

EVIDENCE

TAKEN BY

HER MAJESTY's COMMISSIONERS OF INQUIRY

INTO THE CONDITIONS OF

THE CROFTERS AND COTTARS

IN THE

HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS OF SCOTLAND

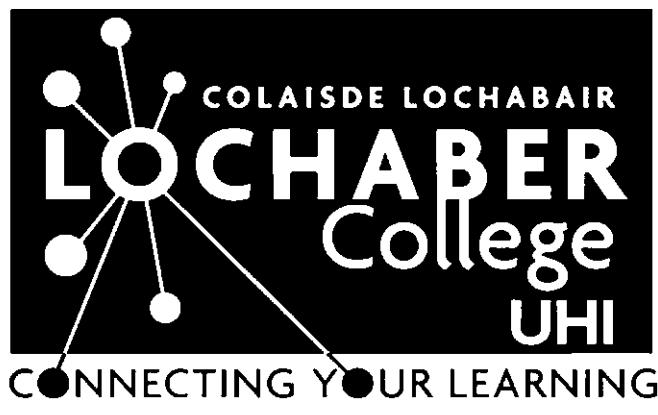
VOL III

PRESENTED TO BOTH HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT BY COMMAND OF HER MAJESTY



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2007



small ones, but there is not a general one which keeps a large stock of everything.

SUTHER-LAND.
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26719. Is there none that deals in meal?—Three of them deal in meal.

26720. But I suppose most of the people prefer to get their goods from Thurso?—Yes, by the smack, and from Wick too. It would be a great benefit to have the steamer which goes in to Badcall three miles from Scourie.

KINLOCH-BERVIE.
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26721. *The Chairman.*—You stated you had the same complaint as the people of Durness, that you are very far from the doctor. How many miles are you from him?—Nineteen.

Rev. Duncan Finlayson.

26722. And how far are the Durness people—Thirty miles.

26723. Do you happen to have had any cases of emergency, such as accidents, here, when there was great inconvenience felt from the want of a doctor?—Not since I came here, but I suppose there have been. He is very often needed down here. The doctor himself is not well this season; he was nearly dead with going about so much.

26724. How far does his circuit extend on the other side?—To Kyle Sku, I believe. He has not many people on the other side.

26725. In cases of child-birth has the want of the doctor been felt?—Yes, I believe it has.

26726. Is there any educated women in the neighbourhood who can attend to such cases?—I believe not.

26727. You stated that want of accommodation for higher education is felt in the school at Insheigra?—Yes.

26728. How far is that from here?—Close on two miles.

26729. There is a school here?—Yes.

26730. And there the same want is not felt?—No; I think not.

26731. Is there the same demand for secondary education in the school here that there is at Insheigra?—I should think so. There are a great many boys above school age.

26732. Do boys above school age avail themselves of teaching in the higher subjects there?—Some of them did; I am not aware if they do now. Some boys would like to attend school in winter.

26733. When was the school at Insheigra built?—It has been built since the new Act came into force.

26734. Have the people of Insheigra petitioned the School Board for increased school accommodation?—I am not aware that they have. I have not heard that they did.

26735. Have you made a representation yourself to the School Board?—No.

26736. Who was the chairman of the School Board here?—Mr M'Iver.

26737. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Kinlochbervie is part of the civil parish of Eddrachillis; how many schools are under the School Board?—Three.

26738. Two in this part and one at Scourie?—One at Scourie.

26739. Have the School Board appointed any managers for these schools?—I am not aware that they have. Is it the compulsory officer you mean.

26740. It is in the power of the School Board to appoint some of their number, or a gentleman from the outside in the neighbourhood, manager of a special school; and I thought they might have appointed you such a manager in this district?—No; I was not appointed. Perhaps they have appointed the other minister, Mr Lundie, who is a member of the board.

26741. Has any representation been made to the board about the amount of accommodation?—I am not a member of the board.

SUTHER-
LAND.

KINLOCH-
BERVIE.

Rev. Duncan
Finlayson.

26742. But has any representation been made by the inhabitants of the district?—I am not aware, but the parents have been often complaining to me about the want of secondary education.

26743. What have you done in consequence of their complaints to you?—I did not do anything.

26744. You did not represent it to Mr M'Iver?—Perhaps they have done it themselves before my coming here. I am not long here.

26745. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Have you considered what effect it would have upon the rate? What is the school rate of the parish?—Ninepence—fourpence halfpenny on tenants and fourpence halfpenny on landlords.

26746. I think you stated that one of the reasons for the defective secondary education was that the master could not give his time to the higher boys during school hours—that he has sufficient to do otherwise. What is the greatest difficulty—want of room or want of teaching power?—The teacher stated to me that he would have difficulty even if he had room.

26747. So that you want not merely a bigger school but a bigger staff of teachers?—I suppose so.

26748. Would you ask that in all the schools?—I don't know as to the other schools. I suppose Scourie school is very well taught. I think there is plenty of room there; but I don't know.

26749. Do you think it would be reasonable to expect that a highly equipped school for secondary education should be placed in every locality whatever the number of people?—I think there should be some way of getting secondary education. That would be desirable; there is no doubt of that. We are so far away from any town here, to send them to, that the parents cannot afford to send their children should they be willing; and there is no one rising up. The people say that clever boys got on far better under the old system. Several boys from here became teachers and some of them preachers during the old time.

26750. Were the school houses bigger then?—In the parish day schools, and now there is no one rising above the common level.

26751. I am glad to know there are notable exceptions just now?—I am speaking generally.

26752. You know various parts of the country very well along the western sea-board down to Mull and these places?—Yes.

26753. Comparing that district with this do you consider that the condition of the people here or there is, take it all round, better or worse—take the south end of Mull?—I should say they are better off here than in the south end of Mull—Ross of Mull.

26754. Better housed?—No. The houses are inferior here, some of them.

26755. But, take it all in all they are better off here?—Yes. I should say so; they have more pasture.

26756. And as to the rents?—I don't know as to the rents.

26757. Don't you know the rents in the south end of Mull?—No, but there are some of the people very poor there.

26758. Is there any other district in the West Highlands which you know the rents of?—No.

26759. Do you agree generally with the description the people give of their own condition here?—Yes, I agree with what our own delegates stated, and I agree also with the statements of the Durness people generally as to the medical officer and so on.

26760. The remedy they themselves suggested in all cases was to get more land; do you also concur in that?—Yes, I do, because it is impossible for them to winter their cattle; that is the great complaint.

More arable land is what is needed ; and I think their pasture land might be improved if it were drained.

SUTHER.
LAND.

26761. Supposing they got more land they say themselves they are not able to stock it. Do you think some benevolent friends outside could help them in any way ? Have they relatives abroad with means ? Very few of them have, I think, but I think the houses should be improved, and that would increase the comfort of the people in every way. The cattle go in by the same door in some of the houses ; and in some instances there are two families in one house, which is very undesirable.

KINLOCH.
BERVIE.

Rev. Duncan
Finlayson

26762. *The Chairman.*—Have you yourself seen houses in which two families were living in one room ?—No, not in one room ; I think they generally have two at least.

26763. But you have seen houses of two rooms in which there was a family in each room ?—In some houses there are the family of the father and of an elder married son. That seems to have been allowed by the laws of the estate.

26764. Living in two rooms ?—I think they live in family.

26765. But one family sleeps in one room and the other family in the other ?—I think they live just like one family and have sleeping apartments. Some of them have a closet and two rooms.

26766. You stated that in some of the houses the people enter by the same door as the cattle, that is the house enters by the byre, the byra being separate ?—Yes, in some cases.

26767. Do you know any instance of a house without a slight partition between the byre and the dwelling-room ?—Yes, I know one in this very place, a pauper, and she lives in a house where there is no partition between her and the cow.

26768. Does the pauper keep a cow ?—Yes ; her daughter is with her. It is her daughter who has the cow. The old woman is the pauper.

26769. Do you think that in some cases the lodging is so bad and dirty as to be prejudicial to health ?—I should think so at any rate ; but I don't hear complaints. I would not like to live in such a place.

26770. Are you aware of any case in which a very bad house has been visited by the health officer, and denounced as a nuisance or dangerous to health ?—I am not aware that such is the case ; I never heard of our having such an official as a health officer.

26771. Some of the houses are very inferior, but you have no inspector of nuisances or sanitary inspector ?—I never heard of his going round ; but there may be such an officer. The inspector of poor, Mr M'Iver informs me, is sanitary officer.

26772. Who is he ?—Mr Chisholm, Scourie.

26773. How far off does he live ?—He lives at Scourie, seventeen miles from here.

26774. Does he often come here ?—He comes, I think, occasionally ; I don't know him very well, yet.

26775. Did you ever hear of him inspecting the habitations of the poor, with respect to their sanitary condition ?—I have not ; but he may have done it. I think he would get plenty of work to do in that way.

26776. Have there been any cases of fever ?—Not since I came here.

26777. Have you heard of previous cases of fever in the houses here ?—I have not, but I have never inquired about that. I suppose there has been fever, but not in my time.

26778. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Do you know who are the members of the School Board of Eddrachillis ?—Mr Mackenzie, Established Church

SUTH'FR-LAND.

minister of Eddrachillis ; Mr M'Iver, the factor, chairman ; Mr Louis M'Iver ; Rev. Mr Lundie ; and the Free Church minister of Scourie.

KINLOCH-BERVIE.

26779. Is Mr Louis M'Iver the son of the factor ?—Yes.

26780. Where does the Free Church minister live, who is a member ?—In Scourie.

Rev. Duncan Finlayson.

26781. Is the Free Church of Eddrachillis divided into two branches—Kinlochbervie and Scourie ?—Yes.

26782. And there is an Established Church in each ?—Yes.

26783. The Rev. Mr Lundie is the Established Church clergyman who is in your part ?—Yes.

26784. Has he a large attendance ?—I don't know, I never was there ; but I don't think he has.

26785. Has the Established Church minister in Scourie a large congregation ?—I cannot say. I think the people belong to the Free Church generally.

26786. Considering that the bulk of the people belong to the Free Church, do you think they are properly represented in the School Board ?—I don't think so. Mr M'Iver asked me to go on it, but I declined at the time, and gave my reasons to Mr M'Iver. I had too much of it.

26787. The only representative of the Free Church on the Board is the minister of Scourie ?—Yes.

26788. Has Mr Louis M'Iver a farm of his own ?—No.

26789. Is he a ratepayer ?—No.

26790. Who is clerk to the School Board ?—Mr Chisholm.

26791. Are there not ministers from Scourie here to-day ?—Mr Lundie is here, but not Mr Mackenzie.

EVANDER M'IVER, Factor for the Duke of Sutherland in the Scourie District, Scourie (71)—examined.

Evander M'Iver.

26792. *The Chairman.*—How long have you occupied your present position ?—Since Whitsunday 1845.

26793. Were you brought up to the business in which you are now engaged ?—I was regularly educated for it.

26794. In what part of Scotland ?—I was educated for it in Lanarkshire and Dumfriesshire. I was sent to these counties to be taught farming.

26795. To what part of the country do you belong ?—I am a native of the island of Lewis, where my father had a large farm and an extensive business as fish-curer and merchant. I have had to do with crofters from my younger days.

26796. Were you a Gaelic-speaking man from your childhood ?—I was ; I could speak Gaelic before I could speak English.

26797. You have been present here during the inquiry to-day ?—I have been present the whole day.

26798. And you have heard what has been stated ?—I have.

26799. Would you make any voluntary statement in regard to any points which interest you ?—The first thing I have to state is with regard to the changes at Laid and Sangobeg. These changes were carried out by Mr James Anderson, tenant of Rispond, Lord Reay's factor. Mr Anderson held a lease of Laid and Sangobeg, when the Duke of Sutherland purchased the property from Lord Reay, and the Duke had no power to interfere. These changes were not made by the Sutherland family. The next subject I would allude to, is the grazing of horses by the tenants of Durness and Foinaven which was mentioned as a complaint

or grievance. The people had the privilege of grazing their horses on this ground which was surrounded by the large farms of Erriboll and Balnaskail, and the Reay forest, and great complaints were made, that there was no proper herd and that the horses trespassed very much upon those grounds. I was asked by the late Duke of Sutherland and his commissioner, Mr James Loch, to go and see the ground and report upon it; and, after a good deal of consideration, it was settled that the generation of tenants then existing, should always have right to send their horses to this ground, but that, as each died, their successors should not have the right, because there were so many complaints made of the trespassing of the horses. This went on for a number of years until the number of tenants who were entitled to send horses there became very small, and then they found the herding became very expensive. Then the people met, and, without any intimation whatever to the proprietor, the whole of them sent their horses up to the grazing. It was then found necessary to have the subject gone into, and the Duke of Sutherland and his commissioner came up to Durness, and it was settled that the people should continue to send their horses there, but that they would require to pay five shillings a year, the Duke of Sutherland to pay a herd for them. The person they sent as a herd got 1s. 6d. but the sum was so small that only a very inferior herd could be got, and the horses were not properly looked after. The Duke now has a party placed there to look after the horses and take care of them.

26800. Did it not occur to you to put a fence round the place?—It extends over a great many miles, and the expense would have been very large.

26801. What length of fence would be required?—Five or six miles perhaps. That is the explanation about the grazing of the horses at Foinaven. I don't think it is necessary for me to take any notice of what Mr Ross said about the appointment of the School Board at Durness, because the whole thing arose thus. The returning officer was not there, and he sent me the return and asked me to make it. I brought the return to the meeting, and we sat down for the purpose of constituting the Board. Mr Ross got up and said we must first appoint a chairman. I said we must first constitute the Board, and then appoint a chairman. I have since asked Mr Ross to come back to the Board, but he would not. With regard to Balnaskail farm, an excambion was entered into and was gone into in the most regular and orderly manner. A part of the land which the small tenants had, was added to Balnaskail, and they got a part which the farmer of Balnaskail had. A portion of the farm of Balnaskail was given back to the tenants, and a portion of the tenants' ground given to Balnaskail. That was before I came to the country, forty or fifty years ago. As to the island of Handa, it is opposite Scourie, and was occupied by ten tenants. When the potato disease occurred in 1846, these tenants came to me in a body and begged I would ask the Duke of Sutherland to send them to America, as they could not remain on Handa. They said they saw no prospect of their being able to live, in consequence of the failure of the potatoes. I conveyed their wish to the Duke, and he complied and sent them to America. There were two families who afterwards said they would not go. One of these was provided with a lot on Achresgil, and I don't remember what became of the other.

26802. What became of the island?—It was opposite my farm and no person could get to it without going through my farm; and the Duke said, if that was the case it must be added to my farm if I would take it. I accordingly took it, and I pay the same rent as the tenants. With regard to Auchligliness, Alexander Ross who spoke to that, never was a tenant on

SUTHER.
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KINLOCH-
BERVIE.
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Evander
M'IVER.

this estate. His father was a tenant, and lived in the village of Scourie, where he had built a house. The factor who was here about 1839 or 1840, wished to remove the ground officer who lived on Auchligliness up to Scourie, and he gave the lot occupied by the ground officer at Auchligliness to Ross's father. The officer went to Auchligliness, but this man Ross remained in the house at Scourie. He got possession, and would not go out until he was put out by authority of the Sheriff. Then he went and lived with his family at Auchligliness. There was a part of the farm of Scirba which this man thought the people of Auchligliness should get, but it was let with the farm. This man, however, would go with horses, cattle, and sheep, and in spite of all remonstrance would put them to this ground. This went on for several years, and ultimately I received instructions to say that if he would not comply with the rules of the estate they would be removed; and we were obliged to carry out the threat against our will.

26803. What about the mother?—She was the tenant; she came to me at Scourie, and promised faithfully they would go off properly and legally, and I agreed that they were to be left, but that understanding was not carried out. The consequence was that we were obliged not to permit such an illegality to go on in the district.

26804. Did the old woman receive the option of remaining with the son on her holding?—Yes, I think it was agreed that she should remain in one end of the house and the new tenant would go into the house with her.

26805. But the old woman was to lose the land?—Yes.

26806. But on account of her son's fault?—She was the tenant, he was not; but it was with her authority that the illegality went on—at least it was through her being tenant. With regard to the school at Insheigra, of which Mr Finlaysou spoke, the school was built with the approval of the Board of Education, who were informed of the number of the children who would attend the school, and what the size of the school was to be. Plans were sent to them and approved of, and the school was built according to the rules of the Education Act. I never heard any complaint—and I am chairman of the board—as to children not receiving secondary education.

26807. Is there a class room, or is it a school house of one room?—There are two apartments in the school. The people, Mr Finlayson says, complain of the want of a smithy. They made that complaint on a previous occasion, and we assisted them to put up a little smithy, and it was arranged that the smith from Scourie should go down regularly on stated occasions, and do work for the people. The smith did so, and this arrangement went on for a year or two, until at last the smith found he was so ill-paid, that he gave it up and would not go. There is nothing else that I wish to remark on, but I shall be glad to answer any questions.

26808. You have explained with reference to the island of Handa, that it was not cleared with any view of benefiting your farm, but really on the demand of the people, who desired to go to America?—Yes.

26809. There are one or two statements in detail—that one or two evictions on other small holdings were made in some degree or other for your benefit?—There were two little townships of Clashfearn and Findlebeg. One of the tenants of these places came saying that he wished to go to America, and the other was provided with a lot in this neighbourhood.

26810. What became of the lot of the one who went to America?—Both these little townships were added to my farm, which surrounded them.

26811. Can you give me any example of a lot in a township like that, where one being evicted was added to a crofter's lot so as to improve it and which was not added to a farm?—There has been an immense number over this district.

SUTHERLAND.

26812. On this particular occasion on which the lots were added to your farm, were there crofters conveniently situated to which the evicted lots might have been added?—There were townships beyond; there is another township called Findlemore beyond Findlebeg; but Findlebeg could not have been added to it.

KINLOCHBELVIE.

26813. But the people were not evicted, but wanted to go away?—Yes.

Evander M'Iver.

26814. Are you able to say that no one has been evicted and his lot added to your farm?—Most emphatically; I deny any imputation of the kind.

26815. In filling up the vacancy created in the School Board by Mr Ross's resignation, who was elected?—I forget at this moment; I am not quite sure. My son who was with me at that time is abroad now. I think he was elected to the vacancy, but I am not quite certain. He was nominated by the board.

26816. As it was a case of nomination, don't you think on reflection, it might have been more discreet and more acceptable to the people that some one should have been nominated more identified as it were with the people and with their interests?—I quite agree it should have been so; but at the time there was some difficulty in getting one to join.

26817. Are you able to state that there is no objection on the part of the management of the estate to the people having representatives of their own class whom they respect and wish to be on the board?—I am quite able to state that; and if any of them had expressed any strong wish or feeling on the subject, it would have been considered and most likely agreed to. But it depends on the other members of the board as well as me.

26818. I am not mistaken in supposing you would have considerable influence. Supposing the people came to you frankly and manifested a desire to have a member on the School Board identified with their own class and their own views, are you able to state that if the person so selected was respectable and competent he would have your sympathy and support?—He would decidedly.

26819. Who is Mr Chisholm, inspector of poor?—He has been inspector of poor at Scourie for thirty years. He is a native of Ross-shire and was brought up in an agent's office in Dingwall.

26820. Is he quite independent in his position, or is he connected by family relationship or interest with the management of the estate?—None whatever.

26821. He is in a position, on an estate like this, to point out any abuse or imperfections connected with his department?—Certainly.

26822. Without favour or fear?—Certainly.

26823. Has he ever brought to the notice of the Parochial Board that there are houses in an unhealthy or insanitary condition?—He has frequently complained that there was a good deal of filth, and that the houses were not so clean in the neighbourhood as he wished, and that he had great difficulty in insisting on getting them put into proper condition.

26824. Have the management of the estate acted on any complaints of that sort?—It is the Parochial Board that has the sole charge of the sanitary arrangements of the parish.

26825. But I presume the Parochial Board would intimate to the management of the estate that there was something wrong?—Mr Chisholm

SUTHER-
LAND.

KINLOCH-
BERVIE.

Evander
M'Iver.

has several times mentioned to me the great difficulty he had in getting any improvements made or reforms brought about in the sanitary condition of the houses.

26826. Does he pay attention to that branch of his duty?—I would not say he pays strict attention to it, for I have sometimes complained that he was not so attentive to it as he ought to be.

26827. Complaint has been made of the consolidation of various head offices in the family of the ground officer at Durness; is that complaint well founded?—The ground officer's daughter happened to marry the teacher, who was teacher long before he married. Of course we had no knowledge that such a connection would be formed. His son acts as inspector of poor, and his daughter teaches the female school. All these offices are consolidated, if one may say so, in one family.

26828. These things sometimes grow up: do you entirely approve of that sort of consolidation of various offices?—No, I do not.

26829. If you had the opportunity, you would take it, to alter that arrangement?—Yes.

26830. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Will we have the pleasure of seeing you at our next meeting at Lochinver?—I shall be at Lochinver. I have a good many statements I would wish to make, but perhaps you would wish to hear them at Lochinver.

26831. *The Chairman.*—If it is in regard to anything which occurred here to-day there is always an advantage in explaining things before the people who heard the accusation?—I wish to explain that this district of which I have charge comprehends the parishes of Assynt, Eddrachillis, and the greater part of Durness. A portion of Durness is in the Tongue management. Assynt has formed part of the Sutherland estate for nearly two centuries. Eddrachillis and Durness formed part of Reay estates which were acquired by the Marquis of Stafford in 1829. The population of these parishes by the last census is as follows:—Assynt, 1390; Storr *quoal sacra*, 1391—together, 2781; Eddrachillis, 605; Kinlochbervie, portion 920—together—1525; Durness, 987. The whole population of the district, amounts to 5293 persons, I found on coming here in 1845, there had been a great deal of discussion about the small rents paid by the small tenants in the district, which amounted in 1839 to £2001, 4s. 4d. The arrears at that time had accumulated to so large an amount that the Duke of Sutherland resolved to abate them, and to begin in 1840, with a clear rental. The abatements made were as follows—in Assynt, £2241, 11s. 2d.; in Eddrachillis, £2255, 8s. 6d.; in Durness, £571, 8s. 1d.—total, £5068, 7s. 9d. That sum was abated by the Duke of Sutherland from the rents of the crofters in the district. I became factor in 1845, and I found when I entered that arrears had again accumulated to the sum of £840, 19s. 10d. The rental in 1845 for the small tenants was £1797, 3s. 5d. The rental of the small tenants has not varied largely since 1845 in these parishes. It is more; but I may mention, in explanation of the sums which were said to be added to the small tenants' rents on the death of a father and mother, that in 1878, the Duke appointed two skilled gentlemen to go over his estates and value every croft in the county of Sutherland. These gentlemen were Mr Macdonald, who was Sir John Orde's factor on North Uist, and Mr Thomas Mackenzie, tenant of Auchnahaird. In that year the rental of the small tenants in this district was £1928, 4s. 11d. These gentlemen went over every croft and made a special report, and valued every one of them. They brought up the rents to £2227, 7s. 2d., adding to the rental £299 or £300 a year. The additions which these gentlemen made to the rents of the crofts are now added at the death of the father and mother, when a son succeeds.

That is the explanation of what has been complained of. The potato disease which came upon us here in 1846 and 1847, brought on a very grave crisis and placed us in very difficult and trying circumstances, and entailed an amount of expenditure that was quite enormous. I have a little memorandum of it here which I may quote. When the Duke of Sutherland purchased the Reay country in 1829, it was almost in a state of nature, in a very poor condition. There was an absence of roads and a want of houses. Lord Reay was not laying any money on improving it, and the consequence was when the Duke of Sutherland purchased the property he found there was an immense deal to do. The first thing was to make a road through the country from one end to the other, which cost from £15,000 to £20,000. There have been since I came into this district, 49 miles of road made in various parts, and 52 miles of paths. These have been made at enormous expense.

SUTHERLAND.
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KINLOCH-BERVIE.
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Evander M'Iver.

26832. What do you mean by paths?—Narrow roads.

26833. Horse roads or cart roads?—Just horse roads—bridle paths. The roads which were made have cost £10,408, 17s. 4d., and the branch roads, £619, 10s. The paths, many of which are in the Reay forest, have cost £2936, 12s. 5d.

26834. What am I to understand by branch roads?—Cross roads leading from main or public roads.

26835. Did they become public roads?—Some of them are, and some are not; some are farm roads.

26836. How are the farm roads maintained?—By the farmers.

26837. Are they maintained by the farmers, or are they sometimes made to townships?—They are to townships in some instances.

26838. How are they maintained? Do the crofters and the landlord co-operate?—When they are for crofters, the crofters maintain them themselves.

26839. Do the crofters appreciate that—are they desirous to have roads?—Very desirous.

26840. Do they grudge the labour bestowed on them?—What the Duke generally does now, when they ask for a branch road or anything for their own convenience, is to say—'That is a thing for you to do yourselves'; but he offers to provide an overseer and give tools for the work in various cases.

26841. He co-operates?—Yes. In the year 1847, when the potato disease came upon us, there was expended upon meal and seed and grain by the Duke of Sutherland for this district, £10,441, 4s. 11d.; and in 1848, £1748, 5s. 4d. Of these sums there were recovered or received by work or labour or money, £6856, 8s. 7d. leaving a balance of £5333, 1s. 8d., which never was paid. In these years there was spent on emigration £4916, 4s. 7d. by the Duke of Sutherland, in sending people at their own special request to America. On trenching and draining, there was laid out £3073 over the district.

26842. Was that trenching and draining chiefly done upon the crofts?—No; partly upon the crofts and partly on the large farms—all set agoing, however, for the employment of the people. The poor rates and school rates are a very heavy burden on this district.

26843. Not quite so bad as in other places?—That may be, but we consider it very heavy.

26844. *Mr Cameron.*—What is the poor rate?—In Assynt £1171, 16s. 6d. on account of the poor.

26845. Don't you know the rate?—I think between school rates and poor rates it is four or five shillings per £. The total assessments last year were—in Assynt, £1171, 16s. 7d.; Eddrachillis, £609, 0s. 11d.; in

SUTHER-
LAND.

KINLOCH-
BERVIE.

Evander
St'Iver.

Durness, £571, 19s. 2d.—together £2352, 16s. 7d., of which sum hat crofters paid £229, 12s. 4d., or one-tenth portion, while the poor emante chiefly from that class. Since the Education Act came into operatioe, there has been assessed from 1873 to 1883—in Assynt, £4972, 14s. 5dn; in Eddrachillis, £2151, 9s. 9d., and in Durness, £1904, 5s. 3d.—together, £9028, 9s. 5d. In addition to that the School Board of Assynt have borrowed £3164 for building schools, and Eddrachillis £1400—together, £4564. These two sums together represent something like £13,500, which has been spent purposely almost to educate the children of the crofters, and people of that class in the district. I suppose the returns made contain all about the stock and acreage of the land occupied by the crofters, so that I need not allude to that. One of the great difficulties in the management of the crofters is the constant tendency to subdivide and subset their crofts. The proprietor or his factor or agents may be as strict as they choose, or may lay down rules framed in the most stringent terms, but still in opposition to all rules, the people will contrive to have a married son or daughter or some relative in the house; and so the lot becomes burdened with two or three families where one cannot exist in comfort. We have done all we could—we have resorted to depriving the tenant of his lot for taking in a married couple; but it is almost impossible to check it. I don't exaggerate when I say that every person connected with the management of a Highland estate will bear out the truth of that remark; I speak only of the West of Scotland not of the east. Another great evil, I think, is that the people attempt to carry on two occupations. They attempt to be crofters and fishermen, which I think is very much against their well-being, because they don't succeed very well with either. I see in a few cases where the tenants devote themselves wholly to their land, and industriously manage it and never fish, they are in a better condition and are much better off than those who go to the fishing. We have a very wild stormy winter here, and the fishing is very difficult and very precarious, and then again, being fishermen unfits the people very much from labouring on the land. They go to work on the land against their will. They think it a species of slavery to till the land—at least a great many of them do.

26846. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Taking the first matter which came up to-day, you say evictions took place in Anderson's time, and before the property came into the possession of the house of Sutherland. I suppose you don't know whether what is said to have been done by Anderson with regard to removing these people is true or not?—I know he attempted to remove people, and I know by tradition and the talk of the country that there was a very disagreeable riot in Durness in consequence.

26847. So that in point of fact all you can say is that you don't hold yourself or your noble constituent responsible for it?—That is so.

26848. You don't justify what occurred?—Oh dear, no.

26849. Still the people have their grievance?—Yes. I can easily understand that this is a very sore subject with them.

26850. You have been present all day and have heard the people tell themselves that they are very poor in their circumstances, some of them stating they are gradually getting worse? How can you account for that?—I don't concur in that opinion.

26851. Don't you think they are telling the truth?—I think their condition this year has been bad and that that is working very much on their minds. I think they are materially better off, a good deal, than they were before.

26852. The population has decreased in Sutherland in your time?—It has, and I think it has been a very great improvement that it has done so.

26853. But still, notwithstanding that, there is no doubt—whether it is true or not—that there is a great deal of dissatisfaction in the country at the existing state of matters?—I think there is that upon every estate you will go to.

26854. You don't say it does not exist?—I never saw an estate yet where there was constant satisfaction, and I am sure that is your own experience.

26855. And under every factor?—Under every proprietor and factor, let them be as kind and good and liberal as they may, there will be some dissatisfied spirits.

26856. What are the arrears upon the property in your district at present?—The rents of this district were never better paid than they were last year. The arrears at this moment are a mere bagatelle. I don't think they are much over £100. But we are very particular about the payment of the rents, not for the value of the rents, but for the benefit of the people themselves, because we consider that it is a very great stimulus to exertion on the part of the tenant, that he knows he must pay his rent at the proper time—it makes him industrious and strive to earn it.

26857. Are you aware that it is sometimes necessary for the tenant to go to his neighbours and borrow money to pay the rent?—I have not the least doubt but a number do that.

26858. But still you stand to it that it is a good principle?—I think so.

26859. Crop or no crop, the rent must be paid?—The fact is the crop here is a very small affair compared with the stock.

26860. Then stock or no stock, they must pay the rent?—There are cases of people without stock.

26861. You stated there was a large sum laid out upon roads—£29,000,—and another sum on bridle paths. Is it or is it not the fact that for these roads the tenants and crofters in the county of Sutherland have always been paying a tax?—They never paid a farthing for the making of these roads, but they pay for keeping them up.

26862. Was there any such thing in old times as statute labour; was not the time of the people exacted for making roads?—Yes.

26863. Which was afterwards commuted into a cash payment?—Yes.

26864. How then is it that you take the whole credit for the roads when you find the people are taxed for them and have paid for them?—The county of Sutherland has a special Road Act for itself, in which Road Act there was a clause to the effect that no new roads were to be made. The consequence was that all new roads made were made at the expense of the landlord. The landlord paid them wholly out of his own pocket and maintained them a great many years. But we came to have a general Road Act which passed a few years ago, and a number of these roads were added to the county roads, and are now under the management of the Road Trustees.

26865. Were there any roads made in Sutherland by the old Commissioners of Highland Roads and Bridges?—There were, from Bonar Bridge to Tongue, and from Bonar Bridge to the boundary of Caithness.

26866. But the estate had charge of all the rest?—The Road Trustees.

26867. I am speaking of the time before the Road Trustees were in existence. The estate had the whole management?—I suppose they had, but that was before my day. When I came here there were Road Trustees.

26868. At the time the tenants were paying this assessment of a few shillings in place of statute labour money, to whom did it go?—To the Road Trustees.

SUTHER-
LAND.
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KINLOCH-
BERVIE.
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Evander
M'iver.

SUTHER-
LAND.

KINLOCH-
BERVIE.

Evander
M'Iver.

26869. And who were the trustees?—Every farmer paying over a certain sum was a trustee, and every heritor was a trustee.

26870. Had the crofters any voice?—No.

26871. You said—perhaps it was not intended, but it gave me the impression—when speaking of the expenditure under the Education Act, that 'all this heavy assessment was practically for the benefit of the crofting population'?—These new schools principally, but not wholly?

26872. Is not that the same all over Scotland?—It is the law.

26873. Then why did you single out the crofters as being more especially favoured?—Because it was the crofting population that created the necessity for the outlay.

26874. Are you quite sure of that, because we have found in our investigation, clergymen and others say the Act is one which never should have passed for country parishes?—Well I think education has deteriorated since the departure from the old parochial system.

26875. Do you sympathise to some extent with what Mr Finlayson stated about education?—It is a new subject to me.

26876. But if there was a young lad now-a-days who had some talent, he really would be practically shut off from getting any secondary education?—He would, and that is the fault of the law, because formerly every parish schoolmaster was obliged to submit to examination, in order to ascertain if he was able to teach Greek, Latin and Mathematics, and all subjects suited to enable him to go into the profession; at present many of the teachers have no Latin or Greek, or any of the classics. The whole or a very large portion of the county of Sutherland here, is under sheep farms and has a very small population, and the population, such as it is, is very much dotted on the sea-coast.

26877. What was the intention—what was the object—of those who removed the people from Strathnaver to the sea coast?—That is going back to a time before you or I was born, and it is a subject upon which I have no knowledge whatever. There has been no such removal in my time.

26878. You don't perhaps care about expressing any opinion in answer to my question?—I think if the people were living in a bad climate and poor circumstances, where they could not support themselves, it was not such a cruel thing to remove them to where they could live better.

26879. Have you not heard it stated as an apology that the people in these glens were not very well off, and that if sent down to the sea-coast they would devote themselves to fishing and make a more certain livelihood than they did when living in their native glens?—I have heard that stated.

26880. That being the case, what facilities were given them by those who committed those acts in the way of making harbours and quays where the fishing could be satisfactorily carried on by the people—in any place, beginning at Caithness until you come round to Ross?—There was a great complaint made that there was no pier at Rispond, but there is a pier at Rispond for which the Duke of Sutherland paid a great deal of money.

26881. If it were alleged as the reason of removing the people, that they might become fishermen, what facilities were given to the fishermen to go to sea?—I cannot answer that question; it was before my day.

26882. Are there any facilities?—There are very fine natural harbours.

26883. Will people from the East Coast—Banffshire men and others—come to your natural harbours with their decked boats?—There was a number of fishermen from that county fishing from Loch Laxford this year.

26884. Can you mention any more?—I suppose here at Loch Inchard there is a very good harbour. Just inside where the steamer is anchored they come, and they can get to sea very easily from there. There are a great many places they come from. But I grant you this, that there is a great want of piers, and I think that is very much more felt since steam communication become so common, because steamers must have piers to go to at all times of the tide. They cannot remain till the tide will rise; they must go away; and there is an absence of piers along the coast of this district, which I have myself represented to the Duke of Sutherland.

26885. You have seen the necessity for it?—I consider there is a necessity, and I think if there were those piers there would be much more likelihood of curers and fishing coming to the place.

26886. In this very locality they complain of the heavy carriage?—Their communication is almost wholly by sea with Thurso.

26887. We have seen the great reclamations the Duke of Sutherland has been carrying on in some parts of the country. What is the general size of farms that have been constituted out of these reclaimed grounds, about Lairg, we shall say?—They are very large farms. That is not in my district; but they are large farms. There have been a few crofters placed on that ground also, as well as farmers.

26888. Is there any intention, are you aware, or if not is there any reason why something of that kind should not be attempted, seeing that the people wish to get their crofts enlarged?—Well, it is a very adverse climate. It has been found that the climate about Lairg is very unsuitable for arable farming.

26889. But in other parts of the country?—I can only speak for my own district, and I don't consider there is any soil or climate in my district to which crofters could go and where I could say they could farm with advantage.

26890. But I am told you are a good farmer yourself?—I don't profess to be so.

26891. But you have a fine farm?—I have a very small farm.

26892. You have very fine stock?—I cannot say they are, for they sell very cheap.

26893. Is it not the fact that in your own district here, although in a minor degree compared with other parts, there is a good deal of land now under sheep farms which once was turned over by the plough and is now lying idle?—I don't think there is any which has ever been turned over with the plough. It may have been with the *cascherm* and spade.

26894. But there is a great deal of that land lying waste?—No, I don't think there is 500 acres in the three parishes which you could say had been so cultivated.

26895. Is there land that could be taken in?—No; I don't think there is. The Duke of Sutherland came round this district to search for land, and he went away with the impression that there was no such thing to be had. And then the expense of taking in any land in a rocky, stony country of this sort is such that it will never pay either the landlord or the tenant.

26896. What are you going to do with the people in these bad times?—I would recommend a number of people to do what I have practised myself. I am the father of seven sons, and not one of these seven sons has remained with me. They went to India and Australia and Cape of Good Hope and to England; they went to fight their battle in the world, and I would recommend very strongly to the crofters of this county that their families should go and do the same.

26897. But you would have liked to keep one son at home?—I would,

SUTHER-
LAND.

KINLOCH-
BERVIE.

Evander
M'Iver.

SUTHER-
LAND.
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KINLOCH-
BERVIE
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Evander
M'Iver.

but I had no way for him. I could not afford to keep him at home.

26898. A crofter only wants to keep one son at home?—I wish that were the case.

26899. They have told us so—that if they could get a big croft they would be willing, when the lot should be settled, that only one son should be left?—If you give a new farm say to twenty crofters this year, in twenty years you will have forty families on it.

26900. Notwithstanding the rule?—Let you lay down all the rules and laws you can. It has been the most trying subject with the management of this district; and I am sure it is the same on every other large estate upon the west coast.

26901. The population of Sutherland, you have said is decreasing. How low will it be necessary for the population to come before those who remain in Sutherland will be all comfortable?—I can only speak as to this district.

