On pauperism, its cure : and the land question / by J. Mackenzie.

With the authors Compts

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ON PAUPERISM—ITS CURE;

AND THE

LAND QUESTION.

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ON PAUPERISM—ITS CURE;

AND THE LAND QUESTION.

It would be difficult to name any subject of greater public interest, as regards the welfare and happiness of society, than the causes and the removal of needless poverty.

The word "Poor-rates" has only to be mentioned, and the most dormant listener instantly proceeds to denounce our Scottish Poor Law as most iniquitous. And every one agrees that "something must be done," or Pauperism will soon sink the good ship Britannia. As yet, the discontented merely talk of the union of contiguous parishes, and similar small attempts to patch up the leak in the ship.

It seems, however, of greater importance to inquire why, how, and where our paupers are manufactured in such masses; and consider how we may mend matters at the fountain head, rather than try to regulate the flood. To discover why, when in Britain the upper classes are wealthy and numerous out of all proportion to the population as compared with other nations, we surpass all other countries in our astounding hosts of starving paupers; and how it happens that in other countries pauperism in rural districts is all but unknown. It is quite clear there must be some serious defect in *our* system of political economy—the cause of such needless shame as well as sorrow.

There are two obvious fountains from whence our floods of paupers flow:

1st, From our rural population being steadily and continually driven into towns and villages, instead of being encouraged to remain in the country, either as labourers in service there, or as improving tenants of the millions of acres of our waste land, which, to a great extent, are quite as well worth improving as much of the neighbouring large farms, now in high cultivation.

2nd, From our Government, from ignorance, or from carelessness as to the effects of fermented liquors on those who use them, drawing a great part of our national revenue from licensing, and therefore encouraging the intemperance and worse than merely wasted "fools' pence" of the uncared-for masses, who are thus everywhere supplied with the greatest possible facilities for intemperance.

As regards these, the two great fountains of pauperism, if we examine the Inverness poor-roll as an example of the truth of the first cause, we find that of our present poor-roll of 668 paupers with their 250 followers, only 242 of these have a just and *equitable* claim on the town for their support, from having been born and lived here chiefly, till age and infirmity prompted their asking for our charity.

Most of the other 426 have been presented to us by our country friends, who are satisfied that wisdom lies chiefly in reducing our rural population to the smallest possible number consistent with carrying on farming at all, expelling all others to a comparatively miserable life in towns and villages, where, their natural calling—agriculture—being impossible, they glut all other minor branches of industrial life so completely, that we have a constant, suicidal, almost civil-war struggle, always going on for daily bread; the poor people, in their ignorance, trying to limit the number of labourers, and the hours of labour; and to regulate the wages in nearly every trade by despotic trades union laws, believing that there is a magic, inexhaustible purse in the pockets of their employers, that *must* fall into the hands of the working classes, if they can only compel obedience to their regulations. And so we hear of constant strikes, and violence, and cruel acts on the part of the unionists, extending even to cold blooded murders, in the

insane, unchristian endeavour to compel all to obey their laws. And, when they succeed in destroying a branch of trade anywhere, their only other resource is the emigration agent, who ships them off to governments wise enough to know,

> "Ill fares the land, to coming grief a prey,
> Where wealth accumulates, and men decay."

Again, nothing is more common than a very high value being placed on our *home* trade in manufactures, as compared with the *foreign* demand. Yet the public is not generally aware that in 1866-67-68, while our manufacturers supplied the foreigner with £42,695,000 worth of goods more than he bought in 1859-60-61, the *home trade*, in spite of an increased population, has in the latter three years fallen off by £3,474,000 !

These figures indicate merely useful articles of manufacture, as cotton goods and the like, required for the comfort and welfare of civilised, self-respecting people. And those who merely take a surface view of matters, believe that this greatly diminished home trade is caused by mere poverty, until, turning over another page of the Parliamentary returns, we find that the very people who are unable to buy the necessaries of life, have found no difficulty whatever in purchasing in 1866-67-68 no less than £51,822,209 more of exciseable liquors than they bought in 1859-60-61.

In these figures, you have matter for serious reflection, as to the folly, or worse, of a Government that licenses, and thus encourages, such a *waste* of our national resources, more especially when alcohol is without doubt the chief cause of our crime, and shame, and sorrow.

We should also remember that to produce this destroyer of our national peace and happiness, this stopper of our useful manufactures, more sound, wholesome, God-given grain is all but utterly destroyed yearly in Britain, than the whole corn that grows yearly in Scotland ! So that, were a wise Governmet to stop brewing and distilling in Britain, every corn-yard in Scotland might be burnt to ashes yearly, without in the slightest degree affecting the amount of bread now used by

our population, even allowing for the then greatly increased health and appetites of the rescued tipplers and drunkards in the land!

Another point deserving to be remembered by those who profess to love their weak and erring fellow-creatures, is the fact, that, calling our population 30,000,000 souls, and all, young and old, to drink exciseable liquors and use tobacco, each person consumes yearly about £4 worth of these poisons! Hence the true cause of our "hard times," and such misery among the poorer classes, who are the chief victims of such wastery; and such excessive poor-rates, when our ignorant, uncared-for, mad-like people actually spend about £120,000,000 yearly in burning tobacco and destroying grain; so that we have to send about £20,000,000 more, yearly, to competing grain-growers abroad, instead of giving it to our own labourers. And thus we depend on the foreigner to replace what we have so madly destroyed: As Mr Potter well says:

"Making hell so merry with our harvest home."

I would also beg the working classes, who complain of the scarcity of work, to consider if it be wise to encourage trades that carry on a maximum of sales at a minimum of labour? The *Scotsman* newspaper (of January 2, 1868), states that one distillery alone in Edinburgh, the Caledonian, destroys 800,000 bushels of grain yearly—selling the whisky produced from this for £1,500,000, while it employs only 150 men!

