

HISTORY
OF THE
DESTITUTION IN SUTHERLANDSHIRE.

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BEING A SERIES OF LETTERS PUBLISHED IN THE  
EDINBURGH WEEKLY CHRONICLE,  
IN THE YEARS 1840 & 1841 ;  
WITH AN APPENDIX,  
CONTAINING SOME ADDITIONAL INFORMATION.

BY  
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tion, and his shepherds are entirely exempt! Those of the small tenantry or their families, who may have been absent for two or three years, on their return are obliged to pay up their arrears of this tax, the same as if they had been all the time at home; and payment is enforced by seizure of the goods of any house in which they may reside. The reader will perceive that the laws of Sutherlandshire are different, and differently administered, from what they are in other parts of the country—in fact those in authority do just what they please, whether legal or otherwise, none daring to question what they do. Notwithstanding this burdensome tax, the roads, as far as the small tenants' interests are concerned, are shamefully neglected, while every attention is paid to suit the convenience and pleasure of the ruling parties and the new tenantry, by bringing roads to their very doors.

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LETTER XVII.

SIR,—In my last letter I mentioned something about the withholding and misappropriating of the money collected at church doors for the poor; but let it be understood that notwithstanding the iniquitous conduct of persons so acting, the loss to the poor was not very great. The Highlander abhors to be thought a pauper, and the sum afforded to each of the few who were obliged to accept of it, varied from 1s 6d to 5s a year: the congregations being much diminished, as I had before occasion to observe. It is no wonder, then, that the poor, if at all able, flee from such a country and seek employment or relief in the various maritime towns in Scotland, where they arrive broken down and exhausted by previous hardship—meatless and moneyless; and when unable to labour, or unsuccessful in obtaining work, they become a burden to a community who have no right to bear it, while those who have reduced them to that state escape scot-free. Any person acquainted generally with the statistics of pauperism in Scotland will, I am sure, admit the correctness of these statements. The Highland landlords formerly counted their riches by the number of their vassals or tenants, and were anxious to retain them; hence the poem of Burns, addressed to the Highland lairds, and signed Beelzebub, by which the ever selfish policy of those gentlemen is celebrated in their endeavouring, by force, to restrain emigration to Canada. But since then the

case is reversed. First the war, and then the food monopoly has made raising of cattle for the English markets, the more eligible speculation, against which the boasted feelings of clanship, as well as the claims of common humanity have entirely lost their force. Regarding the poll-tax or road money, it is also necessary to state, that in every case when it is not paid on the appointed day, expenses are arbitrarily added (though no legal process has been entered) which the defaulter is obliged to submit to without means of redress. There are no tolls in the county; the roads &c., being kept up by this poll-tax, paid by the small tenants for the exclusive benefit of those who have superseded them. In this way very large sums are screwed out of the people, even the poorest, and from the absentees, if they ever return to reside. So that if the population are not extirpated by wholesale, a considerable portion of the sums laid out on improvements will ultimately return to the proprietors, from a source whence, of all others, they have no shadow of right to obtain it.

I have now arrived at an important event in my narrative; the death of an exalted personage to whom I have often had occasion to refer—the Duchess-Countess of Sutherland.

This lady who had, during a long life, maintained a high position in courtly and aristocratic society, and who was possessed of many great qualities, was called to her account on the 29th of January, 1839, in the 74th year of her age. Her death took place in London, and her body was conveyed to Sutherland by way of Aberdeen, and finally interred with great pomp in the family vault, beside the late Duke her husband, in the Cathedral of Dornoch. The funeral was attended to Blackwall by many of the first nobility in England, and afterwards by her two grandsons, Lord Edward Howard, and the Honourable Francis Egerton, and by her friend and confidential servant, Mr Loch, with their respective suites. The procession was met by Mr Sellars, Mr Young, and many of her underfactors and subordinate retainers, together with the whole body of the new occupiers, while the small tenantry brought up the rear of the solemn cavalcade. She was buried with the rites of the Church of England. Mr George Gunn, underfactor, was the only gentleman native of the county who took a prominent part in the management of the funeral, and who certainly did not obtain that honour by the exercise of extraordinary virtues towards his poor countrymen: the rest were all those who had taken an active part in the scenes of injustice and cruelty which I have been endeavouring to