26902. You have between 5000 and 6000 of a population?—Yes.

26903. 5293?—Yes.

26904. How small must the population be before they will be comfortable?—I think for their own good and the good of those who remain one-half should go away.

26905. What will you do with the big sheep farmers?—They are going away in spite of us. We cannot get the farms let. We will have all the sheep farms in the country on our own hands in a short time. I may tell you that the Duke advertised two farms this year, and there never was a single candidate for either.

26906. Do you think that is what was expected by those who constituted the big sheep farms originally?—No, I don't think it is; it was a profitable business for a number of years, a number of people made fortunes on them; but it is very much the reverse now.

26907. What benefit is a big sheep farmer to the country compared, we shall say, with fifty small people in comfortable circumstances?—The benefit to the country is that it is always desirable for the landlord and the country that the tenantry should be thriving and prosperous. There is nothing more trying than a poor tenantry to the proprietor.

26908. But you don't find your small tenantry poor. They pay their rent; what more do you want?—I want no more if they will conduct themselves according to the rules of the estate. I have every sympathy and every kind feeling towards them. I have been brought up amongst the same class all my life and anything I recommend I recommend for their good.

26909. When the large sheep farmer who has come from the south goes away at the end of a nineteen years' lease, what does he leave behind him in the way of improvement in the country unless a few sheep drains?—Perhaps his farm was not adapted for anything else. There are sheep farms in this district that you could not make ten acres of arable ground out of.

26910. Is a big sheep farmer an improver of land?—He drains his land.

26911. And leaves all the arable land out of cultivation?—If there is arable land upon it; but it is a very scarce article I am sorry to say.

26912. He has no object in keeping his houses in particular order?—Oh, yes, for his own good; and when he is bound by his lease he wishes to perform the conditions of it.

26913. Are the large farmers as a rule not very exacting upon the landlord for everything they want in the way of buildings and fences and other things?—I think every tenant is exacting, if you come to that.

26914. We have seen with our own eyes enormous houses, almost like palaces, occupied by sheep farmers?—A tenant who pays £1200 or £1400 a year must have a good house. We charge a fixed rent and lay on a certain sum and charge no interest. We put everything into good order at the beginning of the lease and we fix the same which should be laid out, and the tenant is bound during his lease to keep the houses, dykes, and everything in good order, and so to leave them at the end of the lease.

SUTHER.
LAND.
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KINLOCH.
BERVIE.
—
Evander
M'Iver.

26915. While the houses of the cottars and crofters seem to be getting worse and worse, am I correct in saying that on large sheep farms you will see a very respectable dwelling house and near it a very much larger one indeed, the sheep tenant not having been satisfied, and having wanted a bigger house?—I don't know any case of that kind in this district. I can give you particulars of the improvements in Assynt, but I think it would be more proper to give them there, rather than here.

26916. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Is it the case that the crofters' houses are getting worse and worse?—I don't think that, because we are in the habit of giving away slates and lime to the tenants and re-building their houses if they are going to build. No doubt the crofters have to lay out a good deal of money in building the houses. It is a serious matter for a crofter to build a house.

26917. But are they getting worse and worse?—I don't think so; that is not my opinion.

26918. A delegate stated to-day that the rules which give encouragement and assistance differed from those in the Tongue management. Is that so?—I don't know what they are in Tongue. If a tenant is going to build a new house he gets wood and glass and slate on credit, payable in three instalments at the end of three years; and a very large sum has been expended in the parish on slates and given to the people, and a very great part has not been paid.

26919. Does he get wood for flooring?—No; but he gets couples for the roof and wood for the windows and doors; that is all.

26920. Was it the late Mr Loch who laid down the rules under which you give assistance?—Yes, Mr George Loch.

26921. And have you continued his system?—Yes, there have been very few houses built in Durness, and there has not been so much given there as in other parishes; but there have been one or two good houses built in Durness, and the people have been assisted in the way I have described.

26922. You stated that you thought crofters should not be fishermen and that the fishermen should not be crofters; but have the crofters sufficient land to be able to make a living from the land alone at present?—The crofts are perhaps too small as a rule, but where the croft has anything like 4 or 5 acres, and a man pays close attention to it, he can do.

26923. But if the crofts are, as a rule, too small in the meantime, the people must devote themselves to fishing?—I suppose it is a necessity of their situation.

26924. And you don't see any means of enlarging the crofts except by reducing the population?—What I should do would be to enlarge the crofts by adding vacant ones to others; but it rarely happens that we can do that.

26925. Have you found that the people have got their full summing on the place?—Some have and some have too much.

26926. Have they on an average got the full summing?—Very nearly, but not quite.

26927. Have they more or less stock than they used to have?—I think not more.

SUTHER-
LAND.

KINLOCH-
BERVIE.

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Evander
M'Liver.

26928. Do you think it is rather decreasing?—I think so.

26929. That is not a sign of increasing prosperity?—They are limited to a certain number, according to the rents, and they can only keep that number, however prosperous they are.

26930. But you say they have hardly their full summing, and they used to have rather more?—I think they had a few years ago.

26931. Did they sell a great number last year owing to the high price?—Yes, a great many cattle were sold last year owing to the good prices in the latter end, and even now that is going on. There are high prices going just now for cattle.

26932. *Mr Cameron.*—I don't think you said anything about the doctor?—Well, there is only the one doctor for the two parishes of Edrachillis and Durness. The house built for him was at Badcall, and it is the fact that it is not in a central position. It was proposed that he should be brought to a central position at the head of Loch Inchard, but when we came to consider what it would cost, it was found that it would take £1000, and the Duke declined to be at that outlay.

26933. What salary does the doctor get?—£55 from each of the parishes, and the Duke of Sutherland gives £40 and a free house; and he has his chance of practice besides.

26934. You don't see your way to establishing the doctor within a reasonable distance?—I would like extremely that such an arrangement could be carried out, but it is want of means that is the difficulty.

26935. Reference has been made to a direct representation of the crofter class being on the School Board. Is it not your experience that, in a wide parish like this, where there are so many schools, and where the School Board only consists of five members, a direct representative from the class of crofters might be difficult to find?—Yes, but a man of sufficient education and intelligence would be difficult to find.

26936. Do you think the crofters would be likely to agree upon one man of their own class?—I think it would be very unlikely for them to agree.

26937. Would not it be the case that a crofter in one district might perhaps act more in favour of his own district and against the other districts?—There would be very apt to be such a feeling.

26938. Don't you think they are tolerably well satisfied when they are represented on the School Board by the minister of their church?—I think as a rule in this district the people have every cause to have confidence in the School Boards as they exist.

26939. But if they get in the School Board the minister in whom they have confidence, they consider that that is perhaps better than a representative from their own class?—I should think so, their own clergyman; and I have always been most anxious that there should be one of their own clergy upon every board.

26940. There was a remark made by the first witness to-day to the effect that the crofters never got a favourable answer to any application they made to you?—I deny the truth of that. It was the Duke of Sutherland they referred to, but I deny the truth of the statement.

26941. The Rev. Mr Ross mentioned that when the question of the doctor came up at the Parochial Board meeting, the large tenants who happened to be members of the board did not support him, or voted against him, because they were afraid of losing their farms?—I think it is a most unfounded assertion, I think it was a very unfair statement.

26942. Don't you think it unlikely that the large farmers would do that?—I think that was a very unworthy remark.—*Rev. Mr Ross.* That is an inference made from a statement of mine. It is in my written

statement what I mentioned about the doctor. I made a motion, the terms of which I forgot, and I mentioned in my evidence in answer to questions, that General Scobie always supported me, and that Mr Clark always supported me, but that when I made the motion it was not seconded. It was a statement of my own, easily explained, that the farmers were near the time of renewing their leases, and the inference which has been stated from my examination I don't concur in.

SUTHER-LAND.
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KINLOCH-BERVIE.
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Evander M'Iver.

26943. I find, on referring to the shorthand writer's notes, that you were asked—'They can, if they choose, insist on having a doctor in the 'parish?' and you answered—'I often said so, but it happened that it 'would be of no avail. At every change of doctor I fought for it, and 'once I made a motion, but it was not seconded. It was very near the 'renewal of the leases, and the large farmers quite naturally avowed they 'did not like to oppose the authorities at the time of the renewal of their 'leases.' I withdraw that, if I said it; it is a mistake. I regret very much that I had not my written statement, for my memory and my faculties are failing. There is no doctor for the parish nearer than a remote corner of Eddrachillis, 30 miles off, and the parish of Durness pays one-half of his salary for the benefit of Eddrachillis, as we get very little benefit. That is all the statement I made in the paper, and what I intended to say in my evidence.—*Mr M'Iver.* Might I be allowed to make a little explanation about the doctor's house. There was only one doctor for the three parishes, Assynt, Eddrachillis, and Durness, and the house was built in the most central place for these parishes. It was found the doctor had often to cross the sea, and had great difficulty in getting to Assynt. It was then determined to have two doctors in place of one, and a house was built for the Assynt doctor at Lochinver, and the doctor for Eddrachillis and Durness remained in the old house. That is why the house came to be placed in such an out-of-the-way situation for the parishes.

—*Rev. Mr Ross.* With reference to what has been said about roads and the people paying no part of new roads, I wish to state that in the year 1831 all the crofters from Kyle, Stru, and Scourie to the parishes of Durness and Tongue had 5 per cent. put upon their rent for what the factor called town bye-roads. Then they paid one-fourth per cent. for district roads; and for other roads 4s. per cent. The factor told them, when these town bye-roads were made, this would be taken off their crofts and in place of that it was put into the rental, and the Duke of Sutherland gets that, or the factor, I don't know which. But you may say that the people are robbed out of that money or defrauded, because that was the very way it was done. Another factor put no taxes on for roads at all but made everything rent. The people were blinded out of their rights and all the rates have been put into the rents. They are paying the percentage still. The people also complain of being hampered in connection with the fishing industry. There was a circular sent out by the factor this summer that the poor fishermen could not fish when it was close time.

26944. *The Chairman.*—You had your own examination, which, was of considerable length, and you had a fair share of our time, and I don't think that I can take your examination over again.

[ADJOURNED.]

SUTHER-
LAND.

LOCHINVER, SUTHERLAND, FRIDAY, JULY 27, 1883.

LOCHINVER.

Present:—

Lord NAPIER AND ETTRICK, K.T., *Chairman.*
 Sir KENNETH S. MACKENZIE, Bart.
 DONALD CAMERON, Esq. of Lochiel, M.P.
 C. FRASER-MACKINTOSH, Esq., M.P.
 Sheriff NICOLSON, LL.D.
 Professor MACKINNON, M.A.

Rev. NORMAN NICOLSON MACKAY (45)—examined.

Rev. N. N. Mackay. 26945. *The Chairman.*—Have you been elected a delegate by the people here?—I have.

26946. Was there a large meeting of the people?—At some of the meetings. I was not present at any of the meetings except one; which was not large. I should say fifteen were present, but the people were away from home to a large extent.

26947. Did these people represent this locality or come from a larger area?—They represented the locality in which they lived.

26948. Have you got a statement which you would like to read?—Yes; I was also appointed a delegate in other districts, without my being present.

26949. How far does the area of your charge extend?—I have a church 24 miles from the one beside my house here.

26950. 24 miles from this?—Yes.

26951. You are minister of a district 24 miles across, how long in the other direction?—7 or 8 miles broad.

26952. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Is it a part of Assynt?—It is Assynt proper.

26953. Is there another Free Church minister in the parish?—Yes, at Stoer.

26954. And you two represent the Free Church in Assynt?—In the civil parish of Assynt.

26955. *The Chairman.*—Will you make your statement?—‘Notes of grievances of the crofters of Assynt, and of proposed remedies.—Grievances.

(1) The crofters of this parish were, many years ago, swept with a clean sweep from an area of about 80,000 acres, and crowded on a narrow border of rocky land along the sea-shore, among crofters already occupying that part. Excepting the bleak mountain tops, this border is the worst land in the parish. (2) But let me at once come to the present condition of the people. There are now in Assynt about 360 crofters. There are also about 200 cottars having no land; and there are nearly 100 paupers resident in the parish. The 200 cottars are a burden on the crofters, who out of kindness give them generally potato ground, a ‘cows’ grass, peat moss, &c., rather than see them want. This is a heavy tax. The paupers are also a great burden on the crofters, seeing that the general allowance for the poor from the rates is 1s. or 1s. 6d. a week. This of course will not support them, and the rest of their support remains to be supplied in kind by the crofters. The poor rates is upwards of 2s. in the pound, and it would be a serious matter to increase it. Indeed, justice requires that Government should at an

' early date give some attention to the uncommonly high rates in some Highland parishes. The school rate is 8d. in the pound (we have not the benefit of the favoured clauses); and all the rates together exceed 3s. in the pound. (3) There is no compensation for improvements, e.g., the Duke may take possession of any of the crofters' houses at any time without compensation, because these houses are claimed as the property of his Grace whether he gave assistance to build them or not. Again, if a crofter has a lot or croft which he can improve, and that he does so, it is alleged that it is usual to raise that man's rent soon; and it is certain that if a crofter gets money for improving his lot, the interest of that money continues to be charged in all time coming. The large farmers have got great reductions of rent in Sutherland within the last few years, but there has been no reduction to crofters. Some of them, who were in great distress this year, applied to the Duke for a reduction, but it was not granted. (4) The crofts are so small, and so exhausted by constant tillage, that they are quite inadequate to produce food for a year for a family; and in most cases it is impossible to find any land among the rocks to add to them. The average crop which can be raised by the crofters of Assynt will support their families only for from three to four months. These crofts will keep the families at constant work only for three or four months. The average rent of an Assynt crofter is a little over £3. It will thus be seen that the present crofts would require to be increased fourfold so as to supply sufficient food to the families, and to engage the energies of the people for the whole year. Were this done the rent would be £12 on an average, calculating from the present rent as a basis. And on such a croft a man would be able to keep four or five good cows, one good horse, and twenty-five good sheep. I say good, because their present stock is very inferior, being equal in value to one-fourth of the same number of good stock. (5) There is plenty of land in Assynt for this addition. The rents of some townships have been excessively raised, e.g., Achmelvich paid, in the time of the father of one of the present crofters, £18, and it now pays £84, and there has been no addition of land. They feel greatly burdened by what they call the death premium or rate. This is an addition of about 10s. to the rent whenever a crofter dies and is succeeded by his son. This increase is charged yearly in all time coming. The man who enters into possession of a croft has also to pay the arrears of the former occupant. (I could not get sufficient evidence of this, and I thought at first I should strike it out; but it was mentioned by several people, and I afterwards thought it better they should speak to that themselves.) (6) The old people remember when they had a full right to all the fish in the sea and the lochs and rivers around them. Now they dare not set lines or herring nets near where salmon nets are set. And their liberty to walk among the hills is now circumscribed. They feel it a grievance to have their former rights thus constantly diminished. The young people are becoming more intelligent, and their indignation at the wrongs done to their fathers and grandfathers, which still remain unredressed, and the fruits of which they are now compelled to reap, is fast increasing. (7) The crofters of the township of Clashmore were evicted about twelve years ago, and there was an attempt to evict the crofters of Elphine and Knocken more than twenty years ago, but the attempt was unsuccessful.

26956. 'More than twenty years ago'; does that mean about twenty?—It means between twenty and thirty years ago. (8) The crofters cannot get any of the large farms although they are loudly seeking land, pressingly in need of it, and twice petitioned the Duke to

SUTHER-
LAND.

LOCHINVER.

Rev. N. N.
Mackay.

SUTHER-
LAND.
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LOCHINVER.
—
Rev. N. N.
Mackay.

' give them a large farm when the lease of it was out, and its tenant
' removing. (9) May I be permitted to reverse two of the things in the
' above statement, so as to show how they would look from the landlord's
' point of view. There is, as has been seen, an increase of 10s. when a
' crofter dies, but suppose this reversed, and that it was a decrease of 10s.
' for each crofter when a proprietor died. How soon would the pro-
' prietors cry out they would be ruined, and with good cause. Take
' another case. The proprietors, with the assistance of the law
' officers, have thrown down hundreds of the crofters' houses, and
' left them homeless on the hill side; but suppose the crofters, with
' the aid of the law officials threw down the houses of the proprietors, what
' a cry would the whole land raise over this cruelty and wickedness. (10)
' The Duke encourages and assists the building of new houses; notwith-
' standing this there are too many houses in the parish still in which
' the people are under the same roof with their cattle, and enter by the
' same door. (11) It is a great evil that there is not a rising scale of
' crofts at £10 and upwards. And perhaps a greater evil is that there is
' only one class of inhabitants, a middle and higher class being almost
' entirely wanting. Proprietors or their commissioners, and large farmers
' ought to be resident among the crofters for half the year at least. (12)
' This would greatly tend to prevent another hard grievance, viz., the
' despotic nature of the management of most of the Highland estates.
' The despotism may be often paternal, still it is a despotism. One man's
' will (the factor's) rules whole parishes in all their concerns without limit
' or check. I blame not the men, but the system and the circumstances.
' Factors find themselves placed in remote districts with enormous and
' almost absolute power over nearly every person there, and the more they
' exercise this power, the more the love of power increases, and impatience
' of all opposition increases; these men in these circumstances would be
' more than human if they did not sometimes commit excesses in the
' exercise of this power, and do things which it would be painful to bring
' to light, and which they can hardly see in their true colour unless set
' before the eyes of the public. There ought to be a check upon the
' management of crofters in the interest of proprietors, factors, and crofters
' alike. The best check would be one by Government such as the Board
' of Supervision is upon Parochial Boards, or something not very different.
' —*Remedies.* (1) A business man, a lawyer, is needed for the Highland
' crofters, to be at first appointed and paid by Government to take their
' side (the crofters') in all arrangements and disputes with the representa-
' tives of the proprietors, for the factors are always sharp business men,
' who regard it as their duty to do their very best for their masters, and
' who thus make every arrangement as far as possible in the interest of
' the proprietors, and generally against the interest of the crofters.
' Examples can be multiplied, such as settling cottars on the outrun of
' crofters, making them pay rent to the proprietor, and not reducing, but
' increasing the rent payable by the township thus injured. (2) The
' great need is more land. If the people are to be raised a large
' farm suitable for crofters would need to be looked out, and divided into
' lots, at rents of £10 and upwards, and offered to the crofters and cottars.
' The Government ought to come forward with a large and liberal measure,
' to co-operate with proprietors in once more getting the crofters and
' cottars settled in a fair measure of contentment and comfort. This
' would pay much better than wars with wild tribes. Let the crofters
' and cottars be settled on the land of their forefathers, and they will
' form a very effectual and cheap fortification of the coast; and supply
' splendid recruiting material for army and navy. At present there is only

' one Sutherlandshire man in the 92nd. But if a satisfactory settlement does not take place serious complications may arise which will require much money to put them right. (3) The next great need is work. And no work is so close at hand, and so much needed as the improvement of the large farms which are becoming fast deteriorated by brackens, heather, and rank grasses; these can be subdued or removed only by trenching. Draining is also necessary. Government and proprietors could co-operate in this matter also, and both would be benefited as well as the poor people. At present the people have to go far in search of work, and spend most of their earnings often in journeying to and from the works, and in wandering in search of work. Frequently their poverty is so great that many cannot leave home in search of work for want of money to keep them alive till they can get employment. Another work much needed is the constructing of quays at Lochinver and Oldney for fish curing. Those who have the larger lots are the most active workers as well as the most comfortable. And those who have plenty to do at home are very diligent. I wish the Commissioners saw the number who leave this parish in a year with their bags on their backs in search of work and the number of girls who go south to service. (4) Another thing much needed is such a change of the law as would make evictions impossible as long as a crofter paid his rent, and along with this compensation for improvements would require to be secured. These things if granted would restore the courage, and confidence and activity of the people, and set an object before them which would inspire them with habits of diligence and thrift. NORMAN NICOLSON MACKAY, *Free Church Minister of Assynt.*

26957. By whom was this paper drawn up?—By myself.

26958. Was it read in public to the persons whom you represent, or has it been communicated to them in any form?—Yes, it was communicated to them. I forgot to take the scroll of paper with me, but I repeated it verbally to the people and they approved of it.

26959. So that it substantially represents their opinions?—Yes.

26960. And I need not say that it represents your opinions exactly?—Exactly.

26961. The first and principal complaint is the smallness of the holdings—the necessity for extension?—Yes.

26962. Do you think that the small holdings in which the people are now confined can be extended by additions to their present holdings, or would families have to be removed out of their present holdings into other regions?—They would have to migrate to other regions. The population would require to be thinned very largely—three-fourths removed out of the present township and placed elsewhere.

26963. Could the present township, in any cases, be enlarged by the addition of land on their own borders?—I don't know any in this parish except one district, two townships, where that idea could be carried out—Elphin and Culkin. I may correct that statement perhaps;—it would also suit in Unapool, but not without removing the houses.

26964. In the case then of small tenants being transported from the present townships into new places and new townships formed, I understand you to say they would not be able to build their own houses or make their own improvements, in the first instance?—Very few of them. The more comfortable of them who have holdings rented at £7 and £8 would be able, perhaps, to build houses, but there are not many of them.

26965. Then your proposal is that the landlord should undertake the duty, assisted perhaps in one form or another by Government?—That is

SUTHER-
LAND.
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LOCHINVER.
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Rev. N. N.
Mackay.

SUTHER.
LAND.

LOCHINVER.
Rev. N. N.
Mackay.

26966. You stated that the people lived in a position of dependency upon the will of the landlord, and that one might be turned out at any moment without any compensation whatever?—I said so.

26967. Practically, have there been cases of arbitrary eviction within your recent knowledge?—Not since I came into the parish; I have only been in the parish for nine years.

26968. You spoke of the increase of rent imposed on the death of the holder, do you understand that the estate management intend that increase to be progressive, or does it only apply in the case of a death of the present holder—I mean, in the case of the death of the second holder, would it apply again?—Yes, to the second and third and fourth; I don't think it has been continued steadily on, but there is a report (whether it is true or not) that the proprietor intends to change that.

26969. So that, in the case of a rapid succession of deaths, there would be a rapid succession of increases, without any reference to the increased value of the holding?—Yes.

26970. Did you ever hear it stated that this rule, of increase at the death of the holder, was in consequence of a new valuation put upon the holdings, and that it would terminate as soon as that increased valuation was arrived at?—The rate of which we are speaking was charged before there was a valuation of that kind. The valuation took place as soon as I came to this parish about four or five years ago. I am not quite certain of the number of years, but I should say it was five or six years ago. This rate was charged for a long time previous to that.

26971. Is it understood by the small tenants generally to be an unlimited and progressive rate of increase associated with death?—That is so.

26972. You stated that it was customary on the estate for the arrears of the previous occupant, in case of removal or extension, to be paid by the incoming tenant?—I have been told so, but that, as I have said already, is a point, which I could not get established to my own satisfaction.

26973. May it not possibly be a payment for certain improvements left by the previous tenant—the value of the house or offices or something of that kind?—They insist that it is so.

26974. That the arrears of rent of the previous occupant are charged to the incoming tenant?—Yes.

26975. Does the incoming tenant besides that pay the outgoing tenant of the landlord anything for the houses or improvements left by the previous occupant?—Nothing, as I understand. It might be in that form perhaps, and possibly the representatives of his grace will explain it in that way. Perhaps that is their reason for charging the arrears, but I don't know.

26976. The arrears of rent belonging to the holding are paid by the incoming tenant; are they paid down or spread over a succession of years in the form of increased rent?—I think they are paid very soon or at the time.

26977. In describing the hardships which were attached to evictions, and the removal of the population and of their houses, you stated it would be considered very hard indeed, and would create a great sensation, if the poor tenants or occupiers were to pull down the houses of the proprietors and evict them; and that, you say, would create a greater sensation than the corresponding hardship of the proprietors pulling down the houses of the tenants. Don't you think there is some distinction between altering the condition of your own property and of altering the condition of the property of others?—Yes, there is a very considerable difference; but, at the same time, there is not such a difference that the

law should come forward and allow the proprietor to do this to scores or hundreds of families at the same time. This may be said upon the other side, that the proprietor would be much more able to settle himself down in much the same comfort elsewhere, than these poor people could command. They might starve or die before they were settled somewhere else.

SUTHERLAND.

26978. I don't wish to deny the hardships which might be imposed upon the people, but it occurred to me that it was rather a dangerous thing in a public document, to set one case exactly opposite the other, without making the distinction of doing what you like with your own, however harshly, and doing what you like with the property of others?—I am quite ready to allow that. At the same time I think I am bound, in doing anything, to look from the tenant's point of view in what I am going to do—to look from the point of view of the other side, and to look at the crofter's point of view as much as possible.

LOCHINVER.

Rev. N. N.
Mackay,

26979. You have alluded to the number of people who leave this county to seek for work elsewhere. I should like to know whether it is in any cases the head of the family who leaves and goes away for work, as well as the younger members. Are there cases in which a married man is obliged to leave his home and seek for work?—Plenty, most of the people leave in that way.

26980. Most of the heads of families?—Yes.

26981. Go away for agricultural work elsewhere?—Yes, as labourers. Do you think that this long separation of the head of a family from his wife and children is felt as a great hardship?—It is.

26982. Do you think it is ever accompanied by any bad moral result?—Our people are very moral. This county stands, I think, about the highest in Scotland in that respect.

26983. Did you ever know of a case of a man availing himself of this long separation to desert his family?—Never a case of a native. I have known one case, but the man was not a native of the parish.

26984. In fact the people uniformly return faithfully to their families and bring their earnings with them?—Yes, this man I refer to went abroad and never returned, and never communicated with his wife and family.

26985. And do the younger people who go out in many cases assist their parents with their earnings?—They almost always do. I have known one or two exceptions, and I have gone to speak to one person myself who was at service in Edinburgh, about assisting his father. I think he did not do much for his father, but the cases are very few where children don't send home something to their parents.

26986. May it be said that the rent of the holdings is paid, and the home of the family preserved by the co-operation of the whole family with their earnings?—It may.

26987. You mentioned two particular cases of recent eviction or attempted eviction—one at Cleashmore, from which the people were evicted twelve years ago—can you relate the exact circumstances of that eviction?—There are delegates who can speak to it much better than I can.

26988. And the same with reference to the alleged attempted eviction at Elphin?—Just so.

26989. Can you give the names of the delegates?—William Mathison for Clashmore; Hugh Mackay, Donald McLeod, or Murdoch Macdonald from Elphin.

26990. Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.—Have you, of your own knowledge, known of the successive raisings of rent on the same croft?—No. I never inquired into these matters except when the people spoke of them; and this brought these matters to my ears much more than they used to come.

SUTHERLAND. 26991. But these cases of successive raising were cases related to you ?—Yes, and the delegates will speak to them.

LOCHINVER. 26992. Is there any complaint of the amount of the rents—are they said to be too high ?—No, most of the townships don't complain of the rents. They think the rents reasonable.

Rev. N. N. Mackay. 26993. Is it in the case of the heirs of the former occupant, or in a case of actual change of tenancy, that the arrears of rent of the former occupant are carried on to the new occupant ?—Every case.

26994. Have there been many cases of actual change of tenure ?—Not very many. There may be one in two years, or one in a year. Mr M'Fver will be able to state that precisely.

26995. You cannot detail the circumstances of any of these cases ?—No, I don't know when new tenants are taken in, I have known cases, but I don't know how many. Don't let me be misunderstood, I don't mean that they are taken from other parishes or districts ; I mean people who are not heirs of the people who died, who get the land.

26996. What becomes of the heirs of the people who die ?—Perhaps they remove ; they have removed out of the district. I knew a man last year who removed from the district because he thought he could better his circumstances, and his land was given to another man.

26997. In that case did the second man pay the arrears ?—He did. I have not made particular inquiry, but there are delegates who can speak to that precisely ; it was in Elphin.

26998. You stated, at the conclusion of your paper that people would 'be inspired to habits of diligence and thrift if they had more land.' Do you think, in consequence of the smallness of their holdings, there is now any want of diligence in their habits ?—I think circumstances have made the people very much what they are ; but I wonder they are so active and diligent under the circumstances. They can work their land in three months of the year ; all the work that is required to be done about it, and unless they go away to work somewhere else they are for nine months in the year without very much to do. I don't mean that they are idle for that time ; but I mean they are careless, supposing the work would not be accomplished in the time it could be. They know there is plenty of time to do it, and that, perhaps, they will not get much to do.

26999. In practice do they not absent themselves for five or six months from the country ?—It depends on the success of the fishing. If the fishing is bad they will be away seeking work a long time.

27000. How long does the fishing last ?—I should think about three months.

27001. If the fishing is bad how much longer time do they spend outside the country ?—Perhaps six months more.

27002. Nine months altogether ?—Some of them will stay away that time.

27003. Do heads of families ever absent themselves for nine months ?—I believe so.

27004. If they make enough money at the fishing, then they are only absent three months ?—Yes, usually a short time if they get work ; but the difficulty is to get work.

27005. You think if there were work for them at home they would work ?—I am certain of it, because I find that the men who have large lands are very diligent men. I have spoken to one man, advising him not to work so hard, because I thought he would kill himself, and leave his poor weak family without anybody to take care of them. This is a man who has got a large lot, and who pays about £7 or £8 of rent. Another man beside him got a bit of land to cultivate for himself and he

is as diligent as any man anywhere. The men would work if they had the work here.

27006. Are the bits of land they have, insufficient as they are, as well drained and cultivated as they might be?—In some instances they are not so well drained as they might be. But the people have not been used at all to work the land in a proper way. They have not the quantity of land, nor a place where they are inspired to work it properly, and where they could make a good lot of it if they tried.

27007. But do you think they could get more produce off the land than they do if it were better drained and better cultivated?—In some instances they might; but the most of them get all they can out of the land.

27008. I ask you that because you say that with more land they would be inspired with habits of diligence and thrift, as if they did not possess those habits at present?—I say they have these habits, where they have land to give scope to their energies.

27009. What is the exact meaning you attach to the word ‘proprietor,’ throughout the paper?—An owner of land.

27010. Lord Napier has asked you about the distinction you draw between the rights of the proprietor to knock down tenants’ houses, and the right of the tenant to knock down proprietors’ houses. What do you mean by ownership?—That the possessor has a right to the property, to the goods or to the property.

27011. And has an occupier an equal right?—In the Highlands I consider that the peasantry have a far greater right than elsewhere. In the case of a chief or head of a clan, I think the head of that clan came very likely into the position in which he finds himself through the assistance of the crofters all round about him. He and they have grown up upon the land; they have made him chief, and he has always felt that it was his duty to protect them. I don’t say that either the chiefs or tenants have now the same feeling; still, I may say this before the Commission that I find the regard for clanship strong in the people here, and they are very loath to give up the idea that their proprietor won’t do everything possible for them; they would rather lay it upon any man in the world than upon him. They are deeply attached to their proprietors.

27012. *Mr Cameron.*—I suppose you don’t mean that people would have the right to knock down the house of the chief, and not of any other proprietor?—No, certainly not, but I should certainly say a greater right, if they have any right at all—that is, if the chief wishes to knock down their houses.

27013. It appears there is a great number of cottars in this parish, how did these people get there?—The origin of them is very much the clearances of sixty or seventy years ago.

27014. Were there as many cottars in the parish at that time as there are now?—I should think there were few cottars at all; the people had the whole land of the parish.

27015. The cottars have come here subsequently?—The cottars have been formed out of the people who were cleared away—the people who were cleared away did not all get land—and the increase of population. I might add that this parish is fast decreasing in population, because the young people are not allowed to marry or settle in the parish. For the last decade the decrease has been 225.

27016. But is not marrying and settling in the parish, the principal cause of the superabundance of cottars, and the poverty consequent upon that?—I do not know indeed; I think it a most extraordinary thing when I look at the register of marriages and compare Dornoch with this parish. There are scarcely any marriages here at all in comparison with the parish of Dornoch.

SUTHERLAND.

LOCHINVER.

Rev. N. N.
Mackay.

SUTHER-LAND. 27017. But I am speaking more about the cottars. As I understand you, the cottars are a source of poverty?—They are a source of poverty.

LOCHINVER. 27018. Then, does not the existence of these cottars arise chiefly from marriages and the settlement of the members of another family in the parish?—Sometimes it does.

Rev. N. N. Mackay. 27019. Then how can it be an evil to prevent these marriages and the settlement of these members of the family?—The evil is this, that the people get none of the land. When a farm is vacant the people cannot get it with the same readiness that a large farmer would get it. There is never an advertisement for a large farm or any farm for small cottars or crofters; it is always for men of capital.

27020. But you recognise the existence of the cottars as an evil, and admit that they principally arise from intermarrying and the settling of younger members of the family upon the croft with their families?—I do not agree with that.

27021. You stated in relation to the taxation under the Education Act that the county of Sutherland was omitted from the favoured clauses of other counties in the Highlands?—Yes.

27022. You are aware that an attempt was made in Parliament a few years ago, to get Sutherland included, so far as it could be done?—Yes.

27023. But that was not successful?—No. I have spoken to one Member of Parliament, at any rate, about the matter, who was interested in Sutherlandshire, to see if it could not be brought forward again, and he told me the difficulty was that other counties were anxious to get the benefit, and that that would form a barrier.

27024. Do you see any reason why the county of Sutherland should not be included in these favoured clauses, seeing they were intended for the benefit of districts which were very sparse in population, and of which the rental was comparatively small?—I cannot conceive of any reason.

27025. The county of Sutherland is as Highland as Inverness, Ross, or Argyle?—It is so. And the west part of it fully as poor as any part of these counties.

27026. You are aware of no reason why, so far as is practicable, something might not be done to give Sutherland the benefit which these other counties have from these clauses?—I am not aware, and I am hopeful it may be done.

27027. You said there was plenty of land in Assynt suitable for crofters, can you not mention the names of the farms?—At present the farm of Glencanesp, with an area of 50,000 acres. Part of that farm is suitable only for a deer forest; it is all turned into a deer forest, but there are two parts of the farm which, in my opinion, it would be a very great pity to put under deer forest; it is very suitable for crofters indeed.

27028. Of this farm you think two-thirds might be a deer forest and one-third for crofters?—Yes, or half to the deer forest and half to the crofters.

27029. There are other farms suitable for crofters?—Yes, one was vacant two years ago, and the present occupant took it for three years, and in a year it will be vacant again—the farm of Auchmore. The same remark applies to that farm. There is a part of it, a large mountain, which would be suitable for a deer forest.

27030. The same sort of property as Glencanesp?—No, it could be joined to another farm of about the same size, and a forest could be made.

27031. What proportion of Auchmore might be made forest, and what given to the crofters, in your opinion?—I should think about two-thirds to the crofters, and one-third not so suitable.

27032. Will you please tell us what the large farm was for which the crofters asked, and were refused?—Ardvar. SUTHERLAND.

27033. What is the size of that farm?—It pays a rental of over £400.

27034. You mention that you think, a remedy for one grievance of the crofters would be that a lawyer should be appointed to transact their business. I presume you have not thought that out. You are not prepared to say in what way he should be employed or paid?—I think the difficulty is that, when the large farmer wishes to make an arrangement with the proprietor, or has a grievance, he has resources to enable him to consult a lawyer, and he is sufficiently intelligent to know that he ought to go to consult a lawyer. But when a crofter has an arrangement to make or a grievance to state, it is not so, and he often thinks he has a grievance when he has none, and that the proprietor is doing a very illegal thing, when he is doing a legal and proper thing. If he had a lawyer, the lawyer would tell him at once the proprietor is quite right, or the factor is quite right.

27035. Has he not the same opportunity of employing the services of a lawyer as any one else?—No, he has not, because he has not the means and has not the intelligence to enable him to go about it.

27036. Who should pay this lawyer?—The Government at first; and I think, that in a few years, the people would find the benefit so great that they would pay the lawyer themselves. It would pay them very well, if they could only understand it, to do it now, and it would remove many a grievance.

27037. What sort of township or village is Elphin?—It is a considerable township at the side of the road to Ullapool.

27038. Is it not rather a well-to-do village?—It is better, because they resisted eviction.

27039. Are their holdings of larger size than the holdings of the other crofters in the parish?—Yes.

27040. And have they plenty of hill pasture?—They have much more; they have about two-thirds of what would do for them.

27041. When this attempt at eviction was made, was it intended to add their township to a large farm?—It was intended to form it into a large farm for a gentleman in the neighbourhood.

27042. What form did their resistance take?—They all met together and formed a sort of cordon around their township, and resolved several days beforehand, that the sheriff's officer should not enter the township unaware to them, and they had men there by night as well as by day, and when the sheriff's officer came, the women went out and grappled with the man, and I think, threw him down, and took the summonses out of his pocket, and they were burned in his presence, and then he was allowed to go away home.

27043. Professor Mackinnon.—I suppose you have gone over the whole length and breadth of the parish?—I have not over every step; but I have gone over it in every direction.

27044. Is there a very large area of it which was once occupied, but which is not occupied now?—Very large; I should say three-fourths.

27045. The traces of occupation are still visible?—Quite.

27046. Was there much of it cultivated in old times?—Yes.

27047. It bears the mark of cultivation yet?—Yes, green spots, now getting covered with brackens.

27048. I suppose you are not much of a practical farmer yourself?—I have been trying it for nine years. I am about as good a farmer as the men in the holdings around me.

27049. Do you think these places could with advantage be cultivated

LOCHINVER.
Rev. N. N.
Mackay.

SUTHER-
LAND.
—
LOCHINVER.
—

again?—I think the people would perhaps do as well by having stock, as by cultivating the land in this parish; they could make a very good living by keeping stock and cultivating as much as would keep the milk cattle during the winter.