Now, in order to manufacture a similar amount in cotton, or machinery, more than 10,000 persons, instead of 150, would find daily employment!

So that the liquor trade not only robs the working man who drinks of its poisoned cup, of his senses, his health, and his money—openly—but is one of the greatest enemies to his steady, constant employment.

If we spend £1 in	Shoes,	the *workman* gets	8s.
,, ,,	Blankets	,,	8s.
,, ,,	Tin utensils	,,	9s.

If we spend £1 in Broad cloth, etc., the *workman* gets 11s.
" " Cutlery, " 13s.
" " Books " 16s.
But in strong drink, only 2s.

See our "National Drink Bill for 1869." Rev. C. Garret. London: Elliot Stock.

Brewing and distilling are in truth mere labour-destroying and pauper-making occupations; and when our Parliamentary returns show that, in 1868, 52,659,000 bushels of grain were destroyed by these two trades in Britain, we can easily connect this crime with its fruits, in our crowded jails, our depressed home trade, and the ever-increasing masses of our paupers, in this unhappy land.

Some of you may think I ought not to use the term "destroyed," as you believe that porter, ale, and beer, contain much nourishment. I may here observe that porter, so often prescribed as a more nourishing liquor than ale, is neither more nor less than ale coloured by burnt barley, and when a brewing of ale "goes wrong," as it is called, it is not emptied into the sewer as innocent tipplers suppose, but is immediately cooked into first class, "very nourishing" porter.

No one believes that beers contain *as much* food as the grain from which they are brewed; but still you are advised to drink of them as strengthening, nourishing, wholesome food.

Satisfied that such prescriptions arose from mere ignorance as to the composition of malt liquors, I asked Sir Lyon Playfair, M.P., to inform me distinctly on this subject, and knowing that his opinion will be held as conclusive, I will read to you what he says:

"So far as regards its nutritious, flesh forming-power, one hundred parts of ordinary beer or porter contain 9.5 parts of solid matter, of which only 0.06 consist of flesh-formers; or 10,000 parts of beer contain six parts of flesh formers."

That is, 1666⅔ bottles of beer contain *only one* bottle of flesh and blood-forming matters! One has therefore to swallow

rather serious doses of this *nutritious beverage*, and at a serious expense, before much profit is obtained from it.

He adds, "beer is not taken as a beverage for its nutritious ingredients, but wholly for its alcoholic stimulant," without which, *I* may add, not one drop of it would ever be sold or drunk.

We generally hear of "agriculture being in a healthy progressive condition, and farmers doing well, though rents are high, while labour is scarce, and wages consequently unreasonable."

For many years past, butcher meat has been steadily rising in price, the demand being greater than the farmers' power of production.

On the other hand, corn is kept moderate in price, owing to steam, free trade, and facilities for carriage, opening freely our corn markets; while it is far more difficult to import live stock or fresh meat.

And we consequently find, that a quiet, steady, laying down of our arable land in permanent pasture, has been going on for years everywhere, and to a very great extent.

In the agricultural returns of Great Britain for 1868, presented to Parliament, I find of the 45,652,000 acres of land then arable, not less than 22,164,000 acres, or almost one-half, were laid down in permanent pasture.

And the reason for this is obvious. From scarcity of labour near the arable farms, and consequent excessively high wages, the farmer finds that growing grain, which employs many hands, will not pay so well as growing beef and mutton, which requires very few hands.

Hence we find him laying down field after field in permanent pasture, and thus able to discharge one or more ploughmen, sell some horses, and supply their place by a shepherd or cattle lad, while the "squad" of field workers required for a regular rotation of cropping, many of whom in happier times lived on or near to the farm, ready for a day's work, and, when unemployed, worked in their gardens or crofts, are now mostly resident in towns, or have emigrated.

Indeed, we now seldom find this wise, kindly arrangement of

farmers and labourers, but too often, in its place, a room, barrack, or bothy prepared for labourers hired for a season only; and who, often crowded together without kindly family supervision, and too frequently without inquiry as to moral character, lose that self-respect which alone saves us all from constant shame and sorrow.

Now, our present Scottish Poor Law must bear much of the blame for this downward state of matters. I know an estate near this, where previous to 1845 the proprietor gave £5 yearly to the kirk-session, to aid the church-door collection for the poor. I believe this was considered a liberal subscription, and that no more was asked or given; and I know that the poor in that parish were contented and thankful with the slender rates that they got from these two sources. In 1869, the proprietor on the same estate, and with much the same number of poor people resident upon it, paid £407, 14s. as his share of the poor-rates for that year, his tenants paying an equal sum. And the singular part of the story remains to be told, viz., that whereas a more happy, contented set of paupers could hardly be found before 1845, a more *dis*contented set than they are in 1869 or 1870 can hardly be found, notwithstanding a constant system of begging for additional help from the charitable. In truth, the allowance voted to each pauper, probably in Scotland, as "needful sustentation," is not one-half as much as it should be, and without help from the charitable, there would be an immediate and great demand for pauper coffins.

Proprietors, therefore, hard pressed by this enormous poor-rate, and not *yet* compelled by the pressure to inquire carefully into the matter, imagine that the proper mode of escape from this burden, lies in evicting from the parish every moveable cotter and crofter, and laying out the land into large farms, whose tenants, employing only occasional labourers, who thus do not acquire a legal settlement, will in due time bury the last pauper in the parish, and thus extinguish *their* poor-rates, whatever may happen to the unfortunate town parishes, into which most of their cotters had been driven.

Now I venture to object to this plan of burdening town parishes with most of the pauperism in the kingdom. Previous to 1845, the poor supported the poor, while the rich looked on and approved. It seems incredible, when in 1868, £863,202 was raised by assessment for the support of our 158,372 paupers, that, formerly, the poorer classes bore nearly all this heavy burden; ay, and *cheerfully*.

