates of the higher stories of the front lands, already long suffering from the disease, as fully explained its extension on the principle of importation and contagion. In this case it appears to me quite obvious, that nothing that could have been done in that close, could have prevented the disease from appearing and spreading there, on occasion of the wandering Irish, with their usual habits, already affected with the disease, or imbued with the contagion, presenting themselves; that if these wanderers had not found shelter in this close, they would have found it in others, in which they would have lived in the same way, suffered the same miseries, and diffused the same contagion; and that the true sources of the evil are, the existence of the specific contagion in Ireland, and the circumstances of predisposition, all referable more or less directly to Destitution, favouring its diffusion there, among the emigrants from thence, and among many of the inhabitants of this country with whom they come in contact,—whereby that part of her Majesty's dominions has been rendered, on this occasion as on many others, a cause of injury and suffering to Great Britain.

The Famine, consequent on the failure of the potato crop in 1846, considered independently of disease, presents a still more remarkable collection of facts, the proper view of which appears to me to be this. The potato is an article of diet throughout the whole of this country, particularly useful to the working classes, and its importance to them seems to be fully illustrated by the pretty frequent occurrence of scurvy in many places, where it had been unknown for more than a century,

since the beginning of the winter 1846-7,—that is, since the use of the potato has been necessarily nearly abandoned.

But it is only in certain districts, that the people have been absolutely dependent on the potato, and been reduced to absolute destitution by its failure; and the reason obviously is, that the potato, although much less desirable, as the chief article of diet, than many others, is that by which the greatest number of persons may be fed from a given quantity of land in this climate. When we find a population, therefore, living chiefly on potatoes, and reduced to absolute destitution, unable to purchase other food, when the potato crop fails,—we have at once disclosed to us the undeniable fact, that that population is redundant. It is greater than can be maintained in that district, otherwise than on the poorest diet by which life can be supported, and greater than the labour usually done in that district demands. Now, I formerly stated that such a redundant population, living, as a foreign author expresses it, “*en parasite*,” on the working people of the country, exists most remarkably in Scotland, in districts where no poor-law is enforced;\* and I have now only to show, how amply that statement is confirmed by the facts which the present famine in some parts of Scotland has brought to light.

The Central Board of Management of the Committees at Edinburgh and Glasgow who have been intrusted with the funds raised by subscription for the relief of the destitute inhabitants of the Highlands and Islands, have each published several reports.

In the first of these, stating the population of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, by the last census,

\* Remarks on the Report of the Poor-Law Commissioners, p. 279.

at 448,500 people, they affirm in general terms, that by the failure of the potato crop, "*three-fourths of the food of this vast population has been at once withdrawn from them;*" and they then describe the general condition of the people, quite in conformity with what has been already stated.

"Besides the tenants of the large farms, the population consists of two classes, the small tenants or crofters, partly resident in villages, who possess from one to six acres of land; and the cotters, who possess nothing but the cottages which shelter them, and who depend on the kindness of their neighbours for a few patches of ground for potatoes, and supply their other wants by fishing, and such work as they can obtain, at home or abroad. The latter class *live at all times in a constant struggle for the means of bare subsistence*, and do not rise above the lowest scale of living necessary for existence, not to talk of comfort. In some seasons they are frequently reduced to live on such shell fish as they can collect, &c. On this class, the effect of failure of the potato crop is immediate, and the close and terrible prospect before them, that of starvation, if not relieved. The former class, or crofters, have now, generally speaking, exhausted the remaining produce of their grounds; any little money some may have had is fast disappearing in exchange for food; and they must now, if not relieved, part with the little stock they possess, and the seed for next crop, to procure food for their families. They must soon be reduced to a state as desperate as the cotters."—1st Report, p. 10.

This seems to be as faithful a description as can be desired of an agricultural population distinctly redundant.

Of course, where the necessity for supplies of food is found, by accurate observation, to be greatest, the proportion of *cotters* (i.e. of a population almost entirely *parasitical*) must be greatest, and the crofters most numerous and poorest.

These committees proceed in their reports to specify 106 places, to which they found it necessary, after careful inquiry, to send supplies, chiefly of provisions, as early as March, to preserve part of the population from perishing by famine. In all these, committees were formed for distribution of the bounty.

Of these there were 67 supplied from Edinburgh, and 39 from Glasgow.

The Glasgow Committee stated in their First Report, that the population of the district to which they sent supplies was 114,200 ; and that of these not less than 84,300, *i.e.* 73 per cent. of the whole, required the aid of charity as early as the 10th of March ; and of the whole population of the Hebrides, amounting to 115,000, the Central Board were satisfied that at that early season, "86,000, or 74 per cent., were absolutely destitute "and dependent till next harvest, on food supplied to "them."—1st Report, p. 11.

Now, on referring to the Report published by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, in 1839, as to the Management of the Poor in Scotland, I find that *in not one of these hundred and six parishes or districts was there any assessment for the poor.* If it has been introduced in a few of these districts within the last two or three years, it cannot, of course, have had, as yet, any effect in determining the numbers, or forming the habits, of this population. And although there existed, in all these districts, a fund termed the parochial fund, derived chiefly from church collections, applicable to the relief of aged and disabled persons, yet this fund was in all so exceedingly scanty, that the relief which could be legally claimed, even by such persons, might be regarded as illusory. In those districts, in particular, in which the excess of population and the consequent destitution are now the most remarkable, the utter inefficiency of the legal provision is distinctly recorded. Thus the Second Report of the Edinburgh Committee mentions the parish of Criech, as the only one in Sutherland at that time, in which "there has been extreme misery and "destitution of food daily and rapidly increasing ;" and on

turning to the Report of the General Assembly, we find that in that parish, of 2560 inhabitants, 137 was the average number admitted in the poors' roll for those years before 1839, and the average sum distributed among them in the year was £16, 14s. ; the sum allotted to individual paupers varying from 1s. to 3s. *in the year.*\* The same committee specifies the parish of Latheron, in Caithness, as one in which, "from the great number of crofters and cotters, they anticipated, and soon found, "that great destitution existed ;" and in this parish we find, from the same official record, that the average number admitted as paupers, in a population of 720, was 147, the average sum distributed among them £39, and the amount to individual paupers varied from 3s. to 10s. *in the year.* Again, Dr. Boyter, the agent employed by the Glasgow Committee in the Western Islands, reports in regard to the state of the people at Arisaig, where "but for the supplies sent by the Central Relief Fund, "some hundreds must inevitably have perished from "want of food" as early as April, that "there is no "parochial poor law in operation, and I have reason to "believe that all the voluntary means and arrangements "made to supply this want are *about given up.*" (2d Report, p. 21.)

The parish of Kilmuir, in the Isle of Skye, was specially noticed in the Report of the General Assembly as that in which the amount of parochial relief afforded was the smallest in Scotland, amounting to only £5 per annum, distributed among 110 persons in a parish of above 4000 inhabitants (Report of General Assembly, p. 103) ; and of this parish we find Dr. Boyter reporting on the 21st April, that "the very extensive "distress and destitution is going on increasing every

\* Report of Committee of General Assembly, p. 98.

“day,” and that “the number of destitute is so great as to require all the energies of a willing and well-informed class of men to watch and direct the enormous expenditure, necessary for their existence.” And in the island of Harris, in which the annual disbursements for the poor are reported as £1, 1s. 8d., we have the striking statement of Dr. Boyter, that “the rental of this island is about £4000, and the number of its inhabitants nearly 5000, of which numbers 2600 are now (24th April) on the central fund as recipients of food.” (2d Report, p. 23.)

When to these undeniable proofs of redundancy of population and consequent destitution, in districts where the poor-law had been practically a dead letter, (confirming what I formerly stated of the great excess of the *destitute poor* over the *paupers* in many parts of Scotland, and the utter inutility of any statistical records stating only the numbers of the latter,) we add the obvious considerations, that the failure of the potato crop has disclosed similar evidence of ruinous redundancy of population among at least two millions of the population of Ireland, similarly destitute of any legal protection; and again, that no such facts have come to light as to the condition of the population in any part of England, nor in any of those agricultural districts in Scotland where the legal relief to the poor approaches the nearest to that in England; we have surely an induction of facts more than sufficient to justify my former assertion, that it is *where the legal provision against destitution is absent, not where it is present*, that a redundancy of population, involving the danger of occasional famine, is really to be apprehended.

I am anxious not to push this conclusion farther than the facts fairly warrant. I do not mean to assert that

the poor in the Highlands, for whom so little has hitherto been done by law, are not in reality the objects of much consideration to many of the proprietors, nor that they are not in fact, directly or indirectly, maintained and supported in a great measure at the expense of the proprietors. The case of the aged and disabled poor in the Highlands, in ordinary seasons, is not so different from that in other districts of Scotland, as might be supposed from the difference in the amount of the funds to which they have a legal claim. When it is considered that many of these "permanent paupers" have houses rent free, and bits of ground on which they can plant potatoes, either from the proprietors or occupiers of the ground, and that many of them have "peats" "for the gathering of them," and the assistance of their neighbours in laying in their stores of fuel, it may easily be conceived that in ordinary seasons these advantages are equivalent to a very large portion of the usual outdoor allowance, even of the English poor; and I see nothing unreasonable in the statement of Mr. Smythe, secretary to the Board of Supervision in Edinburgh, that if the aged and disabled poor in the Highlands have *these advantages secured to them*, and have money allowances besides, to the extent of from 9d. to 1s. a week per head, their condition will be generally as good as that of the same class of paupers in any part of Scotland. I believe that it is the deficiency of legal relief to the orphan children, or the children of disabled parents, and to able-bodied persons, that has been mainly concerned in those results as to population, which we are here considering. But at present we are only concerned with the fact, that it is where the relief of all kinds of destitution has been mainly conducted on the voluntary principle, and where the well-known and re-

cognised dependence of the destitute poor of all classes, has been in a great measure on mendicity, that the evidences of redundant population are found to be so numerous and decisive.