A falsehood on the very face of it. Were not the tenants' principal effects in cattle, the article of all others most convenient of arrest? "The Highlanders were unteachable, enemies to innovation or improvement, and incorrigibly opposed to the will of their superiors." Where are the proofs? What methods were taken to instruct them in improved husbandry, or any other improvements? None! They were driven out of the land of their fathers, causelessly, cruelly, and recklessly. Let their enemies say what have been their crimes of revenge under the most inhuman provocation? Where are the records in our courts of law, or in the statistics of crime, of the fell deeds laid to the charge of the expatriated Highlander? They are nowhere to be found, except in the groundless accusations of the oppressors, who calculating on their simplicity, their patient, moral, and religious character, which even the base conduct of their clergy could not pervert; drove them unresisting, like sheep to the slaughter, or like mute fishes, unable to scream, on whom any violence could be practised with impunity. It was thought an illiterate people, speaking a language almost unknown to the public press, could not make their wrongs be heard, as they ought to be, through the length and breadth of the land. To give their wrongs a tongue—to implore inquiry by official, disinterested parties into the cause of mal-practices which have been so long going on, so as if possible to procure some remedy in future—has been my only motive for availing myself of your kindness to throw a gleam of light on Highland misery, its causes and its consequences. And I cannot too earnestly implore all those in any authority, who take an interest in the cause of humanity, to resist that partial and close-conducted, sham inquiry to which interested parties would have recourse to screen themselves from public odium, and save their pockets. Some of these parties are great, wealthy, and influential. Several of them have talent, education, and other facilities for perverting what they cannot altogether suppress, making "the worse appear the better reason," and white-washing their blackest deeds—therefore, I say, beware! They want now a government grant, forsooth, to take away the redundant population! There is no redundant population but black cattle and sheep, and their owners, which the lairds have themselves introduced; and do they want a grant to rid them of these? Verily, no! Their misdeeds are only equalled by their shameless impudence to propose such a thing. First, to ruin the people and make them paupers, and when their wrongs and misery have made the very

stones cry out, seek to get rid of them at the public expense! Insolent proposition! "Contumelious their humanity." No doubt there have been some new churches built, but where are the congregations? Some schools erected, but how can the children of parents steeped in poverty profit by them? The clergy say they dispense the bread of life, but if they do so, do they give it freely—do they not *sell it* for as much as they can get, and do the dirty work of the proprietors, instead of the behests of him they pretend to serve? Did this precious article grow on any lands which the proprietors could turn into sheep walks, I verily believe they would do so, and the clergy would sanction the deed! They and the proprietors think the natives have no right to any of God's mercies, but what they dole out in a stinted and miserable charity. Mr Dempster of Skibo, the orator and apologist of the Highland lairds, says he "keeps two *permanent* soup-kitchens on his estate;" if this were true (as I have reason to believe it is not), what is to be inferred but that the wholesale ruin inflicted on the natives has rendered such a degrading expedient necessary. Their forefathers, a stalwart and athletic race needed no soup-kitchens, nor would their progeny, if they had not been inhumanly and unjustly treated. Mr Loch says in his work, that the Sutherlanders were "in a state of nature." Well; he and his coadjutors have done what they could to put them in an unnatural state—a state from which it would take an age to reclaim them. I admit there was great need of improvement in Sutherland fifty years ago, as there was at that time in the Lothians and elsewhere: but where, except in the Highlands, do we find general expulsion and degradation of the inhabitants resorted to by way of improvement? But Mr Loch has improved—if not in virtue, at least in station—and become a great man and a legislator, from very small beginnings; he and his coadjutors have waxed fat on the miseries of their fellow-creatures, and on the animals they have substituted for human beings. Well, I would not incur their responsibility for all their grandeur and emoluments. Mr Dempster has improved, and his factor from being a kitchen boy, has become a very thriving gentleman. These are the kind of improvements which have taken place, and all would go merrily if they could get entirely rid of the small tenants, "the redundant population," by a grant of public money. A redundant population in an extensively exporting country! This is *Irish* political economy. The same cause (the food taxes) is in operation in that unhappy country, and producing similar results;

but the Irish do not always bear it so tamely ; a little Lynch law,—a few extra-judicial executions is now and then administered by way of example. This, however, is a wrong mode of proceeding, and one which I trust my countrymen will never imitate : better suffer than commit a crime. No system of poor law in the Highlands would be of any avail, but one that would confer SETTLEMENT ON EVERY PERSON BORN IN THE PARISH. The lairds will evade every other, and to save their pockets would be quite unscrupulous as to the means. They could easily resort again to their burning and hunting, but a settlement on the English plan would oblige them either to support the paupers they have made, or send them away at their own expense. This would be bare justice, and in my humble opinion nothing short of it will be of any avail. Comparatively few of the sufferers would now claim the benefit of such settlements ; the greater part of them have already emigrated, and located elsewhere, and would not fancy to come back as paupers whatever their right might be. But there are still too many groaning and pining away in helpless and hopeless destitution in Sutherland, and in the surrounding counties, and I have reason to know that the West Highlands are much in the same situation. There is much need, then, for official inquiry, to prevent this mass of human misery from accumulating, as well as to afford some hope of relief to present sufferers. I have now made an end for the present ; but should any contradiction appear, or any new event of importance to my countrymen occur, I shall claim your kind indulgence to resume the pen.