Our paupers, then, were everywhere pitied and kindly thought of by all in contact with them, and really, unless in large towns, were better lodged, clothed, and fed, and led far happier lives than they do now. Before 1845 I have seen in cotters' houses, sleeping berths reserved for wandering paupers, who were always made welcome to a night's lodging; getting their supper and breakfast with the family, to whom they were often quite unknown.

A miller told me, he used then to have a barrel kept always supplied with meal for pauper visitors, to each of whom his wife gave a plateful till the barrel was empty, when he filled it again. Ere our present Poor Law had been a year in operation, the paupers' bed and the meal barrel were shut up by the law-chilled owners, and the rich were then allowed to put out their hand to bear the burden, that till then the poorer classes all but entirely bore. And yet, as if to show how God cares for those, who, from a loving heart, "lend to the poor," persons like those I have mentioned, have assured me, they never then observed the weight of their burden, though it was probably twenty times the amount now paid by them yearly as poor-rates. Nor have they felt that they are in any way better off now, though relieved of their former heavy burden.

I believe the time is near at hand when ratepayers in towns will tire of supporting the paupers who *equitably* belong to rural parishes, and will desire their members of Parliament to carry out a *national* poor assessment, which will soon alter the present arrangements. I am quite aware of the objection to imposing poor assessments, except parochially, viz., that when levied on unions of parishes, or districts, or nationally, they will be spent recklessly, for want of the supposed intimate

acquaintance with each pauper's necessities, etc., and which knowledge is found in parish arrangements. I have not a doubt, however, that any such supposed advantage, will be entirely forgotten in the great diminution of the rates that most assuredly will follow a more rational and natural distribution of the working-classes in our rural districts.

A *national* assessment would at once awaken people to the worse than folly of reducing the rural population to zero, so that farmers, from scarcity of hands and consequent high wages cease to crop much of their arable land, and give up entirely the reclamation of what is waste, while few landlords have means for this outlay; and the former cheap improvers, the cotters, are now beyond reach in the back woods of America, or residing in the wretched lanes and closes in towns.

We should still have, under a national assessment, poor to support as now, but an old man or woman living among friends in a country cottage, with a garden or small croft, and occasional light farm employment, such as most of our utterly idle town paupers are quite able to undertake, will be a much more useful and therefore happier person than he or she could possibly be, when vegetating in a mere attic in town. Indeed, thousands who now lean entirely on poor-rates and begging for their support, would, in the country, under kindly Christian supervision, soon rise above their present miserable condition, and so far help towards their own support, that they would nearly cease to be a burden on their industrious neighbours."

Why are the hosts of paupers found everywhere in Britain, all but unknown in new, improving countries, such as the backwoods and prairies of America, Canada, etc.

The poorer classes there, are not killed off when they reach the age that our rulers here consider entitles them to be an entire burden on their younger, industrious neighbours. Their neighbours abroad, are not millionaires rolling in wealth, but almost without exception, people who have to labour hard late and early, all the year round, for their daily bread.

There, however, land is not the overvalued, hoarded-up article it is in this country, and those who are unable to cultivate as much of it as they did when young, are welcome to as much of it as they can manage; between the produce from which and light work among friends, they need no heart-case-hardening Poor Law to keep them from want.

And so would it be in this country, although mismanagement for the time has trained up a mass of miserable paupers, who will probably remain the mere idle useless burden that they are now.

I look, however, more to *future* benefit to the country than to immediate relief, although confident that a national poor assessment would soon send numbers of our town paupers back to the country, helping in light work towards their own support. Such a new arrangement put before our paupers without proper explanations and information, would probably not attract them from their dens in town; but with such information and an offer of *only in-door relief* to those *able* to remove to the country, numbers would soon be attracted to their old and natural homes; while a *wise* allocation of the labouring classes all over the country, and kind supervision, with well-arranged plans for distributing their labour, would soon dry up one of the great fountains that now threaten us with national pauperism, as a just punishment for supposing that we are—*not* (?)—our brother's keeper.

We may, however, quite safely allow our rural ratepaying friends to arrange whether to invite healthy aged paupers, able to do some light farm work, to return to the country, or leave them as an expensive, useless burden in towns, confident that as soon as we have a *national* poor-rate, they will gladly recall hosts of those whom they now so carefully place on the backs of their ratepaying friends in town.

When such an alteration in our Poor Law takes place, we shall soon find landlords, either simply, parochially, or in larger associations, meeting to consider the proper number of cotter families needed for the working of their large farms;—building suitable cottages near to the expected source of

work, for families and for single persons, free from their present alarm as to future paupers, and remembering we are told that "we shall always have the poor with us," although when all are Christians in heart, caring for the poor, instead of being deemed as now a hateful burden, will be considered an agreeable privilege, rather than a duty.

Were landlords to consider this subject seriously, they would find that the expected gain in reduced parochial rates, by clearing away their cotters into towns, is far more than lost by their farmers calculating the great rise in the price of labour this has involved, and when they make an offer for a farm, deducting this rise from the proposed rent.