Rev. N. N.
Mackay.

27050. But make the bulk of their stock sheep stock?—Sheep stock, and young cattle, to winter out nearly the whole year.

27051. Do you know any example of a grazing croft—a croft composed principally of pasture land for grazing—that is being worked with advantage?—I know a croft where the people make most of their income by the stock; and in fact, here, the people make most of their income by the stock. It is the stock which pays the rent of many of them.

27052. You don't see anything in the nature of things to prevent a small grazing farm as well as a big grazing farm being worked with advantage?—No.

27053. Where are these places in the parish chiefly—where the people lived long ago?—I could give you the names of fifty townships, and there is a man here who can enumerate fifty townships which were at one time inhabited.

27054. I suppose there can be no idea of the population which inhabited them at one time?—Oh yes, you can form an idea—a rough guess.

27055. They were not so thickly crowded upon one another then?—
No.

27056. They were spread over the whole place?—Yes.

27057. Do you know if there are any of the delegates who would be able to speak to this statement in the paper about the payment of arrears by the succeeding tenants?—I have no doubt of it. I think most of the delegates would be able.

27058. And is it the feeling of the people themselves that that is for arrears and not for value received in the shape of houses or anything of that sort?—That is their idea.

27059. It is the exact amount of arrear and not the exact value of anything they get?—Yes, simply because the proprietor wants this money, and wishes to make it a condition that nobody can get a lot until he gets possession of the arrears.

27060. The arrears are paid by the incoming tenant whoever he may be?—Whoever he may be.

27061. I think you instanced the case of Auchmelvich where there has been a considerable rise of rent; is that an exceptional case?—No, it is very nearly the same thing in Inverkirkag and Strathan.

27062. Have you any idea when the most material rise or rises of rent took place?—I could not say.

27063. Is there anyone here who can tell?—I think so; but I think it was during the time they were sub-tenants to Mr Macdonald.

27064. In the present administration I suppose there has been no rise in the place?—The rent rose gradually by 10s. and sums of that amount. There was not, I think, a definite time, except when Mr Macdonald got them as sub-tenants, he charged them considerably higher rents.

27065. I might explain that the rise of rent took place very much in this way, by settling cottars on the out-run of the farm and making the township pay in that way—increasing the number of the holdings.

27066. So that, even supposing the actual croft was not raised in rent the township, taken as a whole, was?—Yes. Auchmelvich when it paid a low rent had, perhaps, fewer than eighteen crofters, and now it has twenty-six.

27067. And this is really a rise of rent?—Yes, it adds to the rent of the township.

27068. So that, though a crofter's rent was not altered, the whole township's rent might be raised, so that his rent would be raised although it did not appear so?—Yes; and the rates are also a heavy burden.

SUTHER-LAND.
—
LOCHINVER.
—
Rev. N. N
Mackay.

27069. Do you think there are actual cases in which there have been frequent changes of tenancy within a reasonable period of time—since Macdonald had the place—where this 10s. was imposed?—Yes, I think so. They happened every year.

27070. So that there might be a croft that would be 30s. or £2 dearer than its neighbour croft from the imposition of this 10s. within three shifts?—Yes, the rents in that way are very unequal.

27071. And arising in that way?—Yes.

27072. The average croft you would have for the future would rent about £12?—Yes.

27073. What stock would be upon such a croft just now?—Of the kind of cattle they have just now it would be fully twelve cows, two horses, and about forty or fifty sheep of the present kind.

27074. And the rent of that would be about £12?—Yes.

27075. But you are of opinion that the place is at present overstocked; it would have been better if it had been a different kind of stock and fewer in number?—I don't know, for this place has difficulties at present. It would, I think, on the most of the townships: if they were fenced it certainly would.

27076. Do you think that would be a reasonable rent?—Yes.

27077. But how would you have that rent fixed?—I would just have one farm, as I said, selected, and divided into lots of that size, and put out an advertisement that the young men or crofters able to take it could have it, and I have no doubt they could be got.

27078. Who fixes the rent?—The proprietor himself.

27079. Suppose he should think it worth more than £12?—They could easily get arbitration.

27080. In the event of there being a difference of opinion between proprietor and tenant you would have a third man brought in to split the rent between them?—I don't think it would be necessary on this property; I think the Duke is very fair in charging rent.

27081. You don't think the property is over-rented—the portion in the hands of the crofters?—No, I don't think it. Perhaps in Auchmelvich which was thought to be convenient for fishing—salmon were allowed to be caught at that time—and because it was valuable for people on account of a good harbour, there was a rise of rent, and that was kept on after the herring deserted the coast, and the salmon were taken from the people.

27082. So that it was more a fish rent than a land rent which was put upon the people?—Partly with regard to the rights of the fishing, which were taken away from the people.

27083. I suppose the fishing about here just now pays what one would call a fancy rent?—There is a high rent, I think, for the fishing.

27084. I suppose the people scarcely ever take as much of that kind of fish out of the rivers as would be equal in value to the rent that is being paid for it now?—They might take a great deal more; because formerly fish were much more numerous.

27085. How do you account for that?—Well, there is a curious idea which was mentioned to me—I don't know whether I should mention it to the Commission—that the trout in the loch were much more numerous because the cattle were so numerous.

27086. Supposing the people got the right to these fishings back, do

SUTHERLAND. you think they would use it for their own pleasure or would they sublet them?—I think the people are very reasonable and would be particularly so with the Duke or any of their old proprietors. I think they would have no objection that the proprietor should have the fishing if they were comfortable. The objection to their not having the fishing is this, they feel that other people are getting liberties here which they have not.

LOCHINVER.
Rev. N. N. Mackay.

27087. So that, as a practical solution of the matter, you think things might remain as they are if the people were put into a comfortable condition otherwise?—Yes.

27088. And leave the proprietor to get the fancy rents people choose to give?—Yes.

27089. Has there been within recent times so much eviction in the place as to make the fear of eviction a real practical grievance, or rather a matter of principle, right, and sentiment?—I don't think the people are now afraid, although it happened in the case of Clashmore; I don't think they are afraid of being removed in townships; they are more afraid of being removed singly.

27090. Even if single removals were frequent that might create a genuine feeling of grievance?—Yes.

27091. And do you think the people consider it a matter of practical grievance?—They are frightened; they think there is something in which they might offend the proprietor or anyone who has power with the proprietor. They say, 'Are you not afraid you will be driven away from your croft.' I don't see myself that removals have been so frequent as to give cause for their being so much afraid.

27092. Would you expect, supposing there was fixity of tenure, as it is called, conferred upon the people, would you expect greater improvements to be made upon the crofts?—Decidedly, that is, if the crofts were larger.

27093. In what direction could the improvements be made?—Improvements could be made in trenching and draining.

27094. Have the people drained the crofts themselves?—Yes.

27095. And you would also expect they would work hard at them?—Yes.

27096. Too hard in some cases?—I have no doubt of that?—I have no doubt during the first few years some men might kill themselves.

27097. Might not that be used as an argument against it?—There is nothing without evil connected with it.

27098. You would risk that evil?—Yes.

27099. This matter about a Government lawyer; is that a thing you lay stress upon?—The crofter's lawyer I would call him.

27100. Appointed and paid by Government; would that be a matter which the crofters would consider for their improvement; or is it more your own opinion?—It is more my idea. I have not heard any of the crofters speak about it, but I have heard many things which could easily be settled in that way. I have heard people talking of grievances which were not grievances; and I have heard of things being done which would not be done if there were a business man to write two lines about it.

27101. Have you considered the other side of the question?—I know there are two sides to every question.

27102. Do you think if there had been a sharp business lawyer opposed to a sharp business manager in fixing the rent of the crofters, the end might not be an increase in his rent?—I don't think it, I think two equally sharp men would just come to about a proper meeting, the result would come out in the proper place if the two sides were equal.

27103. Don't you think higher rents could be got upon this property if they were asked for?—I believe they could. The people are not able to give the fancy prices which a person coming here to shoot would be able to give.

SUTHER-

LAND.

LOCHINVER.

27104. And might not the fact of employing a sharp business lawyer be to take the highest rent that could be got?—I don't think so; I think it would be the other way.

Rev N. N.
Mackay.

27105. You are quite in the belief that there is plenty of land in the parish to give the increased holding you wish to the people?—I have no doubt of that. The parish has still sufficient for all the people.

27106. And about as suitable land as the land they have?—More suitable; it is the worst land they have.

27107. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You have been asked a good deal about one matter which has appeared in the paper. You were asked to try and explain the difference between the proprietor knocking down the houses of the tenants, and the tenants knocking down the houses of the proprietor. You said 'Take another case. The proprietor with the assistance of the law officers, have thrown down hundreds of the crofter's houses, and left them homeless on the hill side, but suppose the crofters with the aid of the law officials threw down the houses of the proprietors, what a cry would the whole land raise over this cruelty and wickedness.' You did not intend that the small tenants should do this without the assistance of the law officers?—Never, and I never expected the law officers to give them that help.

27108. You say there are 200 cottars depending more or less upon 360 crofters, can you give me any idea how many there are upon big farms?—In most cases none.

27109. Crofters pay poor rates, don't they?—They do.

27110. Then, besides paying their poor rates they are saddled with the burden of the cottars?—They are, and the paupers.

27111. You were also asked if some of the cottars were a source of poverty in the district?—Yes.

27112. Was the cause of that not very much that the predecessors of those cottars were driven away from places which supported them?—That was the cause actually.

27113. And it is not correct to say that it is the cottars being there that is the cause of the poverty; you must go further back to find out the origin?—Yes; it is simply beginning at the wrong foundation; it is not the foundation at all.

27114. You were asked a question by one of the Commissioners as to whether the crofter's places were as well drained and cultivated as they might be. Supposing the crofter does drain well and cultivate his place and make it a very good place altogether, and the landlord takes it into his head to have a valuation of his estates, and sends for men from a distance to come and value it, what would be the effect upon that valuator's mind?—Would he not value that croft higher than one which was not in a good condition?—Certainly, such a case as that has happened, I suppose.

27115. Is that practically not a great deterrent from improvement?—I should think so.

27116. Without any permanence in the holding on the part of the crofter, is it not really to his disadvantage to improve where he only stands from year to year?—It might be to his disadvantage greatly.

27117. What do you understand by rent in reality? Do you mean a certain quantity of produce of the subject?—I have always looked upon it as what the proprietor chose to charge for the land that he gave. I

SUTHER.
LAND.
have not entered into the economic view of it to see how this was to be got, or what proportion it should bear to the produce of the soil. I have not considered much the economic view of it.

LOCHINVER.
Rev. N. N.
Mackay.
27118. Are you aware that most of the crofters here don't earn their livelihood out of their possessions?—I am aware that none of them does that.

27119. May I come to this conclusion then, that the rents paid by the crofters to the Duke of Sutherland are earned out of the county?—In a great measure.

27120. About the additional rent which is paid when the son succeeds the father; do you recollect when the valuation of the estates was going on a few years ago of Mr Macdonald of Newton, North Uist, and another gentleman going about?—I do.

27121. When was that?—I cannot tax my memory exactly to the time, but I should say five or six years ago.

27122. Is the whole country completed now?—I don't know. These gentlemen walked along the road and saw the land; they did not go over the land.

27123. Was this increase put upon the people at the death of an occupant, in existence upon the estate years before that time—before Mr Macdonald of North Uist was going about?—Yes, most decidedly.

27124. Supposing it were stated that it was in consequence of the increased valuation put by Mr Macdonald, North Uist, upon the crofter's land, would that be consistent with your own knowledge?—I don't think anybody would pretend to make such a statement.

27125. You state with regard to several of the present crofters, that about three-fourths of them would require to be migrated?—Yes.

27126. Are they willing to migrate, so far as you are aware, to better pastures?—All the most intelligent of them are. This, I believe, would be the result; the most comfortable now would leave their holdings for bigger ones, and those who were not would be glad to have the medium ones.

27127. What is the cause of the large number of paupers; are they generally old people?—Some are old and some are young.

27128. Are the young people relations?—Yes, of people so disabled that they are not able to do anything for themselves.

27129. Would you say that the proportion of the roll are people over 70 years of age?—I have not looked carefully into that.

27130. There has been a decrease in the population of 225 in the last ten years; are the people a bit better off than they were?—No.

27131. And the decrease is going on?—Yes.

27132. And when is it to end?—It would take a little more than a hundred years before they were all done.

27133. Where is this matter going to end—this increase of poverty and decrease of population?—I don't know; I cannot solve the problem.

27134. It seems a very serious one, does it not, for the country?—It does.

27135. That there is a decrease of population and increase of poverty?—Yes.

27136. And they are going on simultaneously?—Yes.

27137. You are aware that the exclusion of the county of Sutherland from what we have been glad to find in other places is called Lochiel's clause in the Act, is a very considerable grievance?—Yes; it is a loss to us at this time and it will continue to be a loss.

27138. As we are more particularly interested in crofters—it is a loss to the crofters?—Yes, I am speaking for them.

27139. Do you know why Sutherland was excluded?—I don't know that I have any opinion that it would be right for me to give in public; but I have heard reasons given.

27140. It was not a thing that was overlooked at the time, but rather done of purpose?—I have been told so.

27141. And not by the crofters?—No.

27142. Is there any deer forest in your parish?—There is one just formed. It is being fenced, and I am sorry for one thing about the fence. The highest wire is full of stobs. It is low enough for deer to jump into the corn of the tenants, but it is so high that if any cow tries to get over it will be stopped.

27143. What is the forest to be called?—It will be Glencanesp Forest I think; some call it Drumsoundlin.

27144. What farms or places constituted the forest before?—It was Mr Scobie's farm alone. Mr Scobie of Keoldale.

27145. Have you any idea of the acreage?—Yes; counting the whole surface, about 50,000 acres.

27146. I presume the constitution of this forest did not involve the turning away of any small people?—No.

27147. They were turned away before?—Yes, long ago. It seems to me quite unreasonable to say that there is no objection to turn large farms into deer forests because the people are not removed from them. People can be removed to put sheep on, but then sheep can be removed to put deer in their places.

27148. About this fence; are there crofts or hill grazing of any crofter adjacent to it?—There are.

27149. And practically the fence is not a deer fence?—No.

27150. And the deer are already beginning to come into the crofters' lands?—No, the deer have to be cultivated; there are not so many of them. You only mean that they may do it?—Yes, they may do it.

27151. Is there any other forest in Assynt?—No; there are shootings, but the people have not the same objections to them shooting over the ground and the farms also.

27152. Is there any other restriction, which we have found in other places, that they are not allowed to go upon ground when the hill sportsmen come there?—It is beginning to be exercised in regard to the forest, but not in regard to the shootings. The shootings and forest they regard differently, and there is another thing which they feel. I don't think the gamekeepers will be very willing to allow them to go in the old paths that they have been accustomed to use for generations.

27153. Are you speaking of the forests just now?—I am. I don't think the gamekeepers will be willing to let them go by these paths.

27154. That then is a practical disadvantage to the crofters?—Decidedly.

SUTHER-
LAND.

LOCHINVER.
Rev. N. N.
Mackay.

WILLIAM MATHIESON, Crofter, Clashmore (63)—examined.

27155. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Were you appointed a delegate to appear here to-day by the people of Clashmore?—I was appointed for that purpose.

27156. How many people were present when you were appointed?—A considerable number.

27157. What did they tell you to say here to-day, or what have you to say for yourself?—What we have to say is that we feel a scarcity of land

William
Mathieson.

SUTHER-LAND. and that we have no elbow room. We have no room for cattle, or even to take crops off the bits that we have.

— LOCHINVER. 27158. Had you plenty of room in the place twelve years ago?—No.

— William Mathieson. 27159. Where were you before the clearances took place?—Balacladich.

27160. Can you tell us anything about the clearances of Clashmore?—I was in Clashmore when it was cleared. It was out of a croft in Clashmore that I went away to where I am now; I was removed to that place.

27161. How many people were turned out of Clashmore?—About eighteen families were removed off the farm which has been made since. Thirteen of these paid rent; five or six were not paying rent.

27162. Why were they removed; did they want to go?—They were all sent out of the place but three. There were only four who left the place. One went to America. The rest were disposed of by crowding them in corners of the place near about, upon others. Some new pasture in the place itself was taken in and occupied by them; I have some of that pasture land myself, and I would be better without it; it has been a source of expense to me ever since I got it.

27163. Who has the land now from which they were removed?—Mr Brown, the innkeeper of Lochinver.

27164. Who got it when they were put away?—It was in the occupancy of the Duke.

27165. How long did it continue in his own occupancy?—Four or five years. He cultivated it for four or five years. I could not speak exactly to the year; it was at least three years.

27166. Were all the people who were removed put into smaller holdings than they had before?—Every one of them.

27167. Were they fairly well off in the old times there?—They required it all; but they are worse off since.

27168. Was there anything mentioned to you at the time you were told to remove, why the Duke was removing you? did he give any reason for it?—The only reason given was that the land was to be made into an arable farm.

27169. Were you obliged to go to another house?—Yes, and to be at great expense before I got possession of it, and loss connected with it.

27170. Had you a good house before?—It was not very good.

27171. Did you get any value for it when you left?—I got £10 for the expenses of removal, and for building the new house, but £50 would not cover my outlay in that matter.

27172. Does that remark apply to the rest of the people who were in the same position as yourself?—All those that were removed got from £5 to £10 in order to cover the expenses of removing, and building their dwellings. Three of them had slated houses and these got £10.

27173. What rent were you paying before?—I paid first £4.

27174. And what are you paying now?—I am paying now £4, 10s. I was paying £5, 10s. until these two years back, when it was seen that the soil was bad, and £1 was taken off the rent. I pay now £4, 10s., but it is not worth £1.

27175. What stock do you keep on it?—I may say I do not keep stock upon it at all. I keep two cows, but not on the income of the lot.

27176. You are obliged to buy?—I am obliged to buy summer and winter.

27177. Have you any hill ground at all?—I have just a share of the hill ground of the place; but it cannot pasture a milk cow.

27178. Generally speaking was a piece of the farm of Clashmore taken away from you?—Yes, a piece of it was taken away.

27179. Are you and your neighbours struggling away in impoverished circumstances to make both ends meet?—Yes.

27180. Are you or the people in the township in arrears of rent?—I have not been in arrears yet any way, whatever may befall. I don't think there is much arrears in the place.

27181. You received a reduction of £1, but I understand that there was an abatement given last year, being a bad season. Did you get the benefit of that?—No, there was no abatement, beyond the £1 of reduction I stated before. There were three new lots made upon the bad ground at the back of the township. One of the tenants fell back in circumstances and could not keep up his lot; nobody could be got to go into the place; and when nobody could be got to take up the croft the three crofts were reduced each by £1 until they got a tenant for the vacant croft.

27182. Have you heard that the large farmers on the estate have got an abatement?—Yes, but nothing was taken off our rent all the same.

27183. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie*.—What was the rent of Clashmore altogether before the improvements began?—I could not tell exactly the rent of the township. We knew our own rents well, and we did not look much into the rents of our neighbours.

27184. What rent were you paying?—Up to £4; the old lot was worth that rent as compared with the one I have now.

27185. Did the Duke of Sutherland take this piece of ground off you for the purpose of reclamation?—It was by the orders of the Duke that it was taken from us.

27186. What did the Duke do with it after taking it from you?—Put it under crop by his own paid servants.

27187. Did he increase the extent of the arable land by reclamations?—Yes, they added to the arable land.

27188. How much?—Twenty acres, perhaps.

27189. Did that double the former extent?—He did not near double it; perhaps there are 100 acres now.

27190. Is the land you have been placed upon the newly reclaimed land?—Yes.

27191. If you had leases could you have reclaimed this land yourselves?—There is no soil, and it would not come under profitable cultivation within the lifetime of man.

27192. Do you think the landlord has made a mistake in attempting reclamation, even putting tenants out of consideration?—We found it a great mistake anyhow.

27193. Is it not in addition to being a mistake for them, a great mistake for all parties?—Probably it was.

27194. Did you get any material for your house besides £10 of money?—I got a roof and lime.

27195. Did you get slates?—No, I paid £5 for a thousand slates which I put upon it. The slates cost £17, 10s., here at Lochinver, and cartage of 10 miles besides.

SUTHER-
LAND.

LOCHINVER.

William
Mathieson.

KENNETH CAMPBELL, Cottar, formerly Fisherman, Balacladich (75)—
examined.

27196. *Sheriff Nicolson*.—Were you appointed to appear here for the Balacladich people?—No.

Kenneth
Campbell.

27197. Have you come to speak for yourself?—I have nothing to say.

SUTHERLAND.
I have told what was to tell already of the townships that are now in the parish.

LOCHINVER. 27198. To whom did you tell this?—I committed it to paper and gave it to Mr Mackay. Here it is:—‘*Townships in Assynt cleared for Sheep Farmers.*

Kenneth Campbell.

	For whom cleared.
‘ p Achana-h-eagluis,	Chas. Clarke.
‘ p Cuilean,	”
‘ p Callda Beag,	”
‘ p Callda Mor,	”
‘ p Ach Mor,	”
‘ p Unabull,	”
‘ p Roinn-throghard,	Wm. Scobie.
‘ p Ardbharr,	”
‘ p Gleann Leirig,	”
‘ Olldanaidh,	Clarke.
‘ p Eilean Olldanaidh,	Geo. Gunn.
‘ p Duralan,	”
‘ p Preas-nau-aidhean,	”
‘ p Bad-lesh-leathad,	”
‘ p Doire beathaig,	”
‘ p Polldan caraigean,	”
‘ p Lethfir ea a dhu,	”
‘ Taobh-mor,	”
‘ p Aisinnite Sbeag,	”
‘ p Lochbeannach,	”
‘ p Aordh-nan-caorach,	”
‘ p Bad-a-bhainne,	”
‘ p Braclach,	”
‘ p Bad-ghrianan,	”
‘ p Re-charn,	”
‘ Adnair,	”
‘ Anfhaolain,	”
‘ Cuoc-nan-each,	Don. McDonald, Cuileag.
‘ Bad-na-h-achlais,	”
‘ Duinn Suardlan,	”
‘ Dubh chlas,	Kenneth M'Kenzie.
‘ Adnair-ubalan,	”
‘ Poll gharbhair,	”
‘ Clach airaidh,	”
‘ Braclach Stochd,	”
‘ Taobh Beag,	”
‘ Lead Beag,	”
‘ Bruochan Beag,	”
‘ Stron chrubaiddh,	”
‘ Lainn,	”
‘ p Rean craitich,	”
‘ Lead mor,	”
‘ Cromalt,	”
‘ p Meoir,	”
‘ Alltnancealgach,	”
‘ p Loch crogach Beag,	Clarke.
‘ p Draighneach,	Geo. Gunn.
‘ Doire Cuilinn,	”

I have seen people in the places marked ‘p,’ but not in the others.
27199. Are these names taken from your statement?—Yes.

27200. And is that from your own knowledge and recollection?—I have knowledge of the matter, and I remember the clearing of some of them. I was in some of them myself; but I do not remember the clearing of them all.

SUTHER-LAND.
—
LOCHINVER

Kenneth
Campbell

27201. Are there any of them where you are not personally acquainted with the circumstances, and have derived your information only from other people who knew about it?—I have seen the one-half of them at least, I believe, and I have got the information about the rest from others.

27202. How far away is your place from this?—About ten miles.

27203. And did you walk here merely to make this statement?—Yes, I walked the whole way. There are one or two of those places where there are some people yet.

27204. Who wrote this paper for you?—Mr Murdoch.

27205. Were these tenants removed from these places that you have named?—Yes, out of every one of them.

27206. Are there some crofters remaining still in some of them?—No, there are no crofters in any of the places named to-day.

27207. Or cottars?—No, not one.

27208. And was the land from which these people were removed joined to or made into sheep farms?—Yes, they were all placed under sheep farms.

27209. How old were you when the first of the places you have mentioned was cleared?—I would have been about thirteen or fourteen years of age when the townships in that country side were cleared.

27210. How long ago did the last of these clearances take place?—About fifty years ago.

27211. Have you seen any evictions of townships since then?—Ardvar was the last township cleared in the parish, and that happened fifty years ago.

27212. How many families were there when you were there, and removed from it?—There would have been about eleven families; I could not give the exact number.

27213. Where were they sent to?—Some of them were sent to Torbreck; then they were removed on to Clashmore.

27214. Where did you live next after that—where was your father sent to?—He remained as a labourer with the tacksman of Ardvar, after that for seven years.

27215. Did he get a croft after that?—No.

27216. Had you never a croft yourself?—No.

27217. You are personally acquainted with most of the places mentioned in this list?—I have gone through the places which I saw peopled, and I have also travelled over many of the places which were cleared before my recollection.

27218. Were they all desirable places to live in?—The very best of places.

27219. Would you say that of the whole of them?—At that time they were all good for the number of people that were there. They had cattle and horses and sheep.

27220. Was there none of them out of the way and with poor soil?—The places were out of the way; I cannot say for the soil; but the inhabitants had cattle, sheep, and horses.

27221. Were the places to which they were removed, so far as you know, better than those they were sent away from?—The places were not by any means good, in most cases, to which they were sent; some were sent to America, some to Ross-shire, some to the rocks upon the sea-shore.

SUTHER.
LAND.

LOCHINVER.

Kenneth
Campbell.

27222. *Mr. Fraser-Mackintosh.*—What rent did your father pay when he had the place in Ardvar?—I do not remember.

27223. Was he in comfortable circumstances?—Yes, he was in comfortable circumstances; he had cattle and sheep.

27224. Was your grandfather in the place before your father?—Yes, my grandfather was in Ardvar.

27225. Have you a family yourself?—Yes, a few.

27226. Where are they? are they in the country, or have they gone abroad?—They are earning wages in the place; they have not scattered abroad.

27227. Is it a source of regret that you have never been in the position of your father or grandfather?—It is with sorrow that I look upon my circumstances henceforward.

27228. Does your family contribute to your support?—They can do very little as yet beyond supporting themselves.

27229. Is that from age, or that they are married?—It is from age; they are but young yet, although I am an old man.

27230. Supposing the opportunity should present itself of the people getting back to their glens, would your children be able to take a croft before you died?—I have only two daughters.

WILLIAM MACKENZIE, Labourer, presently residing at Clashnessie (38)
—examined.

William
Mackenzie.

27231. *The Chairman.*—Have you been elected a delegate?—I was. I am home from abroad, from South Africa.

27232. Were you elected by the people of Clashnassie?—By the people of Stoer, and I have made up a paper here of the general grievances.—‘The general grievances are the insufficiency and badness of the land. Bearing upon these grievances it may be stated that the valuation of 1878–79 shows a large proportion of the land of the parish in the hands of half-a-dozen tacksmen; although the great mass of the population are in poverty because of the badness and smallness of their lots. Those tacksmen have their land valued at £3345, while seven sportsmen have a valuation of £883. And when we set £305 against churches, schools, and shops, and £226, 14s. 11d. for hotels, there remains only £1093, 5s. 4d. for the rest of the population of 2781 souls. The whole of the land available for the mass of the people is really included in about 340 crofts, with their hill pasture divided and sub-divided—these do not on an average yield more than from one-sixth to two-thirds of the support of those who have land at all. This state of things was brought about by a process which Sutherland men would like to forget, if the process had been reversed, and the evil remedied, by the use of means which have made the ears of savages, let alone Christians tingla. Over fifty townships in this parish were made desolate, and the tenants sent hither and thither over the face of the earth, and when they found a resting place at all in their native land, it was on the poorest scraps, rocks, and bogs, and often put in amongst the poorest crofters, subdividing their lots, and intensifying their poverty. Their stock, their furniture, and their houses were subjected to treatment which reduced their value to such a degree that many were in abject poverty when bound to set about the building of houses which were meant not so much for their own comfort as to add

' to the value and appearance of the evictor's property, and which building was often a condition on which they would get any land at all.
' Even when, according to estate regulations, lime and timber were allowed,
' there were so many masters, and so many ways of raising objections to
' individual claims, that the houses had to be got up as the Israelites had
' to make bricks—without straw—or else shift their camp and seek shelter
' elsewhere. Cuilean township was sought by Mr Charles Clark, and in
' due time he got possession of it. There are persons living to testify to
' deeds of violence committed by the officials, to the loss and hardship
' endured by the people. Colin M'rae, Culkein, remembers the extinguishing
' of his father's fire at Achuabeglish, when the victims went to
' cook a little food for their famished and frightened children, exposed to
' any inclemency and shelterless like fugitives. Seven families came to
' Culkein, where were sixteen before them, paying a rent of £12. Some
' got skirts of the land already paid for by those persons occupying, and
' some got the lots taken from poor old persons whose sons had gone to
' the wars on the distinct understanding that the parents would be left
' on their lots, but the soldiers died in battle, and the parents were of no
' more value on the estate book. There are twenty-three crofts in the
' township subdivided into two, three, four, and even five portions. There
' are now thirty-eight families paying a rent for land and making up a
' rental of £70, 10s. 5d. Then there are eighteen cottars who pay the
' Duke from 10s. to 20s. for house stane on the crofts previously paying
' rents, and besides these subdivisions going to impoverish the people.
' There was a tidy farm made of the best of the land and given with a good
' house and steading at £20, 11s. 6d., to one of the agents who for years
' acted the scourge on this part of the estate. When all these things are
' put together the crowding of the people, the curtailing and subdividing
' of the land and the raising the rent, we have Culkein yielding a yearly
' rent of £100 odds to the Duke, and the unfortunate rent producers
' sunk in poverty in a corresponding degree. Nor is this all; by some
' strange satirical fate the noble Duke of Sutherland stands before the
' country as reaping a revenue from the greatest calamity of the widow
' and orphan. There is now on the estate a regulation by which the
' Duke reaps a death premium from every crofter family, when the father
' dies and the son undertakes the support of his widowed mother, his
' brothers and sisters. He has to pay this premium of 10s. 15s., or may
' be 20s. Nor is this all; he goes under the impost as an annual tax of
' from 10 to 25 per cent on the rent. Not long ago a young man, paying
' the rent due by his father, a couple of months after his death, was called
' upon to pay the death premium, not with his own rent when it was due,
' but almost before he was under any rent at all, and along with what
' was due by the father. There is a tale that the rule has been ordered
' to be discontinued, but no one has had any experience to corroborate the
' report, and the theory that that premium is only paid on these crofts on
' which at a recent valuation there was an increase of rent imposed is not
' supported by the experience of any one coming in for a reduction under
' that valuation. It would be ungenerous to pass over a reduction made
' not long ago, it is believed at the suggestion of the present ground-
' officer. There is a croft in Clashmore on which was one of the evicted
' from Clashmore farm, now in the occupation of the Lochinver hotel-
' keeper. This man became reduced to debt and pauperism, and his lot
' was given to Hector Mackenzie, and the rent reduced £1, but even this
' measure of justice under the rules or rulers of the estate, was not
' allowed to run a straight course. The pauper was left in the house of
' the crofter, and Hector pays 10s. to the estate for an old hut on his own

SUTHER-
LAND.

LOCHINVER.

William
Mackenzie.

SUTHER-
LAND.

OCHINVER.
William
Mackenzie.

' farm. Much the same story is to be told regarding the people who ' were evicted from Ardvar and Glenleiraig to make room for William ' Scobie, with this variation, that of those who did not emigrate some ' were put in at Torbreck to the inconvenience of preceding crofters, and ' by the time they had matters in some measure settled, they were ' removed to Clashmore, where further removals shall have to be recounted ' ere we have done. Every removal attended with loss, and every settle- ' ment being for the worse. But there are further variations in the system ' of administration. Donald Macleod, carpenter, who had no croft, ' bought the crop of an emigrating crofter at Culkein, and paid the ' arrears due to the proprietor. This, according to the use and wont of ' the district, established a claim to the vacant croft, but all he was ever ' allowed to take out of his new possession was one crop of his own sowing, ' when his land was laid hold of to add to another croft—the aforesaid ' tidy farm for the semi-official. Donald Macleod was reduced again to ' a landless condition, and had to take a miserable patch behind his ' former lot, and although he was an industrious, well-doing man, and ' anxious to do well for his family, he was ever after denied an opening ' by which to improve his position, and the reasons for this are tolerably ' well known. Colin MacRae, son of the already mentioned Alexander ' MacRae, who came from Auchnaheglish, bought a house from an ' emigrating crofter, but orders came that Colin should give up and ' depart, the ground being wanted for the favoured underling already ' mentioned. This order not being submissively obeyed, the Duke him- ' self came, accompanied by the factor, and Colin's father having gone to ' plead with his Grace, heard the Duke give the order to have the house ' pulled down about the occupant's ears. This was done, and although ' Colin had payed for the timber, he was not allowed to take a stick of it. ' He had to build another house on the pasture ground of the neighbour- ' hood and he pays the estate 10s. 4d. for the site. It has been ' supposed that this sort of work was not possible on the estate since the ' days of the old Duke. Sutherland rule is the same whoever may be in ' the enjoyment of the fruit. John Mackenzie, Clashmore, was accused ' of being a ring-leader in a case of preventing what was regarded as an ' encroachment of the rights of the neighbourhood by Mr David ' Humphrey, and in face of every evidence to his innocence, he was ' sentenced to lose his croft, and he is now a pauper invalid and a burden ' to his neighbours. Donald Macleod, Clashmore, came in for the ' vengeance of the same power in connection remotely with the resistance ' offered to Mr Humphrey, when cutting off part of the Raffin pasture, ' when some boys went to obstruct the work. On this, Mr M'Iver ran ' to catch two boys assumed to have been obstructing the work, reaching ' a house, the boys got out of Mr M'Iver's sight, and he rushed into the ' house, supposing they had entered. There was a very sick woman who ' had been taken out of bed and placed on a shake-down at the fireside, ' Mr M'Iver went on, however, searching for the boys, and tossing things ' about, and so frightened the woman that her death shortly afterwards ' took place. The boys not being there, were not found, and Mr M'Iver, ' as soon as he came out, dashed at two small boys at play. The boys ' who were about nine years of age, and knowing of no offence, did not ' think of running from the factor, remained to be caught. Mr M'Iver, ' seized one of them by the throat, and kneeling down held his captive ' to the ground, insisting that he should tell the names of the persons ' engaged in the obstruction. Hugh Macleod, the boy's brother, seeing ' this, remonstrated with the factor, who now persisted, demanding the ' father's name. Hugh took hold of the factor's hand and told him to let

SUTHER
LAND.

LOCHINVER.

William
Mackenzie

' go, but as Mr M'Iver held on, and the boy being in great danger, Hugh
' now took hold of the hand that was throttling the boy. On this, the
' factor's two sons and Mackay came. The factor said Hugh had struck
' him, but so little evidence was there for this, that an attempt was made
' to get Hugh to criminate himself. After this one of them came with a
' paper for Hugh to sign, which paper proved to be a declaration that he
' was guilty of striking the factor. He was told if he would sign this
' declaration, the factor would be his friend, and he would get anything
' he wanted ever after. But Hugh refused, saying he would have the
' factor prosecuted. The result was, that the father Donald had to
' emigrate with all his family, excepting Hugh, who had a little shop in
' which he carried on some business. The avenger did not rest satisfied
' with what he had done to the father. Hugh was about as offensive to
' him as Mordecai was to Haman. Taking advantage of Hugh's absence,
' his shop and his groceries, which he left carefully in boxes, were
' attacked by order of the factor, and when he returned he found the
' house broken into, and the boxes of goods smashed and damaged to a
' ruinous degree, and the house, which was built at the family's expense,
' except the roofing, was levelled to the ground shortly afterwards, and
' the timber handed to another man. John Mackenzie, son of Donald, an
' old, respectable man of 70, equally without foundation accused of the
' same offence, and deprived of his croft, which had come down to him
' from his forefathers. He went all the way to Lairg, then to Durnrobin,
' and not finding the Duke there, he went to Tarbert; but after travelling
' in all 160 miles, his efforts were in vain. The belief was, that the
' persistent hostility on the part of some of the officials was at the root of
' this. Humphrey said to John one day—" You are bending to the grave,"
" Yes," said John, " but see you are not bending with the weight of the
" evil you are doing to the widow and orphan." Janet Mackenzie, a
' relict of Alexander Mackenzie, had a better croft than many around
her. She was not in debt to the estate, and she was in possession of
good stock; but her husband had left her a croft on which he had
expended much productive labour. This was wanted for the tack,
and she was a widow, so she was set upon, and as she did not go
when the authorities visited, they built a stone wall so as to have
her and her children walled in from water, peats, etc. One of the
children made a breach in the wall, that they might pass out and in,
and this was the only offence which could be brought against the family.
In time, even the unfortunate widow got weary, and she was sent to a
place so poor, that another widow, Mary Macdonald Mackenzie, was
fain to seek relief from it in Greenock. Janet has been living so far on
the stock, and what assistance the children sends her, and the land
which her husband meant for her and her young children's support,
after his death, formed part of the tack. On the same poor croft,
another widow removed out of the same Clashmore, ekes out her poverty
since her eviction. Widow Flora Mackenzie, who has gone where the
" weary are at rest," was removed out of the way of Humphrey's improve-
ments. She had been a widow for twenty years, and had been bed-
ridden for years—so ill that the other widow's cait had to be employed
to carry her to a worthless place. In like manner widower James
Mackenzie was sent out of Clashmore, from a better to a worse half
croft in Achnancarnin. Ann Campbell, an old, unmarried woman,
suffered the same treatment to that of the widows. Another example
occurs here. To make an extension on the same big farm, Kenneth
Campbell was ordered to go, and was compelled to go to a bad lot,
which soon reduced him to poverty and arrears. The pressure for his

SUTHER-
LAND.
—
Lochinver.
William
Mackenzie.