LETTER XIX.

SIR,—I am glad to find that some of my countrymen are coming forward with communications to your paper confirming my statements, and expressing that gratitude we ought all deeply to feel for the opportunity you have afforded of bringing our case before the public, by so humble an instrument as myself.

Nothing, I am convinced, but fear of further persecution prevents many more from writing such letters, and hence you need not wonder if some of those you receive are anonymous. They express a wish,

which, from various sources of information, I am inclined to think general, that my narrative should appear, as it now does, in the form of a pamphlet, and that my own particular case should form an appendage to it. I had no intention originally of bringing my particular case and family sufferings before the public, but called on, as I am, it appears a duty to the public, as well as myself, to give a brief account of it, lest withholding it might lead to suspicion as to my motives and character.

I served an apprenticeship in the mason trade to my father, and on coming to man's estate I married my present wife, the partner of my fortunes, most of which have been adverse, and she, the weaker vessel, has largely partaken of my misfortunes in a life of suffering and a ruined constitution. Our marriage took place in 1818. My wife was the daughter of Charles Gordon, a man well known and highly esteemed in the parish of Farr, and indeed throughout the county, for his religious and moral character.

For some years I followed the practice of going south during the summer months for the purpose of improving in my trade and obtaining better wages, and returning in the winter to enjoy the society of my family and friends ; and also, to my grief, to witness the scenes of devastation that were going on, to which, in the year 1820, my worthy father-in-law fell a victim. He breathed his last amid the scenes I have described, leaving six orphans in a state of entire destitution to be provided for ; for he had lost his all, in common with the other ejected inhabitants of the county.

This helpless family now fell to my care, and, in order to discharge my duty to them more effectually, I wished to give up my summer excursions, and settle and pursue my business at home.

I, therefore, returned from Edinburgh in the year 1822, and soon began to find employment, undertaking mason work by estimate, &c., and had I possessed a less independent mind and a more crouching disposition, I might perhaps have remained. But stung with the oppression and injustice prevailing around me, and seeing the contrast my country exhibited to the state of the Lowlands, I could not always hold my peace ; hence I soon became a marked man, and my words and actions were carefully watched for an opportunity to make an example of me. After I had baffled many attempts, knowing how they were set for me, my powerful enemies at last succeeded in effecting my ruin after seven years' labour in the pious work ! If any chose to say I

no wonder the Sheriff was so disposed, for when he arrived in Dornoch, the officials there represented the people as savages in a state of rebellion, so that he at first declined proceeding without military protection, and in consequence, a detachment of the 53rd Regiment in Edinburgh Castle received orders to march; and could a steam-boat have been procured at the time, which providence prevented, one hundred rank and file would have been landed on the shores of Sutherlandshire, and, under the direction of the people's enemies, would probably have stained their arms with innocent blood! But before a proper conveyance could be obtained, the order was countermanded, the Sheriff having found cause to alter his opinion: the people, though goaded into momentary error, became immediately amenable to his advice. The clergyman of the parish, also, made himself useful on this occasion, threatening the people with punishment here and hereafter, if they refused to bow their necks to the oppressor. According to him, all the evils inflicted upon them were ordained of God, and for their good, whereas any opposition on their part proceeded from the devil, and subjected them to just punishment here, and eternal torment hereafter. Christ says, "Of how much more value is a man than a sheep?" The Sutherland clergy never preach this doctrine, but practically the reverse. They literally prefer flocks of sheep to their human flocks, and lend their aid to every scheme for extirpating the latter to make room for the former. They find their account in leaguering with the oppressors, following up the threatenings of fire and sword by the Sheriff, with the terrors of the bottomless pit. They gained their end; the people prostrated themselves at the feet of their oppressors, "whose tender mercies are cruel." The *Courier* says, "the law has thus been vindicated." Is it not rather injustice and tyranny that have been vindicated, and the people made a prey? When they were ordered, in the manner described, to put themselves entirely in the wrong, and beg mercy, they were led to believe this would procure a full pardon and kinder treatment. But their submission was immediately followed up by the precognition, in which, as I said before, every means was used to criminate them, and exaggerate their offence, and it depends on the view the Lord Advocate may be induced to take, what is to be their fate. One thing is certain, Mr Anderson and his colleagues will be content with nothing short of their expatriation, either to Van Dieman's Land or the place the clergy consign them to, he cares not which. For the mercy which, as the *Courier*