I have already said that it is not incumbent on me, in order to set aside the argument of Malthus against poor-laws, to prove that their absence is *a cause* of redundant population. It is quite enough to prove that it is *no cure* for that evil. But I go a step further; and although far from maintaining that the redundancy of population in the distressed districts is owing *merely* to the absence of legal protection against destitution, I confidently assert that this is a great, powerful, and permanent predisposing cause of that evil, which must be removed before the evil will abate; and any one who has studied the concurrence of various causes in producing almost all cases of disease, will have no difficulty in understanding, that in making that assertion, I fully admit the possibility of many concurrent and accessory causes, which co-operated in producing the redundancy of population, before the failure of the potato crop made the malady so conspicuous.

These concurrent and accessory causes have probably been more various than many have suspected. The failure of the demand for kelp is stated to have been the immediate cause of the destitution of the people in many parts of the Highlands and Islands; but there are many districts comprised in the lists given by the committees at Edinburgh and Glasgow, which are distant from the sea coast, and where the usual demand for labour cannot have been dependent on the kelp trade. For example, the five parishes in the mainland of Inverness-shire, to which it was found necessary, in March and April last, to send relief from

Edinburgh, those of Kingussie, Urquhart, Abertarff, Laggan, and Boleskine, are, as the committee state, "the five central parishes in the heart of the county." (2d Report, p. 7.)

In some places, the want of education, and particularly the want of the English language, has been represented as a main cause of the destitution and of the redundancy of the population; but it is certain that in some of the distressed districts there has been no peculiar deficiency of education, nor even of the knowledge of English. I may refer to the statements on this point, in the last Statistical Account of Scotland, as to the parishes of Applecross, Glenshiel, Kintail, Loch Carron, Urray, Urquhart, and Criech (all of which have required supplies as early as February and March), in proof of the education of the people having very considerably improved, and the knowledge of English having extended, while the redundancy of the population has been nevertheless rapidly increasing. In Shetland, Captain Elliott states the people whom he relieved to be, "from their *excellent moral deportment, intelligence, education, and physical ability, at least equal to any in her Majesty's dominions.*" (4th Report, Appx. p. 31.)

The absence of proprietors, or of persons of the higher and middle ranks, has been in many places, no doubt, great part of the evil; yet there are some cases in which the destitution could not be ascribed to this cause; which is, besides, one that no legislative enactment can *directly* remedy, without such an interference with the liberty of the subject, as the ideas of the present day would not tolerate.

But at all events it is obvious that all these causes, fluctuations in the demand for labour, ignorance or de-

ficient education, want of the English language, absence of proprietors, are causes which act in almost all countries, which have frequently acted of late years to a great extent in various parts of England and Wales, and yet produced no results similar to those now under consideration. Wherever these causes have led to absolute famine, it is certain that the population must be grievously redundant, and the great fact remains established, that this has been only in those parts of her Majesty's dominions in Scotland and Ireland, where they have been co-existent with the deficiency or absolute nullity of any legal provision against destitution.

In like manner it is easy to understand, that where these or other concurrent and accessory causes have not acted, the same deficiency of the legal provision has not been attended by those results, as to redundancy of population, which I state to be, under less favourable circumstances, in a great measure referable to it. Even in Argyllshire, the Central Committee state, that "in some parts, from a thin population and sufficiency of employment, the destitution is not as yet felt" (1st Report, p. 11), and the same observation applies to several other parts of Scotland, where the legal provision has hitherto been as deficient as in the Highlands, but other circumstances more favourable. I happen to know pretty well the condition of some agricultural parishes in Aberdeenshire, in the Presbyteries of Garioch and Turriff, where, at the time of the General Assembly's Report, there had been no assessments, where the highest allowances to paupers, or pauper families, are less than £4 per annum, and the lowest only 10s. per annum, where the destitute poor are necessarily dependent in a great measure on mendicity, of one kind or another, and where, nevertheless, as I am informed

by a very intelligent proprietor, resident in that district, Mr. Leslie of Warthill, "the supply of labour has been generally rather under than above the demand, employment has hitherto been constant in all seasons, and consequently the working classes in circumstances suitable to their situation in life," farm servants in particular, "from the abridgement of the hours of labour, and improved mode of living and lodging, enjoying a much greater degree of comfort than their predecessors did 30 years ago." But this is a district which has enjoyed a remarkable exception from those *concurrent* causes of destitution which I have mentioned. It is a district purely agricultural, the proprietors resident, intelligent, and devoted to agricultural pursuits, the country undergoing a gradual and steady improvement, and the demand for labour, therefore, liable to no sudden fluctuations, but gradually increasing; while at the same time the working classes are well-educated and remarkably active and enterprising, so that many of the young men push their fortune elsewhere. It is quite true, that where these advantages exist, the population does not become obviously redundant, notwithstanding that the provision for the poor is almost entirely on the voluntary principle; but these are advantages which can only be enjoyed by a portion of the inhabitants of any great country,—particularly of one in which manufactures and commerce as well as agriculture are extensively prosecuted,—and which cannot be secured by law for any portion; and no observations made on such a district take away from the force of the facts, which prove, on so large a scale as those under consideration, that under less favourable, but often inevitable, circumstances, such redundancy of population as infers absolute famine is found only to co-exist with extreme deficiency of the legal provision against destitution.

If it be still said, that there is a difficulty in perceiving how the natural increase of population should be restrained,—implying that marriages should in general be rendered later and less productive,—by laws which give protection against destitution, I can only repeat what I formerly stated, that in order to understand this, it is only necessary to suppose, what is quite in accordance with individual observation, that human conduct, and particularly the conduct of young persons, is more generally influenced by hope than by fear,—that more are deterred from early and imprudent marriages by the hope and prospect of maintaining and bettering their condition in life, than by the fear of absolute destitution. The examples of the Highlands and of Ireland are more than enough to show, that this last is not a motive on which the legislator can place reliance, as influencing the conduct of young persons in extreme poverty. No legislation can take from them the resource of mendicity, of one kind or another, as a safeguard, in ordinary circumstances, against death by famine; and *experience shows* that those who are brought up in habits of mendicity, or of continued association with mendicants, will trust to this resource, and marry and rear families, where no other prospect of their maintenance can be perceived; whereas those who have been brought up in habits of comparative comfort, and accustomed to artificial wants, will look to bettering their condition, and be influenced by the preventive check of moral restraint, to a degree, as Mr. Farr—judging from the general results of the registration of marriages in England—expresses it, which “will hardly be credited when stated in figures.”

I have repeatedly stated likewise, that I consider an efficient poor law, extending to all forms of destitution, as affording a salutary preventive check on early mar-

riages and excessive population in another way, which is easily illustrated by statistical facts, viz. by making it obviously the interest of landed proprietors always to throw obstacles in the way of such marriages among persons who are likely to become burdensome on the poor rates, *i. e.* among all who have no clear prospect of profitable employment. The number of crofters, and still more of cotters, living *en parasite* on the occupiers of the soil in the Highlands, is the theme of continual lamentation ; but the question seldom occurs to those who make this complaint,—would such a population be allowed to settle on the lands of an English proprietor, who is familiar with the operation of the poor-rate ? The following is the statistical statement by the minister of Kilmuir in Skye, of the condition of the ruinously redundant population of that parish. “ In two districts attached to “ Kilmuir Church, there were in July 1837, 421 families and only 190 divisions of land, in the shape of “ lots, crofts, or farms. Of the 421, 231 families had “ no possessions at all from the proprietor, but lived as “ a burden on the occupiers of the 190 divisions either “ as cotters or under tenants,” not authorized by the proprietor. Under these arrangements the population rose from 2555 in 1801, to 4011 in 1837, notwithstanding a very considerable emigration during that interval. (New Statistical Account of Scotland, vol. 14, p. 270.) Now I ask, if the proprietor had known, and felt from experience, that this mass of redundant population, on any slight reverse of fortune, would become a legal burden upon him, would he have allowed the occupiers of the 190 divisions of land to be thus oppressed ? I happen to have it in my power to answer the question by reference to a single small parish in Shropshire, where I spent nearly the whole of the first

ten years of my life, and which I visited very lately after an absence of more than 45 years. During the whole of that time the sole proprietor has been non-resident, and the education of the people, during the greater part of it, inferior to that in almost any part of Scotland, so that the circumstances of the population (purely agricultural) are very similar to those in which the redundancy in Scotland and Ireland is most marked. I was assured, however, that the present population of the parish is rather under than above what it was in the year 1800; and the evidence given was decisive, viz. that several houses had been pulled down, and no new houses built during that long interval; and the reason assigned was equally clear, that the agents of the proprietor would not let land for building houses, excepting to persons who could show that they had regular work on the farms, *lest they should become chargeable on the poor-rate*. Is it not obvious, that the same interest acting on the proprietors in all parishes, must continually tend to repress imprudent marriages, and that if the Highland proprietors had been subjected to a similar law, they would have habitually taken similar precautions to escape its inflictions, and thus *gradually prevented* the great evil of excessive population on their estates? Or what better security can a country have, that the proprietors of land shall not weakly and imprudently facilitate early marriages, than the provision, that if they thereby foster an excessive population, they must expect to have to pay for it?