'removal was so urgent, that he was compelled to quit, before he could 'prepare anything beyond the bare walls. In this rootless habitation 'they kindled a fire, and shortly thereafter the mother was taken in 'labour. The night coming on so wet, a neighbour named Matheson, 'supplied a sail to cover the woman in her emergency from the inclemency 'of the weather. There has been an atmosphere of chivalry and loyalty 'around the famous 93rd. The outside world has been believing for a 'half century, that the generosity of the Countess of Sutherland and the 'devotion of the clansmen, set up this regiment in a few days. Fathers 'and mothers devoting their sons, and the young men themselves burning 'with zeal to go to the House of Sutherland and the Crown, and eager to 'offer their lives on the altar of patriotism. In Assynt the great majority 'joined the army on the distinct understanding that their parents would 'be kept in their holdings; but on the return of the survivors, they 'found their parents huddled together on the sea-shore, ekeing out a 'miserable existence, and their former holdings converted into so many 'sheep-walks. For example, Roderick Mackenzie, Ardvär, was assured 'if his two sons, William and Colin, would enlist, that he would be kept 'in possession of his holding, but when they came home they found their 'parents endeavouring to exist on a miserable patch in Clachtoll. Many 'other instances could be adduced. There is sufficient land in the parish 'of Assynt. We could give the name of fifty townships with their hill 'pasture all under sheep and deer, and if we did to our demand for land 'the suggestion that this land, as it falls out of lease, should be restored 'to its rightful occupants. The Duke has been appealed to at different 'times, to break down these sheep-walks into holdings, so as to put them 'within the reach of the people, but he invariably turned a deaf ear to 'their appeals.'

27233. You told us that you were chairman of more than one meeting which was held by the crofters on this matter?—I was.

27234. Were you elected chairman by the crofters?—I was.

27235. Will you tell us how the paper was drawn up?—It was done by me.

27236. Did you write it yourself?—I did it at our meetings.

27237. The substance of it is your own?—Yes.

27238. Your own composition?—I had some help with it.

27239. Who gave you the help?—Different parties within the last two days.

27240. Parties resident in the district?—Yes; the Rev. Mr Mackay on the Monday night before the meeting helped me to put it in order.

27241. Did the Rev. Mr Mackay compose any of the paper which you have written?—No.

27242. Did he strike out anything from the paper which was submitted to him?—He did.

27243. We have heard the Rev. Mr Mackay's name mentioned; had he no share in the composition of this?—I had the first page from him, that was all. It was at the first meeting, and there were very few present.

27244. On what occasion did you and he compose this page?—Was it a private meeting?—He gave me that sheet with the valuation.

27245. Had he nothing to do with the rest of the paper?—No.

27246. Did he see it?—No, not this paper.

27247. Is it your own hand-writing?—No, I had an accident some time ago; and could not write it.

27248. Who wrote it?—I would rather not say the name of the man who wrote it.

27249. Is he a crofter?—No, he is not.
27250. What objection have you to tell?—The writer of it is Donald Mackenzie.
27251. Who is he?—He is just here on a visit, and I got him to write it for me.
27252. Where did he come from?—Glasgow.
27253. So that you had the assistance of Mr Murdoch and Mr Mackenzie in the composition of that paper?—Yes?—*Donald Mackenzie*. All the assistance I gave was to make two or three grammatical corrections on the paper.
27254. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh*.—How long were you abroad?—Six and a half years.
27255. Have you resolved to stay in this country, or are you going back again?—It depends on how my health is recruited.
27256. Have you been anywhere else but in South Africa?—No, only South Africa.
27257. Did you go out just upon the chance of making your fortune, or under a special agreement?—I went out specially under a contract.
27258. Where did you get your education?—Stoer.
27259. Is that the only education you have got?—That is all.
27260. *The Chairman*.—The greater part of the statement which you have presented is composed of alleged acts of injustice or oppression on the part of the factor or proprietor towards poor helpless persons, and especially widows. I wish to know whether you have made a careful inquiry into every particular case or whether you can state of your own knowledge that these circumstances are correct?—Yes, of my own knowledge I can, because every word was read between four and six times at the meetings. I daresay there were some meetings at which it was not all read. The object of that was to get the statements in proper order.
27261. Was the whole paper, in its present form, approved of at any meeting which was held?—Yes, it was approved of at every meeting.
27262. How many persons were present at these meetings?—Sometimes there would be twenty or thirty and so on, because at this time of the year there are few at home. Many of the people who should have come are away on the East Coast, and we can hardly get more than twenty at any time.
27263. Were there crofters present?—There were.

HUGH MACKAY, General Merchant, Greenock (60)—examined.

27264. *The Chairman*.—You were elected a delegate?—Yes.
27265. By the people of what place?—Assynt generally.
27266. You are intrusted with a statement to make to us?—My statement is very short, and something similar to what has been already said. ‘The general grievance in this parish is insufficiency and badness of land. This state of things was brought about by the Sutherland clearances which Sutherland men would like to forget. But one point to which I should like to draw attention is that in Assynt about the beginning of this century the great majority of young men joined the famous 93rd on the distinct understanding that their parents would not be removed out of their holdings during their life; but when the survivors returned, they found that the promise had been broken, and

Hugh Mackay.

SUTHER-
AND.

LOCHINVER.

Hugh
Mackay.

'that the parents, for whose sake they had enlisted, had been deprived of their land, and were eking out a miserable life on barren spots along the sea-shore. The general size of holdings in Assynt before the clearances was the keeping of from twenty to thirty black cattle, a hundred sheep, from forty to fifty goats. They were not poor people; they had savings of money forby. Now their holdings are too small for that, and their cattle, although they are called cows, are only miserable beasts. The reform wanted is larger holdings, security against evictions and raising of rents, inducements to improve and reclaim land and build suitable houses, outrun for stock, and local harbours to encourage a fishing as distinct from a crofting class.' The want of that was the reason of so many people being cottars, being a burden on the tenants.

27267. Of what place are you a native?—This parish.

27268. Did you leave it early in life?—I left it about twenty-two years ago.

27269. Have you been in Greenock since that time?—I have.

27270. Have you been in constant communication with your native place?—Yes.

27271. And have continued to take an interest in it?—Yes.

27272. Have you from time to time, continued to return here?—Yes.

27273. And have spent some time amongst the people?—Yes.

27274. You have alluded to the fact, if it be a fact, which is an extremely interesting one, and which we have heard mentioned elsewhere, that is, when the Highland regiments were raised, those who enlisted only did so under the distinct assurance that their relatives should have some benefits and securities attached to the tenancy of the land?—Yes.

27275. In fact, the people went out to the army in order to preserve their parents and ensure them a happy and safe life?—That is it.

26276. In what year was the 93rd raised?—They were enlisting here before I was born; but we have brought the tale down from sire to son.

26277. Do you know in what year the 93rd (or Sutherland) Highlanders were first raised and embodied?—I cannot exactly tell the year; but it is a thing which is generally known.—*Rev. N. N. Mackay.* About 1800.

27278. The Sutherland Highlanders were raised and embodied in 1800; that was before the great clearances?—Yes.

27279. Can you tell me whether there had been clearances before that on the Mackay estate?—No, I don't think it. There were no clearances of any note before that.

27280. The great clearances took place some years subsequent to the embodiment of the 93rd regiment. Are you able, of your own knowledge, to state that there were some or many recruits for that regiment raised in Strathnaver?—Oh, yes; and a great many in Assynt. I mind of more than 40 pensioners in my younger days being paid in this parish; and now I question if there are two.

27281. Can you tell me where any record of this supposed assurance can be found; whether in any co-temporary book or newspaper it is mentioned that this supposed assurance had been given by the proprietor of the Sutherland estate, or by the Mackay or Reay family?—It was by the commissioners of the then Marchioness of Stafford, but she was not resident then.

27282. You state that this alleged assurance was given by the commissioners of the Countess about the time the regiment was raised in 1800?—It was the general talk from sire to son since I recollect, and I have seen some of the soldiers when they came home going to the stances

where their fathers had lived and shedding tears, and saying they would go and pull down Dunrobin Castle. I have no assurance that there was an exact statement made by the Marchioness of Stafford.

27283. That is an interesting point, and I should like to get any co-temporary evidence of it written at the time?—I have no document to testify to that, at least, not within my reach.

27284. It is a tradition of the country?—It is a general tradition of the country.

27285. Which you believe to be well founded?—Yes, I mind of the men to whom the promise was made.

27286. And they stated they had taken service on that understanding?—On that understanding alone, and any man who had not a son to go on that understanding was paying £40 to get a man.

27287. You mean that besides this understanding, the relatives were receiving a bounty of £40?—No; the tenants who wished that their sons should not go paid £40. My grandfather had only one son, and he would not allow him to go away, and he paid £40. They tried to get him enrolled again, and he said his man was killed in the army; my uncle said he was killed already, and if it had not been for that he would have been taken out a second time.

27288. But was the £40 paid to the proprietor, and did the proprietor purchase a substitute?—He purchased a substitute.

27289. Or did the man himself who was to be exempted purchase the substitute?—The recruiting sergeant got the substitute.

27290. But that was not a legal claim upon the tenant?—No, it was not a legal claim; they paid it voluntarily when they would not allow their sons away.

27291. I would be much obliged to you if you could furnish me with any co-temporary document or evidence illustrative of this alleged contract between the proprietor and the men?—I shall make my utmost endeavour, and I have no doubt it could be got in the county of Sutherland.

27292. You have spoken of the desirability of establishing a fishing class distinct from the crofting class, is that a suggestion founded upon your own opinion, or is it a suggestion which you think would be acceptable to, and approved of by the people of the country generally?—I do think it would be approved of by the people generally in the country. I have suggested it two or three times since I came to the parish, and they were all approving of the scheme, and I know from my own experience it would prove very productive, and of benefit to the place.

27293. When you say a distinct fishing class should be established, do you mean that these fishermen and their families should have no land attached to their cottages at all?—He would be a fisherman in this country, but would not have a cow's grass; but there are a great many cottars who have no privilege at all unless they get it from others, and I have seen them, before this 10s. came in, pulling down their houses, and the fishermen would be very glad to get the stones of the houses.

27294. Do you think yourself these cottages should have a cow's grass and a garden or a yard attached to them?—I think so, in a place so far away from conveniences.

27295. Supposing a man had a cow's grass how would he support the cow in winter without a field to raise hay or corn upon?—He would need to have an acre of land.

27296. But the acre would not keep the cow and feed it in winter?—They would need to do their best. The acre I referred to would be for winter provender.

27297. But he must have the right of pasture for the cow, an acre for

SUTHER-
LAND.

LOCHINVER

Hugh
Mackay.

- SUTHERLAND. provender, and potato ground?—He would do better without potato ground; it would be far better for him to apply his time to fishing.
- LOCHINVER. 27298. A little kail yard?—That takes in the grazing of a cow.
- Hugh Mackay. 27299. A cottage, grazing for the cow, and a field to raise provender for the cow's winter keep—what do you think would be a reasonable rent for such an establishment for a fisherman?—I am not able to say. That all lies with the proprietor's manager to say. In some places it would be worth double what it would be in other places.
27300. It would be worth a good deal in Greenock?—Yes, it would. I am paying £300 rent, and I have not three yards of spare ground.
27301. *Professor Mackinnon.*—I suppose it was the belief all over the country side, that this arrangement was made about the soldiers who went away?—Yes.
27302. And the money payment you adduce as further proof that the belief was well founded?—Yes.
27303. The payment of the money is produced as more substantial evidence that the arrangement was made then, than the mere belief with regard to the people who did not pay. If you did not provide a man you had to pay £40?—Or we would be threatened to be removed.
27304. When you said they paid that £40 voluntarily you meant that otherwise they would have to go?—Yes, just that.
27305. Do you think there can be any man found in the country who paid the £40?—No.
27306. Or the son of any one?—No, they are all dead and gone now, the old pensioners are dead and gone.
27307. You said there were forty pensioners in the parish when you were young, but there are now only two?—If there are two there are no more. There is one, Kenneth McLeod.
27308. This is a large stock which you say was held by the crofters in the old times?—Yes, a fine stock.
27309. What is the best evidence that can be had of that now?—There are people living to this day who can testify to that; children of men who were removed.
27310. Do you know if it was a common custom in this parish, that the large farmer had a whole stretch of country, and had small crofters under him?—Yes.
27311. Would there be any of these sub-tenants who would have such a stock?—No.
27312. These you have mentioned held their land direct from the proprietor?—Yes.
27313. And they were scattered all over the country?—Yes, from Aultnancealgach to Stoer Head.
27314. You have no idea of the rent that was paid for this average croft of which you speak?—No. In the upper reaches of the parish it was by the merks that the lands were held. Five, six, seven, eight, and ten and twelve merks. I think the old merk came from the north, the merk Scotch. Down about Clachtoll in these days they were only paying from £25 to £30 of rent. But when the sheep system came into vogue that raised the land—5s. 6d. worth to £1; and shortly after that again, when they could not pay that it came down to 15s. a merk, and it is still at that I suppose.
27315. If there was a disposition to restore the old condition of things, do you think it would be practically possible to do it in this parish today?—Yes, and there is not another county in Scotland better adapted for small crofting than the county of Sutherland, with its enormous ocean wealth, and rivers and lakes, and its natural harbours; its railroads are

lying dormant which would give a great return to the house of Sutherland, if the land had been cultivated and inhabited as it might and should have been.

27316. There is no use in asking you whether that should be done?—No, for that has been my belief for 20 years.

27317. Conditions of life have been changed since 1800, how would you manage the education of the people if they were scattered about?—I think this is the worst system of education that ever came to the Highlands. In my younger days the parish schools would, I think, prove better.

27318. But supposing the people are in the small communities they were in fifty years ago?—Do as they did in those days—get a schoolmaster and pay him themselves. But that would not do now; schools are more fashionable than they were then.

27319. You think the education could be managed?—Yes, there is no mistake about it.

27320. They would have very far to go to church?—They could soon make churches.

27321. Would it be reasonable to expect that there are a considerable number of people in the place, who by their own means, or assistance from friends, could put the necessary stock upon such places?—Not to-day; I believe not. But thirty-six years ago, when a petition was sent to the Duke of Sutherland, there were men in this parish who could have taken up the whole parish had it become vacant. But in 1847 or 1848, three ship-loads—the flower of the country, the most courageous men—emigrated to America, when they saw the deaf ear the Duke gave them. In 1856 a petition was sent to the commissioner, a copy of which I have here.

27322. Do you remember quite well that, before the potato disease, there were among the crofting community a considerable number who had means?—I do. I remember when a man with an ordinary-sized family, would not buy more than three or four bolls of meal in the season.

27323. And was that the remains of the larger means they had before the clearances?—The land was in better condition then. After forty years of working, land loses its virtue greatly.

27324. How would you propose that these places should be stocked?—The only way I would propose, would be that when Ardvär falls out of lease, the Duke should advertise it, and on getting a suitable number to take it up at a reasonable price, that he should cut it up to the ordinary size—if he could get men able and willing to take it up. Then when another farm falls out, young men at home and abroad would be prepared and would help their friends to do the same. Not saying that anything of the kind was to take place in one or two years, but when the farms had fallen out of lease. And if the Duke could not get anybody to take them up, he would not be to blame.

27325. You think if a beginning were made, and there was a reasonable belief that it would be continued, young men would take that view?—Yes, eagerly. There are three men belonging to Assynt who could launch out the capital the Sutherland family themselves put upon it. I don't say that they are in Scotland, but I would get them over the quarters of the globe.

27326. I hope men of the crofting class?—Yes, of the crofting class.

27327. How would you propose that the rent should be fixed for this small farm or large croft?—I won't say anything about that; I was never a tiller of the soil.

SUTHER-
LAND.

LOCHINVER.

Hugh
Mackay

SUTHER-
LAND.

27328. As a mere matter of theory?—Well the rent should be fixed according to the stock it would keep.

LOCHINVER.

27329. Who would fix it; would you leave that to the proprietor?—Not altogether.

Hugh
Mackay.

27330. As a matter of fact, at present, where it is left to the proprietor, one cannot complain?—No; and I think it is no pleasure or advantage to a proprietor to have his tenantry too heavily rented. I think the greatest fortune a proprietor ever had, was a peaceable and happy tenantry who could pay their rents.

27331. Would you give them leases?—Yes, perpetual leases; and if their land should be required for any other particular purpose give them compensation for their improvements.

27332. You mean that the rent, once fixed, should never be altered at all?—I would not say that; times might change. Great changes have taken place since last century, and before another greater changes may take place. Say I was taking a piece of land at 5s. an acre; in twenty years a man would say it was worth 15s. Now, that extra 10s. is the tenants' property and that of his family, because it is the result of their labour, and I don't see it is proper and just that that 10s. should go at the end of the twenty years, into the proprietor's pockets. Compensation should be given for the improvements, and the ground should stand at its original rent, or if any reaction came on property, to make the land more valuable, raise it in a small proportion. I know, in this country, men who have become crippled, and have lost their legs and hands improving their father's lots. In improving land, there is great risk that a man who is helping his parents might break his arm or his leg.

27333. You would admit it to be reasonable that a slight rise might be made in the rent occasionally?—Yes, say every fifty years.

27334. But securing the outlay the tenant may have incurred?—Yes.

27335. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Do you think the people of the Highlands are likely to make good fishermen?—No better out; you know that, Sir Kenneth, by experience.

27336. Being a native of this district you probably know the village of Ullapool?—Yes, to my cost, some time ago. In former days fish were taken out of the loch, but things have changed, and they are taking herrings and fish now, half-way between here, and say, thirty miles away.

27337. Ullapool is a harbour, and not further away from the fishing ground than Stornoway, is it?—It is not a place for fishing now; but supposing there was a small village at Stoer, or Gairloch Head, near a fishing ground, it would be very beneficial, and curers would come there to buy fish.

27338. I don't think you realise how far the fisherman go to the grounds. Now-a-days the fishermen of Stornoway go thirty or forty miles. Can they not reach the same ground from Ullapool?—Yes; Ullapool is a very inconvenient place for early fishermen. The Sound of Handa is a suitable place, and make the island of Handa a stance for the fishing village.

27339. There are good natural harbours on the Ross coast? Do you know any place where people could make a good living by fishing, as the east coast men do?—Not to-day; but I have seen the day in some of the townships here, when there were twelve houses of cottars over and above the tenants, and each of them that paid attention to the fishing, was equally if not better off than those who had land, because they devoted their whole attention to the fishing.

27340. But these fishermen want something besides a harbour, they want capital to procure large boats and tackle?—Yes.

27341. How would they get them?—I think they would get support here and there for that, and repay the money again.

SUTHER-LAND.
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27342. You think the curers would advance the money?—I think so.

LOCHINVER.
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27343. And do you think they could work their way out of the curers' debt?—I think they could.

Hugh
Mackay.

27344. What is wanted is to induce the curers to establish themselves?—I think so; and I think Stoer Head is a good place. They could lift herring much nearer at Stoer Head than Stornoway, but there is no place here for them.

27345. What is required at Stoer Head to induce curers to go there?—A quay that would contain 200 or 300 large boats.

27346. That is a quay with a breakwater?—Yes, the people of the place say it is a suitable stance, and in the middle of winter they could run out anywhere.

27347. Would it not be very costly to make such a quay and breakwater?—It would, no doubt.

27348. What number of boats would fish from it, if it were erected?—*No quay should be built for less than 300 boats.*

27349. Still it would be a speculation, would it not?—*It would be a good one, I think.*

27350. But it is a question whether it would succeed or not?—It would.

27351. Would it not be a large outlay as a speculation?—Yes, but it might give good revenue. The curers all pay for the stances of the boats and pay so much for harbour accommodation, as there is no other place—there is no harbour accommodation without paying.

27352. Apart from the question of revenue, it would be a great benefit if poverty could be relieved; but it would be almost necessary to point out cases of success in fishing by people resident here?—But the want of success in this country is owing to the want of the like of that.

27353. *Mr Cameron.*—You said that from your conversation and acquaintance with the people here, you had reason to believe they approve of this scheme of yours? That a portion of them should occupy the ground in the vicinity of the sea for carrying on the fishing and nothing else?—Yes, I am distinctly of opinion, according to their conversation, that they would be agreeable to that.

27354. With regard to the number of stock kept by the people in former times, where did you get those figures?—From my aunts, and cousins, and uncles. They told me that in bad seasons, they, perhaps, lost twelve or fourteen of their cattle in one winter, and that would not injure their stock—they just had stock as well as ever.

27355. Have you any written record to show the number of stock kept by the people in former times?—No.

27356. You got that entirely by tradition?—Yes, and from some living who have seen it. Of course it was not in my day—I don't mind of it—but there are some alive who do mind of it.

27357. Do you think any record of the kind exists in the offices of the Sutherland estates?—I don't think there would be any record of the stock of the people; but I don't know.

27358. Would there be any means of arriving at some accurate knowledge?—The only means would be, just to get the Sutherland books of those times.

27359. What became of the stock at the time of these evictions? was it taken at valuation?—No, they just sold them as they best could. A great many of them took too heavy of their stock to the small holdings, and lost the benefit of their stock by that. They did not like to part with their stock, those who wished to keep them.

SUTHER-
LAND.
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LOCHINVER.
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Hugh
Mackay.

27360. When I asked the Rev. Mr Mackay about the offer which it was stated had been made by the crofters to the Duke of Sutherland, to take the farm which was out of lease, you handed me some papers; would you hand them to me again?—‘To George Loch, Esq., Commis-
sioner to His Grace the Duke of Sutherland,—The respectful Memorial
of the undersigned inhabitants of Assynt, Hunibly sheweth, that your
memorialists are informed that the farm in Assynt lately occupied by
the deceased Mr Gunn, is advertised to be let. That your memorialists
are gratefully aware of your desire to improve and benefit the tenantry
of his Grace, of whose anxious desire for their welfare, they are also
deeply and gratefully sensible; and with such a feeling they now
venture to address you, as his Grace’s commissioner, in the anxious and
hopeful desire that you will give a favourable consideration to the
present petition, that they be allowed to rent the said farm, in such
proportions and at such a valuation as may be considered fair, your
memorialists binding themselves to improve the land, and to submit to
all the regulations of the estate. Your memorialists are confident that
if you shall see fit to agree to this proposal, it would greatly tend to
encourage and advance the people of the district, and much increase that
devoted attachment to the noble house of Sutherland, which has ever
been the glory of the people whom Providence has placed under his
Grace.—We are, Sir with great respect, your very obedient servants.’
The reply to this is contained in a letter by Mr Loch to Mr M’Iver, of
which the following is a copy:—‘Uppat, Sept. 9, 1859.—Dear Sir, soon
after arriving here from the West Coast, I received by post, a petition
signed by ninety-two persons, inhabitants of Assynt, requesting that the
sheep farm of Achmore be divided amongst them, in such proportions
and at such a valuation as may be considered fair. I now desire to
send the Duke’s answer to this, but there is a difficulty in knowing to
whom the reply should be addressed. It is usually in my power to
address my answer to petitions, to the individual whose name is signed
first, by whom it may be communicated to the others. This course,
however, cannot be followed in the present instance, as the petitioners
belong to thirteen or fourteen different townships, some of which are
divided from each other by considerable distances. If the paper
actually received the signatures in Assynt, they must have been
collected by some one who took the trouble of going round to each
district to obtain them. I should have been glad, had this opportunity
been afforded me, to place myself in communication with any one so
much interested in the prayer of this petition, as to take this active part
in promoting it, but as it came to me in a blank cover, I am prevented
doing so, and must address this answer to you, with a request that you
will furnish the petitioners with a copy of it. Their application has
been considered by the Duke of Sutherland, and I am directed by his
Grace to express the regret he feels that it should be one with which he
cannot comply. He desires me at the same time to state the satisfaction
and pleasure given him, by the expressions of attachment towards himself,
which the petition contains. Those who sign this paper, do the Duke
no more than justice, in attributing to him an anxious desire to promote
the welfare of all who live on his estate; it has ever been the leading
aim and object of his life, steadily followed out with untiring perseverance,
and rewarded with very great success. I am much obliged to the
petitioners for their kind expressions towards myself, but I cannot
recommend to the Duke’s favourable consideration, an arrangement such
as that sought by this petition, for it could not be attended by
advantage or success.—I am, dear Sir, yours faithfully, GEORGE LOCH.’

27361. Was no reason given at all for his Grace's not complying with the request, except this letter?—Nothing more was known about it. SUTHERLAND.

27362. Did the crofters who asked to have this farm make any suggestion as to the process by which they would take the stock which was then on the farm?—No. LOCHINVER.

27363. I suppose there was a sheep stock on the farm?—Yes, sheep alone. Hugh Mackay.

27364. Do you know what it would be worth?—No.

27365. Do you know about the numbers of the sheep?—I cannot exactly say, perhaps about 4000 to 5000, if not more.

27366. Do you think that the crofters were in a position at that time to take that stock in the usual way at a valuation?—They could tax them, and make money of any part of it that they did not require.

27367. The value of the stock would be much less than at the present time?—It would be one-half.

27368. But even at that rate, do you think the crofters could have found the money, or got security to give the out-going tenant for the stock?—I cannot say; but one thing is sure, there would have been no difficulty in making money of the sheep and giving it to him of any overplus they did not require; because I should say one-half the stock would have done them, with black cattle.

27369. And you think they would have sold one-half the stock at once and put on their own black cattle to supply the place of the sheep?—Yes, that is what they would need to do.

27370. Are you aware whether it is the practice on the estate of the Duke of Sutherland that the out-going tenant is allowed the valuation of his stock?—I know that. It is the practice of all Highland estates, or most of them.

27371. You think it would be much easier to make those arrangements suggested to us since we came to Sutherland if that rule had not existed?—Yes.

27372. The regulation which is extant in the Highlands that the out-going tenant has a right to valuation for his stock must interfere considerably with our making such alterations as have been communicated to us by the crofters—that is to say, give the sheep farm to the crofters?—Yes, but that would not be a stumbling-block now-a-days, and even Auchmore farm if it were put down for tenants to-day and the stock sold at the market, I question if the incoming tenant would lose more than £100 by it.

27373. Would not that depend on the valuation?—They would sell at high prices.

27374. And would not the valuation be equally high?—Of course it would but nothing but what they could make.

27375. If the crofters were to get the sheep farm they would like to put part sheep and part cattle upon it—to put what they like upon it. Under the present system of valuations they would be burdened with the stock which they would be obliged to take over from the out-going tenant. Would not that form a great difficulty in the way?—A great difficulty.

27376. Can you point any way out of that difficulty?—Yes; that is what I would propose, to sell the stock in the market, and it might diminish £100 or £200 on the 4000 or 5000, the tenants would be at that loss. There might be a difference between the valuation and the market price to that extent.

27377. And would the tenants like that loss?—They would need to expect some loss; they would not get everything their own way.

SUTHERLAND. 27378. You said outside help might be given to the crofters to stock their farms?—Well, I am very delicate to say they would get Government money.

LOCHINVER. 27379. Do you think any wealthy persons in America would do it? Are you aware there is a wealthy man in the state of Nevada an owner of silver mines?—Yes, a namesake of my own.

27380. Do you think you could induce him for the sake of the name to come forward and help the crofters?—Yes.

27381. *The Chairman.*—Do you think the valuators would value the stock lower because they had a feeling in favour of crofters coming into the farm?—I question that. I do not know whether they would or not; but one thing I would like to see would be the Duke condescending to come to that point to meet the tenants so far, that stocking would be the only stumbling-block.

27382. Do you think if the Duke showed an inclination to make an experiment of the nature you refer to, it would be received with great gratitude by the whole community?—I do; I am firmly of that opinion, and have been for many a year.

27383. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You have taken a great interest in matters connected with the Highlands and your own county for many years?—Yes.

27384. Where were you educated?—In this house.

27385. Have you from your position in Greenock, been able to push on a large number of Highlanders who have applied to you?—Yes, Highlanders are very warm to each other in that way.

27386. And although you have been so many years out of the country you have been closely connected with the Highlands?—Very much so.

27387. It has been stated, in other places, that the agitation which is now so prevalent with regard to the acquisition of land is quite modern, and has been fomented. Is it your opinion that it is of modern growth?—Yes, so far; in 1874 I asked Grieve in Greenock if he would be inclined to support an inquiry into the conditions under which the landlords got the land off the Crown.

27388. The wish of the people to get back to their old places is not a modern one?—No; although this movement is modern, as you know.

27389. And you yourself nearly ten years ago, moved in the matter?—Yes, and the following year I went to Inverness.

27390. As an illustration of the desire of the people to get the large farms reduced you have referred to two cases, the one in 1846 and the other in 1859?—Yes.

27391. How did you fall in with this copy of the reply to the petition?—It was sent to the first name on the petition from Mr M'Iver's office by the ground officer, and William Matheson was the first who came to me as I was the writer of the petition, and when Mr Loch regretted that the writer did not put himself in communication with him, I wrote another letter giving him my name and address, to make any inquiry of me he might wish.

27392. You received this letter from Mr Mathieson?—Yes; the ground officer of the parish went personally to Mathieson with it, and Mathieson came to me.

27393. This letter is a longish one?—Yes.

27394. And I rather think the only reference to the petition in this long letter is in these words: 'Their application has been considered by the Duke of Sutherland, and I am directed by his Grace to express the regret he feels that it should be one with which he cannot comply.' There is a good deal about the duty and attachment to the house of Sutherland?—

Yes, sweet words to please the people; of course they would need something to butter them while refusing the request.

SUTHER-LAND.

27395. Mr Loch says it is his Grace's 'anxious desire to promote the welfare of all who live on his estate, it has ever been the leading aim and object of his life, steadily followed out with untiring perseverance, and rewarded with very great success.' What did he mean by saying 'it has been rewarded with very great success'?—I cannot point to one case of success regarding crofters that he could make any reference to, on this side of the county of Sutherland.

LOCHINVER.

Hugh Mackay.

27396. Are the people of Sutherland within your recollection as poor now as ever they were?—Poorer than ever I recollect them to have been. When Mr M'Iver came to this estate the inhabitants of this district were worth in courage and means fifty per cent. more than they are to-day.

27397. They are generally very poor?—Yes.

27398. Is it also a fact that the population of the county, and particularly of these parishes here, has decreased considerably?—I cannot say; I am twenty-two years out of the place, and for the statistics of the county I cannot speak.

27399. But it is a fact?—I suppose it is a fact.

27400. Can the administration of an estate be said to be a 'great success' when after fifty years, the result is increased poverty among the people and decreased population—can that be said to be a 'great success'?—No.

27401. You stated that, in your younger days, there were some forty pensioners or thereabout?—Yes.

27402. Had these pensioners any other privilege besides that of being pensioners?—No; and I remember some who were paid off at 4d. a day, but by the influence of some gentlemen who were coming to the fishing here, they got their pensions increased before their death.

27403. You are aware that in those days the period of service before you got any pension was very considerable?—Yes.

27404. So that in point of fact, some of those who were in this way here may have been twenty years in the service?—No, not twenty years. Those who were paid off had small pensions, and they got paid according to the time; but after conversation with those gentlemen who were coming here they got something more.

27405. You are speaking of the pensions of those who were paid off after the battle of Waterloo!—Yes; and those who wanted off on certain conditions.

27406. One of the great tests of the improvement of the country is increased cultivation, is it not?—Yes, of course, it is.

27407. Taking in land and developing it to the uttermost?—Yes.

27408. Increasing the value of the cattle upon it and so on?—Yes, increasing the produce of the soil and the resources of the country generally.

27409. What benefit to the county was the introduction and constitution of large sheep farms in Sutherland?—It was no benefit to the country at all; I don't think that for a moment. To-day I think they say it was the greatest mistake that ever was committed on the estate. The land has deteriorated in value, and won't give the same crop of sheep as it used to do. If this shooting system had not come into vogue these gentlemen would get very little rents for sheep.

27410. When the sheep farm is out of lease and nobody comes forward what is its fate—forest?—Yes, when not given to small tenants.

27411. But there is no reason why it should not?—I think not.

27412. In most cases?—In most cases.

SUTHERLAND. 27413. How long has Assynt been in the possession of the Sutherland family?—I think about 200 years.

LOCHINVER. — 27414. So that the family must be held responsible for everything done in this parish in this century?—Yes, they bought this parish off an individual whose right to sell it I question.

Hugh Mackay. — 27415. Was that a person of the name of Macdonald?—No, Lady Mackenzie.

27416. Was there a man named Macdonald hereabout?—That man had nothing to do with the estate. He had only a house and garden from the company who owned Ullapool.

Rev. DAVID WILLIAMSON, Minister of Assynt (84)—examined.

Rev. David Williamson. 27417. *Mr Cameron.*—How long have you been a minister in this parish?—Thirty-four years. I came in the year 1849.

27418. Are you a native of this country?—No.

27419. Where do you originally come from?—From the parish of Cromarty.

27420. Can you tell us anything about the relative condition of the people now and when you first came to this parish?—I don't think I can give any information in regard to the difference in their condition. They are much the same.

27421. Do you think there is more poverty now than there was in former times?—I really cannot say; I am not much acquainted with the crofters of the parish. They are all along the coast, and I live in the middle of the country.

27422. Are there no crofters in your neighbourhood?—Only one, and he is on the glebe. He came there in 1848, when the place was vacant, and took possession of the place his mother-in-law had, and then he took it without any leave from anyone. When I came I found him there, and he has been since then an opposition minister, and holds meetings. He wished me not to turn him off, and I said I did not want to interfere with him.

27423. Are you not in a position to say anything about the condition of the crofters on the coast?—No.

27424. Do you think they are fond of fishing?—I don't know that they are fond of fishing in general, but they don't care for any fishing almost except the herring fishing.

27425. Do you think they would be disposed to do more in the way of fishing if they got more assistance?—Perhaps they would, they are not supposed to care very much about fishing. There are fishermen who came from the East Coast, here in summer, and other parts of the year, and they take home a great quantity of fish—a great deal of value; but the natives, I understand—I don't speak positively—don't make much in that way.

27426. But people on the East Coast make a great deal of money. Do you think the people here are inclined to show as much enterprise, or more, in respect to fishing than when you came to the parish?—I cannot say.

27427. Are you a member of the School Board?—Not this present board. I retired in order to prevent a contest, and I have been allowed to be out since.

27428. Do you wish to say anything on the state of the education of

the people in the parish?—The education previous to the operation of the present Act went on very well in the parish. We had society schools and assembly schools, and I don't know but the education then was to some extent more advantageous; there were more good schools, but the education was not so general.

27429. Is the parish pretty well supplied with schools now in the more remote districts?—Yes, education has now reached all, except a few families of gamekeepers and shepherds, and families of that sort.

27430. *Professor Mackinnon.*—You were perfectly acquainted, before you came to this parish, with an inland parish in Inverness-shire?—Yes.

27431. Was there a considerable crofting community in that parish?—Not a large community of crofters, it was a mixed lot of farmers that was there. There was one proprietor there, who had most of the property in his own hands—Mr Fraser—and he had a few crofters.

27432. Were the crofts there larger or smaller than here?—My impression is that they were larger.

27433. And the farms smaller?—Yes, and of a mixed kind. There were two or three—mostly of middle size, paying £40 or £50. It was a different community from that in this country altogether. Here we have only two classes, the crofters and the large farmers; but there there was a mixed population.

27434. And here there is a great gulf between the two?—Yes, and that is the great evil in any country. There is little ambition to better their circumstances, whereas if there were different classes in the parish, the spirit amongst the young men would be very different. What we want here is ambition on the part of the young people to better themselves. I was always anxious to make the people discontented with their position; to get education as much as possible in order to make them try to better their circumstance, and not to be contented with the miserable living they have in this country; and sometimes parents found fault with me for being anxious to give schooling to their children. But that is long ago, and I suppose it is not so now. That was the only want we had those times, that the education was always voluntarily given.

27435. Do you think there were better scholars then than now?—Yes.

27436. And all the good scholars went away?—Yes, that is what we wanted.

27437. And did well?—Yes, and did well.

27438. They had plenty of capacity, and plenty of ambition?—Yes, I wanted the people to have ambition equal to their capacity, for certainly, taking them altogether, they are possessed of superior intellect in my opinion.

27439. And you wanted them to go away because there was no means of exercising that capacity you consider, at home?—Yes.

27440. The desire of the people themselves is to get that at home; do you think that is practicable?—I don't think it. If they got small holdings of £10 or £12 it would be far better than the present system, but still it would be a poor thing.

27441. Do you think such a community could be established as there was in Boleskine, of farms from £40 or £50 to £100?—I don't see any objection to that.

27442. You would get a mixed community then?—Yes, I think so; I think that is practicable.

27443. And if it were practicable at all, it would be very desirable?—Yes, very, in a country that was suited for sheep farms. It is not easy to have small sheep farms; a sheep farm must be a large one, having

SUTHER-
LAND.

LOCHINVER.

Rev. David
Williamson.

SUTHER-
LAND.

LOCHINVER.

Rev. David
Williamson.

a great variety of pasture, so that they can put all kinds of stock upon it—weddars and ewes and so forth. Small sheep farms in this country are not so easily managed ; and then there is little arable land in the country generally. But if a proprietor were to set about it in earnest I think he could manage it to his own profit.