says, has been tempered with justice, of allowing the people to possess their houses till May, while their crop has been lost by the bad weather, or destroyed by neglect during the disturbance, they are mainly indebted to Mr Napier. Anderson found himself shamed into a consent, which he would otherwise never have given. God knows, their miserable allotments, notwithstanding the toil and money they have expended on them, are not worth contending for, did the poor creatures know where to go when banished, but this, with their attachment to the soil, makes them feel it like death, to think of removing.

Anderson craftily turned this feeling to his advantage, for, though he obtained the decrees of ejectment in April, *he postponed their execution till the herring fishery was over*, in order to drain every shilling the poor people had earned, exciting the hope that if they paid up, they would be allowed to remain! The *Courier* hopes "something will be done for the poor *mountaineers*." O my late happy, high-minded countrymen, is it come to this? Represented as wild animals or savages, and hunted accordingly in your own native straths, so often defended by the sinews and blood of your vigorous ancestors!

Surely, your case must arouse the sympathy of generous Britons otherwise the very stones will cry out! Surely, there is still so much virtue remaining in the country that your wrongs will be made to ring in the ears of your oppressors, till they are obliged to hide their heads for very shame, and tardy justice at length overtake them in the shape of public indignation.

LETTER XXIV.

SIR,—Since my last communication was written, I have received letters from several correspondents in the north, and, as I intimated, now proceed to lay a portion of their contents before the public. Much of the information I have received must be suppressed from prudential considerations. Utter ruin would instantly overtake the individual, especially if an official, who should dare to throw a gleam of light on the black deeds going on, or give a tongue to the people's wrongs; besides, the language of some of the letters is too strong and justly indignant, to venture its publication, lest I might involve myself and

others in the toils of law, with the meshes of which I am but little acquainted; hence my correspondence must, generally speaking, be suppressed or emasculated. From the mass of evidence received, I am fully satisfied that the feeble resistance to the instruments of cruelty and oppression at Durness, and which was but a solitary and momentary outbreak of feeling, owes its importance as a riot entirely to the inventive and colouring talents of the correspondent of the *Inverness Courier*. One of my correspondents says, "this affray must be a preconcerted one on the part of the authorities;" another says "the Advocate-Depute asked me, why did the Duke of Sutherland's tenants join Mr Anderson's tenants; my reply was (which he allowed to be true) that when Anderson would remove his, he and his either hand neighbours would directly use their influence to get the duke's small tenants removed likewise, as they hate now to see a poor man at all, and if any of the tenants would offer to say so much, they would not be believed; this is the way the offspring of the once valiant M'Kays are now used, their condition is beyond what a pen can describe, but we are here afraid to correspond with such a character as you: if it was known, we would be ruined at once." Another says "there was not a pane of glass, a door, or railing, or any article of furniture broken within or without the inn at Durine, nor as much as a hair of the head of a Sheriff, Fiscal, or Constable, touched. If it was the Sheriff or Fiscal Fraser who published the first article, titled Durness Riot, in the *Inverness Courier*, indeed they should be ashamed of their unpardonable conduct;" another says "after all their ingenuity it was only one Judas they made in Durness, and if there was any one guilty of endeavouring to create disturbance, it was himself. Therefore, we may call him Donald Judas Mac an Deabhal fear cassid na brarean, and the authorities should consider what credence his evidence deserved in criminating the people he was trying to mislead." Another correspondent says "Fraser the Fiscal (a countryman himself, but an enemy as all renegades are) inserted a most glaring and highly coloured mis-statement in the *Inverness Courier*, and is ever on the alert to publish anything that might serve his employers and injure his poor countrymen;" another says "The Fiscal and Sheriff Lumsden were very severe on the people before the Advocate-Depute, but after he had gone through the business they found it prudent to alter their tone a good deal," he adds "I incurred the Fiscal's displeasure for not giving the evidence he wanted for condemning the people, and to punish