But whether these are the true explanations or not, the *fact* is established, as a general truth, that population in this country becomes redundant where no effective poor-law exists; and before this fact, all speculations as to the natural tendency of a poor-rate, to in-

crease indefinitely, fall to the ground as comparatively unimportant.

I may here shortly allude to a statistical statement in a late number of the *Edinburgh Review*. It is there said, as evidence of this pernicious tendency in poor rates, that the sums expended on the poor in England and Wales had increased between 1840 and 1845, from

£4,576,000, to

5,039,000, being an increase of

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£463,000, in 5 years, which is nearly 10 per cent. But it is not stated in that paper, that as far back as 1818, the poor rate in England and Wales had amounted to £7,800,000;\* and that the diminution, of more than £3,000,000, had been accomplished without any such destitution having resulted, as we have been considering in Scotland; which obviously implies, that the previous expenditure had been unnecessarily and injudiciously profuse, *and yet led to no redundancy of population*. Neither is it stated in that paper, that the average increase of population in England and Wales appears from the inquiries of Mr. Porter (whose accuracy no one will dispute), to have been "within a very small fraction of 2 per cent. per annum, on an average of the last 40 years,"† which at once explains an increase of 10 per cent. on the poor-rates in five years, without justifying any inference whatever, as to the alleged tendency of that impost to indefinite increase. Indeed, when it is remembered how great and widespread distress existed among the manufacturing classes between 1840 and 1845, the fact of the increase of the poor-rate not having exceeded the ratio of the increase

\* See 3d Report of Poor-Law Commissioners, p. 311.

† See *Statistical Journal*, vol. 6, p. 6.

of the population during that time, may be urged as justifying the very opposite inference.

But at all events, let us observe what the amount of the poor-rate actually was in England and Wales in 1845, and compare the amount of destitution which it relieves, and prevents from going on to famine, with that which exists in the parts of the country under consideration, and which have been exempt from that tax. The amount is £5,000,000 per annum, about *one-eighth* of the sum annually paid in England and Wales, in the shape of Government taxes. Now, will any man assert, that one-eighth of the taxes paid to Government in the Highlands or in Ireland, would keep the destitute poor there in a state of comfort similar to that of English paupers? If he does, he must be prepared to abandon the strongest argument that has been stated against a poor-law in the Highlands or in Ireland, viz., that the number of destitute poor there was so great, even before the failure of the potato crop, that to provide for them on the same footing as the English poor would absorb the whole rent of the land. But if he does not,—if he still maintains this last proposition,—then he must admit also the truth of the proposition which I have always maintained, that the destitute poor of a country where there is no legal provision, are apt to multiply to a much greater extent, and ultimately to demand a much greater expenditure, than the paupers under a system of legal relief.

But setting aside the argument of Malthus against effective Poor Laws, the chief resource of the opponents of such laws has of late years been the assertion, that a legal provision against destitution leads naturally to relaxation of industry; that idleness, if not improvidence,

is thus fostered among the poor, and that in this manner, the improvement of a country, necessarily dependent on the industry of its lower orders, is retarded. I have always maintained, that this assertion likewise is distinctly refuted, and not only that it is refuted, but the very contrary established, by statistical facts ; that it is indeed made in face of the demonstrable fact, that the nations most celebrated for industry have long enjoyed a legal protection against destitution ; that the people of England, speaking generally, are probably, to use the words of Lord Abinger, "the most trustworthy and effective labourers in the world," and that the greatest degree of idleness to be seen on the face of the earth exists among people who have no such protection, whose only resource, therefore, when destitute, is mendicity. Of this last proposition, the inquiries lately made both in Ireland and the Highlands afford many illustrations. For example, a pamphlet by Mr. Shafto Adair, in regard to the distresses in the county of Antrim (certainly not the most distressed part of Ireland), contains the following statement. "The applicants for employment at the first meeting of the Committee in the town of Ballymena (of 6000 inhabitants) were 230, but on inquiry, there were very few among them of whom any resident in the town had any knowledge, or who were known to the clergy-men of any persuasion. In the end it turned out, that *not one of those men had ever done a day's work in their lives.* They had all been *mendicants*, yet not migratory. They spent their nights in town, but their days had been passed, from their youth upwards, in begging from door to door in the country about. Except a shilling earned now and then, by a casual job on a market day, not one of them could shew that he had ever earned a penny by labour ; and not one of them

“knew how to hold a spade or a hoe.”—(See the Winter of 1846–47 in Antrim, by Shafto Adair, &c., quoted in the Quarterly Review, April, 1847, p. 467, 473.) Now, we may here ask whether such a state of things as this can by possibility exist in a country possessed of a really effective poor-law, administered with common prudence, and in which labour of one kind or another may be exacted as the price of relief given to able-bodied men?

That the present habits of a great part of the population in the Highlands are nearly as remote from those of regular labourers, as those of the young men at Ballymena, has been often remarked, and is confirmed by the recent inquiries; particularly, I beg it may be observed, by the observations made at the commencement of the operations of the Committees. Thus Dr. Boyter reports from Corry, at Broadford, in Skye, “I may here observe, as I did at Isle Oronsay, that the general appearance of the soil offers a vast premium on its improvement, but *such is the apathy of the people to work*, that unless some more stringent resolutions are enforced, to obtain some return of labour for the meal received, it will be impossible for members, composing a committee, to give any satisfactory account to the Central Board of work performed.”—(2d Report, p. 21.)

Again at Harris, Dr. Boyter says, on 24th April, “I was sorry to observe, that any little piece of ground rented by the crofters, was still untouched, or prepared for any crop whatever. I asked in the strongest terms how such a state of indolence could be overlooked, and this was distinctly met by an assurance, that *the people were disinclined to work at anything*. It is now a general opinion among them, that the distribution of meal is their right, and must continue. I am sorry to give so unfavourable an opinion of these poor misguided peo-

“ple, but such is the opinion of every correct observer  
“in this country.”—(Do., p. 23.)

Captain Elliott reports from Skye (28th April), “There  
“exists in Skye very great destitution at present, and  
“most alarming prospects for the future, unless met by  
“prompt and comprehensive measures, calculated to  
“stretch beyond the present exigency, and prevent its  
“becoming an organised chronic pauperism, from which  
“the population will soon be *content to seek no escape, but*  
“*rely on the contributions of the charitable.*”—(3d Report,  
Appendix., p. 7.)

These and other facts, to which I referred in my Remarks on the Report of the Royal Commissioners, must be allowed to prove, that the idea of making a people industrious, by withholding from them all right to relief when destitute, is as much opposed to the results of experience, as that of making them prudent by the same means; from which I infer,—not that the indolence of this class of the poor, any more than the bad qualities to be found in all other classes of people, absolves us from the duty of relieving them when destitute (inasmuch as it will very surely be aggravated by that course),—but only, that it imposes on us the additional duty, of devising such means of relief as shall *test destitution, and tend to the correction of idleness.*

And there are other facts, recorded in the Reports of the Central Board, and their appendices, which seem to me amply to confirm this opinion, and if the right inference is drawn from them, to open a much more pleasing prospect.

I. *First*, it appears clearly, that the idleness and disposition to abuse charity, on the part of those who are the objects of charity, are qualities very apt to be exag-

gerated by those who are to grant it, no doubt because these qualities afford so ready an excuse for the neglect of a burdensome duty ; and that the injudicious mode of administering charity is often more to be blamed for such cases as occur, than the disposition of the people. Thus a statement was published, and immediately "went the round of the newspapers," very soon after the operations of the Board of Relief commenced, to the effect that many of the Highlanders, employed on the railways or elsewhere in the south of Scotland, had left their work and gone home, as soon as they found that food was to be distributed *gratis* in the Highlands. But when the grounds of this assertion were examined (exactly as has happened on a smaller scale in cases under my own observation), they turned out, in many instances, to be quite erroneous. The Employment Committee of the Edinburgh section say in their First Report, "they have taken great pains to trace these reports, and are happy to say that they have found little foundation for them. They found that they had, in some cases, at an early period, when reports of the destitution of their families reached them, before the plans of the Relief Committee were made known, gone to the Highlands with what money they possessed ; but the Committee have reason to believe that they left their money with their families, and returned to the south. In other cases, they had not gone to the Highlands, but gone in search of other work, when dissatisfied with what they had got ; but the result of the inquiries made by the Committee leads them to believe, *that in no case did they leave their employment and return home, with the view of sharing in the relief.*"—(1st Report, p. 28, 29.) In regard to a body of 200 Highlanders, sent to Mr. Oldham, contractor on the Edinburgh and Northern Railway, at the

Bridge of Earn, we have the following statement from Mr. D. M'Rae, assistant secretary to the Edinburgh Employment Committee, who visited these men at their work. "I had the most satisfactory account from Mr. Oldham of all the men sent. He told me they were giving him entire satisfaction; that not one man of the 200 had been found absent from his work since they went to him, and that if all the Highland labourers were as well behaved, he would not only be willing to employ them, but would discharge both English and Irish to make room for more." "I conversed in Gaelic with most of them," adds Mr. M'Rae, "they all assured me they were perfectly happy and comfortable, and each and all of them asked my advice, as to the best mode of sending their first savings, to assist their starving families at home. All the men sent to other contractors are doing equally well."—(1st Report, p. 32.) I recollect myself being informed, on the line of the North British Railway, before the present famine began, that the Isle of Skye men there employed were considered better labourers than either the Lowland Scotch or the Irish. The different reports of the Glasgow Committee state the numbers of labourers from the West Highlands, who had accepted the offer of the Committee to bring them to the south, and procure them employment; and this number appears in their 6th Report, p. 3, to have been 1350, besides which, at least as many more appear to have come by tickets, granting them a free passage, but otherwise on their own resources; so that the number brought (at the expense of the proprietor, Mr. Matheson), by the Mary Jane steamer alone, during some months, was 2256 (Do. p. 4). The 4th Report of the Edinburgh Committee, dated 1st July, states that "during the last month, able-bodied labourers have con-

“tinued to come in considerable numbers to the south from those districts ; and in some parts *very few are left behind.*” (P. 4.)