Now, as to labourer's wages, much is said as to the neces sity for their having risen of late years so greatly, on account of "everything being now so dear." But a little inquiry will satisfy any one that this is not the true reason, which must be divided between the scarcity of labour and consequent rise in its value, and high wages encouraging a desire to possess things which till of late the labouring classes looked upon as mere luxuries—as they really are; seeing that almost entirely without their use, our old labourers, and indeed many of their sons and daughters, lived and died in perfect health of mind and body, without ever supposing, till of late years, that these articles were necessary for life and health. I allude to butcher-meat, butter, poultry, and eggs,—these being almost the only articles that can be named by those who insist on doubled wages on account of "everything being so dear," as having for many years past risen in price. Almost every other article, really necessary for comfort, health, and longevity, has fallen in price immensely. Now, till of late, the labouring classes in the North, used very little butcher-meat, although it could, a few years ago, be bought for about a third of its present price. And unless they kept a cow and poultry, butter, fowls, eggs, and even milk, too often, rarely "darkened their doors," and were most justly, with the exception of milk, deemed *needless luxuries*, since without them, our labourers, on one-half their present wages, could compete with the whole world for the

most robust health and vigour of mind and body, and in every point really essential to true happiness and contentment with their lot in life. Indeed, to a degree that, with their present great increase of wages, much of which are now spent on mere luxuries, or at least on what are not absolutely necessaries of life, is rarely now to be found.

Then, till 1845, they supported their parents and poor relatives, while now, most of this burden is borne by their employers. Last year, their usual chief food, potatoes, could be bought at about two pounds for a farthing, and though now about a farthing the pound, the world can hardly produce a cheaper, more wholesome food, grown by labour. Whisky, it is true, has greatly advanced in price since 1845, but few will blame the rise in this deadly drug, as the cause of higher wages being universal, and, in short, the true reason for the great advance, is the scarcity of labour in the conntry, trades union despotism in towns, and a determination on the part of the working classes to purchase needless luxuries in food, and dress, and travelling expenses, and amusements, although this be accompanied by unsteady, irregular employment, ending too often in preventing works being undertaken, and killing the goose that was willing to lay the golden eggs of steady daily employment throughout the year.

Let us take an example of the folly of striving to compel employers to pay excessive, nay, absurd, wages, by trades union laws—the Thames shipbuilding trade, lately so busy and profitable a trade, and now extinct. The rate of wages (by union laws) was 7s. 6d. a-day. The employers could only build at a loss, at such wages ; but rather than see the fearful misery a complete stoppage of work would involve, they offered to give, I think, 6s. a-day for wages, though at this rate not a farthing of profit would remain for the employer. But the insane moving powers in the union ordered this ample offer to be rejected ; and the workhouse and the churchyard soon told the consequences of such madness, while the ruined survivors are now craving aid from Government that they may emigrate to America, where they will find the same madness has extin-

guished the shipbuilding trade there also; although, at the good wages of 4s. 6d. a-day, it is thriving beyond all former examples, in the Clyde.

Take another case: A, finding he has £20 that he can spare to effect a desired improvement on his house, tries to get it done for that sum, which he knows is ample, by the carpenter who built his house a few years ago; but who surprises him by showing, how, on account of wages being by union laws ordered to be doubled, the improvement will now cost £40; so A merely shrugs his shoulders, does without the desired improvement, and with his £20 takes a holiday trip with his family somewhere from home, leaving his union friends to be astonished at the slackness of trade, and to try and mend matters as *they* suppose, by a strike for higher wages, which some unfortunate contractor, compelled to finish his work by a set time, is obliged to allow them, although he is thereby not unfrequently ruined.

Lately, meeting a friend near this, who was building a new house, where large iron beams were being used, and asking where they came from, I was more than surprised to learn that they came from Belgium! On inquiry, it turned out that the contractor had two reasons for this seeming folly, viz., 1st, Their being laid down to his hand far cheaper than he could get them made in Britain; and 2d, Had he agreed with a British iron-founder to provide them, it was a mere toss up, that, ere they were cast, a strike among the founders would have stopped the work, and put him to no end of expense and inconvenience, so he was obliged to give the contract to the wiser, sober, non-union Belgian iron-founders, grieving that from ignorance, and selfishness, and forgetfulness of the golden rule, he could not give the job to his own countrymen.

Were the working classes permanently bettered by the great rise in their wages, better educated, improved in Christian behaviour, wiser for time and for eternity than their forefathers, every one would rejoice at the improvement in these circumstances. But having been an employer of labour on a large scale, and mixing much with the working classes, so as to

know their circumstances for half a century, I am compelled to believe that our labourers are in no way *really* bettered by the great rise in their wages, and to agree with the writer who says, "without better education, and more of the spirit of Christian faith and love than as yet is perceptible, high wages, instead of being a blessing to the receivers, are a calamity."

It is then surely time to inquire whether a return to some wiser like arrangements for our labouring population, might not be tried, both as regards paupers and the able-bodied.

As to the latter, remembering that a vast extent of our present fine large arable farms near here, was not long ago waste moorland, over which I used to search for game, and, beyond this, not worth a rent of 6d. per acre;—that much of that waste land has been reclaimed by poor cotters, who were able and willing to pay any reasonable rent, and conform to any rules with proper instruction and oversight; who asked for no compensation for their improvements, and would have retained their holdings gladly, if permitted to do so; and who left them for a comparatively wretched life in towns, or in a hated foreign land;—and when I see around me millions of acres of waste land, on an average quite as improvable as what is now cultivated, and as good soil as much of the forest and prairie abroad if similar labour were bestowed on it—surely our landlords are anything but wise, in driving away, and to a certain extent making enemies of their people, whose hearts are aching to be allowed to remain where they were born and bred, that they might cultivate these tracts of waste land, which, uncultivated, are a disgrace to a nation busily evicting those who are so sadly required at home.

Had we no improvable waste land in Britain, no low grounds under sheep or game, our arable lands fully supplied with cheap labour, and incapable of higher cultivation and heavier crops, then I would thank God that there was room elsewhere, for what, *only then*, may be rightly termed, a *surplus population*.