27444. You think it would not only be for the benefit of the people, but to the profit of the proprietor?—Yes, and there is another view I have taken of these farms. When there is a large farm requiring £10,000 to stock it, very few people who would apply for it care about farming ; but they have so much money which they would like to lay out that way. But if you had it in small farms of £100 to £150, there would be a great number of people in the country—men who would work the farms themselves—who would have money and would wish to take them up. I think the large farm system is an evil in this way, that it requires so much capital. And the proprietor would get more rent for a middle class of farms than for large farms ; that is my idea.

27445. You think there would be a greater number of bidders?—Yes, and for the large farms there are not many bidders.

27446. I suppose if there are not so many good scholars there are a greater number of children now receiving education?—Yes, they are compelled ; but there are not so many good scholars.

27447. Could both systems be combined with profit?—I think so ; but in the old school system we taught the clever ones, and sometimes, I have no doubt, neglected the careless ones, and let them shift for themselves.

27448. And now you have given a trial to the other system?—Yes.

27449. And the stupid are to have their day?—Yes, to be sure.

ALEXANDER M'LEOD, Unapool (68)—examined.

Alexander
M'Leod.

27450. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Have you a statement to make?—When the township of Unapool was cleared sixteen families were removed to a corner which is not more than a mile broad. Five families paid rent, but they have not had a sheep for the last 65 years. There are four families who do not pay rent at all. They have very nearly stripped the whole surface of the land for peats and divots that are required ; it is almost all bare now. Five families are paying rent and four not.

27451. What became of the other seven families?—Some went to America, some to various other places and some went to the Reay country.

27452. Are the Unapool people fishers now?—Yes, they follow fishing.

27453. Is it out of the sea they take their living?—Yes.

27454. Have they boats of their own, or do they work as hired men?—They had boats of their own, and they also go as hired men. They have no boats now ; they used to.

27455. How is it they have no boats of their own?—The fishing at Lewis and Wick went back and got worse, and so they found themselves unable to follow the fishing with profit in their own boats. They were losing all the proceeds of the fishing.

27456. Used you to prosecute the cod and ling fishing when you had boats of your own?—No.

27457. Would it not pay you if you had boats to fish cod and ling?—

I saw a boat belonging to Culkin that was following the cod and ling fishing, but they had to give it up ; it did not succeed.

SUTHER-
LAND.
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27458. Did they go far to sea ?—Ten or twelve miles out to sea.

27459. Do you think it possible that the fishing can be prosecuted to advantage on this coast at present ?—Perhaps some years they might succeed—some might. There is no doubt some of the Lewis people come quite close to this shore prosecuting the herring fishing.

LOCHINVER.

Alexander
M'Leod.

27460. You don't think the herring fishing would be a safe trade to depend upon as a source of livelihood ?—No.

27461. Is it more land that you and the people of Unapool desire ?—What we want would be to get a strip of the place where we were, if such were the good will of the proprietors or the Commissioners.

27462. Do you rent land ?—Yes.

27463. Is it hill land that is spoiled by taking divots and peats from it ?—Yes, the pasture land.

27464. And the additional strip you want, is it pasture or arable land ?—Of course the land most adjacent to it would be the land most convenient for us, and whether arable land or not it is the most we could get.

27465. Is there arable land near ?—Yes, quite near.

27466. What extent of arable land do you think would suffice for a person in your position ?—I might have a difficulty in paying the rent for it until I got it well stocked and that ; but the more land the easier it would be for me to pay the rent.

27467. In the meantime, situated as you are now, how much land would it be to your advantage to take—what could you afford to take ?—As much as would support 150 sheep between the five, and two or three cows.

27468. What rent would that be worth as rents go ?—The rent should be much about the same as all over the country ; but there is no place so poor as our place.

27469. If you got as much land as would enable you to keep this stock, what rent do you think it would be worth ?—£6 or £7 each.

27470. What do you propose should be done with the four cottars ?—Just give them land as we get ourselves.

27471. And is there land adjacent to the farm which would be sufficient for their agricultural purposes ?—Plenty of it. The lease will be out next year.

27472. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Were you pretty comfortable before this, or was it before your time that these people were put into this place ?—My forefathers were there, but my younger days were not spent there, my next neighbour, who has come along with me, was at the clearing of the place.

27473. Did you hear if your father and grandfather were in good circumstances when they were there ?—They were ; they had full stock and had saved money—plenty of it.

27474. Was not the placing of these people upon this place and the taking away so much of its land, dooming the remainder to perpetual poverty ?—Yes.

SUTHERLAND.
— MURDOCH MACDONALD, residing with his aunt and working her crofts,
Knockan (33)—examined.

LOCHINVER.— 27475. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Were you elected a delegate to come here?—Yes.

Murdoch Macdonald. 27476. How many people were present?—All the tenants except one, they met in the church at Elphin.

27477. How many tenants are there altogether?—Fifteen in Knockan and eighteen in Elphin—thirty-three altogether; fifteen cottars and paupers.

27478. What is the total population—upwards of 100?—Yes.

27479. What did the people there authorise you to say?—(1) That there are too many of them for the land they have in Knockan and Elphin; (2) Too many lots divided for other families; (3) Death rent increased; (4) Incoming tenants paying arrears of outgoing tenants, if any; (5) No encouragement offered to them for improvement; (6) No valuation for the houses on leaving; (7) No lease or fixity of tenure of land; (8) More land is required for cultivation, as it is getting poor with continual farming; (9) No labour of any kind. And we would like to get club stock by Government money.

27480. We have been told that some twenty years ago, there was an attempt at eviction of these townships?—Yes.

27481. Was the same number of people there then as there is now?—No.

27482. They have rather increased?—Yes.

27483. To any great extent?—Yes.

27484. How is that; is it from the natural increase of the townships, or that the people were put in?—Put in.

27485. How many have been put in there since twenty years?—I cannot go back that far, but I mind of four or five myself.

27486. Four or five families?—Yes.

27487. Did they get a share of the crofts or were they simply put in as cottars?—As cottars and crofters; the crofts were divided and subdivided.

27488. By whose authority?—Mr M'Iver or the ground officer.

27489. Then these increases were against the wish of the possessors?—Yes.

27490. And it is in consequence of these increases that you are now complaining you are too crowded?—Yes.

27491. Was any land taken from you?—Not to my knowledge.

27492. You have no leases as I understand?—No.

27493. What is about the largest rent now paid on the township?—£11.

27494. Have you a good deal of hill pasture?—Yes.

27495. Is it good?—Pretty fair.

27496. Supposing the number of families had been left as they were twenty years ago, at the time they were threatened to be put out, was there enough of land for them?—They would have had a better chance.

27497. Is there any place near at hand where the surplus population could be sent to?—Lead beg, part of forest.

27498. Was it at one time under crofters?—Yes.

27499. Is there some old cultivation there?—Yes.

27500. And is it convenient to Knockan and Elphin?—Just quite close, marching with them.

27501. Could that be leased without their removing from their present

- houses?—Not very handily, but it could be done if the place were fenced; it marches with their ground.
27502. Is that a forest of old standing?—No, it was made two years ago.
27503. There were people removed out of it at one time?—Yes.
27504. So that it was first under crofters, then under sheep, and now it is under deer?—Yes.
27505. What will be the next stage?—I hope it will be crofters again.
27506. Do you think that would be the best adaptation of it?—I have no doubt of it.
27507. Both for the people and the land?—No doubt.
27508. *Professor Mackinnon.*—The townships are pretty near each other?—Yes.
27509. So that you know the circumstances?—Yes; there is only a burn between them. You might say they are the same, but have only a different name.
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- DONALD MUNRO, Crofter, Strathan (48)—examined.
27510. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Are you a fisherman?—Not now.
27511. Have you a statement to make?—Yes.
27512. Just read it.—‘We beg to ask the Royal Commission to allow us to say a few words at the beginning of our statement, to tell how the people of Inverkirkag, Badinaban, and Strathan, came to such poverty. At one time their ancestors peopled the glens, and other portions of arable land that lie inland. They lived then chiefly by their cattle. They had a good number of them and had plenty provender to keep them in good condition during the winter months. They were thus in easy and comfortable circumstances. The then Duke, from some motive unknown to us, removed them. Some sought shelter in foreign lands, the others were crammed in small townships near the shores. The lots there were divided to the people of each township so that when each family got their share it was very small. This land was cultivated by, and came down from sire to son, so that now it has become so poor that the people have to force a crop with manure. The people are now so poor that they cannot emigrate if they wished, or take a much larger holding than they have. They cannot improve their land much more than they have already done, as it is limited in extent and very poor. At the death of the parents the son has to pay yearly an additional sum of 7s. 6d. or more for getting his name in the rent roll books. The people are also poor from the want of work. The father of one of the present crofters of Assynt was only paying £20 for the township of Inverkirkag. That township now pays upwards of £50, although it has been reduced in size and is occupied by fifteen crofters besides cottars. The township of Badinaban, two generations ago, was occupied by four crofters each paying a rent of £1, 15s. That township now pays upwards of £20, and is occupied by nine crofters. The people have no fixity of rent or tenure. In order to raise the people out of their present condition they would require to get more land, either more hill pasture or the arable land that now lies waste under sheep and deer. There could be very good and comfortable townships formed on the said land, each tenant paying a rent of £10 to

SUTHERLAND.
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LOCHINVER.
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Murdoch
Macdonald.

Donald
Munro.

SUTHER-LAND. ' £15, but unless they got help from either Government or proprietor, or from both, they could not stock this land ; but should Government or proprietor, or both, give this loan, and some time to pay it—say fifty years —at a rate of £3 per cent. interest, and the first rent to be paid two years after the tenant settles in his new home. This would raise the crofter once again. Another way would be to give the hill pasture as aforesaid, and work draining the ground on those large sheep farms where now the brackens and rushes grow, and keeping the ground from being over-run by heather. Those who seek to better their condition by fishing would wish a curing station or two at Lochinver, and the East Coast fishermen have repeatedly said that they would fish so much per crane less at Lochinver than they would at Stornoway, if they had conveniences for a station there, as it is more convenient to the fishing ground. The people also wish fixity of tenure and rent.—JOHN M'KENZIE, DONALD M'CASKILL, Inverkirkaig; DONALD MUNRO, ALEXANDER M'FARLANE, Strathan.

27513. Do these three townships adjoin each other ?—Yes.

27514. Where do they lie—how far from this ?—Two or three miles.

27515. Along the coast ?—Yes.

27516. Do you know how many families there are in each of them ?—About sixteen in Strathan.

27517. When were the crofters sent there ?—I cannot tell.

27518. Were any of them removed from Strathnaver ?—From the heights of their own parish.

27519. What rent do you pay yourself ?—£7, 17s. 6d.

27520. I suppose that is one of the highest ?—Yes.

27521. What stock do you keep ?—Three cows and a horse ; twelve sheep.

27522. How much arable land have you—what number of acres ?—About six acres or a little more perhaps.

27523. Are you able to raise crop enough for your family or for your cattle ?—Not for the family, but enough for the cattle.

27524. What sort of soil have you ?—Very bad.

27525. Is it the same in each of these townships ?—No, it is better in some.

27526. Is it rocky or boggy, or both ?—Both.

27527. Do you consider your rent too high ?—No.

27528. But you want more land ?—More land.

27529. Are there any large sheep farms close upon your boundary ?—It is only deer forest now.

27530. What forest is that ?—Glencanisp forest.

27531. When was it made a forest ?—Two or three years ago.

27532. It was a sheep farm before that ?—Yes.

27533. Is it sufficiently fenced to keep the deer from getting into the crofts ?—No.

27534. Do they go over the fence ?—They can go over it ; it is only about $3\frac{1}{2}$ feet high. There are not many deer yet.

27535. Will it be of any use to protect your crops when the deer increase in numbers ?—We don't know yet ; but they would spoil the crops I know.

27536. But does it keep your cattle from going over it ?—It will do that sufficiently—it is a barbed fence.

27537. Why was it made a barbed fence ?—So as to pierce any beast that would attempt to leap over it ; that is our belief.

27538. Is there no work going on around or near you of which you could get the benefit ?—There may be a little now and again, but far too little for the population of the place.

27539. Have you a good place for landing when you come back from the fishing?—Yes, the coast is very good for landing; but we thought it would be a greater benefit to the place if the curers would come to it as they go to Stornoway.

SUTHERLAND.
LOCHINVER
Donald Munro.

27540. Are all your men fishermen more or less?—Almost all.

27541. Do they go to the East Coast fishing?—Yes.

27542. What kind of fishing do you engage in at home?—Very little home fishing is done. There was a boat here the other day that had 200 cod fish, and they could not get them sold.

27543. Is there nobody in Lochinver who could take them?—Not a soul.

27544. Do you never try your hand at curing the fish yourselves?—No.

27545. Has it never been done here?—There were curers once.

27546. But you never tried to cure fish and send it away yourselves?—No.

27547. If you had the curers once, why did they abandon it?—I think it was because the fish got scarcer, and it was not worth the while of the fishermen to prosecute it.

27548. How long is it since the fishing became less productive?—A good many years ago; but I may mention about twelve years ago especially, since it has ceased to be productive.

27549. *The Chairman.*—Do you salt fish for your own domestic consumption?—Yes.

27550. Is fish a large part of the diet of the people in their own houses?—Yes.

27551. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Are you able to make a living out of your own croft?—No.

27552. What else do you do to support yourself and your family?—I get a little work about the place when I can take work, and I must just live as I may.

27553. You don't go south to work?—No.

27554. What size of croft do you think would support you, and what rent would you consider fair for it?—This is not a place for crofting, and one expends a great deal of labour in cultivating it with the spade, and *cas-chrom*.

27555. You still use the *cas-chrom*?—Yes.

27556. Is the land not fit to be ploughed?—There are very few places where the horses could work it.

27557. Because the ground is so rocky?—So rocky. The whole place is far more suitable for rearing cattle, and a little cultivation.

27558. Would you like to have some pasture to breed cattle and sheep, even although you should buy food for them?—Yes.

27559. But there is no land near you except the deer forest available for the purpose?—No.

27560. Have the Inverkirkaig people horses?—Yes.

27561. The same as you or more?—The same.

27562. Has everybody a horse?—Some of them have; it would not be worth while for them all to keep horses, the bit they have is so small.

27563. Are there any cottars amongst you?—Yes.

27564. Many?—Not very many.

27565. How do they live?—They get bits of the township as we have ourselves, and they just do as best they may.

27566. Where do they get work?—They get a little here. They can attend to their work even better than the crofters, because they have no land to look after.

SUTHER.
LAND.

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LOCHINVER.

Donald
Munro.

27567. Does it support the people?—They must live as they can.

27568. What kind of work do they get?—Is there any draining, or building of dykes?—No. There is very little work at all. This year, for example, there is a walk being made through the forest, but that is exceptional. Then there is a fence being set up between the deer forest and the crofts, and that too is special. The people are away at the south and east coast fishing. Were it not for these two things they might go where they pleased, they have nothing else to do.

27569. Are there many young men employed in the forest?—Very few, if any.

27570. Are any of them employed here attending anglers?—Yes.

27571. I suppose in summer some have steady employment at that?—Not very steady.

27572. And not very many of them?—No.

27573. How many men in your place would find occupation in attending upon anglers hercabout?—About half-a-dozen.

27574. Have you a good supply of peats?—Plenty.

27575. Do you carry them on horses?—No, we carry them on the people's backs.

27576. Do the men ever condescend to carry them, or is it the women who do that work?—Both.

27577. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You have said in your paper that at the death of the parents the son has to pay yearly an additional sum of 7s. 6d. or more for getting his name in the rent roll books?—I have been told that.

27578. Do you know yourself of any case? did anybody who paid this rent tell you?—Yes, I am aware of a man who told me he paid it himself, and I believe he is in here. I don't pay it myself; I am not on the rent roll.

27579. Has this system been going on for some years?—I am certain that it has been.

27580. Can you say that since you have been old enough to take notice of things about you, you heard of this?—It certainly has been a subject of complaint at all events for the last ten or fifteen years.

**MURDOCH KERR, Crofter's Son, formerly a Fisherman, Auchmelvich
(55)—examined.**

Murdoch
Kerr.

27581. *The Chairman.*—Have you any written statement?—I have:—*Auchmelvich Township Grievances:*—There are 44 families in this township, of which 26 pay rent, the odd 18 being a burden on the rest, with subdivisions of crofts, grazings, fuel, &c. In the time of the father of one of the present crofters, the township paid only £18, shortly afterwards 20 crofters paid £63, and now (1883) 26 crofters pay over £83. There are two families placed in the best of our hill pasture entirely against our will, who are paying rent to the proprietor and there was no reduction of our rent. Our greatest grievance is the smallness of our holdings, the stony and unproductive nature of the ground, which is almost exhausted with constant cultivation for the last ninety years. Another grievance is the scarcity and poor nature of our hill pasture. The produce of the crofts is not sufficient to keep the people for three months on an average from being under the necessity of buying food. There are four times as many people in the township as the place could

'properly support. There is not half an acre of arable land in the whole township that could be ploughed, it is delved among rocks and stones with spades and crooked-spades. The most of the crofters and cottars are fishermen, who depend all the year round on their earnings from the fishing, excepting what we have mentioned they derive from the land. A low water quay and fishing station is greatly needed at Lochinver, as Stoer and Coigach points are the best fishing ground on this coast. There is generally a good deal of fish, but no market, and the people are compelled to go to the far away and more exposed east coast, where they can get a market for their fish. Another grievance is that if a man enters into possession of a croft he will need to pay the arrears of the outgoing tenant. Again if a man is to get his name entered in the rent book after his predecessor's death he is taxed up to a pound as the factor sees fit, and this is to continue as long as the factor pleases, or for ever. We complain of turning sheep farms into deer forests, and that the taxes the sheep farmer paid fall upon the poor crofters in a large measure while these deer forests remain unoccupied, 50,000 acres have remained thus unoccupied in this parish for two years, and the shepherds and others who got work on this farm were thrown out of employment, and some of them had to throw themselves among the crofters, who were already over-crowded. *Remedies:*—The only means to improve our present grievances would be to give us work, as there is no kind of work going on in this parish. Also to give us as much land as we can live on, and some help to stock and improve it from Government, for which we are willing to pay so much per cent. The people require liberty to fish all fish in the sea. We are prohibited this year from setting small lines because the nets, buoys, ropes, and anchors for fishing the salmon are there. We would also require compensation for improvements on buildings and land.'

27582. You state that there are eighteen families which are a burden on the rest: are a portion of these the children of the crofters?—Some of them are the children of the crofters; others of them have been placed among us, when they were removed from the sheep runs.

27583. Does the township march with a sheep farm?—Yes, it marches with a sheep farm.

27584. And is the land on the sheep farm of an arable character?—plenty of it.

27585. Which is not cultivated by the farmer?—Yes, which is not cultivated now, but which was cultivated in old times. It is only detached bits or fields that are arable. It is pasture lands that we want. The amount of arable land in Assynt would not maintain the people.

27586. Don't you require any arable ground to raise straw for feeding your cattle?—Yes.

27587. You state that if a man has to get his name entered on the rent book after his predecessor's death, he is taxed up to £1, as the factor thinks fit. Has that additional rent always been levied when a son succeeds to his father?—Yes.

27588. And supposing that a new tenant died suddenly and was succeeded by another, a brother or a son, would he have to pay a new addition?—He would just pay as much as the factor might choose to impose.

27589. And do you expect that that system of increase is to go on indefinitely?—We expect it to continue for ever.

27590. I suppose when a widow succeeds her husband as tenant of the holding she does not pay anything additional?—No.

SUTHERLAND.
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LOCHINVER
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Murdoch
Kerr.

SUTHER.
LAND.— 27591. Is there any work given by the proprietor to the people near his place?—No.

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LOCHINVER. 27592. Are there not sometimes roads made from the public road to the townships?—The predecessor of the present Duke made a walk from the main road down to the extreme end of the township, a mile and three-quarters in length.

Mardonch
Kerr. 27593. And did the proprietor pay for the whole of that?—The proprietor paid for the whole of it.

27594. You state that the taxation fell upon the crofters while 50,000 acres of deer forest remained unoccupied; were not taxes levied upon the land while it remained unoccupied?—I am aware that there were rates paid for that place for the last two years.

27595. Do you know that taxes were levied upon that ground although there were neither sheep nor deer upon it?—Yes, I am aware it was paying rates.

27596. Then why do you say that the taxes fall in a large measure upon the poor crofters?—We pay so much per pound of poor rates, and the Duke and we, between us, have to pay poor rates for the place that used to pay poor rates when there were sheep upon it.

27597. Which pays the highest rent, the sheep farm or a deer forest of the same size?—I cannot say.

27598. Which do you think?—I cannot say; I should not wonder at all if the deer forest did.

27599. Do you think, with reference to the rates and taxes, that it is more advantageous for the crofter that the land should be let as a deer forest than as a sheep farm?—I could not give an opinion upon the matter.

27600. Which do you think the best neighbour of the crofter on the whole—the sheep farm or the deer forest?—What good can we get out of deer. The sheep are bad enough. They were the cause of the people being expelled from their places, but still they are better than deer.

27601. But which—the stock on the sheep farm or the deer—are more likely to do your pasture and cultivation harm?—The deer.

27602. Do you generally live on good terms with the large sheep farmers?—Yes, we agree very well.

27603. Do you complain of shepherds hunting and poinding your sheep or not?—They used to do that, but we have a good fence now—a stone dyke, which separates the two stocks.

27604. It must be a very long one?—There is only about a mile of it, but it joins in with a loch, about a mile broad, which does the rest.

27605. Who paid for the stone dyke?—We paid the half of it, and the Duke the other half, or the tenant, I don't know which.

27606. It was a stone dyke?—Stone in some parts, and turf in others.

27607. *Mr Cameron.*—You say that the sheep farmers were the means of the people being evicted, and yet you think them better than the deer. Why do you think that?—We can get no use of the deer, whereas if we can afford to purchase a sheep, it will at all events provide us with clothes. But for the deer, we are not allowed to kill or eat them, and they are of no other service.

27608. But, as a matter of fact, do you buy the wool of the sheep farmers?—We have not, as a matter of fact, bought it for some years back, it is very dear, and we cannot afford to buy it. It is white wool they have. Sometimes we can buy broken fleeces at the time of the shearing, and the remnants, hanging about the flank.

27609. If you are not able to buy the wool what is the advantage of having sheep in the neighbourhood?—The sheep are herded, for one

thing, and then there is some work connected with them in the way of smearing and shearing. But the deer require no herd, and they can leap the fences and eat our crops.

27610. Do you find any work in connection with the deer?—I don't know that any work would be required in that case except some ghilles, perhaps.

27611. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Do you know any of the cases where the incoming tenant had to pay the arrears of the outgoing tenant?—I know a man in my own place.

27612. Who is the man?—A man Donald Kerr, who is away at the fishing.

27613. Do you know how much he paid?—I do not know.

27614. Who was his predecessor?—A man John M'Leod.

27615. What became of him?—He is a labourer in Ross-shire now.

27616. Had he built any houses—improved his place?—He built a little bothy of a house.

27617. Was anything given to him for doing this?—He might have got wood, perhaps, I am not aware that he got anything else.

27618. Did he get anything for this bothy when he left?—Nothing.

27619. Was none of the money paid by Donald Kerr given to the outgoing tenant?—John M'Leod could not get it; it would have gone to pay a debt which was on the lot.

27620. In what depth of water do you set small lines?—Close to the shore, but the depth varies.

27621. What kind of fish do you catch close to the shore?—Codlings and flounders.

27622. Why are you prohibited from setting these lines?—If we put them out we never get them again, owing to the ropes, and chains, and anchors, and bag nets along the shore.

27623. The bag nets are fixed in certain places, are they not?—Yes.

27624. And if you don't set your lines across the bag nets, the bag nets won't touch them?—No, that is quite true, but then they are set in the best fishing places we have got.

27625. *The Chairman.*—Do the salmon ever take a bait set for another fish in the sea?—No, we never get salmon upon our small lines; but it is one of our greatest complaints that we are not allowed to kill the salmon as we please.

27626. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Do you know whether there is a separate receipt given for the money paid at the death of the former tenant?—I cannot say, but to the best of my knowledge it is only an increase of rent.

27627. And therefore one receipt?—That is my opinion.

27628. Who draws the rent here—is it Mr M'Iver?—Yes.

27629. With his own hand?—Yes.

27630. It is not paid through any ground officer?—No.

27631. Your name is rather uncommon?—It is a strange name in the place.

27632. Are there several more in this place of Auchmelvich?—Yes.

27633. Do they all belong to the same clan?—No, they are separate families.

27634. Are they long here?—My ancestors have been here for seven hundred years, the Kerrs to whom I belong.

27635. What family were in possession of Assynt at that time?—I cannot tell.

27636. Do you, and the people in your place, look with favour upon the large sheep farms?—We would rather not see any in the country.

SUTHERLAND.
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LOCHINVER.
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Murdoch
Kerr.

SUTHER-
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LOCHINVER.

Murdoch
Kerr.

27637. Do you consider it a very great hardship when you don't want these sheep farms, that when shepherds are thrown out of employment by the tenant leaving the place, they are thrown upon you, and you are obliged to support them?—If the sheep run were restored to the crofters, why should not the shepherd get his portion of it as well as the others. We don't dislike the men, but there is no doubt but they are a burden upon the place when they are thrown in upon us.

27638. Is this in the nature of adding insult to injury, to make you support the old servants of people whom you don't care about?—Yes, it is both insult and injury.

27639. You were asked to explain whether of the two you preferred, sheep or deer. Are they both bad neighbours?—Have they not both been the destruction of the place to us? Have they not sent us down to the rocks, and the shore of the sea.

EVANDER M'IVER.

Evander
M'Iver.

27640. *The Chairman.*—There is a statement which we have heard to-day for the first time, with reference to this part of the country, and that is that the arrears of rent of the outgoing tenant are exacted from the incoming tenant as a condition of his admission?—The rents of the small tenants are paid at the term of Martinmas for the year from the Whitsunday preceding to the Whitsunday following, but the crop of the following year is the crop for which that rent is paid. The tenant goes away at Whitsunday, and the crop has to be reaped off the lot. The tenant who comes in generally gets that, and the incoming tenant pays the arrears, which is really the debt of the outgoing tenant.

27641. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Who gets the crop?—The man who goes in.

27642. *The Chairman.*—He gets the crop and pays the value of the crop?—No, he pays the rent.

27643. Do you pay in anticipation upon that crop?—Yes.

27644. When a tenant leaves the property for one reason or another, we may say one or two years in arrears of rent, is such a sum ever exacted from the incoming tenant as a condition of his being admitted to the holding?—A year's rent is sometimes charged, but the year's rent gives him the right to crop the lot that year.

27645. But the year's rent charged to them may be more than the value of that particular crop?—Yes, but it is paying the debt of the man who is going away. It is not paid to the Duke, it is paid to account of that tenant.

27646. But still the Duke or proprietor may receive it in part payment of arrears of rent?—He does.

27647. But more than a year's arrears is never exacted?—I cannot condescend upon any particulars regarding it. I cannot tax my memory whether two rents or one rent was paid; but I am certain that one year's rent is sometimes paid. But it is very rare.

27648. You don't remember in the period of your management ever having exacted more than one year's rent?—I don't at this moment.

27649. Do you think it impossible that it could have been paid?—I would not say it is impossible. I cannot say.

27650. There is again the question of the increase of rent payable upon the death of the outgoing tenant. We understood from you yesterday

that that was by no means an increase of rent which was liable to indefinite continuation, it would not be payable upon a long series of successions?—Previous to the valuation which was made of the small crofts in this district, when the tenant died a small sum was sometimes added in the case of a son succeeding the father, but never in the case of a widow succeeding her husband; but since the valuation of the lands was made the additional rent fixed by these valuers was charged.

SUTHERLAND.
LOCHINVER.
M'Iver.

27651. That is to say when the limit of valuation has been reached, no further addition will be made in connection with death?—It appears to me that there is a misapprehension in the minds of the people who have spoken on that subject.

27652. Do you think they thoroughly understand it, or have they been unwilling to understand it?—They have so many misunderstandings that I am not at all surprised at it; they have so many misunderstandings as to what is done by the landlord's agent.

27653. Don't you think it would be desirable to make it thoroughly understood by them that there will be an end at a particular point, to these increases upon death?—That I thought they always understood.

27654. A grievance has been spoken of in connection with the salmon fisheries, of the suppression of liberty to fish with the short lines on the shore; could not some arrangement be made in connection with that question?—I think that is a most absurd complaint. The number of bag nets is small over an immense stretch of coast. They are only about 100 yards out from the sea-shore, and if the people go beyond that, as they generally do, the nets should be no hindrance. The nets are fixed to the land at one end, and the other end is secured by two anchors, so that they never move. If the people go with their lines close to these nets it is possible they may come in contact with ropes and nets. But the bag nets are not more than 100 yards from the shore.

27655. There is no prohibition on the part of the estate management of fishing of that kind?—No, I never heard of a complaint until this day.

27656. Do you think it is possible that the men in connection with the salmon fishery interfere with or pull up or destroy the short lines?—I am sure they don't. They have no business to interfere with them.

27657. If the lines cross them by accident?—Yes; or by people setting their lines too close to the bag nets.

27658. One of the delegates to-day read a long paper in which several instances of alleged injustice or oppression were mentioned as occurring to poor persons, and especially of the class of widows. What remarks would you like to make upon that subject?—A great many of the statements made to-day were perfectly new to me; I never heard of them before, and did not know such complaints could be made. The complaints I heard made were in connection with the improvement of the farm of Clashmore. Clashmore was a township with a lot of small tenants in it. They cultivated the lots very partially, and the Duke of Sutherland one day, standing on the hill pasture, asked me, would it not be a good thing for the employment of the people if we were to set agoing a small farm here, on which we could show the people what crops could be grown by proper trenching and drainage, and farming on the regular rotation. I said I thought it would be a good thing indeed, and would give a great deal of employment to the people of this place, Clashmore was fixed upon as suitable for the purpose. In carrying out this improvement it was necessary to remove some of these tenants, but the Duke laid out a considerable sum of money in improving land to give lots to these people who were so removed.

SUTHER-
LAND.

LOCHINVER.

Evander
M'iver.

27659. He laid out a sum of money in improving the land. Can you give us some details of that?—I think I can. I think it is in my memorandum which I have from the books of the office. In 1872 and following years to 1877 the farm of Clashmore was improved and created purposely to give employment to the people of the Stoer district around in draining, trenching, fencing roads, and making culverts and dykes. There was spent from the beginning to the end £3328, 13s. 10d. in making that land. The houses, including offices, mill, and farmer's house upon the farm, cost in addition £1635, 15s. 4d.

27660. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Does that sum include improvements upon the croft lands too?—No, that was separate. There was spent between £300 and £400 in improving the crofts for these tenants; and they got £90 in money and materials for the purpose of assisting them to build new houses.

27661. *The Chairman.*—When the model farm was finished, and when the proprietor no longer required to make any further outlay upon it, to whom was it let?—To Mr Brown, the tenant of the hotel here. There was no arable land hereabout, and he required it for the purpose of providing hay and oats for his establishment.

27662. How far off is it?—About ten miles.

27663. Does Mr Brown occupy these extensive dwelling houses and offices?—It is his servant who occupies the house, but he occupies the farm.

27664. As the land was not to be let to a resident farmer, it occurs to me that the experiment might have been prosecuted a step further, and that the improved land might have been re-let to the crofters or small tenants?—The Duke decided it otherwise—that it should be given to the tenant of the inn.

27665. We heard one of the witnesses say that it is true that when transferred to another township he received as compensation £10 towards building houses, and also, I think, timber, lime, and glass, but he stated that the slates alone upon his new house cost him £17, 10s. and were carried from this place ten miles on. Is that credible?—It is quite true that he got the slates. What the exact amount was I cannot tell, but this I know that they are not paid for yet. They are partly paid and partly not paid, and there is a considerable balance due. It was given many years ago, on the understanding that it was to be paid at the end of one, two, and three years.

27666. It may possibly be that that makes the position of the man harder still?—Well he has not been troubled in the least about it.

27667. Do you wish to make any statement with reference to this alleged case of severity exercised towards widows and poor people?—I am not conscious or aware of any cases of severity towards widows.

27668. Are you under the impression that these statements are entirely unfounded?—I have no recollection of anything of the kind. It was necessary to move them in making this farm, and the farm was dyked and a certain number of parks made in it; and these people lived upon the ground, and it was necessary to remove them to their new places. I am not conscious that in doing so there was ever any severity used towards them. If it was, it was without my knowledge, and personally I never heard a complaint about it.

27669. *Mr Cameron.*—It was stated by one of the delegates when he was asked, if there was ever any work given by the proprietor? No, but that a walk was made by the previous proprietor?—There is, at this moment, work going on in the neighbourhood of that man's place. There is a path three miles long going on within the forest of Glencanesp,

and the contractors complained to me that they had great difficulty in getting men to work. Murdoch Kerr, who made the complaint of no work, is a road contractor, and has fourteen miles of road under contract to keep it in repair, which keeps him constantly going.

27670. Can you state generally what work is now going on in the various districts from which we have received evidence to-day?—There is not much work going on at present from the Duke of Sutherland.

27671. I want to ask you one question about the conversion of farms into forests. The question was asked, 'When a big farm cannot be let, what is its fate? Forest is it not?' And the answer was, 'Yes, forest.' Can you say how many farms have been of recent years converted into forest?—None for many years, until last year, the forest of Glencanesp. Mr John Scobie was tenant of it as a sheep farm, but on succeeding to Keoldale, on the death of General Scobie, he gave up his farm, and went to Keoldale. The Duke did not think it right that one man should have both, and this farm was left upon the Duke's hands. It is a very difficult thing to get a sheep farm off his hands, and he converted it into a deer forest.

27672. But with that exception, no farms have been converted into deer forests?—Not for ten years. There was an addition made to the Reay forest about twelve years ago.

27673. No other conversion with this exception, and that of part of the Reay forest?—None else.

27674. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Has the farm at Clashmore succeeded at all well?—Has the improved ground turned out of value?—A part of it did well; but it was a very bad spot, and most difficult to improve—so difficult that it cost £34 an acre to improve it.

27675. I think the sums you gave, including the building improvements, will make it about £50 an acre?—Yes, taking the improvements.

27676. Does it not produce satisfactorily?—No, I think it was a very bad speculation. I think whenever land costs more than £20 to improve it, in a bare country with a bad climate, it is too much.

27677. But, after having expended all this money, do you get fair crops out of it?—There were very fair crops, but it was limed and drained and trenched, and everything done to make it a good farm; but a great part of it was a very poor subject.

27678. Do the tenants continue to get good crops?—Yes, better; but that is not to be wondered at.

27679. Mr Macdonald complained that new land had been given to him, but it was worthless?—The subject was not good, and although a lot of money was spent upon it, it was not a good speculation.

27680. Was there as much money spent upon it as upon Clashmore?—Yes, it was drained, but not limed.

27681. Has the tenant not limed it?—No, the small tenants here don't lime their land.

27682. There was a complaint made with reference to the rates; it was stated that in consequence of the sheep farm of Glencanesp having ceased to be a sheep farm, the rates fell heavier upon the tenants?—The Duke of Sutherland had the farm in his own hands that year and received nothing for it. It was entered in the valuation roll for £700, and he paid both as a landlord and as a tenant for it. The former rent had been £1000.

27683. But you could not get that rent again?—We could not get £700.

27684. Would you have taken £700?—If a good tenant had offered, we would have been very much disposed to do so, I think.

SUTHER-
LAND.

LOCHINVER.

Evander
M'Iver.

SUTHER-
LAND.

LOCHINVER.

Evander
M'Iver.

27685. You had no offer?—No.

27686. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Before leaving the subject of Clashmore, will you tell me what is the present rent you get for the enormous expenditure of about £5000?—Just £90.

27687. I am afraid it was rather an unfortunate day when you and the Duke were looking down from the hill?—It was unfortunate for the Duke, but it was fortunate for the people who were employed to make it.

27688. Was it fortunate for those poor people whose land it was?—Perhaps it was not.

27689. The result is that the thing has turned out a bad speculation, and the people who have been removed are since dissatisfied?—That is so.

27690. There was a complaint made in one of the papers of the farm that is now put into forest—a complaint which the delegate was not able to explain—that the burden of the rates fell upon them in consequence of the matter being in the Duke's own hands. To the extent of £300 there was a loss of taxable value to the people?—There was a loss to the Duke and to the parish, because the rent could not be obtained for it.

27691. Why did you fix upon £700?—Because we thought that was the rent we should have taken if we could have got a good tenant for it.

27692. What are you to get for it as a forest?—It is given to a gentleman upon very easy terms.

27693. Are you laying out much in the way of buildings for him?—We have not begun to do anything. The farm house remains as it was. Lord Cloneurry has taken it for this season, and is paying a small rent for it. He is living in the hotel, and he has taken the forest on the understanding that if it pleases him he is to keep it at a particular rent.

27694. You are aware that applications have been made for land: did it not occur to you that there was now an opportunity of doing something in the direction of complying with these applications?—There will be two large farms out in this district next Whitsunday, and it is not yet decided how they are to be disposed of. The Duke has it under consideration, and it has been a matter of correspondence between him and me that we should endeavour to supply the loss which Mr Williamson explained to-day—that we should try to have some middle class farms, or such farms as it would be an object for the crofter to look forward to obtaining.

27695. It is said that the fence which you have erected is a barbed one, and only three feet high?—Such fences are very common, and is the kind of fence that is now erected. It is not intended to be a deer fence. I may mention that the pasture of the tenants of Inverkirkraig and Strathan adjoining the forest of Glencanesp, was rather limited, and they petitioned the Duke to give them that portion of the low ground of Glencanesp to increase it, and the Duke has kindly complied with their request, and added 2000 acres to their pasture. They are to pay £21 additional rent for these 2000 acres and this fence, which is referred to, is erected between the forest and the new portion of the ground they have received.