II. Although in these, as in other instances, to be mentioned presently, when a fair prospect of employment has been opened to them, we see very little of that “aboriginal idleness” of the Highland people, which many persons have been so ready to blame for all the misfortunes of their country, yet it is necessary to add, that in some cases, the accusation of men having deserted work in the low country, and returned to the Western islands, “to obtain a share of the meal, and live in idleness at home,” has turned out to be well-founded. (See 4th Report of Glasgow Section, p. 7.) But I beg it may be observed in which of the localities this lazy and unprincipled conduct has been detected. Dr. Boyter says he found twenty such cases in Tyree, several in Barra, and many in Coll (Do., p. 12, 13), and again at Lochournside (6th Report, p. 118) — *i.e.* precisely in those places where the number of the inhabitants is so great, that “they never can expect,” as Dr. B. observes, “under any circumstances, to obtain a comfortable subsistence ;” and where, no obligation existing on the higher ranks to obtain for them either work or subsistence, they have acquired those indolent, improvident, and mendicant habits, which I have stated as being, all the world over, the natural condition of a redundant *and neglected* population. The relief which they have had, and by which alone they have been kept alive, has been entirely on the voluntary principle, yet it appears distinctly that they have trusted to it, just as the beggars in Ireland do, and that their mode of life is regulated by the expectation of it. Indeed, in the last instance reported

by Dr. Boyter, "three of them made an open attack on " the Committee's store, and carried off what they wanted, "boasting that it was their right, and at the next distribution they would do so again."—(6th Report, p. 18.) Those people have so barren a soil, that it is impossible to set them to work on shore, and "*they have no boats in " which they can go to sea ;*" therefore their subsistence is entirely dependent on the occasional return of fish to their loch.

III. It appears quite distinctly, from the inquiries of these committees, that a very great part of the acknowledged evil of idleness and want of enterprise is owing, not to any want of industry in the people, but to the want of capital, or of the knowledge, or the disposition, requisite for the expenditure of capital, in the proprietors, or upper ranks generally.

It may be remembered that the Royal Commissioners, who reported on the state of Scotland before the introduction of the new poor-law, stated as the result of their inquiries, that "profitable investments of industry "were fairly open to the Highland labourer," and they ascribed the want of employment, so general in the Highlands, entirely to what they termed the "undeveloped habits of industry" among the labourers,—*i.e.*, to what has also been maintained to be "the root of all "the misery of Ireland; the aboriginal idleness of the "people—that hatred of regular labour which has always "characterised them since history began." (Quarterly Review.) In short they laid the whole blame on the poor themselves. On that statement of these commissioners I took the liberty of remarking that "for profitable investments of industry two things are required,— "not only industry, but likewise capital;" and that the

number of unemployed persons in the Highlands might be ascribed, at least as much to the want of capital, or of disposition to expend it in improvements requiring attention, and personal inspection, and instruction of the labourers,—in short *skill*,—as to that “aboriginal idleness” which may be observed, in fact, more or less, in every people whose circumstances elevate them but little above the state of savages. I said, therefore, that “it appeared necessary to stimulate not merely the industry of the people, but likewise the liberality and enterprise of the proprietors, or upper ranks generally, in the Highlands, and that for that end, the most useful expedient and the only constitutional security seemed to be, such a Poor-law as should make it incumbent on them to provide either sustenance or some sort of work for the people.” “When it is distinctly understood, that assessments must be employed in ‘setting the people to work,’ and be available only for those who will work, and when it is known that ‘profitable investments of industry’ exist, what is the inference? That the heritors, knowing that they must set the people to work, will employ them in these ‘profitable investments of industry,’ rather than at unprofitable work; and that the people, knowing that subsistence, better than their present fare, is provided for them, but that they must work for it, will have their ‘industrious habits developed.’” (Remarks on the Report of the Royal Commissioners, &c. p. 287.) In order to bring capital and skill into a country, where “profitable investments of industry” exist, so as to give work to its poor, what can be a more reasonable and effectual expedient than this, to make it clearly and obviously the interest of every proprietor of that country to introduce them with that specific object; or, if he cannot do so, to sell his property and give place to others who can?

I must now beg of my readers to attend to the following statements of the Committees at Edinburgh and Glasgow, and particularly of Dr. Boyter and Captain Elliott, their very intelligent agents, and to ask themselves whether it is possible to conceive a stronger confirmation than they afford of these views. They demonstrate, *first*, that such "profitable investments of "industry," available both for the improvement of the country and the support of the inhabitants, do exist in almost all parts of the Highlands, but have been utterly neglected by most of the proprietors; *secondly*, that by the expenditure of very moderate sums, these resources may be applied to those purposes; and *thirdly*, that where this is done, where the simple expedient is adopted of offering the people sustenance, *only in return for work*, "the aboriginal idleness" of the people disappears, even more rapidly than could have been anticipated.

It is true that neither these Committees nor their agents express any opinion as to the importance of an effective Poor-law, as a security for these objects being in future attained in the Highlands; but that circumstance makes their evidence only the more valuable, as that of impartial and unprejudiced witnesses to the *facts*, from which, as it appears to me, the inference is quite inevitable, that a law which would impose on the proprietors and capitalists of the country the obligation of supporting the people, but at the same time *the right of exacting work in return for that support*, would infallibly bring these resources of the country into operation, not only without injury, but so far as we can learn, with great benefit to the proprietors; excepting probably in a few cases of extreme redundancy of population, the means of relieving which will be afterwards considered.

Indeed, I may be permitted to remark, that all the quotations which follow from these Reports may be regarded as a commentary on what I stated in regard to the Highlands in my Remarks on the Report, &c., (p. 283 *et seq.*) particularly on what I said at p. 288, of “a small amount of capital being required to set on foot various improvements in the Highlands, and the lines of industry which may be opened being various, in many places capital being only required for decent clothing and implements, in others for the draining of lands already in culture, in others the inclosing and bringing into cultivation moors and mosses;— in some instances what seems chiefly wanting is the superintendence and direction of the works to be undertaken by persons of skill and experience; in some places the fitting out of fishing boats would be the most important assistance to the industry of the people; and in others, assisting a certain number to emigrate,” &c. But in all these cases, I said that “a certain command of funds is requisite before the improvements can commence,” and added that the “introduction of a poor law, making some kind of provision for the unemployed compulsory, would in all probability force these improvements into existence, and compensate the proprietors for the increased expenditure.” (Remarks, &c., p. 288 and 290).

First, then, as to the existence of the resources, and no advantage being taken of them, we have assertions to that effect in the earlier Reports, and proof positive in the later.

Dr. Boyter, in his account of Harris, where he witnessed the most remarkable example of indolence and apathy, “attributes this slothful inclination of the people to the want of a few influential persons to guide and

“*train them*, to the crofters being tenants at will, who  
 “may be removed any year, a system very dishearten-  
 “ing, particularly in such a crisis as the present,—lead-  
 “ing them, in particular, to neglect draining, and allow  
 “the time for it to expire ; and to the want of the appli-  
 “cation of superior wisdom, mixed with a little kind as-  
 “sistance from the landlord.” (2d Report, p. 23.)  
 From the isle of Oronsay he writes, “It is lamentable to  
 “observe the *immense extent of waste land in this district*,  
 “*which is capable of improvement*, and were the energies  
 “of the people directed to this consideration, *both land-*  
 “*lord and tenant would soon reap the advantage* of the  
 “undertaking.” (2d Report, p. 21.) Again, from To-  
 bermory he writes, “A communication was made to me  
 “by Mr. Sheriff Robertson, regarding a scheme for the  
 “employment of fishermen in this and the adjacent  
 “coasts, and I am of opinion, that from the *great field*  
 “*at present utterly neglected, and the evident success that*  
 “*must attend its prosecution*, it must have a most benefi-  
 “cial effect on the prosperity, and in promoting indus-  
 “trious feelings among the inhabitants, of the country.”  
 (Do. p. 19).

The Glasgow Committee on Employment state that  
 “they have ascertained that there are many productive  
 “fishing stations in the destitute localities, which, if pro-  
 “perly cultivated, would not only contribute to support  
 “the inhabitants of the districts, but prove a *source of*  
 “*real wealth to the country* ; and entreat *the landlords*  
 “*and their agents* to turn their immediate attention to  
 “this subject.” (Do. p. 25.)