But when I see everywhere immense tracts of waste land, as capable of supporting its improvers in health and comfort, as similar land abroad; when I find much of our arable land

returning only about half the amount of food that more labour and consequent higher cultivation would extract from it, while our working classes are rapidly becoming paupers, living on the industry of their neighbours, who with difficulty obtain precarious employment—I cannot help thinking that God is blinding us, till general pauperism compels us to see how much wiser it would have been to have planted the working classes judiciously where God shows us they are required, instead of driving them away altogether from the country, to be piled up in miserable heaps in towns, the rotten planks in our pauper-laden ships, till some now slumbering revolutionary delusion summons them to lay their ignorant, hungry hands on the wealth of the upper classes, towards what they are being, even now, taught, is needed, viz., a wiser and more equitable division of property.

We shall be told of insuperable difficulties in this scheme of replanting the country with a happy, useful, prosperous small tenantry, the steady supporters of home trade, growing and exchanging food for the manufactures needed in civilised life, and forming a body of true *rural police*, so deeply interested in the maintenance of peace and order in the land, that the present serious dangers from the hungry, unemployed, demoralised masses crowded into our large towns, will cease to alarm us.

1*st*, The difficulty is, that town-born people will object to removing to the country, preferring even precarious employment, with the excitement of a town life, to the steady occupations and sober tenor of a country one, which would not suit *their* dissipated minds.

2*nd*, That landowners have no means for building cottages, even were cotters waiting to occupy them.

3*rd*, That such immigrants have no capital, without which waste land cannot be improved.

4*th*, That pasturing waste lands, or reserving it for game, is better than cultivating it.

5*th*, That a landlord is entitled to keep his land waste, if he wishes to do so: and,

6*th*, That supposing all our waste lands allocated among the

labouring classes, there would still remain hosts of persons unemployed, since 10 to 20 acres of land are required to support a family.

In reply to the objection that town labourers will not remove to the country, we may pass this by till the offer, on reasonable terms, is made to them.

At this moment Government is importuned to pay the expenses of working people desirous of emigrating from London, most of whom must expect to become crofters on waste lands abroad, needing quite as much labour as similar lands in Britain, without any greater return worth mentioning.

Secondly, as to landlords being unable to build cottages: were it required, Government might as well lend money for *this* purpose, as for draining, etc. But as the emigrant usually builds his own cottage abroad, why may he not, on suitable terms, do the same in Britain? Of course, if architects are employed to plan, etc., pretty cottages, the expense will be serious; but otherwise, this matter will be no difficulty to those practically engaged in such works.

I have had charge of estates for above thirty years, where hundreds of cotters built their cottages without dreaming of laying out a farthing on them beyond their own labour, except for doors and windows, using of course the commonest materials within reach. Even were hired labour necessary, a small cottage with living room and three bed-rooms (less than this being only suited for savages), can, in most places hereabouts, be run up, quite sufficiently for health of mind and body, for less than £30. Everywhere hereabouts in the North, indeed, cotters, often without even a lease of their holding, build their own cottages, generally of a better description than is positively required, unless to please the eye; and those who know them must be aware, that were such cottages to cost above £30, they never would be built. So that landlords who will be content with plain, unornamental, cheap cottages, may be quite easy as to the cost that housing such persons to a wise and reasonable extent on their estates may involve.

3*d*, As to labourers having no capital, and therefore being

unable to improve waste land. Under wise regulations, health is far more important than gold or silver in this matter. It is a fact, that cotters without any capital beyond health and willingness to work at home, rather than emigrate, have improved most of our present arable farms in this part of the country; and "what man has done, man can do."

In truth, willing labourers, strong in mind and body, are the *real* capital of a country. Without them, all the gold and silver in the world would be useless dross, of less value than a good potato. Comparatively few of our labourers are employed constantly 60 hours a week. If they average only 40 hours, then, unless they find work at home, in a garden, croft, or at some trade, a third of their time (and time is, or should be, money, *i.e.*, one kind of capital) is lost But, till all our waste land is under crop, having our labourers idle is a national waste of capital.

Throw open the door for profitable improvement of our waste lands, and the higher cultivation of our arable farms, and we add greatly to the national capital, although it may be some time ere it becomes visible and exchangeable for gold. Plant a cotter on a waste improvable moor near arable farms, and he will probably obtain work for say 40 hours a week. Had he no land to improve, or other occupation, two days of his time weekly would have been so much capital lost to the country; nay, worse than merely lost, since he would have been consuming food and producing nothing. But, in all ordinary circumstances, while reclaiming waste land, he will produce more than he consumes, to the sensible increase of the national capital.

"Cannot improve waste land, forsooth, for lack of capital!" What are our crofters everywhere doing daily? Are they sitting still on their waste land, because they have neither gold nor silver? Nay, but busy with pick and spade, laying the foundation for the gold and silver they know will ere long flow to them from the crops to grow on the land once waste, but which they are busily improving during their leisure hours.

4th, As to its being wiser reserving our waste lands as pas-

ture for sheep or for game: It is true that much land now waste is so high above the level of the sea, that it were useless trying to improve *it.* But an enormous extent, if reclaimed, will pay well for the labour, even though it may not grow fine grain; for straw, grass, hay, and green crops, will grow well, at all reasonable heights above the sea level; and cattle, sheep, and dairy produce, grown from such crops, will be found as profitable as grain. Such lands, left waste as pasture for sheep, will not average one quarter the rent that they are worth when improved; and while it takes often ten acres of such land to supply food for one sheep, one acre of the same land, properly improved, will support many sheep.

Again, while one shepherd frequently has charge of many thousand acres, while waste, as pasture—two acres, improved, will, under garden-like cultivation (and till such cultivation is general, it is absurd talking of our "surplus population") give full occupation to a labourer during the year. So that while a shepherd and his family, say five souls, is sufficient to overlook the stock on say 5000 acres of waste land, the same land, properly cultivated, should profitably employ say 2500 souls, who would send to market much food beyond what they require for their own use, and make a vast difference to the manufacturer beyond the single shepherd's wants, in the home demand for manufactured goods.