27696. It will not, in point of fact, keep the deer out from their ground?—I really don't know, I have never seen the fence myself. The Duke has put up the fence at his own expense.

27697. We have been told that Glencanesp forest is about 50,000 acres in extent?—That is a mistake—a great exaggeration—it was only 35,000 acres in extent before the 2000 acres were taken off. I measured it carefully and came to the conclusion that its contents were

35,000 acres, and now, when the 2000 acres have been taken off it will only be 33,000 acres.

27698. What is the acreage of the portion added to the forest twelve years ago?—I should think 5000 or 6000 acres.

27699. Were these 5000 acres part of the parish we are now in?—No, part of the parish of Eddrachillis.

27700. There was no forest in this parish until the one at Glencanesp was made?—No, this was the first and only forest made.

27701. What is the extent of the forest in the other two parishes?—As near as I can say the Reay forest contains 60,000 acres, that is the only other one there is.

27702. In what parish is the Reay forest?—It is in the parishes of Durness, Eddrachillis, and Lairg.

27703. Can you give us any idea how much of the 60,000 acres was originally forest?—The whole of that ground was under sheep up to 1840, when a portion of it was forested.

27704. And although there was always what was called the Reay forest there were sheep on it?—There was no part of it forest originally, but it was called the Reay forest because Lord Reay shot deer over that portion of his estates.

27705. But there were sheep on it in his time?—In the days of the last Lord Reay there was, but it is not so long since sheep were introduced into this country; I think it would be about the beginning of the century.

27706. Were the tenants large or small, allowed to send sheep all over the old Reay forest, or was it used exclusively for deer?—I have endeavour to ascertain what the tradition of the country on that subject was, as I had no other means of arriving at the truth, and the information which I got from old people was that, previous to 1830, there were about twelve crofters living on what is now called Reay forest. They lived down in the low parts of the forest and had cattle and horses. In the summer they went to shielings up on the hills, but Lord Reay had the hills for sport.

27707. Was it good sport?—Very fine, and it was very extensive, much more so than it is now. The hills were of no value in those days, and he shot over the whole of them.

27708. Do the salmon nets extend all over the coast?—Each station will have about six bag nets.

27709. How many stations are there?—From Cape Wrath to Lochinver, five or six stations.

27710. Are these stations generally in the vicinity of the localities where the crofters are?—They are all along the coast, near the sheep farmers and the crofters.

27711. Is there plenty of coast open to the fisherman here?—Any quantity; the complaint about that is a most frivolous one in my opinion.

27712. Probably it arises from this, that in some cases they are very near the houses of the crofters?—There may possibly have been a net at Auchmelvich.

27713. Which may have been troublesome?—It should not have been.

27714. You said yesterday, when I asked you about some clearances which took place in Durness that it was before your time?—Yes, these clearances were carried out by Mr Anderson, Rispond.

27715. Can you say as much for the clearances we were told about to-day in the fifty townships of Assynt enumerated?—That I also wash my hands of personally; it was done about the time I was born.

SUTHER-
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Evander
M'IVER.

27716. But I am afraid Assynt then belonged to the Sutherlands?—Yes, it has belonged to them for nearly two hundred years.

27717. And, therefore, they are responsible for what has occurred, right or wrong?—I stated yesterday that in the year 1840 the Duke of Sutherland had made very large abatements of arrears of rents to small tenants, to the amount of some £5000, and I think it proper here to state that, although £2241, 11s. 2d. was due by the small tenants of Assynt, and was wiped out altogether and never again asked for, in my own time, since I became factor, in cases of poverty and distress where the people really were poor, and I thought deserving, I myself have abated £780 to the people of this district.

27718. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie*.—You have reduced the amount to that extent?—I wiped out arrears to that amount. It was asked to-day why the rents of the small tenants were not reduced, and I wish to state that fact.

27719. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh*.—It was asked rather why abatements had not been made?—I think I can explain why they were not given. Since I came to this district the rents of the small tenants have increased comparatively little, whereas the rents of the large grazing farms have increased from £4135, 13s. 8d. in 1845, when I entered on the factorship, to £8928, 15s. 10d. in 1880; in other words the rental of the large farms was more than doubled between 1845 and 1880 throughout the district. The rental of these large farms in 1845 was £4135, 13s. 8d.; in 1660, £6105, 11s. 6d.; in 1870, £6747, 12s.; in 1880, £8928, 15s. 10d.

27720. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie*.—Were these rents raised by competition?—Yes, when a farm was vacant it was advertised.

27721. You accepted competition rents?—Yes; but since 1880 the rents have been reduced by about £5000.

27722. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh*.—Permanently?—Yes. The reason why the small rents could not be reduced was that they had not been increased, and the others had. It was stated that there were two hundred cottars in Assynt. I cannot vouch for the correctness of that, because I have it in the lists given to me that there are only 113 in the whole of the three parishes.—*Rev. N. N. Mackay*. May I be allowed to explain. I made the statement I think in my paper, and I took the best care to be sure it was correct. I asked the inspector of poor if he could give me any data of that kind, and he told me he had the return of the registrar; and on consulting that I found the number of families in the parish at the last census, and then I found the number of crofters and the number of paupers, and taking the crofter families from the families we had altogether and counting the number of paupers, we made out that there were something like 200 cottars. What I said in my paper was, ‘about 200.’ We were giving relief in the parish this year, and made out a document for the information of the people in the south who sent us relief, showing how many crofters and how many cottars got assistance. The clerk of the committee made out a return, and I found that he returned 207 cottars and 165 crofters, so that when I stated that there were about 200 I was below what the clerk of the Relief Committee brought out in his report.—*Mr M'iver*. Previous to the year 1880 there was a large number of parties throughout this district—cottars who had houses and cut peats, and many of them got grass for cattle from their neighbours, and bits of arable land to till, and over these people the proprietor had no control whatever. They were not in his books at all, but were perfectly independent of him. I asked the ground officers to send me in the list of those who had houses in the three parishes in this

district, and 113 were entered in the rental at a rent of 10s. each, so as to give us a connection with each other, and so that we should have some control over them. I may mention that in the year 1861 Mr George Loch set agoing a system of assisting the tenants with wood, lime, glass, and slates to improve their houses, and since that time I have paid in timber, lime, and money for the small tenants, £1470, 10s. 10d.; and slates to the value of £551, 19s. have been given on credit. But these slates are expected to be repaid. When I came to Scownie I found that the Assynt tenants had no lots of land, they occupied it under the old runrig system, and one of my first anxieties was to place the matter on a better footing, and make lots throughout the parish. This was done, and in doing so there was a considerable amount of expense incurred on the farm of Culklinachanaran, there was a considerable sum of money expended on dykes, roads, and drains, I think about £200 or £300. I wish to state, with regard to the telegraph, that I think Sutherland was very ill treated and very unfairly used with regard to it. The telegraph was brought to the west coast of Inverness and Ross, but there was not any brought to the west coast or the north coast of Sutherland. The Duke of Sutherland brought the telegraph to Lochinver and undertook to pay £70 a year for seven years as well as one half the expense of the messages sent away and the same to Tongue. In Scownie and Durness there is no telegraphic line, and we think perhaps the Commissioners might mention this in their report as a grievance and complaint.

27723. The Duke was compelled to undertake a guarantee of £70 a year for seven years?—Yes, but he has not required to pay that, it has come down to £45 a year.

27724. It is a loss as yet?—A great loss. I cannot say that I agree with the opinions expressed here to-day as to the fitness of much of the land in this parish for crofters. The arable land is very limited and the climate is very bad. It might do for sheep farming, but certainly not for cropping.

27725. Has Clashmore frightened you?—It certainly has frightened me, and the Duke of Sutherland has been frightened by larger improvements. The stock on Clashmore farm, if given to the crofters, would be valued as the prices of sheep go, at something like £10,000, and the stock of Ardar would be £5000 at the present price of sheep, that is, £15,000 for stock of these two farms, which some people, perhaps, would give for these two farms.

27726. How much would be realised for these in the market if they were sold now?—Not so much, but a person taking these two farms might lose from £1000 to £2000.

27727. *Mr Cameron.*—He would require to keep most of them to stock the ground?—Any person who took it would require to keep a portion.

27728. What deduction would there be between the valuation rate and the open market rate, say per sheep?—It would require a little consideration that—ten or fifteen per cent.

27729. It would depend on the valuation a good deal?—No doubt it would depend on the amount of valuation. There is always an additional sum put upon a sheep stock in consequence of its being fitted for the land on which it is reared. A person who comes in pays the value of the sheep and the value of them as belonging to the farm. Strange sheep won't do on a farm, sheep reared on it are a necessity for it.

27730. Do you think the rate fixed by valuation has any reference at all to the class of persons who has to take over the stock?—Do you think that would be more highly valued to the proprietor taking the

SUTHER-
LAND.

LOCHINVER.

Evander
M'iver.

SUTHERLAND.—land into his own hands than to a tenant?—I dare say the valuers would be inclined to put as much as possible upon the landlord.

Lochinver.—*Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—More particularly if it were deer forest?—We had no complaint of the valuation of Glencanesp, and the day it was gone over I would have been glad to give £500 over to any person who would have taken the stock. But we got out and lost nothing—sheep rose. It was stated here to-day that two tenants were taken in at Auchmelvich and there was no reduction of rent made. I have a distinct recollection of taking in a shepherd or herd whom the tenants had introduced upon the farm and quarreled with. They left him in his croft and made him pay rent, and I insisted he should be put on the Duke's rental, and I deducted that rent from every other tenant in Auchmelvich—a certain proportion of it. One delegate yesterday mentioned that he had never got any work from the Duke of Sutherland. Now I think it my duty, after being thirty-eight years in the service of the Duke of Sutherland, to express in the highest terms, the kindness and the liberality with which the tenants have been treated, in my opinion, by the Duke of Sutherland. I have served both father and son. This year when it was stated that seed was required, I happened to have occasion to go to London, and I went to the Duke of Sutherland and told him seed was required; and he asked me how much money would be required, and I told him the amount I thought would be required, and in the most generous, kind manner, he granted it at once. A certain amount of seed was given to every man on the estate in the district of the three parishes who wished for it, on the understanding that it is to be paid at Martinmas with the rent.

The Chairman.—Paid in instalments?—We expect it will be wholly paid.

27733. In one payment?—Yes, it is given on those terms. There were several things said here to-day regarding myself, but I don't think they are worth notice.

27734. You incidentally stated that you did not think agricultural improvement was profitable if the outlay in reclaiming the land exceeded £20 per acre. Does that include the expense of the first liming?—No, I did not include the liming in that.

27735. Would you really think it profitable here to expend £20 per acre upon the improvement of arable land?—No, I would not in such a poor climate and with such an inferior soil.

27736. What would be the highest rental per acre that could be prudently taken for improved arable ground here?—I think there is very little land in this district worth more than 10s. an acre.

27737. Then it is impossible to expend anything like £20 on reclaiming it with advantage?—Yes.

27738. Because the original rent is nothing almost?—It is so.

27739. But can any land be reclaimed and made into tolerable arable ground by an expenditure of £10 per acre?—In parts of the country where there are no stones, and where there is not much drainage required. On the east coast of Scotland—Morayshire and Nairn—they improve the land without drainage, they just put on the oxen and plough it up, and there it is done for a small amount; and in the climate it pays very well. A number of tenants took in a great quantity of land in that district, in that manner, at their own expense, having a lease of 19 years.

27740. Can that be done in Sutherland?—No, there is no place where that can be done; it is such a boggy, mossy, rocky, and stony country—none that I know of in this district at all events.

27741. *Professor Mackinnon.*—You heard Mr Hugh Mackay's statement

Evander
M'Iver.

about this alleged arrangement between the proprietor and the people at the time of their going away to the army?—Yes.

27742. Of course, although you were not in the country yourself, you have been in constant communication with gentlemen who were, and whose people were in the country but whose families were not mixed up in that. Do you know what their view was in regard to that tradition? —I have often heard that statement made by the humbler classes, but I never had any conversation with the better classes on the subject. I know that it is the impression in the mind of a number of the smaller people in the country.

27743. And has the feeling also come in among them that where they did not provide a man they had to provide the money?—Yes, that is the feeling.

27744. But of course you are not able from any outside evidence to say anything about it?—No, I am perfectly ignorant on the subject.

27745. There was another statement that came down by tradition, namely, as regards the people before the clearances. Have you heard anything reliable about that?—The story I have always heard about it was that they were in extreme poverty.

27746. I think there is evidence of that—that there was a great number of people in extreme poverty?—And that a constant recurrence of the famine led to the clearances, but whether that is true or not I don't know.

27747. It might be true that a large number were in extreme poverty, and yet some be in the position which Mr Mackay described?—Quite possible.

27748. *The Chairman.*—Have you ever heard any tradition about the alleged contract which existed at the time the Highland Regiments were raised?—I have just been stating to Professor Mackinnon that there is a feeling and impression in the minds of the humbler classes in Sutherland, that of those who went into the army their friends were not so well treated as they expected, but I never had any information that I could rely upon.

27749. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Is there any estate record that can be referred to on the subject?—There may be at Dunrobin, but I have none.

27750. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Was there not the same tradition in Lewis?—There was.

27751. And in Skye?—Yes, about the 78th.

27752. *Professor Mackinnon.*—There was particular mention of a rise of rent in the township of Auchmelvich, do you know anything about it?—No, and I was very much astonished to hear it.

27753. As a matter of fact the rise of rent on crofters' land in your time is so small that it is scarcely worth talking of?—The amount put on altogether was not large.

SUTHER-
LAND.

LOCHINVER.

Evander
M'Iver.

[ADJOURNED.]

ROSS-
SHIRE.

ULLAPOOL.

ULLAPOOL, ROSS-SHIRE, MONDAY, JULY 30, 1883.

Present:—

Lord NAPIER AND ETTRICK, K.T., *Chairman.*
 Sir KENNETH S. MACKENZIE, Bart.
 DONALD CAMERON, Esq., of Lochiel, M.P.
 C. FRASER-MACKINTOSH, Esq. M.P.
 Sheriff NICOLSON, LL.D.
 Professor MACKINNON, M.A.

KENNETH MACKENZIE, Crofter, formerly Fisherman, Lots of Scoraig, Little Loch Broom (74), assisted by DUNCAN MACKENZIE, Crofter's Son, Lots of Scoraig (35)—examined.

Kenneth Mackenzie
and
Duncan Mackenzie.

27754. *The Chairman.*—Have you been elected delegates?—*Duncan Mackenzie.* Yes.

27755. What have you to say?—In the first place when the township of Lots was formed in 1840 there, twenty men put down having a lot each.

27756. That was the first formation of the Lots?—The first formation on the Black Moor, the rental for the twenty lots was £5.

27757. £5 each?—£5 for the whole—5s. for each, that was the case for the first nine years, or, rather, instead of 5s. it was six days' labour. There was no rent paid in money, it was six days' labour, equal to 5s. In nine years the rent and labour was put up to twenty days, and it continued at that till 1884.

27758. Could the twenty days be taken in money instead of labour; was there an alternative?—There was no money value put on it then, merely twenty days labour.

27759. Were the people in the habit of affording the labour or offering the money?—They were supposed to give the twenty days' labour for the rent.

27760. But what did they do generally, labour or money?—They gave the labour at that time.

27761. Until 1880?—Yes. In 1880 there was money rental imposed, varying from £2, 12s. 6d., to £3, 10s. per lot, which they considered a very hard case indeed. Instead of raising the rents the people ought to have got compensation for their improvements. They have no communication by road, only by a dangerous rocky mountain which is a hazardous way of travelling even in daylight; and there is no pier to land at with boats. The people wish, if it can be got through the Royal Commissioners, to have a road there which would benefit upwards of sixty families, beginning at Scoraig right through the townships of Lots, Carnoch, Pereoch, Achmore, and Badraloch, and joining the ferry of Dundonnell on the top of the hill at Mulbuie. They also want more pasture, security of tenure, and reduction of rent. Although I am not an old man I have never seen anything done there by the proprietors to benefit the people, although they have been oppressed.

27762. You mentioned three periods—the first period in which the people received their land during nine years for six days' labour?—Yes.

27763. Then the second period in which they received their land for

twenty days' labour ; and in the year 1880 a third period began with a money rental ?—A money rental.

27764. During the two first periods the land was actually paid in labour ?—Paid in labour.

27765. When the ground was first apportioned to these people had they a written agreement with the landlord ?—None whatever.

27766. But was it explained to them at the time that they were to have their land on an improving lease for lower terms at first and higher terms afterwards ?—Not on these terms. They were put there to make the best of it, and told they would never be put out unless for a crime.

27767. Is there any written statement of that kind ?—No.

27768. Is there any one here who can speak to it ?—I think my father can speak to it.

27769. Would you ask him if he was one of the original settlers ?—Yes, he says he was.

27770. When he received the land originally was any promise made to him that he should remain there on the same terms as regards rent ?—*Kenneth Mackenzie*. The terms that were given were that we were to have it for nine years for nine days' work.

27771. The other delegate said it was for six days' work ; why do you say for nine days' work ?—Then when these nine years were over twenty days' labour was imposed on us.

27772. When you got the land originally were you promised to have it for nine years for nine days' labour ?—There was no promise except that so long as we would not be charged with any crime we would always remain there—the nine days' service was to last for nine years.

27773. Did you understand that at the end of nine years other terms might be made ?—We did not know about that.

27774. What did you expect to happen at the end of the nine years ?—We did not know ; anything that the proprietor might choose to impose.

27775. When the nine years were over and the twenty days' were asked what did the people do—did they consent to it or make any protest against it ?—They did not oppose it ; they just accepted the terms and worked the twenty days.

27776. Did they always give it in work, or did they sometimes give it in money ?—We never gave money.

27777. When the heads of the families were otherwise engaged were they allowed to find substitutes ?—Yes, a substitute would be accepted.

27778. Was the work exacted from women and men and the whole family, or only the head of the family ?—They would require the services of a man.

27779. When the second period finished in 1880 and the money rent was imposed, what did you do then ?—We just paid the rent.

27780. You did not protest against it ?—We did not protest against it, but the reason of the new arrangement was that we were not able to attend upon the day to give the work which the proprietor wanted ; we were engaged in other employment. We were ready to do it upon a subsequent day, but meanwhile the proprietor got rather irritated and said he would not be bothered with conduct like that, and he imposed a money rent.

27781. During the whole period of thirty years that you paid a labour rent, did you receive any assistance from the proprietor in building or improving your houses, or in any other way ?—No, he gave us no assistance.*

* A voluntary declaration has since been made by this witness to the effect that his answer to question 26781 is not in accordance with facts. See Appendix A, No. LXXI.

ROSS-SHIRE.

ULLAPOOL.

Kenneth
Mackenzie
and
Duncan
Mackenzi

- ROSS-SHIRE. 27782. No materials for building the house?—I don't know many that got wood.
- ULLAPOOL. 27783. Did any get wood?—I am not aware.
- Kenneth Mackenzie and Duncan Mackenzie. 27784. To *Duncan Mackenzie*.—Are you aware of any who got assistance in building houses?—I am not aware.
27785. There were twenty families originally, how many are there now? is there the same number of lots, or have the lots been subdivided?—*Kenneth Mackenzie*. There were twenty families went there originally, and there are twenty yet.
27786. What is the area of arable land, and what is the amount of stock now kept upon the full lot?—We got £5 worth of black, stony ground which was brought under cultivation at the beginning, among the whole twenty families of us.
27787. How many acres of arable land are there in each lot?—I have myself perhaps a little over two acres; some have less and others have about that.
27788. How many cows do you keep?—One head of cattle was put down in my summing when I got the place.
27789. How many have you got now?—I keep two head of cattle. I have no horse nor sheep.
27790. Do you mean a cow and stirk, or two cows?—Two milk cows.
27791. Have you any stirk?—Well if I have it is not upon the croft. The croft cannot keep the two cows either. How could it do so when all the pasture we have is just the breadth of the arable ground back on the hill?
27792. Is there any hill pasture?—No. If the neighbouring places would preserve the marches strictly, the whole twenty of us could not keep ten beasts upon our own pasture.
27793. But as a matter of fact is there some hill pasture upon which you drive out your cows?—The breadth of the arable land behind.
27794. How far does it go back?—It goes back the same breadth—it forms a square.
27795. What do you think the croft would really keep itself without buying anything from the outside—would it keep one cow?—Two head of cattle.
27796. So that you have a croft which keeps two head of cattle, and you pay £2, 12s. 6d.?—The rent of the whole township is £55, my rent is about £3, and others pay more, and some less.
27797. To *Duncan Mackenzie*.—You have heard what Kenneth Mackenzie has said, have you any explanation to offer about the six or nine days' labour?—There are three days I did not take into account—two days for cutting peats and one day for harvest—besides the six days of manual labour.
27798. Is his statement correct that each croft will keep about two head of cattle?—They will, by what grows upon them for winter keep.
27799. And they pay from £2, 12s. 6d. to £3, 10s.?—Yes, exclusive of taxes.
27800. Is that a higher rent than the common custom of the county would warrant?—Yes.
27801. It is a higher rent than usual?—Yes, the township when we went there was given for £5, taking off Scoriaig.
27802. But it must have been a sort of improving lease, on the understanding that when it became better it was to be more?—There was no agreement to that effect.
27803. Must there not have been something of that kind?—It is worth more than when they got it.

27804. Do you think they would have objected to pay something more, or it is the additional amount that they complain of?—It is the additional amount, and the want of pasture for the cattle. They have no place to put cattle behind the dykes, except about fifty yards.

ROSS-SHIRE.

27805. They would be contented to pay more than they paid in the first period of nine years?—Certainly, if they got pasture.

ULLAPPOOL.

27806. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Do you represent the people of Scoraig only or other people besides?—The township of Lots, not Scoraig.

Kenneth
Mackenzie
and
Duncan
Mackenzie.

27807. Is there not a village of Scoraig?—Lots was taken off Scoraig, it has been distinctly apart from Scoraig since 1840.

27808. Are there delegates from other parts of the Dundonnell property?—I dont know.

27809. You have no reason to believe there are complaints in other parts?—I have reason to believe there are, but I cannot speak on that point.

27810. Twenty days' labour was what was latterly given for the croft, I see the proprietor of the estate of Dundonnell estimated the value of the days' labour at 2s. 6d. ?—I don't think they value it so much in the conditions of lease.

27811. They mention that the rate of labour having risen, the twenty days' labour had become worth £2, 10s. What is the value of labour here now-a-days?—You would not get an able-bodied man to work days' labour under 18s. a week, and provide everything himself.

27812. Then twenty days labour is worth £3 now?—Yes, certainly, and often they have to waste six weeks in making out twenty days, owing to the bad weather.

27813. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—What property are you on?—I live at Advie on Spey.

27814. What is the property you represent here to-day?—Dundonnell.

27815. Are you well acquainted with it?—I have been brought up on it, and my father is still living there.

27816. Is any part of the estate under forest?—Yes.

27817. How much?—I have no idea of the acreage.

27818. A large part?—A good part.

27819. How long is it since it was made forest?—It is a good many years—but not into a forest proper for letting until twelve years ago.

27820. Are there any sheep in the forest now?—I cannot tell.

27821. *To Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Are there any sheep in the forest?—There are none.

27822. *To Duncan Mackenzie.*—What was the name of the sheep farm that was there before it was turned into forest?—It was all under the name of Dundonnell.

27823. Who was the last big tenant?—There was no tenant in that forest.

27824. Who was the last tenant of the sheep farm that is now the forest?—A Mr Urquhart.

27825. Do you know what he was paying?—I cannot tell.

27826. Were there any lands taken from small crofts at the time this forest was made twelve years ago?—Not for the forest.

27827. Not so far as you know?—No.

27828. Is there only one forest on Dundonnell?—One forest.

27829. Are you acquainted with the other forests in the parish of Loch Broom?—Not very well.

27830. Is Braemore a forest?—Yes.

27831. Does it lie in Loch Broom?—It is in the parish of Loch Broom.

27832. Is it a big forest?—Yes.

ROSS-SHIRE.

27833. Were there tenants there once?—I cannot say, but to all appearance there were in old times.

27834. Is there a place called Inverlaur in this parish?—Yes.

27835. Was it a sheep farm until lately?—I am not aware, but it is so yet.

27836. Are you not aware that it is to be converted into forest?—I cannot tell.

27837. Do you know it?—I have passed through it.

27838. Has it all the appearance of having been once thickly populated with small tenants?—Yes, it has.

27839. Do you know Leckmelm?—I have passed through it, but have not much acquaintance with it.

27840. Do you know now that the whole ground was enclosed?—I was not aware.

27841. The rental paid by the township of Scoraig is between £50 and £60?—It is £55 odds.

27842. It has been made out of barren moor?—Yes, heather and stones.

27843. Did the proprietor contribute one farthing directly or indirectly to make this township which is now paying £55 except giving the waste land?—Not that I am aware of.

27844. You have stated that you want several things done for you in the townships?—Yes.

27845. Do you say so because you think something ought to be done for the rent you pay?—Most certainly.

27846. Do you think you should have a road?—Yes, we want a road.

27847. Do you pay road money?—I don't know whether they pay actual road money. They think themselves they do, but I am not aware of it.

27848. With regard to the narrowness of the pasture, it is said that the hill pasture is about as broad as it is long behind the crofts; is there any reason why the people should not get more?—No reason whatever.

27849. To whom does the ground on the other side belong?—To a distinct tenant, and not resident.

27850. Is he a big tenant?—Fairish,—a man paying about £30 rent; it is merely pasture for him.

27851. Do you mean summer pasture?—He keeps cattle and sheep and horses on it.

27852. Would it be worth the while of the twenty families that are there to pay a little more rent for the purpose of getting a good slice of the grazing?—They ought to get the breadth of the lots until it strikes the sea on the north side, and a reduction on the present rental, that is the only thing they could get for pasture directly behind their township. It would be the highest-rented piece of ground on the whole property although they had all that.

27853. How many proprietors does the other delegate recollect on Dunderwell?—Four.

27854. *The Chairman.*—Does the township march with the deer forest at all?—No, it is on a different side of the Loch.

27855. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Who is the tenant of Unapool?—Mr M'Iver, Scoraig.

27856. How far is it from the farm?—A mile and a half.

27857. Is it quite separate from other land?—It adjoins on the pasture.

ULLAPOOL.

Kenneth
Mackenzie
and
Duncan
Mackenzie.

JOHN M'IVER, Merchant, Scoraig (53)—examined.

ROSS-SHIRE.

ULLAPOOL

27858. *The Chairman.*—Are you a delegate?—I am not a delegate, and I have nothing to say, only I would like to state three or four points about the tenants. I have very little to say on their behalf. The land we have is rented by us, but these other tenants that spoke get the use of it. Their own land would not pasture their stock, and when the proprietor gave the place to us he was for putting up a fence between us and them, and we would not allow him, because we knew that in that event the stock of these people would starve, all their pasture would not feed twelve head of cattle altogether. We are quite willing to remove our own stock off the place for their benefit, and we told to the proprietor a year or two ago, adding that that was more his business than ours, but that we would require to get a reduction of rent, and we did not get any hearing for that. I wish to speak a few words on behalf of the people generally, if I may be allowed. Although the poor people would get all they want—although they should get a reduction of rent and enlarged holdings these benefits would be of no service to them unless there were proper estate regulations going along with it to prevent the one crofter from injuring his neighbour. It may so happen that one is in good circumstances and may have a great amount of stock and pay only £1 or £2 of rent, while his neighbour might pay £12 of rent and have little or no stock at all.

27859. What place do you speak of?—The whole parish. The man that has this large stock usually has a very large family, and when the sons marry the stock is split up and separated and scattered. Then another mischief is, that some of them keep no less than six dogs. We have sold the whole of our stock because of the number of dogs round about us, belonging to the people of the place. What I should like would be that there should be something like a club-farm so that the one who would only pay £3 of rent should have only his share, the same as the one who paid a larger rent, and that the stock should be placed under proper management and supervision, so that the poor man, although on a bed of sickness, should not suffer more than the man who was better off. We are sometimes blaming proprietors, but this must be said that some of the people among ourselves if they had the power would probably use it against their neighbours at least quite as oppressively. Many of the landed proprietors probably don't use their power to the utmost. No doubt the people have cause to complain, and they have that all over the country; but what I want to speak about would be some practical measure for their good. The people would benefit by many other things besides an increase of the holdings of land. We are in want of a quay, and we get no assistance whatever in order to build one, even supposing our boats should be broken and injured. I should like that the people should get increased holdings, and I don't see why they should not—there is plenty of land and to spare; but still I would like if these other things could come in at the same time, and along with that. But if any one thinks that we, my brother and myself, have too much land, we will be very glad to share it with our poorer neighbours, and we have always been so.

27860. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Lots of Scoraig was a piece of old pasture land on Scoraig which was given to the people about forty years ago?—It was given to my father and another man forty years ago. We got Lots of Scoraig along with Scoraig.

27861. But about the place these two men who were examined before you, spoke about?—That is Lots. It was a part of Scoraig when we came to Scoraig; we got it along with Scoraig, although it is called Lots now.

ROSS-
SHIRE.
27862. And then it was given to about twenty families?—It was given to my father and another man, and then Lots was cut off Scoraig and twenty lots made of it.

ULLAPOOL. 27863. How many people are in Scoraig now?—My brother and I John M'Iver have the half of Scoraig and there are two families on the other half.

27864. *The Chairman.*—The twenty lots which were made were given to twenty families at almost a nominal rent for a certain number of years? —Yes, for so many days' labour.

27865. And then they were given for a second period for an increased number of days' labour?—Yes.

27866. And now they are given at a money rent?—Yes.
27867. Do you think it was fair that the people, after sitting for a number of years at a low rent, should pay a higher rent?—There are better judges of that here than I.

27868. But I want to hear your opinion, because you are recommended as an independent witness?—My judgment is that they are paying too much rent.

27869. But do you think it right that, after sitting a term of years at a nominal rent, they should gradually pay a higher rent?—I don't think they should pay a higher rent; they should have it for the first rent—that is my opinion—as they were improving the land and making it better. It is worth now more than £5 surely, when they improved it.

27870. You think they should always sit at the same rent?—Well, I don't know about the same rent; but I don't think it should be put at such a high figure as it is now.

27871. I want to understand whether you think it would be wrong to put any increase of rent upon them, or whether it is the amount of increase you complain of?—I don't see that any other thing is advancing, and I don't understand why rent should advance.

27872. Don't you see that the price of labour and stock is getting higher? What is asked is. Do you think it would be a wrong thing to take a small increase of rent, or is it your objection that too much is put on?—I think there is too much put on.

27873. But you would not object to a little increase now and again?—No; but that would be just as people would say it would be just and right to do it.

27874. Do you think it would be just and right to add any small thing now and again?—I don't concede that point.

27875. But in this particular place you think too much has been put on?—That is my opinion whatever.

27876. They stated that they paid for a croft supporting two cattle, £2, 12s. 6d., and you think that is too much. What would you think a reasonable rent for a small croft supporting two cattle?—Although I would mention a price for the lot just now, it would not be accepted. If I would be put out as judge for the place I would give an opinion, but I am not fit just now.

27877. You won't give your opinion to Her Majesty's Commissioners? —No.

27878. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Do you know where the twenty families that got the half of Scoraig came from?—The most of them came from Dundonnell—we came from that part ourselves—and from Kildonan, and part from Rereech. Kildonan is part of a farm now; it is just on a right line over from the Ferry.

27879. Were they all put out of their places?—Yes.

27880. Has your own half of Scoraig been raised in rent since you got it originally?—It was a little. When this £5 was taken for Scoraig I

think we had it for two years or so and then the rent was raised. The notice was that we would require to pay double, but when my father went to pay the rent I think we got it for two-thirds, and it is at that rent yet. If anything was done it is not since our new proprietor came in.

BOSS.
SHIRE
—
ULLAPOOL

27881. You heard what the previous delegate stated?—I heard part of John McIver. it.

27882. Do you know that these people in Scoraig besides paying a money rent have to give labour?—They are wanting labour besides that.

27883. The proprietor is wanting labour besides that?—Yes, from all the tenants.

27884. Do you know the number of days he wants?—They are wanting six days of the men, and four or five days of those that will be at home just now, to cut peats and corn and everything of the kind.

27885. Are you obliged to give any service?—Yes, one must do it as well as the rest. That is for the croft we have in Scoraig.

27886. What payment do you get for these six days' labour?—Since these new people came from Australia the people are getting their dinner sometimes.

27887. No money?—No.

27888. Do you get a good dinner?—I never heard them complain.

27889. I think you seem to take it up that the previous delegates were complaining that you had this hill pasture. I don't think they intended that at all; they merely said they would like to have it?—For my part I may say it is themselves that have it; it is theirs as well as mine.

27890. On the contrary they rather state that were it not for the kindness of you and your brother it would not support twelve families besides twenty?—That is true.

27891. You made some remarks about your countrymen, that they might just go as far if they had the power as bigger men, and you wanted some regulations?—Yes, I think nothing will be of use unless there are good regulations to make the tether for the merchant as well as for other men as short as it can be done.

27892. Who could make the regulations but a proprietor?—If it would come down from the Government that a board would be erected in every parish to look after these things as well as the Parochial Board.

27893. That is what you are pointing to?—Yes.

27894. But hitherto the tenants cannot lay down any regulations without the consent of the proprietor?—No, I am sure a proprietor would have no objections to a board of this kind—no right proprietor. It would benefit his own tenants and he would get the rent. I think he would get the rent, and he would get just all the kindness of the people.

27895. But every right tenant would like it too?—I think so.

27896. But not a man who put a great deal more stock on the pasture than he ought to?—Well, according as the place is just now, if I am able to put stock on the land I may put 200 or 300 sheep there. Is that justice for the poor man who cannot buy one cow?

27897. Are the people about you rather poor in their circumstances?—They are, and they are poorer this year. I never saw them so poor. But I am hearing there are some gentlemen in this parish saying they are not.

27898. But you have very good means of knowing, because they are in your books probably?—My books show a different story.

ROSS-
SHIRE.

ULLAPOOL.

JOHN MACLEAN, Crofter and Shoemaker, Altandu, Coigach (41)—
examined.

John Maclean. 27899. *Mr Cameron.*—Have you any statement to make?—Yes.
Petition of the Crofters residing in Altandu, in the Parish of Lochbroom—Unto the Royal (Crofters') Commissioners, humbly sheweth,—
 That there are at present eighteen crofters and four cottars residing
 within the bounds of Altandu paying a rent of about £50: that in our
 'grandfathers' days the township only paid £7, and was tenanted by five
 'crofters, with much more pasture-land than we at present possess, part of
 'which pasture-land is now under sheep and deer. That our arable land
 'at present averages about three acres for each croft: that it has been
 'tilled yearly for a great number of years, except what has been lately
 'improved by ourselves, and that this improved land has been rented:
 'and that some short time ago our rents were raised considerably. That
 'as we are compelled to till our land yearly we can scarcely make half a
 'boll of meal for every pound of rent we pay. That should we build a
 'house at our own expense, if we leave or are put away we receive no
 'compensation whatever: that we generally receive some lime and sticks
 'for a house and then the whole house is claimed for their value. That
 'at present some of us are so deeply in debt that it would take nearly all
 'our stock to pay up the debts of merchants who have advanced meal,
 'and other necessaries of life to us. That some of us are compelled to go
 'below tide-mark and gather whelks, &c., to eke out a scanty livelihood.
 'That our chief manure is sea-weed, which we have great difficulty in
 'getting ashore, owing to the want of any suitable landing-place, so much
 'so that often our lives and boats are in danger, and that we have to carry
 'this manure in creels on our backs from the shore to our crofts. That
 'for every horse we keep we must pay £1 in addition to our rent: that if
 'we merely report we need the horse we must pay from that time although
 'we may not have it for some time after saying we require it. That it is
 'chiefly by means of the *caschrom* that our patches of arable land are cul-
 'tivated from among the rocks and bogs. That what we wish is more
 'arable and pasture land, sufficient to keep ourselves and our families, say
 'from ten to twelve acres in each croft, and for which we are quite willing to
 'pay a reasonable rent; compensation for improvements to our land; aboli-
 'tion of the £1 charged for keeping each horse; small local harbours
 'erected round the coast so that we may land fish, and the sea-weed re-
 'quired for manure; and that Government would advance boats and
 'fishing material to those who have no land, and to the young men who
 'are experienced fishermen.' *Statement from Coigach.*—The average
 'size of our crofts is about three acres. The original size was much more
 'than this but was reduced by subdivision. When Badentarbet and
 'Achnahaird were turned into sheep farms, the hill pasture of Polbain,
 'Altandu, and the township of Achnahaird was considerably diminished.
 'We have to build our own houses, and only of late years do we get a
 'little wood for roofing, but receive no compensation on removal nor for
 'improvements we make on the lands. When any improvement is made
 'on the lands our rents are immediately raised in proportion, and we
 'therefore receive no benefit from them. We have also to pay for the sea
 'ware which we gather on the shores of Isle Ristol and Old Dornie. This
 'island, as well as all the summer Isles, was once in the possession of the
 'people, and taken from them about the same time as Badentarbet and
 'Auchinaird. We also feel that pauperism is greatly on the increase
 'owing to the failure of the fishing, the unproductiveness of the soil, and

' the high rents—e.g., the rental of the district of Reef is about thirteen times what it was 100 years ago. If any crofter keeps a horse, he must pay £1 to the factor, even when the horse grazes on the crofter's own hill pasture. There is a patch of ground about twelve acres, in the very middle of the island of Janera belonging to another proprietor. It is John Maclean.
ROSS.
SHIRE.
—
ULLAPPOOL
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27900. I understand this is a particular statement from your parish?—Yes.