me, he would pay me on'ly 10s for attending the precognition five days and a night. But when the Duke comes I will lay the case before him and tell him how Fraser was so anxious to get the people into a scrape. He is a little worth gentleman." The conduct of the Fiscal requires no comment, and his, it is said, is the *Courier's* authority for its mis-statements. The plan of the persecutors is not only to ruin and expel the natives, by any and every means, but to deprive them of public sympathy, by slandering their character, belying their actions, and harassing them in every possible way, so as to make them willing to leave their native soil before a regular authorised enquiry takes place, which would (in case their victims remain on the spot,) not only expose their nefarious deeds, but also lead the way to a regular law for obliging them to provide in some way for the poor they have made.

These are now the two objects of their fears, first, lest they should be shown up, and secondly, that a real—and not, as hitherto, a sham—poor-law should be established, to make them contribute to relieve the misery they have so recklessly and wickedly created. With these preliminaries, I present you a large extract *verbatim*, from the letter of a gentleman, with whom, though I know his highly respectable connexions, I am personally unacquainted. Coming evidently from a person of education and character, it seems justly entitled to the consideration of all who are pleased to interest themselves in the woes and wrongs of Sutherland, and the outrages there offered to our common humanity:—

"You are aware that Anderson was a pretty considerable speculator in his time, (but not so great a speculator as a * * *) extensively engaged in the white and herring fishings, at the time he held out the greatest inducement to the poor natives who were expelled from other places in this parish, who came and built little huts on his farm and were entirely dependent on their fishings and earnings with him. In this humble sphere they were maintaining themselves and families, until God in just retribution turned the scales upon Anderson; his speculations proved unsuccessful, he lost his shipping and his cash was fast following; he broke down his herring establishments, and so the poor fishermen had to make the best of it they could with other curers. Anderson now began to turn his attention to sheep farming and removed a great many of his former tenants and fishermen: however, he knew little or nothing of the details of sheep farming, and was

entirely guided by the advices of his either hand neighbours, Alex. Clark of Erriboll and John Scobe of Koldale (both sheep farmers); and it is notorious that it was at the instigation of these creatures that he adopted such severe measures against those remaining of his tenants—but, be this at it may, this last summer when the whole male adult population were away at the fishing in Wick, he employed a fellow of the name of C——l to summon and frighten the poor women in the absence of their husbands. The proceeding was both cowardly and illegal; however, the women (acting as it can be proved upon C——l's own suggestion!) congregated, lighted a fire, laid hands on C——l and compelled him to consign his papers to the flames! Anderson immediately reported the case to the Dornoch law-mongers, who smelling a job, dispatched their officer;—off he set to Durness as big as a mountain, and together with one of Anderson's shepherds proceeded to finish what C——l had begun: however, he 'reckoned without his host,' for ere he got half through, the women fell in hot love with him also—and embraced him so cordially, that he left with them his waterproof Mackintosh, and 'cut' to the tune of Caberfeidh. No sooner had he arrived in Dornoch, than the gentlemen there concluded that they themselves had been insulted and ill-used by proxy in Durness. Shortly afterwards they dispatched the same officer and a messenger-at-arms, with instructions to raise a trusty party by the way to aid them. They came by Tongue, went down to Farr on the Saturday evening, raised Donald M'Kay, pensioner, and other two old veterans, whom they sent off before them on the Sabbath *incog.*; however, they only advanced to the ferry at Hope when they were told that the Durness people were fully prepared to give them a warm reception, so they went no further, but returned to Dornoch, and told there a doleful Don Quixote tale. Immediately thereafter, a 'counsel of war' was held, and the sheriff-substitute, together with the fiscal and a band of fourteen special constables marched off to Durness. Before they arrived, the people heard of their approach, and consulted among themselves what had best be done (the men were by this time all returned home). They allowed the whole party to pass through the parish until they reached the inn;—this was on a Saturday evening about eight or nine o'clock;—the men of the parish to the amount of four dozen called at the inn, and wanted to have a conference with the sheriff; this was refused them. They then respectfully requested an