5*th*, As to a proprietor being at liberty to keep all his land waste if he pleases: This is the serious difficulty in the case. If a law were passed, obliging owners of waste lands to let them for cultivation, so that our unemployed labourers might there grow food for themselves and others, it will be difficult to draw the distinct line between what should be ordered for cultivation, and what allowed to remain free from growing food. For instance, Government might tell the Duke of —— that such a moor around his summer lodge must be planted with crofters and cultivated. The Duke might quite well reply, "Why not begin nearer home? I see you, Mr Home Secretary, have 1000 acres of the finest land around your house, utterly waste, except feeding a handful of dear and a few

rabbits. That land is all ready for crops at once, while it would take many years of hard labour to grow any food on my 1000 acres of coveted moor; and I prefer the walk over *my* heather, and the wild waste view from *my* lodge windows, to the richest crops or fattest deer that ever grew. Come to me when all your lawns, and croquet grounds, and flower gardens, are under crop!"

And, till the general distribution of property among the population takes place, it is rather difficult to reply to the Duke of —— legally, and also equitably. I think, however, that lands improvable, and yet retained as waste, whether of old arable, or of moor, park, or lawn, might equitably be taxed for the support of the poor, so heavily, that outsiders could not complain of there being dogs allowed to lie in the manger on the stuff *they* wished to utilise. It would take much consideration arranging such a tax equitably, but I have no doubt it could be done, so as to bring at once to pick and spade millions of acres, rather than pay the *idle-land* poor-rate on them.

6th, Giving more land than 5 acres to a cotter, seeing he *cannot cultivate* it, without hired labour, would be as unwise as a farmer with £100 occupying an arable farm of 1000 acres. *No average family can possibly cultivate properly, more than* 5 *acres*, and one acre thoroughly attended to, will give more food than four acres cropped in the ordinary way. On the co-operative plan, of course, any extent of land may be cultivated by spade labour, but the wisest allocation of land appears to be, mere cottage garden lots; next, crofts up to five acres, and then farms cultivated by one or more pairs of horses; thus, opening doors of progress, through which even the humblest cotter may, if he is sober and industrious, hope to rise above the lower stratum of society, in which he generally commences life.

Under wise arrangements, then, for improving our waste lands, ample, remunerative, steady employment, will be found in Britain, to generations yet unthought of, for all who object to other professions than agriculture, or find them overstocked.

Now, I assert *positively*, that an average family cannot consume nearly the amount of food that five acres of average land,

properly cultivated, will produce ; and no one has ever yet seen a large farm, cultivated by horse labour and ordinary rules, that produces above one-half the amount of food that may be grown on the small-croft system.

I have been on spade-cultivated crofts in Britain, where, with no peculiar advantages of any kind, over *our* average waste land and climate, etc., in most localities, each acre produced from £12 to £15 worth of food yearly, giving the crofter constant, profitable employment, beyond comparison preferable to the ordinary occupations of the labouring classes in towns. The Parliamentary report on allotment gardens, state, the net annual profit on land so cultivated by cotters, at from £16 to £20 per acre. "Very true," says the Emigration agent "but that is by *garden* cultivation, where the cow and pig get much that cannot be managed by ordinary farming."

And we reply, "Certainly, but only for want of hands to cultivate our farms as highly as gardens." And were Britain to have all Europe combined against her in a general war, and our navy only able to protect our seaports, so that not an ounce of food came to market for years, but what grew at home, it would then be found that we had most ample home means of providing a full supply of food for man and beast, as independent of foreign supplies as were the Chinese or Japanese before we requested them for the love of God—at the cannon mouth—to open their ports to our manufactures, *and our opium* (!)

But it may be said, and indeed has been said, that the crofting system has been tried already, carefully, and thoroughly, and always given up as a plan that cannot succeed. And I ask, *where?*

If I am told, "in Gairloch," then I reply, "It never had even a *decent* trial there, or a faint *chance* of success." When I took charge of that estate, I found between five and six hundred crofter families upon it, planted in twenty-four townships along some 90 miles of sea coast. Of say twenty families in a township, only perhaps twelve were recognised as tenants. The rest were sub-tenants, or married sons or daughters, who had shares in the small slips of arable land along with the tenants, and generally also had cattle or sheep on the moor that belonged

to the township. The arable land was occupied on the run-rig system, under which a new division of the whole among the twelve tenants took place every spring, so that what No. 1 possessed in 1869 fell perhaps to No. 7 in 1870, being the most sure and ingenious plan for damping and discouraging the most intelligent and zealous improver of land in Europe, into taking things easy. And should there be twenty separate stripes of arable land in the township, each tenant was entitled to $\frac{1}{12}$th of each of the twenty stripes, so that as every one paid the same rent, no one could have any advantage over the other. As they themselves measured each $\frac{1}{12}$th afresh every year, by bits of string, the time and tempers thus wasted may be better imagined than described.

Potatoes, bere, and oats were the only crops they grew, and seaweed the only manure they valued (and fought for, like tigers). Under the run-rig system, no grass seeds, of course, could be sown, and turnips were unknown. Consequently, and from universally miserable crops, very few of their wretched cattle, from sheer starvation, (most of their house feed being plucked heather), could rise on their feet in spring, till hoisted up by the tail; and the mortality among them was fearful.

As the whole people were mere able-bodied paupers, their landlord having often to send them meal to prevent starvation, his trustees, with the new Poor Law before them in 1845, and the potato disease in 1846, resolved, in 1847, to try and show to the poor neglected souls, that the land, if properly cultivated, would really support them and their cattle, and pay a rent besides. We therefore had each township surveyed and divided, so as to allow a square block of land of from three to five acres to each family, embracing the arable land, and as much contiguous moor as was required—separating the lots from the hill by a ring fence. Then, while formerly all the houses were clustered together *away* from the arable land, we obliged each family to build on their lot, giving them wood as required, gratis, and assuring them that though we gave no leases, they would not be removed, or the rents raised, for (I think) twenty years, if they paid their rent and obeyed the simple

rules laid down for managing their land,—for their own good, that of the land, and of the landlord.