The following quotations from Captain Elliott's Re-  
 ports are to the same purpose. He writes from Skye,  
 “I am full of good hope that by the blessing of Al-  
 “mighty God, the exertions of the Committee and the

"benevolence of our countrymen will not only carry  
 "them through with comparative safety, but will pio-  
 "neer the way for an incalculable change in the aspect  
 "of this country, *which is not destitute of resources*, and  
 "in the moral and physical condition of the submissive  
 "and uncomplaining but *wonderfully neglected* popula-  
 "tion." (3d Report, Appendix, p. 5.) Again, from Shet-  
 land,—“There are many obvious resources *unthought of*  
 "and *untried* in Shetland, and nowhere do I conceive  
 "there is larger scope for improvement by land and sea  
 "operations. The latter may be the most lucrative and  
 "prolific source to depend on; but there is *ample and*  
 "*inviting opportunity for the improvement of land by*  
 "*draining*. On land so dried, from the general absence  
 "of frost in spring, a seed time nearly a month earlier  
 "may be expected, and a corresponding harvest." (4th  
 Report, Appendix, p. 29.) "In Shetland no advantage  
 "from the Drainage Act has yet been taken *or sought*,  
 "while all the inducements to do so are in greater pro-  
 "portion than in other districts where it has already  
 "proved most beneficial." (Do. p. 31.) He states that  
 he considers "some general and comprehensive mea-  
 "sure in regard to the state of the proprietary and trust  
 "estates in Shetland" to be necessary; he speaks of the  
 abolition of "the pernicious run-rig system, which the  
 "*apathy of the proprietor and the ignorance of the tenant*  
 "perpetuate, against all common sense and the rudiments  
 "of improvement," as indispensable; but mentions also  
 "the inclosure of crofts at the proper idle season, the  
 "substitution of better corn seed, the abolition of the  
 "present ridiculous rotation of oats and barley, the cul-  
 "tivation of garden stuffs and root crops, the improve-  
 "ment of their breeding stock, &c." He says it is the  
 policy to keep the fisher always in debt to the fish-curer,

and adds that although "individually they may be considered expert and skilful fishermen, yet, hiring both boats and lines, bound to one master by their debt, with no open competition for their labour, the victims of combination as to prices, they reap little real advantage, and never progress towards independence." (Do. p. 31.)

Next, as to the total absence of any security for attention to the wants of the poor, on the part of the proprietors, in the present state of the law, the following examples may suffice. Captain Elliott writes as to Glenshiel. "I am not satisfied with the prospect of work in futuro from the proprietors, but I *hope*, that where so much laudable exertion is making elsewhere, the principal proprietors in Glenshiel will not fail to consult the interests of their people." (3d Report, Appendix, p. 26.) Again from Dingwall. "It is my duty to report, that my information points at great carelessness and indifference, and that in the estate of Redcastle, *nothing has been done or is doing*, for the assistance of the suffering population." (Do. p. 39.) And from Avoch. "I am much pleased with the clear views and benevolent efforts of Sir James Mackenzie, who owns half the village; and I *only wish his desires and efforts were responded to by the proprietor of the other half*." And as to Wester Ross in general, "there has been *every variety* of exertion, on the part of the proprietors, from those who have given *their untiring personal services*, in addition to their sympathy and their money, as Lady Mackenzie and Mr. Lillingston, down to those, to whom I need not refer more directly at present, in the hope that their aid has been only deferred, but who up to this time (May 17, 1847) have given *no sign* by word or deed, that they have

“any sympathy with or interest in their people,—less  
 “indeed than the southern mechanic or labourer, who,  
 “by a contribution from his hard-earned competence,  
 “has proved himself not indifferent to the wants of his  
 “suffering countrymen.” (Do. p. 31.)

Lastly, as to the measures actually adopted (of course on a small scale) by the Committees and their agents, and their results, in confirmation of these views. The Glasgow Employment Committee, “considering that there  
 “are numerous stations in the distressed localities *where*  
 “*fishing might be most beneficially prosecuted*, forwarded  
 “a quantity of fishing materials to some such districts,  
 “and endeavoured to arrange a more extensive plan, by  
 “which herring and deep-sea fishing may be more ex-  
 “tensively carried on, and advertised for persons able  
 “and willing to superintend deep-sea fishing, and to in-  
 “struct and train persons in the destitute localities  
 “therein.” (3d Report, p. 4-5.)

The Edinburgh Committee issued general regulations as to the mode of administering the relief which they granted to persons able for work (the very aged and disabled being provided for, it is to be hoped better than formerly, by the Poor Law), and framed a scale of remuneration—entirely in food, allowing 7lb. (or half a stone) of meal for a day's work of an able-bodied man, for an aged man or woman a third of a stone, and a boy under 15 a fourth of a stone, or 3½lb. a day. They then directed, that “relief must now be given only for  
 “work done, and in the distribution return the Commit-  
 “tee must state the work each party receiving relief is  
 “actually performing. All male persons receiving re-  
 “lief, and who cannot be advantageously employed in  
 “fishing, to be employed by the Committee in the fol-  
 “lowing works.” “Making roads, tending to open up

“the district, &c., and small bridges,—clearing out and  
 “embanking streams,—building small fishing quays and  
 “clearing out creeks,—enclosing gardens,—trenching, en-  
 “closing and otherwise improving waste land, either their  
 “own occupation, or obtained with concurrence of their  
 “landlords. The women in making nets, spinning, knit-  
 “ting, &c., according to the custom of the district.”

These are just such regulations as are adopted in those countries where the able-bodied unemployed have a right to relief, and where the “labour test,” is imposed on those who demand it; and I formerly said that “the labour test” must be the “chief safeguard for preventing abuse where relief is given to the able-bodied poor in such districts.” (Remarks, &c. p. 298.) The only precaution requisite, in regard to such works, to avoid the error of the former English system, seems to be, that they should, as has been very properly recommended above, be works for the advantage of the whole district, not of individual proprietors only. The effect of these measures, therefore, *affords an earnest of what may be expected* if a law to that purpose shall exist in the Highlands, giving relief at the public expense, *coupled with that condition*, to all who are able for work, and *cannot find remunerative employment from the proprietors or others.*

Now let us observe the effect of these measures, as adopted by the Committees, partial and temporary as they necessarily were, on the prospects of the country, and on the character of the people.

Capt. Elliott, writing on the 22d July from Dunvegan, in Skye, where he says there had been “an anxious desire and a very creditable success attending their efforts to carry out the views of the Board,” says, “I offer it as my decided opinion, that your relief *has in-*

“*evolved no moral debasement, but has rather engendered general habits of industry, and accustomed all classes to labour, affording opportunities for acquiring skill, and the development of an enterprise which they themselves, as well as all others, were ignorant of their possessing.*” (5th Report, p. 19.) “Not only are there indications of prospective advantage to themselves in the inclosure of their cultivated grounds, but the opening of post roads, and a general communication with remote and obscure districts, promises a beneficial change to more civilised habits; above all, *the whole population is now like an ant-hill; there is scarce an individual left to sustain the old reproach of lounging laziness.*” (Ib.) It was intimated that in future being at school “would satisfy the requirement of labour from young children when entered against their name. In the school of Carlost, the number was thus raised from about 55 to 105 attending.” (Ib.) “There was an apprehension that my labour regulations would interfere with country work; but I made it be clearly understood, that those refusing to take advantage of other work, were disqualified from receiving any relief in employment from the Local Committee,” (Ib.) This is exactly what Mr. Senior and others have described as the proper working of the law of Elizabeth in England, where the able-bodied poor are entitled to be “set to work,” when unemployed otherwise, but with the provision, that the parish is to be “the hardest task-master and the worst pay-master” in the country.

“On the whole,” says Captain E., “I have much satisfaction in testifying to the efficient relief afforded, and the *useful nature and workmanlike appearance* of the operations rendered in return.” (Ib., p. 20.)

The following is particularly deserving of notice. “I

“ am surprised and delighted at the complete success  
 “ which has attended Mrs. M’Leod’s arrangements for  
 “ women’s work, and greatly gratified by the amount of  
 “ present relief and *social advancement* they have con-  
 “ duced to, at a cost of nothing beyond the loan of ne-  
 “ cessary capital ; as she contemplates repayment in  
 “ full by the sale of the manufactured articles. The  
 “ amount of *trouble and superintendence* involved has  
 “ been immense, and the Central Board, and the public  
 “ in general, are deeply indebted to this estimable lady.”  
 —(Ib.)

Again, from Kingsburgh, on the 23d July, he writes,  
 “ The sub-district of Uig has been well supplied with  
 “ fish, by the business-like arrangements of Mr. M’Leod,  
 “ the convener. The boat’s crew originally employed  
 “ have, by praiseworthy industry, earned well nigh the  
 “ cost of the boat, &c., supplied by the Committee, and  
 “ *their complete success has so stimulated industry in this*  
 “ *calling*, that the convener is in possession of various  
 “ offers to *fish for the Committee.*” “ In the fish store  
 “ at Uig, in addition to the supply for the destitute poor,  
 “ there is nearly a ton of well cured fish, of the value of  
 “ £15 or £16.” “ I look on the success of these fishing  
 “ boats as having effected *great permanent good in break-*  
 “ *ing them in* and offering an example. The *resources*  
 “ *from the sea are endless.* The boats at Uig and Dunve-  
 “ gan are bringing in ling of 40 lbs. weight, and one boat  
 “ had a credit of 775 lbs. for three days’ work of four  
 “ men ; the lowest was 191 lbs. for the same number of  
 “ men and days.” “ I am particularly satisfied with the  
 “ useful nature of the public works, and the judicious  
 “ employment of the people,” on roads, breastworks  
 “ against the tide, &c. This applies equally “ to the  
 “ work they are now engaged on, *in co-operation with*

"*those more immediately concerned*, who undertake to "refund 50 per cent. of the estimated work when completed." "All these works are evidently for the people's "immediate benefit." (Ib. p. 22.)