27901. Who wrote the statement from Coigach?—Our minister, Mr Finlayson.

27902. Did he compose it as well as write it?—No.

27903. Who composed it?—The neighbours.

27904. Did they appoint a committee to draw it up?—Yes.

27905. And the committee met at the minister's house?—No, at the church.

27906. How many members were there on it?—I am not sure, a good many members.

27907. A dozen or twenty?—Over a dozen I suppose.

27908. Were you one of the members of committee?—Yes.

27909. Did the committee suggest these statements to the minister, or did the minister first write the paper and suggest them to the committee?—The committee first suggested them to the minister, and he wrote out what they suggested.

27910. Were there any strangers present besides the minister?—I am not aware of any.

27911. It is stated in this paper that when any improvement is made on the lands your rent is immediately raised in proportion, and thus you therefore receive no benefit from the improvement: when was the last increase on the rent made?—Three years ago.

27912. Do you remember when the previous increase was made?—No, but there are those here who remember it.

27913. About how many years ago was it?—About forty years.

27914. So that it has stood for forty years without the rent being raised?—Not as far as I know, but there is another delegate here older than me.

27915. What is your own rent at the present moment?—Over £4.

27916. How much over?—£4, 8s.

27917. Without taxes?—Without taxes.

27918. What was it three years ago?—£3, 16s., only I was paying an extra pound, for keeping a horse.

27919. So that you were raised 12s.?—Yes.

27920. In fact, after holding the croft forty years it was raised 12s.?—As far as I know.

27921. Will you explain about this horse—it is stated here that when a crofter wishes to keep a horse he pays a pound whether he keeps the horse or not?—After I myself had improved the land I could not work the improved land without a horse. I trenched more than half the whole lot; 740 yards of stone drains I made myself. I made 365 yards of open drains in order to drain away the surface water. After I made this im-

ROSS-SHIRE.

ULLAPPOOL.

provement, I could not work the place without a horse. I went to the factor and asked permission to keep a horse, and he was quite willing to give me the permission, only I would have to pay an additional pound for it. I had not the means to buy the horse at that time until after two years John Maclean were due, and I had to pay the pound for the horse upon these two rents—that is, I paid for two years before I got the horse. And although we should provide summer pasture for the horses in a different parish, or even in a different county, still we would have to pay this pound additional for the horse. I myself in one of these years grazed a horse in a different place and I paid the pound.

27922. Did you ever represent this grievance to the factor?—Yes, I made a complaint to the factor about it. When I paid my first rent after I got permission to keep the horse I told the factor then that I had not actually a horse at all. It was to Mr M'Iver, the local factor, that I told this.

27923. What did he say?—I put down the total rent—that is, the old rent that was paid, and the additional rent that was added on three years ago, on the table, and he shoved it to the other side of the table and said he could not accept it unless I paid the pound for the horse as well.

27924. When you complained to the factor about putting on the pound for the horse, what did he say in answer to your complaint, or did he say anything?—He said that it was not he who prevented me from keeping a horse, and I replied that I was not able to purchase a horse although I got permission to keep it, and he said that was none of his business.

27925. Is that all he said?—That is all, in addition to what I have stated already, that he would not accept the rent from me without the additional pound as well.

27926. What is the amount of the stock which you keep on the croft?—A horse and three, four, or five head of cattle as the case may be,—sometimes the one and sometimes the other.

27927. Is the pound paid for the horse included in the rent you gave me just now?—There is £4, 8s. for the rent and a pound for a horse whether I have it or not.

27928. Then what is your stock not including the horse?—Three, four, or five head of cattle as may be, and a dozen sheep, more or less. I want to make a statement about the cattle. Although I and my neighbours keep a certain number of cattle, and although the factor allows us to keep them, the crofts will not support them.

27929. What do you do with the cattle in winter. Do you buy extra food for them?—We buy food for them in winter and spring, if we can get it.

27930. Used you formerly to keep that number of cattle, or did you keep fewer?—I never kept a larger stock than that, but my forefathers kept a larger stock when they had more pasture ground—ground which is now occupied by sheep and deer.

27931. Is it want of wintering that prevents you from keeping that number of cattle, or want of grazing?—Both.

27932. Is there any hill grazing or arable ground adjacent to your croft, and which could be added to your croft with advantage?—Plenty of it.

27933. Lying on the bounds of your croft—contiguous to it?—Yes, land under sheep adjacent to our pasture land.

27934. If portions of that were added to your croft would it give you arable ground as well as hill pasture, or only hill pasture?—Certainly it would give us more arable ground and hill pasture as well.

27935. Has that land adjacent to your croft ever been under the plough?—Yes, it has been under the *cas-chrom*.

27936. Is it of the same quality as that which is described as being so inferior that it can only be worked by the *caschrom*?—Part of it is six times more value; because I have it from my father.

27937. But judging from your own eyes do you consider that the land would plough?—Yes, I have heard my father say that out of this land John Maclean which I have spoken of he would take a creel of potatoes for every creel of sea-ware used in manuring it, and now I can only dig a creel of potatoes for every six creels of sea-ware out of the croft I have.

27938. In this paper it is stated that the crofters wish security against evictions; are we to understand by that, that there have been in recent times arbitrary evictions?—I cannot say in quite recent times that there have been arbitrary evictions. Another delegate will tell exactly when the evictions took place; there were some.

27939. Within your own experience have there been arbitrary evictions?—None in my neighbourhood within my recollection.

27940. Will you explain about the patch of ground in the small island of Tanera?—Mr Bankes of Gruinard and Letterewe got a piece of ground called the Parks, which once belonged to the late Mr Macdonald of Tanera, and is now occupied by people from the other side of Loch Broom—from the Poolewe neighbourhood and district. They had no right to go beyond the dyke fences upon this cultivated portion to the pasture surrounding the place, but they are there for the last sixteen years, and, so far as I can hear from others, for a considerable number of years back. The fences are not well kept up so as to keep cattle in or out. Now these tenants of the late Mr Bankes chased their neighbour's stock with dogs. The cattle stray in and out, and those that are within, chase their neighbour's stock with dogs. People tell me they have complained to the factors upon this property, and that they have got no benefit from that.

27941. You state here that you wish that the people could get better boats and nets, and that a safe and proper landing place should be put up upon the shores to enable them to prosecute the fishing; and in the first paper you say you wish the Government to supply these nets?—I would prefer that you would confine my examination to the first paper.

27942. Do the people fish much?—Yes.

27943. Are they fond of fishing?—Yes.

27944. They take naturally to it?—Some of them; there are some without any land at all, and these go to the fishing.

27945. Are there many cottars?—Yes.

27946. How many?—Four in Altandu.

27947. Are they fishermen?—Some of them.

27948. Are the people too poor to buy nets and boats for themselves?—Much too poor. Could you expect anything else from those who make their livelihood from the whelks gathered on the sea shore?

27949. I suppose I may take it for granted that what the people about you really want are larger holdings, both arable and pasture, and assistance to enable them to prosecute the fishing?—Yes, but they have no landing place, even supposing they had boats and nets.

27950. They also want piers?—Yes; boats and nets and a pier for fishing. I have an additional matter to bring up if you give me the opportunity.

27951. *The Chairman.*—Go on.—The tenants of Achnahaird march with us on one side. Some of their pasture land is upon our march and some of their arable land is upon our march. These people had about a third part of their arable and pasture land taken from them and added to a neighbouring farm. Now this has thrown their burden upon us who march with them and is an extremely hard matter for us. It confines us

ROSS.
SHIRE.

ULLAPOOL.

ROSS-SHIRE. very much. The one tenant cannot very well quarrel with the neighbouring tenant on the matter when the factor will not settle matters between us. In my father's time there were three tenants from our township transplanted into a part of our own hill pasture and settled there. They John Maclean pay £10 of rent, and these three get a considerable portion of pasture land which property belongs to Allandu.

27952. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You said that the person who put the pound on you was not the present factor?—I didn't say that.

27953. Is that custom about the pound going on to this day?—Yes.

27954. Had the people in your township horses of old?—Yes, they had as many as they pleased, and they used to winter and summer in a place called Strath Polly, now under sheep and deer.

27955. Was it at the time that hill pasture was taken from them that the privilege of keeping horses was taken away?—I believe it was, but I cannot be very well certain; an older delegate might speak better to that.

27956. Can you give any explanation why you are prohibited from keeping horses?—No.

27957. Have you turned it over in your mind, over and over again to think what the reason could be?—Yes, I have turned it over often enough in my head, but I could not make it out. Is it not quite manifest to any one when he has a pound to pay whether he has a horse or not, that all the estate managers want is money?

27958. Who is the tenant of Baden Tarbet just now?—A Mr Cameron.

27959. Were there any crofters removed from that farm originally?—Plenty of them.

27960. You stated that the farm of Baden Tarbet which was taken away was, according to the story of your father, six times as good?—There were three places—Old Dornie and Risdale and Baden Tarbet which were occupied by tenants long ago, and which were then worth six times the value of the places, I now work, according to my father's story.

27961. Was it your opinion from what you heard from your father, that it was because they were so good that they were taken away and put into a sheep farm?—I could not say that.

27962. Why did they take that particular part?—It is very likely that may be the reason, although I cannot say.

27963. And is it likely they left the bad parts because they were not worth taking?—Yes, they were hardly worth taking.

27964. With regard to your improvements, you have told us you drained so much, both open and closed drains, and improved your croft altogether; what assistance did you get from the proprietor?—Nothing. I got nothing, but it was the factor's people that measured the place four years ago, and I complained to him then that I had made a great deal of improvement upon the place, but he said nothing, I am in that respect in much the same condition as my neighbours who sent me here.

27965. Is it an encouragement to you and others to make improvements in these circumstances?—How can it be an encouragement to make an improvement, when not only you get no compensation for making them, but the rent is increased?

27966. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Has any sub-division of crofts taken place in your life-time?—Not in my time, but there are two families living within the bounds of one croft as they were originally allotted.

27967. How did these other families get there?—When a father died sometimes he left two sons and they would remain upon the land.

27968. You mentioned that pauperism is on the increase, to what do you attribute that specially?—The reason is, the smallness of the lots

occupied by the people. The population is increasing and the amount of land occupied by them is getting less, getting worse, and getting dearer.

ROSS-SHIRE

27969. Is it to the dearness of the land or to the smallness of the lots that you attribute this tendency to pauperism?—Both combined, but especially to the smallness of the lots.

ULLAPOOL

John Maclean.

27970. When you asked the factor for leave to get a horse, and obtained leave, did the factor give you any additional ground, or any other advantage?—Not a foot although I paid him a pound for the keeping of this horse. His idea is that I must have a horse myself.

27971. When you obtained permission to keep a horse did the factor explain to you that from that moment you would have to pay the pound whether you bought the horse or not?—I put that very question to the factor, I asked him whether I would have to pay this additional pound whether I had a horse or not, and he said he was not certain, but they objected to change the stock in the rent roll—having it down whether a man was entitled to keep a horse or not—and when I appeared to pay my rent I had to pay the pound.

27972. Why did you ask leave to keep a horse so long before you had the money to buy it?—I can tell that. There were some in the township that kept a horse. Those of them that were facile and pliable paid the pound, and those that were rather obstinate in a way paid nothing for it. Now about that time I was told by the ground officer of the place that he had a schedule, down in which the name of every person had to be entered who wished to get a horse, and he stated—we don't know whether he had authority for it or not—that whoever would not put down his name as wishing to keep a horse, upon that occasion would not get another chance.

27973. Is the rule about the horse an old rule upon the estate, or has it been introduced recently?—I never heard my father say that his father paid a penny for a horse, and he would have very often three or four of them out on the hills.

27974. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Was your father in good circumstances?—In far better circumstances than I am.

27975. Had he more horses and cows?—Yes, he had more cattle and sheep, but I never saw him with more than one horse unless, indeed, it might happen to be a mare and foal.

27976. Was anything additional paid for horses in those days?—I never heard of it.

27977. How long ago was it?—My father kept a horse all his lifetime, and he only died three years ago.

27978. Do you remember your grandfather's time?—Yes.

27979. He was before your father?—Yes.

27980. In the same place?—Yes, in the same land.

27981. What was his condition—was he in good circumstances?—Yes, twice over better than my father was.

27982. He had more land?—He had more pasture land.

27983. There were fewer tenants then?—Yes.

27984. How long ago was that?—Sixty to eighty years ago.

27985. The paper states that there were only five tenants in Altander in your grandfather's time, who paid only £7 for the whole township. Is that so?—Yes.

27986. And are there now eighteen crofters and four cottars in that township?—Yes.

27987. And they pay £50?—Yes. Formerly the land could just keep the tenants, and they didn't require to go to the shore to seek for shell-fish, and go east and west to the danger of their lives, for work.

ROSS-SHIRE. 27988. Was there ever any money laid out by the proprietor for improvements in that place?—Not that I know of, except for roads.

ULLAPOOL. 27989. Are the roads good?—Yes.

27990. When were they made?—A couple of years ago, down our length.

John Maclean. 27991. Do you all pay road money?—I cannot tell.

27992. Don't you know whether you pay it yourself?—There is poor rate and school rate mentioned in the receipt, but not road money.

DUNCAN MACKENZIE, Crofter, Reef (76)—examined.

Duncan Mackenzie. 27993. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Have you any statement to make?—Yes.—*The Petition of the Crofters residing in Reef, Cragach, in the Parish of Lochbroom, unto the Royal Commissioners, Highlands and Islands,—Humbly sheweth,—That there are about forty young men, residing in Reef, who are experienced fishermen, and are able and willing to work at sea, but who are prohibited from doing so, by want of proper boats and fishing material, and by the want of any suitable local harbour: That there is abundance of fish near the coast, indeed it is believed that there is not a better fishing station between Cape Wrath and Gairloch Head: That most of the men are the support of their parents, and are at present bravely striving with their small boats and poor material to keep their parents from becoming a burden on the parish. We therefore most humbly solicit that you would use your influence with Her Majesty's Government so that they would advance to us good substantial boats and fishing material at a stated rate of interest, and giving us a stated time to repay the outlay; and also that a small harbour would be erected so as to enable us to land our fish in safety. By doing so an inestimable benefit would be conferred, not only on the inhabitants of Reef, but also on the inhabitants of the west coast generally.*

27994. Were you appointed a delegate by the inhabitants of Reef?—Yes.

27995. How many were present at the time you were appointed?—About a dozen of them. The people are not at home just now; they are away but they left their mandate with us.

27996. How many crofters are there in the township you represent?—About twenty who pay rent.

27997. Any cottars?—Four.

27998. Altogether I suppose you represent about one hundred people?—Yes, probably about one hundred.

27999. Have you any statement to make over and above what is in the paper?—What I, as an old man, have to complain of chiefly is, that the rent has been increased, and this in consequence of our own improvements upon the land. Our township paid a rent of £60, and for the last three years we have been paying £80. Now I am an old man and I have no family—they have taken wing and flown away—they were not of such a kind as would remain in the place. I kept a horse before the rent was raised, and they made me pay for the horse separately from the rent. Now they have combined the rent of the horse with the rent of the land. I pay now £1 for the grazing of a horse in another place, in Assynt at Knockan, and the factor here compels me to pay £1 on the croft. The place is contracted and is not suitable for grazing a horse in summer.

28000. What is your rent now?—£4.

28001. Does that include the pound for the horse?—The £4 includes the horse; and there are the rates in addition.

28002. How long have you been a crofter yourself?—Nearly fifty years.
ROSS-SHIRE
28003. When you began what rent were you paying?—£2, 10s.
ULLAPPOOL
28004. Have you got the same land and the same privileges of hill pasture that you had fifty years ago when you began?—Yes, but it is a bad place; it is rocky and stony ground, and I expended a great deal of labour upon it blasting the rocks.
Duncan Mackenzie.
28005. Have you been during the last forty years improving and trying to develop the resources of your croft to the utmost?—Yes.
28006. And the result has been all added to your rent?—Yes, the man that improves best will have his rent increased most.
28007. There seems to have been a rise of rent on the property; did anybody go about valuing the places?—Only our own factors.
28008. They are quite able themselves to raise the rent without calling in other people?—Yes, quite; I did not happen to be at home at the time; I was at Caithness fishing when the valuation was made.
28009. Are your houses in pretty good order?—They would be none the worse of being better.
28010. Have you kept them up yourself all the time you have been tenant?—Yes, it was myself that erected them and kept them up afterwards, I paid for the masons and took some of the timber from Wick and from Inverness and Loch Hourn.
28011. Did you ever get any assistance in the way of money, or timber, or lime from the proprietor?—Not a penny.
28012. May your case be called a typical one of the rest of the crofters, or did they get any help?—So far as I am aware their condition in that respect is the same; I am not aware that they ever asked any assistance.
28013. When the rent was raised from £60 to £80 on the township three years ago, did you get anything directly or indirectly in the way of extension?—Nothing whatever; I would not even get an ounce of powder to blast the rocks. I did not ask the pasture, but what I asked I did not get.
28014. What did you ask?—There is no occasion to tell.
28015. Are the cottars a burden to the crofters to some extent?—They must needs be. But if they are able to have a cow they will have a cow; and if they can afford to buy a sheep they will have a sheep, and they need potato ground and other conveniences.
28016. Do they pay any rent to the township in money or labour?—I am not aware.
28017. Does the township pay poor rates?—Yes.
28018. Do I understand that besides paying poor rates they have these four families entirely to support also?—They make their livelihood some way. The whole of their livelihood is not by any means dependent on us; if that were the case they would be hungry indeed.
28019. Is there any land near them convenient, which might be added to their ground?—There are other tenants coming in between us and the large farm of Baden Tarbet.
28020. In order to make the people comfortable at Reef it would be necessary to transport some of them elsewhere?—Yes, that would be necessary, but I am not sure that they would be willing to emigrate. The younger ones have to support their parents.
28021. I mean to emigrate to Baden Tarbet there?—They would be exceedingly glad to go there; that is suitable land for rearing people, and not ours. Our land is rock and moss.
28022. Can you ever be comfortable in these circumstances as long as

ROSS-SHIRE. you remain in your present crippled and confined state?—No; that is the reason why they ask for assistance to enable them to take their livelihood out of the sea.

ULLAPOOL. 28023. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—What kind of harbour have you at present?
—It is a bad harbour in winter.

Duncan Mackenzie. 28024. What wind blows into it?—The south-west wind.

28025. Is there no safe creek into which you can take your boats?
No.

28026. What do you do with them? Have you to haul them up on the grass?—To be sure.

28027. Is there a good place on your shore where a pier or breakwater could be made?—It could be done very well at considerable expense. There are plenty of stones.

28028. Have you not made any kind of little quay for your own convenience?—Yes, there is a sort of quay.

28029. Would it be very expensive to make a better one?—That would depend upon the amount of labour which would be expended upon it.

28030. Has every house-holder there got a boat?—Almost all of them have.

28031. They have no large boats of the sort they have on the East coast?—Yes there are some; one that I had myself is still there, and there is another one.

28032. Where did you get that boat?—In Wick.

28033. What did it cost?—£80.

28034. And did you pay that for the boat yourself?—Yes.

28035. How did you make the money?—By the sea, not by the land.

28036. If all these forty young men and their successors at Reef had good boats and sufficient gear, do you think they could live by the fishing?—They would try whatever.

28037. Do you think they could do it without the land?—I am not sure. The land is for the old people and the sea for the young men.

28038. I suppose they could not get on well unless they had milk to give their children, for which one cow at least is necessary?—They would be the better of that.

28039. And they would rather raise their own potatoes than be buying them?—Surely.

28040. Are they able to raise potatoes enough just now to support their families?—Not by any means.

28041. Was there a total failure of your crop last year?—The wind swept away the crops, and the storm destroyed the potatoes.

28042. Are your own circumstances worse just now than they were when you were young?—Yes, as my family left me—that is the reason of it; and my strength ebbed away.

28043. Where have they all gone away to?—Some of them died, and the females married.

28044. Are you able to get enough out of your own croft to support you?—No, it is by the horse I am taking home the peats, I am not able to carry any burden.

28045. Does your ground supply you with food enough?—No.

28046. How are you able to pay for the meal and the things you buy?—It is by the stock, and by the credit this year.

28047. What can you make by selling beasts in a good year?—I get £5 or £6 for a good beast.

28048. Is that the most?—This year £8 if it is a good beast.

28049. Have you any sheep?—Yes.

28050. How many?—Indeed I have not many sheep.
 28051. Perhaps you don't know how many?—I know fine.
 28052. How many?—Between five and ten.
 28053. Do you sell any of them?—Yes, I sold three this year.
 28054. What did you get for them?—£1 for the three.
 28055. What kind were they, black-faced?—Just that.
 28056. Do you sell wool also?—I sold the wool with them.
 28057. Do you ever in your place make clothes out of your own wool?
 —Yes.
 28058. Do a good many of them do that?—Yes, a good many.
 28059. Have you weavers?—Very rarely now.
 28060. Had the people better clothes when you were young or worse?
 —The young people will get good clothes.
 28061. But are the people generally better clothed than when you were young?—They are.
 28062. I suppose when you were young a good many of the men would go bare-footed?—Very few.
 28063. Do you think the clothes they buy are as good as those they made?—I think not.
 28064. Are the children better clothed than they used to be?—I don't know that.
 28065. Are any of them so poorly clothed that they have some delicacy or difficulty in going to school?—Indeed, yes.
 28066. But I hope there are not many of your people in that condition?—I know some of the children that were kept from school last examination for a fortnight for want of clothes.
 28067. *The Chairman.*—Do you remember the time before the first great potato disease?—Yes, quite well.
 28068. Were the potatoes very much better before that, than they are now?—Yes, very much better. We had a kind of potatoes then, that I don't see now at all.
 28069. Was that a great advantage to the people then, and have they suffered much in consequence of the disease?—The people at that time lived more upon potatoes than they do now; even supposing they had potatoes now, they would not consider it good diet.
 28070. In those days did the people have potatoes enough sometimes to last a whole year?—Yes, when I first remember.
 28071. How long will they last now?—Usually till seed time, but they give the potatoes away to the cattle more now.
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MURDO STEWART, Crofter, Achiltubie (60)—examined.

28072. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Have you any statement?—Yes.
 ‘ The grievances of the crofters of Achiltubie and Badinscallie are much
 ‘ the same as those complained of everywhere else—inferior quality of
 ‘ lands, excessive rents, no compensation given for tenants' improvements,
 ‘ and want of fixity of tenure. About fifty years ago, when the lands were
 ‘ laid out in lots there were seventy-two families on as many lots; now on
 ‘ the same lots there are 104 families. A number of the crofters of the
 ‘ township of Badinscallie have no roads to their houses, and their chil-
 ‘ dren run very great risks in going to and coming from school from want
 ‘ of a road. It is not merely that roads are wanting in some very critical
 ‘ places; but from some curious ideas which have pervaded in the minds

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 Duncan
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Murdo
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ROSS-
SHIRE.

' of those who manage the affairs of the estate. Roads have been made, as for example, that from Druimraonaidh to the east of Badinscallie, a distance of about twenty-two miles. Now between Druimraonaidh and Achiltubie there is only one solitary house for a shepherd. By the above-mentioned road there are thirty-one miles between the east end of Badinscallie and Ullapool, the chief town of the district of Coigach. And yet while that road has been made for the accommodation of sheep-farmers and deer stalkers, one of the wildest paths, that by which the Coigach people go to Ullapool, has never had a road made in it. This year a road was made to the east end of Badinscallie, but it now terminates near the brink of a dangerous river over which the children pass to school, and the seven miles from that abrupt termination, along the face of the Big Rock, remain a succession of dangers to those who venture to pass. In speaking of the roads, we think it is necessary to state that these two townships are in an exceedingly awkward position in relation to the national centres, and even to the local ones. They are situated along the south-west margin of the rough and mountainous stretch of country which forms the northern side of the entrance from the Atlantic to the two Loch Brooms, and have for their commercial capital the town of Ullapool. The east end of Badinscallie is cut off from Ullapool by the Big Rock, to a degree which cannot well be understood without seeing the said Rock. We respectfully take the liberty of suggesting that in passing out of Lochbroom the Royal Commissioners would keep a north-west course for some miles, and have a full view of the giddy line of scrambling which has to be followed by the carrier of Her Majesty's mails, along the face of rocks high and steep and slippery enough to try the equilibrium of a goat as well as of a man. About thirty-two years ago the township of Badinscallie was let to a man named Alexander M'Kenzie who was postmaster and shopkeeper in Ullapool. He laid on impost under which each tenant was obliged to supply him with thirty creels of peats, per annum, delivered to him and deposited in his cellar, or pay a penalty of 7s. 6d. which penalty is still exacted by the factor of the Duchess of Sutherland. As another example of the details in the factorial system of management, mention may be made of the fact that two lots in Badinscallie, happening at one time to have a cornmill each for the accommodation of the district, had £1 each laid on the rent. All the profit from the mills have been entirely taken away about nine years ago, by the building of another mill. The crofters still continue to pay the £2, although the mills are now in ruins. While we are taught that so many of us should devote themselves entirely to fishing, no fishing stations or landing places have been constructed. It is seldom now that a family can do without buying from five to seven bolls of meal in the year, and the more general rule is that they buy from twelve to fifteen bolls. The calculation with many is that in good years they will raise of food what, in meal and potatoes will keep them for three or four months in the year. So that in reality the rent and the greater part of the support of the people come out of the sea, and other industrial sources. Not to enlarge any longer in this direction, we respectfully submit the following suggestions for the bettering of our condition. That a substantial reduction, be made on existing rents; that compensation be given for tenants' improvements; that fixity of tenure be granted; that the attention of the Government be called to the unsatisfactory mail service; and the providing of piers on our shores so as to admit of the young and strong among us devoting some of their energies to enriching themselves by drawing upon the wealth of the sea.—**ALLAN M'LEAN, MURDO STEWART.** 'A glaring instance of refusal to give any compensation for im-

ULLAPOOL.

Murdo
Stewart.

' provements.—Alexander Grant, crofter in the east end of Badinscallie, spent about £40, besides labour performed by himself. His rent was only raised, and Mr Gunn, factor, refused to give any compensation for work done on the farm. Owing to the excessive rent, he gave up the farm this year. The said Alexander Grant will be present, and can be examined himself.'

ROSS-
SHIRE.

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ULLAPPOOL.

Murdo
Stewart.

28073. I suppose this paper was written before you were aware that the Commissioners passed by the Big Rock on Saturday?—Yes.

28074. Would it be possible at any moderate expense to make a road through the Big Rock?—Yes.

28075. A road for a horse and cart?—Yes.

28076. Would it not be a very costly road?—Yes, it would cost a good deal of money; roads over rough places always cost money.

28077. Would you expect the proprietor to be at such an outlay as to make a road through that place?—Yes, I think so, when it is upon his own land.

28078. Would the rent of Coigach pay for it?—I am unable to answer that.

28079. How long is it since your rents were raised last?—Three years ago.

28080. How long was it before that, that your rents were raised?—Over thirty years at least.

28081. Your rent is now entered in the valuation roll at £4, 5s., is that correct?—Yes.

28082. What was it before the rise took place?—£3, 3s.

28083. Did that include the keep of the horse?—No, there was no horse either then or now. Two or three people in the place asked for horses, but most of them did not.

28084. Does the rise of 22s. entitle you to keep a horse?—If we kept a horse we would not have a cow or any animal but itself; we will not have enough to maintain it.

28085. Are you entitled to pasture a horse for the £4, 5s.?—No.

28086. Would you have to pay another £1?—Yes.

28087. Do the young people fish much at present?—The greater number of them fish; I have fished myself since I was eight years of age.

28088. Is it at the curing station of Tanera that you deliver your fish?—Yes, at this very time.

28089. Is there not good harbour accommodation there?—Very good; that is the anchorage.

28090. Is it not a good landing place?—There is no quay.

28091. Where would you think best to have a harbour and quay?—I would not like to say anything that would be objectionable to other people, I would only speak for myself.

28092. Is Tanera not a very convenient place for the village of Achiltibuie?—Yes, if one fished without having anything to do with land at the same time; but then we live and have our dwelling and crofts ashore on the other side.

28093. Would it be any advantage to you to have a pier and harbour if you could not get a curer?—I believe it would be of great service. We would get a curer to come there for the herring and also for white fish.

28094. Would Achiltibuie be more suitable for the country in general?—Yes; it is on the mainland while Tanera is only an island.

28095. Is there a suitable place for making a harbour on the mainland? Yes there is such a place, but it would cost labour and expense.

ROSS-
SHIRE.
ULLAPOOL.

28096. Would it be reasonable—moderate labour and expense?—I cannot very well give any idea whether the expense would be reasonable; I know that the convenience of it would be very great.

Murdo
Stewart.

ALEXANDER GRANT, formerly Crofter at Badenscully, now Labourer with Mr Fowler (48)—examined.

Alexander
Grant.

28097. *The Chairman.*—Who has the croft you held formerly?—Neil and Murdo and Donald Macleod, formerly my neighbours.

28098. *Mr Cameron.*—What rent were you paying for the croft before the rise was put upon it?—£4, 17s.

28099. What was the rise put upon it?—The rent was increased by 29s. and there were also 29s. of a further addition when the high road would be made to the place—29s. of a rise and 29s. of a prospective rise.

28100. Did any of your neighbours agree to pay this rise?—The road was not put there by the time I left; but it is there now. All the neighbours payed additional rent; they were obliged to, I built a house and barn and a byre at my own expense, and they have now made a kennel of the byre and the gamekeeper occupies the house.

28101. Was it in consequence of your improvements that the rent was raised?—I cannot say, only I was obliged to pay it or else leave.

28102. Did your neighbours who had not made improvements have the same rise of rent imposed?—Yes, that is quite true, but it was after I made these improvements that the rent was raised upon me, I only occupied the house four years, I put shutters upon the windows and closed the doors, and the factor opened them.

28103. Where are you now?—I live at Braemore.

28104. Have you regular wages?—Yes.

28105. Is it more easy to make your living that way than the way you did before?—Yes, it is easier and cheaper for me to live there. I would not get sixpence worth to earn where I was before although I should die, myself and my children.

28106. Your complaint is that you did not get compensation?—Yes, that is my complaint. I said I would take the windows and door which I brought from Glasgow, and I was threatened with the police.

28107. *The Chairman.*—I wish to know how much money you laid out upon the house and offices in improvements altogether?—I had an outlay of £40 or so, not counting my own work. I worked at the croft day and night.

28108. If you wished to build a new house did you ask the factor or proprietor to render you any assistance?—Yes, I got some wood and some lime.

28109. How much do you value the wood and lime at?—I am not very well able to give it in money,—ten barrels of lime and thirty battens about 11 feet long.

28110. Who supplied the slate?—The houses were thatched. I bought iron and sacking from Glasgow, and the windows and doors.

28111. If you laid out £40 yourself, do you think the materials you received from the proprietor were worth £20?—No, not £5.

28112. You paid £40, and perhaps the proprietor paid £5?—I paid £40 myself; I cannot say what the proprietor paid.

28113. When you determined to expend this sum of money in building a new house did you ask the factor for any security of tenure, or any

compensation? did you ever ask for a lease?—I cannot tell whether I asked it, but I know that I would not get it supposing I did ask.

28114. Did any one in your place ever ask for or receive a lease?—No, nor any upon the estate.

28115. Did any one you know ever ask for or receive any compensation for improvements on leaving their holding?—I cannot tell. I only knew about my own property.

28116. Did you leave the place with very great reluctance?—I was obliged to go where I could get food and clothes, but I may say it was the dearest spot on earth to me.

28117. Was there any cause of fault or dissatisfaction between you and the factor besides the question of the house?—No, there was no reason at all except that I could not make a livelihood there. I had no quarrel with the factor.

28118. You are now upon the land of Mr Fowler; have you got a house from Mr Fowler?—Yes.

28119. Have you constant employment from him; I have not had a broken day since I went there.

28120. Do you receive good wages?—I am quite satisfied with them—both with the wages and with the master.

28121. Comparing your situation as labourer with a good landlord, and your situation as crofter before your rent was raised, whether would you prefer to be a labourer or a crofter?—‘The flag at the doorstep of the ‘great house is slippery.’ [A Gaelic proverb meaning—he had more security where he was before.]

28122. Do you consider that as a crofter you had a higher social position than as a mere labourer?—There was such a time, but it is gone; now respect is given to the man that has means.

28123. Do the people of the country consider the crofter who has land, above the man who depends upon his daily wages, or do they not?—When I had a croft I was a greater slave than I am now.

28124. What rent do you pay to Mr Fowler for your house?—1s. 6d. a week.

28125. Have you a garden?—No, but I have potato ground and manure given to me.

28126. Have you any cows’ grass?—I have never asked that yet.

28127. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—What was the first rent you were paying?—£4, 17s.

28128. What was asked of you?—29s. more

28129. You are paying now 1s. 6d. a week—do you know how much that is a year?—It will come to about £4.

28130. Is that a cheap rent?—Yes, when I get work.

28131. But supposing you could not get work?—But I must work.

28132. If you got back your old place at your old rent to-morrow, would you go back? the place was dear to you; is it not so yet?—It was about seventy-five years since tenants came to that place and they never put a road in, but when the gamekeepers came they put a road to the house at once.

28133. What is it you want now? are you satisfied now to remain where you are if you get the value of your improvements?—Yes, if I would get them I would never go back.

28134. Until there be new rules?—Yes.

28135. And the old rent?—Many a time they alter the rent. When they gave the land to Mr Mackenzie who had the running of the mail here, each tenant was obliged to give thirty creels of peats in the year to him. Now, our people not being conveniently situated for these peats, had to pay

ROSS-
SHIRE.

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ULLAPPOOL.

Alexander
Grant.

ROSS-SHIRE.
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ULLAPOOL.
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Alexander Grant.

the money. Then, when this practice stopped, those who were down for a money payment continued to pay it as rent when they ceased to pay it as peats. That was a grievance. When the rule came upon the estate that a pound was to be paid for every horse that was kept, horses were so thick about the place that many a time I would have to chase them away before I could get a cow out of the byre.

MURDO STEWART, Fisherman and Crofter, Achiltibuie—examined.

Murdo Stewart.

28136. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—About what part of Achiltibuie do you reside?—The end nearest Ullapool.

28137. Do you know a farm called Morefield?—Yes, it is upon the other side of the river.

28138. Is it well fenced and a dyke about it?—We live far away; I don't know. The people hereabout will know.

28139. Do you know the Free Church?—Perfectly well.

28140. What is the name of the place beyond the church over which there is a new bridge?—Baden Tarbet.

28141. Who occupies that part immediately beyond the bridge?—Mr Cameron.

28142. Were people removed from that place looking towards the sea?—Yes, but there are others who can tell more about that than I can.

28143. In going along that road on this side of the church do you know a house of two stories occupied by a man Macleod?—Quite well, and I know Macleod also.

28144. Do you know a house between the road and the sea very near Macleod's house occupied by an elderly man rather infirm in his health, and his wife and daughter?—Yes.

28145. What is the name of that man?—James Macleod.

28146. Have you been in his house?—Yes.

28147. Have you ever seen a worse house in your life occupied as a dwelling?—Yes, I have, but there are not very many worse to be seen now.

28148. Do you know Drumraonaidh?—Yes I know Drumraonaidh very well.

28149. What is it now?—There are shepherds and a shooting lodge there; it is part forest and part under sheep.

28150. How long is it since part was made forest?—It is not very many years since it was made into a forest, but there have always been deer on the hill.

28151. Is it part of Rhidorrrach?—I cannot tell.

28152. Do you know what the forest of Rhidorrrach used to be?—I never was that way; I had more to do with the sea than the land.

28153. Are there any delegates here to-day who can give any information about the forest?—The people near this place ought to know more about it, and if you come upon any of them they may be able to tell you.

28154. Do most of the people in your place keep sheep?—Yes.

28155. Is there any fixed number for a man according to his rent?—Yes.

28156. Does anybody keep more sheep than his rent entitles him to on the hill?—Yes, there are some that keep more sheep.

28157. What is the greatest number of sheep that any man has on that hill?—I cannot tell accurately.

28158. Is there anybody else from Achiltubie who can tell?—I don't think there is.

28159. Is it not the case that some people keep more sheep there than they are entitled to, and that others have less than they might keep?—That is the case.

28160. Do you think it would be desirable and agreeable to the people if it were made into a club farm?—Yes, I think it would be very desirable if it could be done, but there are too many families to make an arrangement of that kind.

28161. Why too many families: would not these families have one shepherd watching all their sheep—would not that be an advantage to them?—The reason why it would not suit is because, owing to the great number of people, there would be a difficulty in getting them to agree.

28162. The people who have more sheep than they are entitled to, would not like it?—That is the case.

28163. But don't you think that if the factor were endeavouring to arrange it for them, with their own consent, and pay a man chosen by themselves, the thing might be done with advantage?—Yes, the factor has imposed upon us a thing less desirable than that.

28164. What do you refer to?—Additional rent.

28165. When was your rent raised?—Three years ago.

28166. What was it before?—It was three guineas before, and it is £4, 5s. now.

28167. How many beasts do you keep yourself?—One cow and two smaller beasts, no horse, and four sheep. I am more a fisherman than a crofter.

28168. Are you sure you have not twenty sheep?—I have never had that number since I was born. It would be more to the purpose if I were to be questioned about nets.