And so, procuring them government drainage money, we launched them forth into what seemed to them so madlike a scheme compared with the good old run-rig system, that numbers declared they would rather emigrate than adopt it; only, they thought better of it, and remained at home. Our rules and plans were so simple, being the mere rudiments of universal agriculture, though hitherto unknown to *our* crofters, that talking or writing of our proceedings as "a great experiment," "the crofting system on trial," was perfectly absurd. Had our people emigrated, every one of them would cheerfully have done everything that we asked them to do at home, where they enjoyed numberless advantages, civil, social, and religious, that they would search for in vain in any other country, and which entirely overbalance all the emigrants' imaginary advantages of being able to say, "I do not rent this bit of land—it is my own."

For want of means to engage suitable, unprejudiced, agriculturists, instead of the most ineffective oversight of a few rather more biddable crofters, things progressed with true Celtic delay; yet much land was improved, and compelled to grow as fine crops of grass and turnips as could be found in Europe: and crops increased so greatly, that whereas no family used to grow as much grain as it consumed, many now sold grain, and to the astonishment of "the oldest inhabitant," some cargoes of potatoes were actually exported!

Had we been able to engage proper agriculturists, who, for say fifteen or twenty years, would have compelled the poor, ignorant, and therefore prejudiced people, to cultivate their land as is done in civilised countries, and, *after this*, have found that under the *crofter system and garden cultivation, which is quite essential to its success*, food *could not* be grown on five acres of our average soil, in an average climate, to support a crofter's family and pay a moderate rent, *then*, and *only then* would it be time to declare that the crofter system had been carefully tried in Gairloch, had proved an utter failure, and, of course, could not succeed anywhere else.

By "garden cultivation," I mean taking as much food from the land for man and beast as can be grown upon it, by a full supply of hand labour, and home-grown manure, two things always in very limited supply in our ordinary large farming arrangements. In the first place, it is undeniable that spade and hand will generally produce much more food than the Plough & Co. Let us suppose the green crop quarter of a croft. After manuring and turning it over by grape or spade in October last, it should be found now, with rye showing all over it in thin green lines, drilled or dibbled, nine inches between each drill, and every third drill-space left blank to hold early potatoes in spring, with a bean dropped in at every three feet in that drill, experience showing that we thus get as full a crop of potatoes as if no beans were grown, while the cow will be thankful for the empty bean pods and stalks, in due time. If properly supplied with liquid manure, the rye, in ordinary years will, by 15th of April, cover the whole break, and by say 20th May, have given two heavy cuts of very early good cow food, after which being dug in between the potato drills, the roots answer well as manure.

Cabbage plants must be prepared by frequent transplanting and watering in, to occupy the quarter on removal of the potatoes, taking up a potato plant, when its tubers are needed, every three feet apart, and immediately planting a cabbage in its place. If this is properly executed, by November, the potatoes will all have disappeared, and the whole quarter will exhibit a mass of first-rate cabbages, nearly as heavy as if no two or three previous crops had been taken from the land. I need hardly say that it will be long, ere, by horse labour on the large-farm system, anything like this amount of food can be taken from the land, while various crops can thus be grown, that will object entirely to the rude and barbarous plough.

But to return: As I have already said, the crofter system has really never had a chance of success in Gairloch, our Celts needing much more time and patience to teach them than we were allowed, and needing also, a wise, kindly despotism, to advise and direct them in every way, and warn them also, that

others more accessible to reason must take the place of those who *will not* be advised. All along they had never been reconciled to our new-fangled rules and whims, and though we made slow, steady progress in the six or seven years before our bow was again unbent, the people still detested the growing of turnips, and sowing grass seeds, and not being allowed to grow white crops in succession till the land refused to give back the seed. Their landlord, however, when he came of age, imagining that their discontent arose from our "*ordering*" Celts, instead of "*requesting*" them to do as we desired, allowed them to follow our rules or not, merely "*requesting*" them to do so! The immediate consequence was, that every soul instantly and joyfully returned to the noncultivation of his croft, "after the manner of the ancients," except perhaps as to the run-rig system! And forgetting our rule, that only one family should reside on a croft, unless in the case of a married son or son-in-law, assisting his aged parents, many families soon appeared in single houses and crofts (I have been told of four couples on one small croft), and nearly all the terrible evils of the old starvation system we had tried to remove, were immediately restored, by acclamation, with the expected and sure consequences of poverty, etc., in which they now contentedly remain! Had we dreamed of such a sad end of our rational plans for the benefit of the people and their landlord, we would never have put hand to the harassing to-mind-and-body contest with the ingrained, ignorant prejudices of the poor people for so many years; and the regret at seeing them fallen back again into the slough of despond from which we were drawing them, is not diminished by reading essays on the subject by those who know nothing at all about the story, explaining how "the thing had been carefully and fully tried, had, as was to be expected, completely failed, and that nothing remained now but to clear off all that class of tenantry" (who, but for gross mismanagement and neglect, would be their country's strength and pride), "and supply their place by the more valuable sheep or deer!"