From the impoverished district of Kilmuir, formerly described, he writes, "I am happy to say, that the "register of their proceeding is most clear and credit-  
"able ; their exaction of work, *and success in obtaining it*,  
"have been about an average of others. Their *success*  
"*in fishing* has been most conspicuous, and has served  
"to pioneer the way to much enterprise in that line." He adds, "The works that I saw in operation impressed  
"me with a sense of their *general* usefulness ; but there  
"has been no progress made at Snizort in obtaining  
"the co-operation of the proprietors and tenants in  
"works *useful to themselves*, by a joint undertaking ;"  
(Ib. p. 23)—on which I would simply ask, if proprietors and tenants had a tax gatherer presenting himself, year after year, as in England, and now in Ireland, to draw from them the funds for keeping the people, when otherwise unemployed, at public works, or maintaining them in a workhouse, would they not bethink themselves of such "joint undertakings" as might be specially "useful  
"to themselves?" In that case, the legitimate use of the poor-rate, at least in ordinary seasons, would be, not to assist that joint undertaking by which the landlord and tenant must be benefited, but virtually to compel them to pay a penalty for neglecting such undertakings as might develop the resources of the country.

Captain Elliott's concluding remark on Skye is, "I  
"observe with satisfaction, the more contented *and im-*  
"*proved* appearance of the people in this district since  
"I last saw them, and it is gratifying to know that this  
"is exclusively the result of your labours *in the dispen-*

“*sation of the public bounty.* A warm feeling of gratitude was expressed on the part of the Committee *and people* for the relief.” (Ib. p. 24.)

Again, let us observe the result of Dr. Boyter’s inquiries, as to projected harbours and fishing stations on the island of Mull and in Morven, and the effect of such works on the habits of the people. “When at Pennycross, I had an opportunity of examining minutely the plan and specifications of a pier intended to be built at Carsaig, Isle of Mull; and having the best information on the subject from the best informed people, I have no hesitation in saying that, as a fishing station, it cannot be surpassed by any other place on the west coast of Scotland, either in point of safety or *certainty of success.*” “After a most careful examination of all its qualities as a harbour of refuge, and as a place of safety and convenience for fishing boats, Captain Ottar declared it to be as admirable a place of anchorage as he had ever seen, and so surrounded with natural defences from sea or storm, that he should feel it his duty to report to the Admiralty the survey he had made; and I herewith enclose you a copy of plan and report. As a beginning to a fishing establishment, *nothing on the west coast offers so desirable a situation in every point of view*; and as the assistance required by Mr. Maclean is *so inconsiderable an amount*, I hope the Board will feel disposed to contribute, by the employment of aged people, to the completion of the intended pier and breakwater, the plan of which I now transmit.”

“My visit to Lochaline” (to inspect and report on another projected pier contemplated by the proprietors and others, inhabitants of that neighbourhood) “being unknown and unexpected, I came among the work-

“men by surprise, and I must confess that *a more energetic or hard working party, I have no where met with.*”  
 “The harbour of Lochaline possesses every quality, in the highest degree, of beauty, safety, and usefulness;” “and I may mention that several of the Government steamers have entered this port, and the officers have expressed their astonishment that *such a position could so long have been overlooked.*”  
 “The projected pier is situated near the entrance, but inside, and secure from the worst weather, and, when finished, must at all times prove admirably adapted for the purpose intended, of embarking and disembarking all kinds of live stock, lime, coal, or agricultural produce. There is a large district of country to which the pier would afford convenience, and which would undoubtedly be taken advantage of, from the many excellent lines of road leading to it from all directions; it may be said that Ardnamurchan, Strontian, as well as Morven, will feel alike its facilities for carrying on their business. The pier is at present in rather an advanced state, and *I consider Dr. M'Leod's estimate of £500 rather too high.*”

At Craignish, he says, “I shall now advert to the usefulness of a small pier here, as contemplated by Admiral Campbell.” “As a fishing station, I consider Craignish surpassed by no other place. The herring fishing has commenced, and a better quality of fish is only to be found in Lochfine, and as several hundred boats frequent that Loch annually, a convenient pier becomes a subject worthy of the consideration of the Board.” “The highly cultivated state of the country admits of considerable exportation of agricultural produce, as also the importation of coal and lime; and *that so fine a district should so long have remained with-*

“out the convenience of a pier, is a matter of astonishment to all.” “I am now strong in belief, that all permanent improvements of this kind will do more to benefit the Highlands, and civilize its poor inhabitants, than any temporary relief from the most charitable or benevolent fund in the world.” (Appendix to Fifth Report of Glasgow Section of Central Board, p. 10.)

In the Western Islands we have one memorable example of a large district from which there has been no cry of distress, and to which the committees have not found it necessary to send any aid, viz., the Lewis; and if we had confided in the Report of the Royal Commissioners as to the cause of distress in the Highlands, we must have supposed that the patriotic proprietor, Mr. Matheson, had devised some peculiar method of “developing habits of industry among the people;” but the fact is, simply, that he has undertaken to “give employment to every man and boy who will work, at draining of moss lands, building bridges and quays,” &c. &c. (Edinburgh newspaper, June 21, 1847,—article from Stornoway.) And as to the effect to be expected from these works, we have the testimony of Sir E. Coffin and Capt. Elliott. “Any hesitation or doubt that may have arisen, of the practicability or desirability of subjecting unpromising moss and muir-land to the operations of modern science and improvement, in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, must at once give way before the success attending the *tested* experiment on a liberal and extensive scale in Lewis.” “The anticipation of prolific corn fields, a busy and contented peasantry, and competent farm-steadings, replacing the desolate wilderness, no longer seems visionary, when witnessing the wonderful results of the last three years. Unlike ordinary experience, the theory of this

“*land manufacture* is more formidable than the observation of its practical working warrants.”

“The result in 1847 was a full average, at least, of what might be seen elsewhere on medium land. Had the corn crop been entirely equal, which on new-taken-in land is seldom the case, I would not hesitate to ascribe a return of 8 bolls per acre, presuming it to ripen and yield as warranted by its appearance in August; but as it is, on an average, and at last year’s prices, there would be a value of £10 or £12 for corn, and not less than £3 for straw.

“The turnip, or second year’s rotation, was a fair average crop, which at last year’s prices, would be cheap at £5 per acre, or one hundred years’ rental of the land two years previously.

“The hay crop, or third years’ rotation, was excellent. The growth of Timothy grass I never saw equalled, and I was informed there was an aggregate weight on trial of 200 stones of 24lbs. each per acre, which could not be valued at less than 15d., or at all events, 1s per stone, being £10 an acre.

“The cost of these improvements had been variously stated in my hearing, in different parts of the Highlands, to range from £20 to £30 per acre; but from such data as I had access to, and as I cannot believe to be faulty to any material extent, this would appear very different from the reality.” “These would only make £10, necessary to put the land in a condition to receive the seed and manure.” (Sixth Report by the Edinburgh Section of the Central Board, pp. 30, 31, 32.)\*

\* It has been suggested to me by an eminent agriculturist, that there is one certain and very ancient mode of improving pasture land, which is wholly neglected in the Highlands, although practised with remarkable profit in the hilly parts of Devonshire and Somersetshire—Artificial Irrigation.

In the last Report (the 6th) of the Central Board, the reports by Captain Elliott are in general less satisfactory, because the Committees whom he visited in Ross-shire had not carried the directions as to the "labour test" into effect so faithfully as elsewhere; yet several of them illustrate the resources of the country and effects of the system when fairly acted on. Thus, at Kishorn, (31st July) after some difficulty as to applying the test, "the calm determination of the Committee brought things into order, and ever since, the work test has been fully applied. No starvation has been allowed, the lists have been greatly reduced, and will be still more, there being labour for hire in the country. No farther supply is needed for Kishorn before harvest. The *able-bodied are at present almost universally at the herring fishing or at railroads.*" (6th Report, p. 22, 23.) At Shieldaig "They are finishing several useful quays for boats, five of them worth £10 each, also finishing a piece of road," &c.—(Ib. p. 24.)

At Gairloch, Capt. Elliott says, "110 men were at work, old, and very young." "I saw the works and approve of their object and superintendence." He expresses doubts as to the particular system (of spade husbandry) now practised, but adds, "when I review what has been accomplished in two or three years, I have no despair for the future. They have sub-divided the houses into three apartments, so as to separate the sexes, and have a kitchen and cowhouse, with two entrances, a liquid manure tank," &c. "I was glad to witness the zealous and apparently successful efforts for moral culture among the youth of both sexes, under circumstances most unfavourable. A school of 80 girls, built and maintained exclusively by Lady M'Kenzie, afforded gratifying evidence of what may be done. It was

“taught by an intelligent mistress ; the appearance of  
 “the girls, the order, method, success and popularity,  
 “were alike creditable. It had acquired great practical  
 “value in the eyes of the parents lately, from *the chil-*  
 “*dren writing to their fathers, absent at the herring fishing*  
 “*or railroad.* The boys’ school had a model farm at-  
 “tached, at which the boys might attain much useful  
 “knowledge. There were other schools, erected by the  
 “proprietor, with grants from the Education Board,  
 “on different parts of this *well-cared-for property.* I  
 “inspected the projected line of road along the Loch,  
 “and I understand Dr. M’Kenzie” (brother of the late  
 proprietor, and manager of the property) “considers that  
 “a road to join the present one to Gairloch, and open  
 “up that district, might be done for £2100. I have  
 “seen nothing so calculated for the general good of the  
 “country as this road.”—(Ib. p. 26, 27.)