assurance from the sheriff that they would not be interfered with during the Sabbath; this was likewise refused. Then the people got a little exasperated, and, determined in the first place on depriving the sheriff of his sting, they took his constables one by one, and turned them out of the house *minus* their batons. There was not the least injury done, or violence shewn to the persons of any of the party. The natives now made their way to the sheriff's room, and began to dictate (!) to him; however, as they could not get him to accede to their terms, they ordered him to march off; which, after some persuasion he did; they laid no hands on him or the fiscal. And, to show their civility, they actually harnessed the horses for them, and escorted them beyond the precincts of the parish!!! The affair now assumed rather an alarming aspect. The glaring and highly coloured statement referred to, appeared in the *Inverness Courier*, and soon found its way into all the provincial and metropolitan prints; the parties referred to were threatened with a military force. The Duke of Sutherland was stormed on all hands with letters and petitions. The matter came to the ears of the Lord Advocate. Mr Napier, the Depute-Advocate was sent from Auld Reekie, and the whole affair investigated before him and the Sheriff, and Clerk and Fiscal of the County. How this may ultimately terminate I cannot yet say, but one thing is certain, the investigators have discovered some informality in the proceedings on the part of the petty lawyers, which has for the present suspended all further procedure! I am glad to understand that the Duke of Sutherland expresses great sympathy with the poor people. Indeed I am inclined to give his Grace credit for good intentions, if he but knew how his people are harassed, but this is religiously concealed from him.

I live at some distance from Tongue, but I made myself sure of the certainty of the following extraordinary case which could have occurred nowhere but in Sutherland.

The present factor in Tongue is from Edinburgh.—This harvest a brother of his who is a clerk, or something in that city, came down to pay him a visit; they went out a-shooting one day in September, but could kill no birds. They, however, determined to have some sport before returning home; so, falling in with a flock of goats belonging to a man of the name of Manson, and within a few hundred yards of the man's own house they set to, and after firing a number of ineffectual shots, succeeded at length, in taking down two of the

goats, which they left on the ground! Satisfied and delighted with this manly sport they returned to Tongue. And next day when called upon by the poor man who owned the goats, and told they were all he had to pay his rent with, this exemplary factor said to him, 'he did not care should he never pay his rent,'—'he was only sorry he had not proper ammunition at the time,'—as 'he would not have left one of them alive!!! Think you, would the Duke tolerate such conduct as this, or what would he say did the fact come to his ears? As Burns says—

"This is a sketch of H——h's way,
Thus does he slaughter, kill, and slay,
And 's weel paid for 't."

The poor man durst not whisper a complaint for this act of brutal despotism, but I respectfully ask, will the Duke of Sutherland tolerate such conduct? I ask will such conduct be tolerated by the legislature? Will Fiscal Fraser and the Dornoch law-mongers smell this job?"

LETTER XXV.

SIR,—Having done my best to bring the wrongs of the Sutherlanders in general, and, latterly, those of Mr Anderson's tenantry in particular, under the public eye in your valuable columns, I beg leave to close my correspondence for the present, with a few additional facts and observations. Before doing so, however, I must again repeat my sense—in which I am confident my countrymen will participate—of your great kindness in allowing me such a vehicle as your excellent paper through which to vent our complaints and proclaim our wrongs. I also gratefully acknowledge the disinterested kindness of another individual, whose name it is not now necessary to mention, who has assisted me in revising and preparing my letters for the press. I hope such friends will have their reward.

It is unnecessary to spin out the story of the Durness Riot (as it is called) any longer. It evidently turns out what I believed it to be from the beginning—a humbug scheme for further oppressing and despoiling the people; carrying out, by the most wicked and reckless means, the long prevailing system of expatriation, and, at the same time, by

gross misrepresentations, depriving them of that public sympathy to which their protracted sufferings and present misery give them such strong claims. In my latest correspondence from that quarter the following facts are contained, which further justify the previous remarks, viz. :—

A gentleman who makes a conspicuous figure in the proceedings against the people, is *law-agent* of Mr Anderson, the lessee, from whose property the poor *crofters* were to be ejected; and C——l, the first officer sent to Durness, was employed by them. This C——l was an unqualified officer, but used as a convenient tool by his employers, and it was actually, as I am assured, this man who advised or suggested to the poor women and boys, in absence of the male adults, to kindle the fire, and lay hold on him, and compel him to consign his papers to the flames!—acting doubtless under the directions of his employers.

The next emissary sent was a qualified officer; qualified by having served an apprenticeship as a thief-catcher and w—— chaser in the police establishment of Edinburgh, who, when he came in contact with the virtuous Durness women, behaved as he was wont to do among those of Anchor Close and Halkerston's Wynd; and I am sorry to say some of the former were inhumanly and shamefully dealt with by him.—See *Inverness Courier* of 17th November. And here I am happy to be able in a great degree to exonerate that journal from the charge brought against it in former letters. The Editor has at last put the saddle on the right horse—namely, his first informers, the advisers and actors in the cruel and vindictive proceedings against the poor victims of oppression.