And now, while no one can be less justly accused of wishing to drive our rural population into the hands of the emigration

agent, I have no hesitation in saying, that such neglected, ignorant people as we had to deal with—and they are legion in these northern parts—can only be taught how to avoid perpetual, chronic, *needless* poverty and sorrow to themselves and their landlords, by decided rules of "you must do this and must not do that," if you are to remain where you are. Moreover, I would only grant leases to those who show, by their intelligence, and willingness to obey rules laid down for *their* advantage as well as their landlord's benefit, that they deserve them. And as to their not improving their crofts without a lease, I can show scores of crofts, where, with a nineteen-year lease, not a tenth of the stipulated improvements have been even begun, while, close by, crofters without leases are doing nearly as well as need be expected. When our legal friends consent to have the terms of a lease interpreted and put in force, out of court, and without expense, then I shall have no objection to giving leases to every crofter.

And if crofters *will not* learn how to cultivate land profitably (and I wait, and *shall wait* long, ere I learn where they have been kindly, wisely, and patiently taught, and yet positively refused to learn), then, and only then, will I vote for their being handed over to the emigration agent, as a public national nuisance, to be got rid of as speedily as possible.

I feel so strongly on the subject of overgrown estates and few landowners, that I cannot avoid saying how rejoiced I am to learn that an estate lately purchased by wise, look-alive Inverness friends, is now being divided into lots of all sizes, to suit the wishes and abilities of the multitudes who have long desired to own the land they cultivated, but who in the memory of the oldest inhabitant, except in better arranged Orkney, with its 7 or 800 proprietors, were never allowed to dream of estates, being for sale under many thousand acres. And I most sincerely hope that God may prosper this wise and natural undertaking, so that people may awaken to the innumerable evils arising from the whole land in Britain being owned by a mere fraction of the population, about one-thousandth part as it is said.

Were it possible in a free country like this, to limit the extent of land that each person could own, and thus to check the unreasonable accumulation of estates by one individual, who may neither be willing, and probably is unable to cultivate them to their greatest national value, I cannot doubt that a law to effect this would be an incalculable blessing to our country, binding by the strongest ties to their fatherland, *multitudes* of our people, who, at present, feel very much as if their ties were merely European, or, like tenants by the day, who need to care little for the future of Great Britain, their property being easily convertible into cash, with which they may on the shortest notice retire, and become citizens of the world, instead of remaining always warm-hearted true sons of their native land.

Some years ago, a nobleman, who inherited about a million acres of waste land alone, a great part of which is of the most improvable description, knowing my democratic (?) ideas as to the occupation of land, told me, "That, as he had never drawn a farthing of the rental of the large estates in question for his personal use, but had always expended them in improvements, no other mode of occupation than what was then in operation there could effect more than was being done;—"did I not think he was right in this?"

I merely asked him to look at the estate, chiefly of waste land, that he had sold a few years previously for, I think, £90,000. Its purchaser had laid out probably twice that sum in such judicious improvements, that I had no doubt he received five per cent. for most of his outlay; and moreover had, by such a free use of money, to my certain personal knowledge, cleared from difficulties *hosts* of cotter tenants, who were employed from far and near on these improvements, and who, ever since, now many years ago, have been in easy, instead of their former hard-up, circumstances, adding, besides this, to the wealth of the country by a great yearly increase of food, which never would have occurred for a century, had merely the original free rental of the estate been laid out upon it. And I took the liberty of suggesting, as he

gave me the opportunity, how different in a few years would be the returns from *his* principality, were *it* divided into small estates, and improved in like manner, compared with what it could ever be, while in *his* sole possession, even with all its rental laid out on it yearly.

Seeing that my suggestions were not agreeable, and supposing pride at being "monarch of all he surveyed" might be the difficulty, I said, if he disliked scattering among the world so fine and old an inheritance, this might be got over by disposing of it in divisions on improving leases, of say ninety-nine years, on which terms while he could still say, "All this is mine," I doubted not he would find tenants, who would effect permanent improvements not much inferior to what had been done on the estate he had sold. But, "all this estate is strictly entailed, and I am merely a life-renter," brought our conference to an end.

Surely the day is coming, when no such reply for this ruinous folly by entails will be offered.

And now, in conclusion, leaving the question as to how best to improve our waste lands, and the cultivation of land by spade labour, for future discussion, I trust our poor-rates may continue to increase so fearfully, that every one will be *compelled*, to consider our absurd laws and customs regarding entails, overgrown estates of improvable waste lands, and the mad-like system of driving such masses of our rural population from their natural position in the country, into towns, or making enemies to Britain of them by emigration schemes, since the true position for their welfare and happiness in every possible sense of the term, consists in living upon, and cultivating properly the soil of their native land, till the whole capable of cultivation becomes like a garden ; and thus, in population and home-grown food, enabling us to care little who are our enemies in a quite possible day, when depending as we now do for our existence on imported food, we may be found with empty granaries, neglected, and discontented, and needlessly starving masses of our people, and Britannia, unable as of old, to rule the waves.

PAPERS

Read before the Chalmers Association for diffusing Information on Important Social Questions.

I.

THE SCOTTISH POOR LAW EXAMINED

IN ITS PRINCIPLES AND TRIED BY ITS RESULTS, WITH SUGGESTION OF REMEDIES.

By ALEXANDER WOOD, M.D., J.P., F.R.S.,
Fellow, and formerly President, of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh, etc., etc.

II.

THE SCOTTISH POOR LAW,

AND SOME CONTRASTS BETWEEN ITS PRINCIPLES AND THE PRACTICES THAT HAVE GROWN UPON IT.

By DAVID CURROR, Esq.,
Late Chairman of the Edinburgh Parochial Board.

III.

SOME ASPECTS OF PAUPERISM

IN ITS RELATION TO LAND.

By R. SCOT SKIRVING, Esq.

IV.

THE CAUSES AND PROBABLE REMEDIES

OF

PAUPERISM IN SCOTLAND.

By JAMES BEGG, D.D.

These to be followed by Papers from Rev. Mr M'Gregor, J. H. Stallard, M.B., of London, and Others.

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