From Poolewe he writes, “Fishing might be prosecuted  
 “here with great advantage if there were protection  
 “for the boats by piers or harbours. At present there  
 “are 15 boats of 15 tons, which, when the herring fish-  
 “ing is over, are hauled upon the beach till its periodic  
 “return. These boats have crews of five men each, but  
 “if four piers were constructed, it is the unanimous  
 “opinion of the intelligent practical members of the  
 “Committee that *the white fishing would be extensively*  
 “*prosecuted ; and that there were resources enough in the*  
 “*district to establish, instead of 15, 45 boats or more,*  
 “which would require for white fishing *crews of nine*  
 “*men.* I apprehend the piers or boat harbours for safety,  
 “would cost from £300 to £500 each.”—(Ib. p. 28.)

Dr. Boyter reports from Saline, in the Isle of Mull, on  
 the 25th August, “I have great pleasure in remarking  
 “that this visit was attended with peculiar marks of sa-

“tatisfaction. A pier was in progress, which must be  
“acknowledged as a great and permanent convenience  
“to the public. We also visited the property of the  
“Hon. Mr. Drummond, as well as that of the Duke of  
“Argyle, and there witnessed most extensive improve-  
“ments in trenching, draining, and enclosing, which has  
“rendered the appearance of that wild but naturally  
“beautiful country, *equal to the most fertile district in*  
“*Scotland.*” At Loch-Allen he writes, “I was happy to  
“find the pier approved of by the Glasgow Board was  
“progressing rapidly. The able-bodied men and other  
“descriptions had mostly gone to the low country for  
“work, which had in some measure retarded the gene-  
“ral operations of quarrying, &c., *but the disposition of*  
“*the people to work is so determined,* that I have no fear  
“of its completion in good and due time.” And from  
Strontian, “Never having had an opportunity of visiting  
“this district, I was pleased to find every thing conduct-  
“ed in the very best manner, and with due consideration  
“and strict attention to all the rules laid down by the  
“Central Relief Board of Glasgow. A pier for the pro-  
“tection of boats and of convenience to the trading com-  
“munity has been commenced, and is now being carried  
“on by a class of recipients of that age which renders  
“them unfit for any other employment. A small manu-  
“factory of herring netting has also been established for  
“the employment of boys, and it is very pleasing to see  
“the progress they have made. A considerable number  
“of women are employed in barking wood for tanning pur-  
“poses. A considerable number of men, rather aged, are  
“also employed in different districts in road making.  
“Sir James Riddell has in his own pay and employment  
“upwards of 200 men in trenching and draining; and  
“I have no hesitation in saying that Sir James Riddell

“surpasses any proprietor in the north (with a few exceptions) in his endeavours to improve the country, “as well as the inhabitants, on his property.” (Sixth Report, Appendix, p. 20, 21, 22.)

Here it cannot fail to be observed, that the examples of such proprietors are rare ; but that where the bounty dispensed by Dr. Boyter and Captain Elliott has been combined with “strict attention to the rules laid down “by the Central Relief Board” (which are exactly similar to those which would be adopted by any experienced official Board dispensing legal relief to the able-bodied under the safeguard of the labour test), its effects in stimulating the industry of the people, and improving the prospects of the country, appear to have been uniform and decided. And when it is remembered that notwithstanding the failure of the potato crop, and consequent destitution of so large a population in the Highlands, the Relief Committees have been not only able to prevent any death by famine, but to open in so many places a fair prospect of improvement of the country, and of reformation of the manners of the people, at an expense in all not exceeding £100,000, it is surely not unreasonable to expect, that in ordinary seasons, and after some further assistance shall have been given them for the purpose of emigration, the proprietors of the Highlands and Islands will be perfectly able to bear a similar burden to that *which the legislature has now imposed on Ireland.*

I observe with the utmost satisfaction, that the principle of a Poor Law, skilfully imposed and judiciously regulated, and extending to *all kinds* of destitution, being a useful stimulus, both to the industry of the people, and to the exertions of the landlords and other

capitalists of a country, (and a reasonable security to others assisting them,) has now been fairly recognised *and acted on*, in reference to Ireland. It is distinctly avowed in the following extract from Sir Robert Peel's speech at Tamworth, 1st June, 1847. "We have experience of the evils of periodical returns of destitution in Ireland; we see periodically a million or a million and a half of people absolutely in a starving state,—in a state which is disgraceful, while it is dangerous to the security of life and property. I believe it is a great point *to give security to those people* that they shall not starve,—that they shall have a demand upon the land. I believe it is necessary to give *a new stimulus to industry,—to impress upon the proprietors and the occupying tenants, that they must look on the cultivation of the land in a new light*; and that the demands of poverty will not be so great, when all persons do all that they can to lighten the pressure."

In proof that the natural resources of Ireland, in the absence of this stimulus, have been equally neglected as those of the Highlands, I may quote a few sentences from the official Report of the Commission on the Occupation of Lands in Ireland. "The general tenor of the evidence before the Commissioners goes to prove, that the agricultural practice throughout Ireland is *defective in the highest degree*, and furnishes the most encouraging proofs, that where judicious exertions have been made to improve the condition and texture of the soil, and introduce a better selection and rotation of crops, these exertions *have been attended with the most striking success and profit*." "The lands in almost every district require drainage; drainage and deep moving of the lands have proved most remunerative operations wherever they have been applied, but as

“yet they have been introduced only to a very limited extent; and the most valuable crops, and most profitable rotations, cannot be adopted in wet lands.” (See Report of that Commission in London newspapers, Sept. 3, 1847.)

The Commission above mentioned, stated as their opinion, that the potato may perhaps be regarded as the main cause of that inertia of the Irish character, which prevents the development of the resources of the country; but with all deference to that opinion, I would observe, that in this case, as in the Highlands, the fundamental evil appears to be, the existence of a population, such as nothing but the potato can support, who “cannot find employment,” as these commissioners themselves state, “during several months of the year,” and therefore cannot afford to purchase any other food, and whose only recourse, when they cannot find employment, is beggary; and that it is the absence of skill and capital to give them work, rather than the presence of the potato to keep them alive, which ought chiefly to fix the attention of those who wish to see the resources of the country developed. And without giving any opinion on the political question, how far it is just or expedient for Great Britain to give farther assistance by advances of money, to aid the improvement of Ireland, we may at least repeat here what was stated as to the Highlands, that when it becomes the clear and obvious interest of every proprietor in a country, to introduce capital into it, with the specific object of employing the poor, as well as improving his property, we may expect, either that such improvements as will prove “profitable investments of labour,” will be prosecuted, or else, that the land will pass into other hands, more capable of “developing its resources.”

In exact conformity with these anticipations, I find that a memorial has been already presented to the Government, by the proprietors of one county in Ireland, showing distinctly, that since the enactment of the new Poor Law, they have begun to discover resources in the land formerly neglected, and at the same time *revealing the motive* which has fixed their attention upon them. "By a judicious advancement of loans in this county, *on unquestionable security*, public undertakings of the greatest utility may be accomplished, and a demand created for the surplus labour, *which must otherwise fall on the parishes.*"—(Memorial of the Grand Jury of the county of Galway, to the Lords of the Treasury.—*Glasgow Chronicle*, September 1, 1847.) And on this the following extracts from recent Irish papers furnish as satisfactory a commentary as could be desired.

The following is from the *Tralee Chronicle*. "Messrs. Cousine and Mr. Lawlor are now draining many hundred acres. *These operations, it is calculated, will save the whole of the poor-rates of Natocul Daly.*" "Nothing but reproductive employment can save the landlords and occupiers of the soil in this country from utter ruin." The next is from the *Cork Reporter*, "A few gentlemen have formed a fishing association at Cosheen; £1000 or £2000 are to be raised for an experiment. If it is successful, of which there is little doubt, a regular company will be formed on a large scale, and then the appalling scenes of last winter will be averted from one of the most distressed districts of the western coast, by the only effectual means of relief to the labouring poor, *remunerative employment.*"

The next is a statement, made by the Relief Committee of the division of Monaminy, in the Union of Mallow. "The non-resident proprietors possess the most valuable

“interests in nearly nine-tenths of the soil in our district. *Their estates are capable of great improvement.* “Four-fifths of them are waste and unproductive; but which, if reclaimed and improved, as they might be, by draining, &c., would give *ample employment and subsistence to the whole surplus population, and change the district to one of comparative health and prosperity.* By means of the relief system, the labouring population are alive, and able to effect this by their industry.”—(*Morning Chronicle*, September 14, 1847.)

In the same newspaper there is a letter from Mr. Hamilton, of St. Ernan's, county Donegal, which deserves the more attention, as he states that he has himself been extensively engaged in improvements which have effected, as every inspector sent to examine them has reported, “not only a good moral effect on his people, but a good profitable effect on his land.” In this letter he says farther, “Experience enables me to assert, that 20 years' labour of all the men in the country, would not suffice to put Ireland in a state fit to be cultivated,” *i. e.* might be properly employed on preliminary operations. “The Land Improvement Act (if carried out so simply as to enable one to avail oneself of it) will put it in every landlord's power to begin a vigorous course of improvement; and acts for emigration and colonization, and especially for facilitating the sale of estates, would enable them to go on with it.”—(*Ibid.*)

Again, I see a notice in the newspapers, of two meetings of Agricultural Societies in Ireland, the Ballinasloe, and the North Wexford, in which “useful and remunerative employment, including the cultivation of flax, was most earnestly urged, as the only legitimate mode of *saving the proprietors from ruinous taxation and the peasantry from famine;*” and a meeting of the

Castle Island Relief Committee, in which a resolution was adopted to the effect, that "*extensive employment of the working classes is the only mode of meeting the difficulties of the country, and that the Land Improvement Bill affords ample encouragement to landlords to improve their properties with advantage to themselves;*" and at the same time it was announced, that the landed proprietors in that district *had determined on taking loans to the amount required for carrying out the object of the meeting.*"—(See *Morning Chronicle*, September 22, 1847.)