It is lamentable to think that the Sheriff-substitute of Sutherland should arrive in Durness, with a formidable party and a train of carts, to carry off to Dornoch Jail the prisoners he intended to make, *on the Sabbath-day!* If this was not his intention, what was the cause of the resistance and defeat he and his party met with? Just this (according to the *Courier* and my own correspondents), that he would not consent to give his word that he would not execute his warrant on the Sabbath-day, although they were willing to give him every assurance of peaceably surrendering on the Monday following. Provoked by his refusal, the men of Durness, noted for piety as well as forbearance, chose rather to break the laws of man on the Saturday, than see the laws of God violated in such a manner on the Sabbath. He and his party, who had bagpipes playing before them on leaving Dornoch,

told inquirers, that "they were going to a wedding in Durness." It was rather a divorce to tear the people away from their dearly-loved, though barren, hills. Under all the circumstances, many, I doubt not, will think with me that these willing emissaries of mischief got better treatment than they deserved. It is high time the law-breaking and law-wresting petifoggers of Sutherlandshire were looked after. This brings again to my mind the goat-shooting scene, described in my last, which was the more aggravated and diabolical from having been perpetrated during the late troubles, and while a military force was hourly expected to cut down such as should dare to move a finger against those in authority; knowing that, under these circumstances, no complaints of the people would be hearkened to. But this was not the only atrocity of the kind that took place in the country at this time. I have seen a letter from a respectable widow woman residing in Blairmore, parish of Rogart, to her son in Edinburgh, which, after detailing the harassment and misery to which the country is subject, says—"I had only seven sheep, and one of Mr Sellar's shepherd *drowned* five of them in Lochsalchie, along with other five belonging to Donald M'Kenzie; and many more, the property of other neighbours, shared the same fate. We could not get so much as the skins of them." But they durst not say one word about it, or if they did, no one would hearken to their complaints. God alone knows how they are used in that unfortunate country, and he will avenge it in his own time.

A correspondent of mine says—"At an early period of your narrative, you stated that the natives were refused employment at public works, even at reduced wages; but, if you believe me, sir, in the last and present year, masons, carpenters, &c., were brought here from Aberdeenshire, and employed at those works, while equally good, if not better, native tradesmen were refused and obliged to go idle. This, however, was not admitted as an excuse when house-rent, poll-tax, or road-money was demanded, but the most summary and oppressive means were used for recovery. They have been paying these strangers four or five shillings a-day, when equally good workmen among the natives would be glad of eighteen-pence!"

In this way, the money drained from the natives in the most rigorous manner, is paid away to strangers before their eyes, while they themselves are refused permission to earn a share of it! My correspondent adds—"We know the late Duchess, some years before her

demise, gave orders (and we cannot think the present Duke of Sutherland has annulled these orders) that no stranger should be employed, while natives could be found to execute the work. But it seems the officials, and their under-strappers, can do what they please, without being called to account, and this is but one instance among the many in which their tyranny and injustice is manifested." Every means, direct and indirect, are used to discourage the aborigines, to make them willing to fly the country, or be content to starve in it.

May I not ask, will the Duke of Sutherland never look into the state of his country? Will he continue to suffer such treatment of the people to whom he owes his greatness; proceedings so hazardous to his own real interest and safety? Is it not high time that illustrious family should institute a searching inquiry into the past and present conduct of those who have wielded their power only to abuse it?

Their extensive domains are now, generally speaking, in the hands of a few selfish, ambitious strangers, who would laugh at any calamity that might befall them, as they do at the miseries of those faithful subjects whom they have supplanted. Many of these new tenants have risen from running about with hobnails in their shoes, and a colly-dog behind them, their whole wardrobe being on their back, and all their other appointments and equipage bearing the same proportion—to be Esquires, Justices of the Peace, and gentlemen riding in carriages, or on blood-horses, and living in splendid mansions, all at the expense of his Grace's family, and of those whom they have despoiled of their inheritance. The time may come—I see it approaching already, when these gentlemen will say to his Grace "if you do not let your land to us on our own terms, you may take it and make the best of it; who can compete with us?" This will be the case, especially when the natives are driven away, and the competition for land, caused by the food taxes, comes to an end. Let his Grace consider these things, and no longer be entirely guided by the counsels of his Ahithophel, nor adopt the system of Rehoboam towards the race of the devoted vassals of his ancestors, a portion of whose blood runs in his veins.