We have an account of a public meeting of proprietors and tenants in the Union of Skibbereen, on 14th September, at which the following Resolution, still more forcibly illustrating the operation of the new Poor Law, was, *inter alia*, adopted.

"That with the country *wholly unimproved*, and remaining, in the view of other parts of the empire, in a *rude and half cultivated state*, we deplore the necessity of *confining in a workhouse a labouring population who might be usefully and respectably employed in many ways.*" And in an excellent and patriotic speech by Mr. W. H. Beecher at that meeting, we find an explicit avowal, that the "*landlords must now help themselves, or their estates will pass from them,*" coupled with an announcement, 1. That a meeting to promote the cultivation of flax was to be held next day; 2. That an association had been formed for improving the fishery of the district; and 3. That application had been made to Government (unfortunately not then answered) by the proprietors in that Union, for loans to the amount of above £10,000, implying an expenditure of above £20,000, under the Land Improvement Act.—(See *Times* newspaper, Sept. 20, 1847.)

The Earl of Clancarty, at a meeting of the Ballinasloe Agricultural Society last month, expressed himself thus:—"The poor people this year are in as dependent a position as last, with this difference, that it is not on American corn, purchased by Government, that they must this year be subsisted. The corn we are to use this year for that purpose is in our own haggards; and *it is for us to consider, whether they are to eat it unprofitably within the four walls of a workhouse, or as the reward for value given in work.* The important question then is, how to find *employment for the poor*; and the questions to be discussed to-day will, I trust, show that work can be laid out upon our farms, that will be remunerative to the employer as well as the employed."—(See *Dublin Evening Post*, Sept. 21, 1847.)

Again, at a meeting of the Irish Council held in Dublin last month—Lord Cloncurry in the chair—the first resolution proposed by the Committee on Manufactures was—"That the aid of the clergy of all denominations be sought, in propagating *a feeling of the moral obligation and value of extending employment, and giving a fair preference to the products of national industry, so as to support the poor by profitable employment, rather than by feeding them in workhouses.*"—(*Times*, Sept. 30, 1847.)

Even at Cloghreen, in county Tipperary, where it was absurdly proposed in the Board of Guardians to resist the payment of the poor-rate, the proposal was accompanied by an "earnest request, that each member of the Board would devise, within his own district, some system, whereby each landowner shall deposit in the hands of a committee, a part of the produce of his farm, *in the ratio of the portion assessed to him under the Poor-Law*, to be distributed in rations to the able-bodied.

“paupers, *whom such committee should employ in remunerative works.*”—(See *Morning Chronicle*, October 2, 1847.)

When we read and reflect on these statements, I think it must occur to every one, that whatever other auxiliary measures may be devised, the greatest boon that has been conferred on Ireland in our time, is the Law which has not only given a security, never known before, for the lives of the poor, but has made that motive to exertion, and to the application of capital to “profitable investments of industry,” which is here distinctly avowed, equally operative on the proprietors of land in every Poor Law union in that country; and in all time coming; and I believe I may add, that the individual to whom Ireland is chiefly indebted for this inestimable boon, is one whose name we do not find connected with any of the questions of religion or of party politics, which have caused so much useless excitement; but who has distinctly perceived the root of the evil,—the absence of any security, either for the lives of the poor; or for the useful application of capital to the employment of labour, and has applied himself patiently and steadily to the legitimate remedy,—viz., Mr. Poulett Scrope.

It is true that we have many representations, from Poor Law unions in Ireland, of the utter inability of the proprietors and occupiers of the soil to bear the burden which the new Poor Law has imposed upon them, and I give no opinion on the questions, whether they have a claim in equity on further assistance from England, or whether the rate has been imposed in the most judicious way. But when it is said, that they are utterly unable to support the poor of Ireland by a rate, the question presents itself—How do they propose that those poor are to be supported without a rate? I ap-

prehend it can only be by begging ; and of whom are they to beg ? It can only be from the occupiers of the soil, and other inhabitants of the country. Now, will the ability of those inhabitants to bear this burden be *lessened* by a law which will, in one way or other, compel the landlords (often absentees) to share it along with them ?—and will, at the same time, make it the obvious interest of the landlords to introduce capital into the country, and expend it there in “remunerative employment ?”

On the present state of Ireland I can speak with some confidence, because I can give the opinion of a friend, the Count de Strzelicki, who is well entitled to judge, because he was previously thoroughly acquainted with agriculture, and because he nobly undertook the painful office of dispensing the bounty of the London Association in the very worst district of Ireland, during the worst period of the famine, and who expresses himself thus :—  
 “The real evil and curse of Ireland is neither religious nor political, but lies simply in so many of the landlords being bankrupts, and so many of those who are well off being absentees ; others again, equally well off, resident, judicious, benevolent, and far-sighted, being unsupported in their efforts, and isolated in their action upon the masses ; who, long since cast away by the proprietary, have been dragging their miserable existence in recklessness, distrust, and rancour. It is this dislocation—even antagonism—of social interests and relations, combined with the *irresponsibility of the property for its poverty*, that constitutes the ‘*circus viciosus*,’ the source of all the evils of this unfortunate and interesting country.

“But now, *in consequence of the new Poor Law*, and other new enactments of Parliament, those who have a

" real interest in the preservation of their property will  
 " be forced to look, as they never did before, to the im-  
 " provement of their tenantry. Those who are insolvent  
 " must part with the nominal tenure of land, and leave  
 " their estates to capitalists who can better discharge  
 " the duty of landlords; and lastly, the masses, who  
 " hitherto had been abandoned to themselves and to  
 " their brutal instinct for self preservation, will find  
 " henceforth their interest linked with that of the land-  
 " lord, and will find advice, help, encouragement, and in  
 " extreme cases a legal support.

" Every real friend of Ireland, and particularly those  
 " who, like myself, have had an insight into the many  
 " excellent, intellectual, and moral qualities of their cha-  
 " racter, while sympathising with the hardships which  
 " at first will be felt by many from the new system, can-  
 " not but acknowledge that it is only now that its society  
 " is being placed on its proper basis, and in a fair way  
 " to amelioration and prosperity."

This opinion was given in a letter to a common friend,  
 and without reference to any speculation of mine as to  
 the management of the poor. In a subsequent letter  
 to myself, he adds, "It is only since I came to Ireland  
 " that I have become conscious of *the real value of a*  
 " *legal provision for the poor*, and of the demoralizing  
 " effect of private alms. Already we see some good  
 " symptoms of the action of the new Poor Law. It is  
 " by the provision made to employ men, and not by  
 " feeding them, that the operation of the law begins.  
 " The out-door relief will, I am sure, act not as a pre-  
 " mium to idleness, but as a *stimulus to landlords* to  
 " supply labour, and thus prevent the people from fall-  
 " ing on it."

Now, having the evidence that I have stated, *first*,

of the salutary but necessarily transient effect of the bounty dispensed to the able-bodied by the Relief Committees in the Highlands, when guarded by the simple precaution of the labour test ; and *secondly*, of the incipient but equally salutary, and, I trust, permanent operation of the effectual legal provision, now introduced into Ireland, and guarded in the same way, I beg to ask, what better confirmation can we have of the opinion which I ventured formerly to express, “that the introduction of work, done by paupers, at the expense of the ratepayers, into the Highlands, would not only be safe and beneficial as regards the poor, but would be the true stimulus, now wanted, to induce the landlords to set on foot those different improvements, which, according to many witnesses, would furnish a profitable investment for labour in almost all parts of the country?” (Remarks on the Report of the Royal Commissioners, p. 298.)

At several of the meetings lately held in Ireland, Emigration and Colonisation have been maintained to be necessary for the relief of the districts most burdened with redundant population ; and the importance of that resource is stated also in an important address, lately presented to the Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, by the whole body of ministers and elders of the Remonstrant Synod of Ulster, in which they express confidence that many portions of that province require no external aid, and add that “by a well-regulated and extensive system of colonisation,” the poor districts may be relieved of the surplus population, and that there will then be abundant remunerative labour for those remaining at home.—(*Times* newspaper, Sept. 20, 1847.)

The same opinion is briefly stated in reference to some of the most distressed districts in Scotland by Dr.

Boyster. "The whole district of Kinloch Moidart and Loch Shiel is poor, and far behind in cultivation; more especially the latter, which from various causes has rather fallen into decay, with an excessive and miserable population; and I see nothing as a perfect means of relief, but a removal of a portion of the inhabitants to some other quarter, where industry may procure them living for themselves and families."—(6th Report, Appendix, p. 22.)

On this last point Dr. Boyter gives a more detailed opinion in another report, where he speaks of districts where there is "no great wealth to pay them, and neither manufactory to work on, nor soil to improve;" *i.e.* where not only the population is at present redundant, but the country destitute of resources; a case, however, which even by his own reports appears to be by no means general in the Highlands. Under these *extraordinary* circumstances, "emigration to a certain extent seems the only relief for the future;"—I would add, provided always that measures are taken to place those who remain, in that condition in which *experience shows* that the tendency to redundancy of population is checked; otherwise the relief will be only transient. He adds an important suggestion. "If Government would give territory at a fair valuation, proprietors would become purchasers and send out their people in a gradual and safe manner. The estates formed in this way would be handed down to their posterity as a valuable specimen of what can be done by the services of a people at present useless to themselves, their landlords, and the country. I am by no means prepossessed in favour of the present generation of Highlanders, but I know them to be substantially a sound people in principle, and that they *would make excellent colonists. The thousands I have sent out are all doing*