"Woe is me! the possessors of my people slay them, and hold themselves not guilty; and they that sell them say, "blessed be the Lord, for I am rich; and their own shepherds pity them not." "Let me mourn and howl" for the pride of Sutherland is spoiled!

In a former letter I put the question to the Sutherland clergy, "of how much more value is a man than a sheep?" No reply has been made.

I ask again, "you that have a thousand scores of sheep feeding on the straths that formerly reared tens of thousands of as brave and virtuous men as Britain could boast of, ready to shed their blood for their country or their chief; were these not of more value than your animals, your shepherds, or yourselves? You that spend your ill-gotten gains in riotous living, in hunting, gaming, and debauchery, of how much more value were the men you have dispersed, ruined, and tortured out of existence, than you and your base companions? But I now cease to unpack my heart with words, and take leave of the subject for the present; assuring my kind correspondents, that their names will never be divulged by me, and pledging myself to continue exposing oppression so long as it exists in my native country.

In conclusion, I implore the Government to make inquiry into the condition of this part of the empire, and not look lightly over the rooting of a brave and loyal people, and the razing to the ground of that important portion of the national bulwarks, to gratify the cupidity of a few, to whose character neither bravery nor good feeling can be attributed.

Yours, &c.,

DONALD M'LEOD.

A P P E N D I X.

During the publication of the foregoing series of letters in the *Chronicle*, I have received a very great number of letters, all tending to establish and illustrate, and in no instance to contradict, the facts adduced. Much of this correspondence is valuable from being well written, and containing the graphic descriptions of eye-witnesses. I regret, therefore, that the limits to which I had resolved and arranged to confine the size of this pamphlet, will admit of my giving at present but a very small selection of this large and daily increasing mass of corroborative evidence. This is also partly caused by the space unavoidably occupied in the recent case of the so-called Durness riots, as well as by my personal narrative, on neither of which I had originally calculated.

Should the present publication be favourably received, I may, however, soon follow it up with some supplemental matter, especially if the course of proceedings in that devoted county should continue. In this case the correspondence would be an interesting and appropriate adjunct. I have in the previous pages repeatedly pledged myself to keep watch and ward, and bring the wrongs of Sutherland before the public so long as I can hold a pen, or obtain a medium for the publication of them, and, with God's help, I will not shrink from the engagement.

I am quite aware that great allowances must be made, by readers of education and literary taste, should these pages be honoured with a perusal by any such. I am not capable of writing to please critics; I had a higher aim, and my success in bringing out the case of my countrymen must now stand the ordeal of public opinion. For my own part, zeal and faithfulness are all I lay claim to, and if my conscience tells me true, I deserve to have these conceded to me, by both friends and enemies.

There are three remarkable cases in the correspondence which I cannot think to postpone; the first is that of Angus Campbell, who possessed a small lot of land in the parish of Rogart, in the immediate neighbourhood of the parish minister, the Rev. Mr M'Kenzie. This rev. divine, it seems, had, like King Ahab, coveted this poor man's small possession, in addition to his own extensive glebe, and obtained a grant of it from the factor. Angus Campbell, besides his own numerous family, was the only support of his elder brother, who had laboured for many years under a painful and lingering disease, and had spent his all upon physicians.

Angus having got notice of the rev. gentleman's designs, had a memorial drawn up and presented to her Grace the late Duchess, who, in answer, gave orders to the factor to the effect that, if Angus Campbell was to be removed for the convenience of Mr M'Kenzie, he should be provided with another lot of land equally good as the one he possessed. But, like all the other good promised by her Grace, this was disregarded as soon as she turned her back; the process of removal was carried on, and to punish Angus for having applied to her, he was dealt with in the following manner, as stated in a memorial to his Grace the present Duke, dated 30th March 1840.

In his absence, a messenger-at-arms with a party, came from Dornoch to his house, and ejected his wife and family; and having flung out their effects, locked the doors of the dwelling house, offices, &c, and carried the keys to the safe keeping of the rev. Mr M'Kenzie, for his own behoof. These proceedings were a sufficient warning to all neighbours not to afford shelter or relief to the victims; hence the poor woman had to wander about, sheltering her family as well as she could in severe weather, till her husband's arrival. When Angus came home, he had recourse to an expedient which annoyed his reverence very much; he erected a booth on his own ground in the church-yard, and on the tomb of his father, and in this solitary abode he kindled a fire, endeavouring to shelter and comfort his distressed family, and showed a determination to re-