ROSS-SHIRE

ULLAPPOOL

Murdo
Stewart.

JOHN FOWLER, C.E., Proprietor of Braemore (66)—examined.

28169. *The Chairman.*—How long have you been connected with this John Fowler country?—Eighteen years.

28170. Were you acquainted with the condition of the Highlands before you became proprietor?—Yes, for thirty-two years. During the last thirty-two years I have spent several months of every year in the Highlands.

28171. And you have been a great employer of labour in various countries?—Yes.

28172. You have had occasion to study or observe the condition of labouring people in many parts of the Highlands?—Yes, the question of the condition of the labouring classes has always been an interesting subject to me, not only in the Highlands, but in every part of the world.

28173. In the course of our inquiries we have heard a very general statement of a desire on the part of the crofting population to obtain the occupancy of more land. Do you think it consistent with the welfare and improvement of the crofting population that they should have more land and live upon the land, or that they should have less land and live upon wages and auxiliary labour?—That would depend entirely on circumstances. If a man has sufficient capital and sufficient power in himself and his family to provide labour—when I say sufficient capital, I mean not merely to stock the land but to carry him over one or two bad years

ROSS-
SHIRE.

ULLAPOOL.

John Fowler.

—if a man is in that position he may look forward to living fairly and comfortably as a farmer. But nothing could be more disadvantageous to a crofter who depends on labour more or less skilled, or on fishing, to have more land than is just sufficient to support one or two cows for his family, and the necessary little corn and vegetables he requires, because he is neither a farmer nor a labourer nor anything else. That is the most unfortunate condition of all. I don't at all object to a man having more land if he has means of using it and of living as a farmer—that is with sufficient capital and power of labour. But for a man to have sufficient land to tempt him to leave industrial occupations on which he must mainly depend for himself and his family, I think it is the most unfortunate of all conditions of the labouring classes; and that is the result of thirty-two years' experience.

28174. You think that the addition of a small portion of arable ground to the croft would not be advantageous to the crofter, but might lead him to expend his labour uselessly upon the cultivation of the land?—Yes, if the quantity is more than that which would occupy him in what may be called surplus hours or surplus time. If it is to take him from earning money as a smith or carpenter or an unskilled labourer, or from his occupation as a fisherman, I am sure instead of being advantageous to him it would be distinctly disadvantageous.

28175. We have heard a very general expression of opinion that they might receive an addition to their land in the form of hill pasture which would be easily managed, which would not absorb much of their labour, and which would be very advantageous to their families?—In my experience nearly every croft has attached to it—in my own case it has besides a small quantity of arable land, grazing for a cow or a horse, or two cows as it may be, on the hill, and that I consider is the best possible condition for a man to be in—a small portion of arable land and the means of keeping his cow on the hill. He must have means to provide summer grazing if he is to keep a cow all the year.

28176. And what about sheep?—I think sheep are exceedingly doubtful matter indeed, unless it can be done by parties clubbing together and having a hirsel, or a number of sheep that require the attention of a shepherd. If that can be done the sheep could be managed with economy. But that would require the fencing in of the portion which was attached to even a club quantity. I think if that could be done it would be a good thing, and I see no objection to it. I think it a doubtful privilege, without some such arrangement, to have the power to send a few sheep on the hill.

28177. You think, if the hill pasture could be extended so as to afford to the township the means of forming a club sheep farm, that might be advantageous and would not absorb their labour in a disadvantageous manner?—I think that is quite a feasible thing to do, because it would combine economy in management of the sheep with the profitable use of the hill. But any other way I don't think it can be done with any advantage. Of course, I need not tell you that there might be, and probably would be, very considerable difficulty in the details of management of such a club farm, because the sheep would have to be marked, they would be jealously watched to see whether one part of the sheep had better pasture or were better attended to, and all that in detail would probably present more difficulties than might appear at first. But in principle I don't see any objection to it.

28178. Some of the delegates who have appeared before us have contended that the auxiliary industry of the croft could be provided for by the same family at the same time; the elder members of the family who

were no longer able to fish attending to the husbandry, and the younger members going to sea?—That is really what is done now—that is to say, some members of the family not efficient as labourers owing to their age and infirmities, capable of doing useful work about their crofts, but still not in a position to hire themselves out for profitable labour. That John Fowler is really the method of working at present. My only objection is, from my experience, not having the slightest jealousy of the crofters being comfortable, that if you expand the crofter into a farmer without the necessary conditions of successful farming, you ruin him and do him no good at all.

ROSS-SHIRE
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ULLAPOOL

28179. As an employer of labour in this vicinity you have had occasion to employ crofting people as labourers?—For the last eighteen years I have employed as much labour as the district could supply me with, and I am doing so now, and the great majority of the men who supply me with labour—at all events a very large proportion—are of the crofter class.

28180. What wages did you pay eighteen years ago and what do you pay now?—I am not quite sure that I can tell you that. I think there is very little difference indeed. Of course there is a difference in the value of different men's labour. Putting it at the very best there is a small difference between the amount eighteen years ago and now, probably 6d. a head. But before that there was a great difference. A great change in wages in the Highlands occurred when the railway was extended up to Inverness. Then the whole condition of the island became changed, because people were then able to go to the Highlands with their families for country houses and shooting lodges; and from that time there was a great accession of employment of labour by reason of the railways themselves and the roads connected with them, and the great number of estates which were then purchased, or improved by the old proprietors, for country houses, instead of old shooting lodges. Of course there had been changes previous to that, but to my personal knowledge great changes took place then.

28181. What is the common rate of wages in summer just now?—I think about 3s. a day for efficient labour, and sometimes 2s. 6d.

28182. How does the labour of able-bodied members of the crofting class compare with the labour of a workman in other parts of the country?—As might be expected, men who are of the crofting class have not the same continuous training for any work, or the strong food of what may be called the navvy class who do the work on the railways, and whose sole business it is. I don't say that in the way of finding fault with the crofter class, because their occupation is a different one; but a crofter at 3s. a day would be at least as expensive as an English navvy at 4s. 6d. I could give you a very curious instance of the difference in different parts of England. In Yorkshire and Lancashire, the labouring classes are most efficient and do the greatest quantity of good work. In Devonshire and Cornwall and Somersetshire they do a very much less quantity of labour—at least thirty per cent. less.

28183. You don't find any want of inclination to work on the part of the men?—It is difficult to distinguish between disinclination and inability. I have not been able to get as much labour as I desired.

28184. You mean as many labourers?—Yes. I am not only improving my property in the way of building roads and bridges, but I also employ labour on permanently improving the land by trenching. I am willing to do that when I can find labour, but I have often great difficulty and sometimes it is altogether impossible to obtain it.

28185. You have a sheep farm on your estate?—Yes.

ROSS-SHIRE.

28186. In the formation of that sheep farm you have had no occasion to remove any of the small tenants?—No.

ULLAPPOOL. 28187. But you have some small tenants on the property?—Eight or nine crofters.

John Fowler. 28188. Do you find that the exhibition of a better description of husbandry on the arable part of your farm has had any influence in teaching crofters to cultivate their land better?—I think so; I think there is a general disposition on the part of my crofters to cultivate their land better, and to have better houses and to pay for them. On that point I should like to make a remark, that my crofters, I suppose looking to other things and common sense, don't expect to pay only the same rent when they have good houses and improvements in the way of roads and bridges which makes their holding more valuable; they are willing to pay a fair and proper rent for the additional accommodation. An increase of rent is not necessarily a hardship to a crofter, but is very often to his advantage. But in answer to your important question I have no hesitation in saying that I see in my own crofters, and I have no doubt it is the same in the neighbourhood, a desire to improve the cultivation of the land, and of course their own personal comfort, and that of their families.

28189. When a house has to be improved among your crofters, is it done by yourself or the crofter or by co-operation?—I do everything myself; that is to say, all that is called landlord's improvements—building and everything of that kind. I don't think we have any case of any one leaving. But I should like from my experience to say this, that what seems to me almost more wanted in dealing with the agricultural part of the question, both with tenants and crofters in the Highlands, is a good system of what is understood in England as valuation by custom; that is to say that an out-going tenant shall receive full and proper compensation for all unexhausted improvements, at the same time being responsible for the dilapidations. If a tenant cross crops his land, or in any way gives up his farm in a condition in which the incoming tenant should not receive it as being in good condition, in the best parts of England the outgoing tenant has dilapidations deducted from his unexhausted improvements, and I consider that a most wholesome and proper system; and I don't know anything that would be more calculated to do good in the Highlands than some regulation or system of that kind. I have spoken to experienced valuers in Edinburgh and the Highlands, and all agree with me entirely in that, they say the difficulty is that the custom having been, not to punish out-going tenants with deductions for dilapidations except in very extreme cases indeed, it would be necessary to make a start; that is to say, the landlord probably would have to take upon himself in the first instance to give to the in-coming tenant a fair start, so that he should be responsible for dilapidations at the end of his lease, otherwise an incoming tenant would go out with great disadvantage. He would have the disadvantage of dilapidations and would have them deducted from him in the end. Therefore it is necessary to make a start. But I commend that to the notice of the Commissioners as very important for the good cultivation of land in the county.

28190. Has there been any beginning of such a system on any of the older or larger estates in the Highlands?—Not that I am aware of. I am better acquainted in these matters with Yorkshire and the southern counties of England, and I know it has been the system there, and has been attended with great advantage.

28191. But the holdings I presume are very much larger?—Yes in some cases, and in some cases smaller. In England there is a greater number of middle sized farms. In the Highlands they are either very

large or very small; but in England, in many parts, there is a greater number of moderate sized farms.

ROSS-SHIRE.

28192. Have you seen anywhere in England any class of occupiers answering to our crofters or small tenants here?—No, not in England; it does not arise there because there are no such men. In England in John Fowler nearly all cases you can get milk and the necessary things for your family from towns and villages. In a thinly populated country like the Highlands, unless a man is to a certain extent self-contained it would be a great hardship upon him; therefore I think it is a very desirable thing here that you should keep up the system of the crofter having his cow and his means within himself for his family interests, including vegetables. In Ireland I am very well acquainted—as well or better acquainted than with the Highlands of Scotland—and there you have the same class.

ULLAPOOL

28193. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—What is the total acreage of your estate?—43000 acres.

28194. How much of it is in forest?—25000 acres.

28195. Did you form the forest yourself?—Yes.

28196. What was it before?—One large sheep farm.

28197. You have heard, no doubt, that there was a considerable population in Braemore long before your time?—There must have been, from the old maps in my possession.

28198. Have you ever heard there were more than thirteen townships on Braemore at one time?—No.

28199. There may have been or there may not?—There may have been 1300.

28200. You spoke about your crofters?—Yes.

28201. A crofter, according to the definition of the Commission, is laid down as a man paying £30 of rent and under. I don't observe any such people in the valuation roll?—That I don't know. All the crofters on my estate are sub-tenants to the principal tenant, but they are crofters in every sense of the word.

28202. Do they pay rent to you direct?—My son is my tenant, and they pay to him.

28203. You made use of the expression a minute ago ‘in a thinly populated country like the Highlands’—do you admit it is thinly populated?—Yes, but I think quite sufficiently populated.

28204. Although thinly populated, in your opinion it is still sufficiently populated?—I do indeed think so. With regard to the sheep farm, in changing from the sheep farm to the deer forest I have considerably increased the number of men employed upon the ground.

28205. Who are constantly engaged upon the forest?—Certainly.

28206. You have stated that crofts to be enlarged—which the people generally wish themselves—would be a mistake without their having other means to keep them up?—Yes; I assumed when it was put to me—I don't know that they generally desired it. My answer would be that those who desire it, except under the conditions I explained, would not obtain a profitable or desirable thing if they did obtain it. You must take it of course with my explanation. I have no desire to restrict any crofter from taking as much land as he can manage.

28207. Supposing the crofters themselves are of the opinion that it would be advantageous for them in all cases to get an increase, would you set up your judgment against theirs?—If they state generally they desire it without at the same time stating that they were prepared with the necessary capital to deal with it, then I should say the conditions are wanting on which to form a judgment. We all desire to have more than

ROSS-SHIRE. we have, and we all desire to pay less than we pay ; therefore, that general desire would have no weight with me.

ULLAPPOOL. John Fowler. 28208. Do you think yourself qualified to pronounce an opinion upon that question against the opinion of the crofters themselves ?—I feel myself quite competent to give an opinion on the subject, for what it is worth. I have for the last thirty-two years watched the growth, and I am happy to say the increase of comfort, of crofters in the Highlands of Scotland, with great satisfaction to myself, and I have endeavoured to inform myself what leads to success or failure, and I think I am competent to have a very fairly good opinion on that point.

28209. You have been present all this day ?—No, I came in about one o'clock.

28210. You heard something of what was stated ?—Yes.

28211. You heard several delegates mention that they were scrimped and confined in their occupation ?—I heard one man from Coigach who is employed on my estate.

28212. You did not hear anything before then ?—I heard part of another man's evidence. Of course I need not say the Commissioners will hear the other side of that.

28213. As you have mentioned that labourer who is with you—He pays you 1s. 6d. a week ?—He says so.

28214. Have you many in that position ?—Four. I am gradually improving the cottages, step by step, as I find the people desire them ; and I find there is no unwillingness to pay that rent. On the contrary there are applicants for the new houses.

28215. You have expended a large sum upon your house ?—Yes, but comparatively small when you take the total expenditure on the estate into consideration. The expenditure on the house would not be a fourth of what I have expended on the estate.

28216. May I ask what object you had in purchasing the estate ?—I think it is rather, as you have put it apologetically, a personal question ; but in the first place, perhaps the greatest object of all was health. I knew from experience that if I put myself in a position to make it almost compulsory duty upon me to spend two months in the Highlands of Scotland every year, I should do much more good work in the kind of work I wished to do, namely public works. That was one great object. Another was a great weakness for improvement. I have always had all my life a great weakness for improving properties, and I don't remember, since I was a grown man, of ever being clear of bricks and mortar. I have always great pleasure in improving property, and making the land do everything it is possible for land to do either in regard to arable land or otherwise.

28217. These were two of your leading reasons ?—Yes ; land speculation was not one of them. With my eyes open I knew that improving the land the way I was doing was not the way to make money ; I was not misled about that, and I don't in the least regret what I have done ; and I hope to continue for a few years to do as I have done.

28218. Did you ever take into account the condition of the people you found on the estate ?—I have.

28219. Have you added to the population ?—Do you mean personally ? a very welcome grandchild came home last week. I think there is very little difference in the population ; if there is a difference I should think it is a slight increase.

28220. How many people may be upon the estate altogether ?—I think about two hundred.

28221. When you spoke about the district being thinly populated did you apply that to the Highlands generally or to Braemore ?—To the

Highlands generally, because my experience of both England and the Highlands of Scotland is this, that in a purely agricultural district no increase of population takes place, nor, in my opinion, ought to take place, because if you put more people on the land than is necessary for cultivation, these must live in a more or less impoverished condition unless you John Fowler can add other industries to it.

ROSS-SHIRE.

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ULLAPOOL.

28222. Two hundred people upon upwards of 40,000 acres—can you call that thickly populated?—I should say it is the utmost number upon that property. Of course when you talk of 40,000 acres I need not point out to you that nine-tenths of that is incapable of growing anything except for black-faced sheep, or deer or hares or rabbits, and from its elevation, and, therefore, from its climate and the absence of soil, it is entirely incapable of further cultivation. In point of fact I don't hesitate to say that, taking Braemore as it is, everything has been done that can be done to increase the productiveness of the soil, with the exception of a few fields which were trenched; but as to attempting to cultivate the sides of hills, or when you get two or three thousand feet high, it is absurd.

28223. You must not be depreciating your property altogether. Is there not as good land as you have ever seen which your son occupies at Inver Broom?—No, certainly not.

28224. Is there not very good land there?—No, all the land there is light and sandy. With care and cultivation it produces a very fair crop, but comparing it with the rich alluvial land of England it would be called very poor land indeed.

28225. But is it not as good as you find in the Highlands?—I have no doubt I have more than doubled the production of that valley since it came into my possession, by making river banks to save it from floods and by properly cultivating it; and I hope still more to improve it in a moderate degree.

28226. Does that not all show that if proper attention is paid to it, it is very rich?—That is what I have done; I have been paying proper attention to it. I don't hesitate to say that no poor crofter could have done such a thing, for this reason that some of that land on which I have expended large sums of money in trenching would never have paid any man unless he had the general question to deal with. I have expended upon some of the land as much as the fee simple of the estate. You may think it a foolish thing to do, but being possessor of the whole property I thought it proper to do it. But it is a thing you could not have done on the strict unassisted crofter system.

28227. Deer forests are increasing in this parish?—I don't know at all.

28228. Don't you know there is one being formed in your immediate vicinity?—I don't know.

28229. Did you never hear that Inverlaur is to be turned into forest?—I don't think there is anything settled about it. The last thing I heard was that it was not likely to be.

28230. Are you aware that a fence is being put up?—No.

28231. I happen to have observed more than you?—Very likely.

28232. Is there not a piece of Leckmelm enclosed for forest; I don't know, I should think not.

28233. Are you aware that a great part of Dundonnell estate has been made forest since your time?—Dundonnell forest has been slightly increased, but only very slightly.

28234. On part of the Duchess of Sutherland's estate has the forest been enlarged?—That I don't know. I should think you will have Mr Gunn, the factor, who will give you precise information upon that. I should prefer to speak upon what I know.

ROSS-SHIRE.

28235. You have given a positive opinion about the crofters?—That is because I understand the question.

ULLAPOOL. — John Fowler. 28236. Do you or do you not approve of the extension of deer forests that is going on all around you and everywhere in the Highlands?—That is a very wide question indeed, and exceedingly difficult to answer, because it must depend on a great number of conditions.

28237. I want you to look at it as an imperial question?—I can only look at it step by step. Taking my own case, I am sure it is a good thing that part of Braemore has been made into forest. It may be the same in other places; I don't know. It is not necessarily a bad thing; it may be a good thing. These things must regulate themselves. If the price of sheep should be so low that a farmer cannot live, then no one would wish the land to be unoccupied, because there is this advantage in deer forests that labour is employed and people come for health—it is to the advantage of the people. It is better that land should be thus occupied than unoccupied altogether.

28238. You say that a good deal of labour is employed?—Certainly.

28239. I should doubt very much whether there are as many people employed on any one estate in the parish of Loch Broom as there are in the one township of Achiltibuie?—I think I do a most useful thing to you by giving you accurate information on localities and subjects I thoroughly understand, and I can give you information, and complete information, with regard to Braemore, and I don't hesitate to say that during the last eighteen years the condition of the neighbourhood has been greatly improved by my wise or foolish operations at Braemore.

28240. There is no one complaining here from Braemore?—I don't know; there is no compulsion upon them not to come; they may come yet—I don't know.

28241. You think if they did come they would really have no serious grievance to complain of?—I don't know. I have never yet evicted a crofter, but at the same time if I had a crofter of bad character, or a bad neighbour, my crofters would expect me to evict him, and I should have a very bad time with my good crofters if I did not evict a bad one. Eviction may be the result of a hard landlord or a bad tenant.

28242. But as a rule, when you get a respectable crofter or tenant upon your estate you would be very unwilling to dispossess him without good cause?—Certainly; so I think would everyone else. I like to see old faces, and I think they like to see me, and I think everyone likes to live; at the same time we are not all good, and I think naughty people are best sent away.

28243. Do you approve of periodical valuations and raising of rent without something being done in return?—No. But the rent question is a difficult one; I wish I could assist in any way as to what is a proper mode of dealing with it. There is no definition of rent except value, and as a rule I think crofters and tenants are very willing to pay additional rent for additional accommodation.

28244. But the question I put was this, would you approve of the periodical valuation of estates and a rise of rents being put upon small tenants, when it is ascertained that not one farthing was laid out by the proprietor; or would you do it yourself?—No. I wish, of course, to be perfectly candid with you, and it is difficult to answer these questions without a preliminary explanation, for this reason, that if the original rent was too low from any cause, then a revision of that rent bringing it up to a fair and proper rent, having reference to other rents and the general value of the estate, would not be an improper thing to do. But I think if you start with a fair rent and there is no alteration in conditions, in

the value of stock, which is a very important thing to take into consideration, or increase of accommodation, it would be rather a hard step to take.

28245. *Mr Cameron.*—With reference to the question of comparative expenditure, would it be impertinent to ask you how much you have expended on the property since you went there?—About £105,000. John Fowler.

28246. And I presume that with the exception of the highest skilled labour, all the labour has been drawn from the surrounding district?—Yes, that is so. I have always employed the labour of the district if I possibly could. Wherever I could accomplish the work I had to do with the labour of the district, I have preferred to do so.

28247. Do the few crofters on the estate work their land in rotation as is practised among good agricultural tenants?—Yes, they do very fairly well.

28248. With reference to the question on this point asked you by the chairman, may you not perhaps attribute that in some measure to the example set them on the farm in the occupation of your son, and upon which good husbandry prevails?—Yes, and then my son and myself are on good terms with them, and speak to them and discuss with them, and so on.

28249. So that in point of fact a farm occupied by a proprietor or by a near relative, which is the same thing, has a good effect upon the agriculture of the district?—I think it must have, necessarily.

28250. It is not often that the crofters in the Highlands do pursue the best system of agriculture; they generally have not the means or opportunities of laying down sown grass and turnips?—No, I am afraid it often happens that, for instance, from a bad fishing season, the men are impoverished and for a time are not able to give that assistance to the land that they would like. But there is no doubt it is the case that the crofters' land is very often less productive by reason of defective management and deficient assistance than it would be; and for that reason I always like to see small crofters have some profitable industrial enterprise or trade in connection with their land.

28251. *The Chairman.*—Do you think the want of enclosures is a very great discouragement to improve the husbandry amongst them?—I think land should certainly be enclosed if possible. The want of enclosures often leads to disputes amongst other things—trespass and disputes. It is very desirable to have the land enclosed if possible.

28252. With reference to the use of improved grass, I suppose an enclosure between two different tenants would be almost indispensable?—Certainly, the moment you get from their very primitive husbandry, then enclosure becomes almost a necessity. I should like to see every crofter's ground in the nature of a garden and cultivated as a garden should be, so as to get the greatest amount out of the soil. I was a few months ago in the island of Madeira, and it was beautiful to see the quantity of crop obtained from the small acreage of land by very careful husbandry, and I hope that, step by step, that will be the case in the Highlands of Scotland.

28253. *Professor Mackinnon.*—The condition of things we find here is a very small croft and a very big farm. Are you acquainted with parts of the Highlands of Scotland where the condition of things is rather large crofts and small farms?—No, I am not.

28254. You are not acquainted with holdings of the class of from £20 to £80?—No. I should be very glad both in this and every part of the British Isles to see as many of a certain class as could be arranged, and that is what may be called subsistence farms. Men who have got sufficient capital to provide for the farm in all its departments, and supply the labour of their own family. My experience of agriculture is this, that

ROSS-SHIRE.

ULLAPOOL.

ROSS-
SHIRE.

ULLAPOOL.

John Fowler. 28255. But you are not acquainted in the Highlands of Scotland with farms ranging from £20 to £100?—No, I am not.

28256. Supposing you were meeting with such a holding which was quite successful would you change your mind?—I have not expressed any opinion contrary to that; what I say is, that where a crofter or tenant can provide sufficient capital and means of labour for a farm of that kind, I think it is a very desirable thing, and likely to be successful; what I object to, and what I do most strongly object to, in the interest of the crofters, is giving them more land while they are not in a position to be the farmer you describe.

28257. Would you not think there may be some two or three found amongst the large population that extends over the whole of this country side, who would take first a large croft if they got it, or a small farm—that there are men with means and energy and family that could take a holding worth £30 or £40 or £50, if such could be had in the country?—But they do take them.

28258. Are there many here about?—Not in this immediate neighbourhood. The very man who was my first keeper at Braemore has a farm of that sort at the present moment.

28259. But the great bulk of the rents of the country is made up of very large farms and holdings over £200?—Yes.

28260. There is scarcely any middle class?—That is so.

28261. Is that a benefit or otherwise?—I think it is a necessity in this neighbourhood, and such neighbourhoods as this one, where the proportion of arable land is so exceedingly small.

28262. Is there anything to prevent a large pastoral croft—four of the crofts put together—and a corresponding quantity of pasture?—Not the least.

28263. How does it happen that it is such a rare thing in comparison with other parts of the country?—I don't think it would be a very tempting thing to do here, because if you put four crofts together here you would have five or six acres of land, and that would not do. Although I should be glad to see it, I don't think this immediate district is adapted to that arrangement, there is not a sufficient proportion of arable land.

28264. Would not there be the same proportion that exists at present for the small croft?—But that is scarcely what I say—the crofter's occupation ought not to depend upon the crofts; but a farmer must depend upon his land.

28265. So that you don't see your way to small farms or big crofts?—Not here.

28266. It would either have to be big farms or small crofts?—I think so. But there are neighbourhoods where the proportion of arable land is greater where that would be a desirable thing, and I have no objections to see it here, though I don't think this place is adapted for it.

28267. Has it been tried?—I don't know.

28268. The people say it was tried with great success sixty or eighty years ago?—I do hear such very contrary accounts of things sixty and eighty years ago. I heard that the villages were scarcely ever free from famine or fever; and I also hear that in good seasons they did very well, but in bad seasons they had a very hard time. But putting together all the evidence I have been able to collect, although there was sometimes

a good deal of prosperity, yet they never escaped without very great difficulties indeed in getting through a bad season.

ROSS-SHIRE

28269. May it not be that there was a considerable portion of the population in easy circumstances, and also a considerable portion almost destitute?—That is due to the then arrangement of things.

ULLAPPOOL

John Fowler.

28270. Those who had the large crofts were in easy circumstances, and those dependent upon them were poor?—Yes, because more than at present they were dependent upon the land, and the land did not carry them over bad times. You must be carried over bad times by capital; a man must have sufficient money in the bank to carry him over a bad time; he must make sufficient money in a good time to carry him over a bad time.

28271. Do you think in old times it was those who had the land who were badly off?—I think they were in a desperate state both from famine and fever.

28272. Is there evidence of that?—Yes; here and in Ireland they were in the same state. There was a very desperate state of things in bad times.

28273. I have thought it was those who were dependent upon those who had the land who were in that condition?—Yes.

28274. Those we would now call cottars, of whom there was a very large number?—Yes, and those people were no doubt dreadful sufferers in a bad season. At the present time they have industrial enterprises by which they can earn money, and that carries them over a bad time. In former days they had nothing of that kind.

28275. But you would not be inclined to disbelieve the universal testimony of the people that there was a large number of people in good circumstances sixty years ago?—I would not be inclined to believe it except subject to this, that there were periods of great trial and distress, because I know there were.

MURDO M'LEOD, Crofter and Fisherman, Auchnahaird (52)—examined.

28276. *The Chairman.*—Have you any statement to make?—I have:—*The Petition of the Crofters residing in Auchnahaird, unto the Royal (Crofter's) Commissioners,*—Humblly sheweth, That there are eight tenants in the township of Auchnahaird, that each lot averages between two and three acres; and that these lots have been tilled for about eighty years as we have not land enough to allow part of this to lie out in grass, the land has got so weak and poor that we can hardly make a boll of meal in a year from a croft. That about twenty-eight years ago, more than one-third of the pasture, and one-third of the arable land were taken from us and added on to the farm of Auchnahaird, and that some time afterwards our rents were raised £1 on each croft. It is but fair to state that our present factor, Mr Gunn, who has always dealt in a most gentlemanly manner to us, has reduced our rents by 15s. each croft, but that still we pay £4, 10s. more than what we paid before part of the land was taken from us. That we complain much of the want of sea-weed for manure. Formerly there was no restriction for us to take as much sea-weed as we required, but now we must pay 7s. 6d. to the tacksman of Auchnahaird, or give him three days' work instead. We understand that the tacksman holds the right to the sea-weed in his lease, and so we cannot blame him. That

Murdo
M'Leod

ROSS-SHIRE.

ULLAPPOOL.

Murdo
M'Leod.

'when we build a house at our own expense, we receive some planks for rafters and a few bags of lime, and then if we leave, the house is claimed for the estate, and no compensation whatever is given to us. That what we wish is, to get back the land that was taken from us twenty-eight years ago, and to pay the old rent for it; leave to cut as much sea-weed as we require for manure without any restriction; compensation for improvements we make on our crofts; and also that a small local harbour should be erected, as at present there is no pier of any kind whatever for us to land fish and sea-weed at.' Signed by KENNETH MACLOUD, MARY M'Loud, widow; and by six others.

28277. Do you remember twenty years ago when a third of the pasture was taken from the township?—Yes, and long before it.

28278. When more than a third of the pasture was taken away, was there any reduction of rent made?—No, nothing at that time.

28279. There was also a third of the arable land taken. What became of the third of the pasture and the third of the arable land—who was it given to?—It was made into a farm which is now occupied by a gentleman of the name of Lindsay.

28280. Was it made into a farm or added to another farm?—It was added to an existing tack. They wanted the fence drawn transversely through the land diagonally down to the sea, so as to leave the good portion of their own township with them.

28281. Was the best part of your croft taken away to be added to the farm?—Yes, it was twice better than what was left to us; one yard was better than two of what was left.

28282. And the rent of the tacksman's farm was increased?—I understand the rent was increased.

28283. You complain that you have to pay the tacksman of Auchnahaired 7s. 6d., or give him three day's work for sea-weed, is there plenty of sea-weed on that shore?—Yes, each of us pays 7s. 6d.; there is plenty of sea-weed on the shore.

28284. Has he as much as he can use on his own land besides what he sells to you?—Yes, there would have been quite enough and to spare, even although he were to use three times the amount he uses. There is a long sea-coast.

28285. Are a great number of them building new houses?—Very few have built new houses.

28286. Are the houses very bad?—They are pretty bad—pretty old; just about as bad as they can be and still remain habitable.

28287. If you had any security that you would be repaid any cost on leaving, would you build better houses?—I believe they might, but it would not be worth while to build houses upon the small portions of land we have, or to improve them in any way. The ground is poor and the crofts small, and they cannot keep us alive.

28288. Have you any complaint to make about horses?—I am not going to say much about that; there are a few horses, but the place cannot keep them.

28289. Do you pay additional rent if you keep horses?—Yes; those who have horses pay a pound additional. There are only two horses set apart for the township, and the men who have them pay a pound each. We wish first of all that we would get that piece of good ground between us and the sea which was taken from us; and at any rate, if we cannot get that, we would wish that the small patches that have been left to us would be given us at a somewhat more reasonable rent.

28290. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Do you attach more importance to the increase of land or to security of tenure?—A larger holding is of all

things what we want. We used to pay our rent by our stock, and now we cannot keep stock.

28291. *Mr Cameron.*—Do you plough the land with the two horses? —I put a third of what I have under rye grass, and a third under turnips and a third under oats, and one cow would eat the whole thing; the place is so very small, a cow and a calf could eat it.

28292. Do you use the two horses you have mentioned for ploughing the land? —Yes, the neighbours use the horses for ploughing in some places in return for payment; but the great portion of the arable ground is of such a kind that horses cannot work it.

28293. Are these two horses sufficient to do all the ploughing necessary for the crofts? —Yes, for every bit of it if they were kept going; but those who have the horses sometimes go to earn wages to other townships to plough, so that the horses are not always available.

28294. That is not very fair to your township? —Well perhaps they prefer to go far afield and get better paid. They will be paid more exactly there than at home.

28295. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Have your predecessors been there for a long time? —My ancestors have been for at least 200 years upon that country side between Inverlaur and Auchinahaird and Rhidorrrach. They were foresters for some 150 years probably, father and son, and then they went over to the other side.

28296. Have most of the M'Leods in the neighbourhood been there since the M'Leods were the lairds of Coigach? —My people are the oldest in the place.

28297. Have you ever heard of Sir Rory M'Leod of Coigach? —I have heard often enough of M'Leod of Coigach.

28298. Have you heard of Torquil? —Yes, often.

28299. Are your people as old as Torquil M'Leod of Coigach? —My people were here before the Union when James was king—before the Georges came to the land.

ALEXANDER M'LEOD, Crofter (formerly Fisherman), Polban (50), assisted by MURDO SHAW, Crofter (formerly Fisherman) (52)—examined.

28300. *Mr Cameron.*—Are you delegates? —Yes. Alexander
28301. Have you any statement to make? —Yes: —‘ The case of the M'Leod and Murdo Shaw.
‘ Poolban tenants may be stated briefly to be—That they have too little
‘ land; that they have no security of tenure, and no compensation for
‘ improvements; and that their rents are too high. There are twenty-seven
‘ families on twenty-three lots varying in size from two to three acres
‘ arable. The only changes made have been for the worse. Some forty-
‘ five years ago, when the township was under Captain M'Leod, they
‘ had a part of Badintarbet, the whole of Old Dornie, and six islands for
‘ grazing purposes. These places, when Captain M'Leod gave up the
‘ place, were cut off and laid under sheep, and instead of receiving a com-
‘ pensation their rents have been raised. We now pay about £120 for the
‘ greatly reduced area. The fact is that this curtailment of pasturage has
‘ been one of the greatest grievances. Among the consequences are that such
‘ of us as are able to have more than one cow and six or seven sheep are
‘ obliged to pay for grazing for them elsewhere, although in all probability
‘ the officials on the estate will give in all these extra beasts of ours as part
‘ of the stock which we are privileged to keep. Another grievance is that

ROSS-
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' we want suitable piers and harbours—a want common to all the Coigach townships. Although, as has been seen, the defective and deficient land resources of the district force us to look at the sea for a great share of our support, we are met by the want of piers and harbours. This want entails not only danger and loss but very serious injury. We cannot use boats of a sufficient size for proper fishing, because we must draw them ashore every landing. The seriousness of the want of a pier at which to embark for, and land from Ullapool will be easily understood from the description given of the mountains which stand in the way by land. The most obvious way of passing between this district and Ullapool is by sea. But there is no quay for embarkation although there is no want of suitable places for the purpose between Poolbain and the Big Rock. But, as already stated, the greatest grievance is the want of land. Twenty-seven tenants, for example, have only an area of one mile by one fourth for pasture and peats. This grievance is more easily remedied here than in many places, for the excellent arable and pasture lands of Badentarbet and Old Dornie are in the immediate neighbourhood of Poolbain, and, what is worthy of remark, although these places have been out of lease several times they were kept from us.—
ALEXANDER x M'LEOD, MURDO x SHAW.

28302. It is stated in this paper that you have no security of tenure; have you much fear of being turned out?—I don't know.

28303. Is not your great want rather more land with which to support your families than to protect yourselves against the danger of being evicted?—Yes.

28304. Have there been any arbitrary evictions of late years?—No.

28305. As the want of more land seems to be greatly felt, will you describe to us the nature of the land which you mention in your statement as suitable to be added to the crofters?—It is the land upon the other side of us that was taken from us.

28306. But I want to know the nature of it?—It is of both kinds; it is suitable, part of it, for arable cultivation, and some for pasture land.

28307. Is it better land than what you have yourself?—Some of it is better.

28308. On an average is it about the same, or better?—I cannot tell very well until it was brought under cultivation.

28309. Who holds that land now?—A farmer has it.

28310. What is his name?—He is a tenant, a man of the country name, Donald M'Leod; and we march with Baden Tarbet on the other side.

28311. What rent does Donald M'Leod pay?—Probably he pays about £36, but I don't know the exact figure.

28312. He cannot be called a large farmer then. Is that the only farmer who lives on one side of your croft?—Yes, that is the only one upon that side.

28313. That land would hardly be available to add to the crofts?—Yes, that may be the case; but our chief grievance is that the wintering has been taken from us—the islands.

28314. But in the meantime you don't want to take Donald M'Leod's land away?—I am not able to say much about it; it is chiefly pastoral, and perhaps for an increase of food to the people it would not be of much service although we got it.

28315. What is there on the other side which would be available — Baden Tarbet farm.

ULLAPOOL.

Alexander
M'Leod and
Murdo Shaw.

28316. What is the size of it?—It is a pretty large farm.

ROSS.

28317. What rent does he pay?—I used to know the rent, but I don't know it now.

ULLAPPOOL

28318. Is it held by a man of the name of Cameron?—Yes.

Alexander

28319. I see that he pays £115 a year of rent, if enough land were given to you and taken from Mr Cameron, do you think it would leave him with any land worth speaking of, or would he still have sufficient? —I really could not give an opinion upon that.

M'Leod and Murdo Shaw

28320. Tell me about the islands?—The great loss arising from our being deprived of the islands is this, that we have nothing now to winter our cattle, whereas formerly, cattle could winter themselves upon the islands, the islands lie low, and the cattle could eat sea-ware and grass and heather.

28321. I have no doubt the islands would be a great benefit to you, but they appear to be comparatively small farms, and if you got them the man who occupies the islands would have to go?—They are not given to the same man; they are held by different people.

28322. How many tenants occupy these islands?—They are distributed between three or four tenants, but nobody lives on them; they always belonged to our place formerly.

28323. They have not belonged to your place for forty-five years?—It is some twenty or thirty years since we lost some of them.

28324. These islands which have no resident tenants upon them would be suitable for adding to the crofts?—Yes, it would be exceedingly suitable to add them.

28325. Have you brought this under the notice of the factor?—No, it is not very long since the present factor came to the place. All these changes were made before his time.

28326. How long has the present factor been in the place?—Seven or eight years.

28327. Is the place where you want a pier put up and a harbour to be made, the same we have heard of to-day already, or is it a fresh place?—It is at Baden Tarbat in the centre of the country and not in our own particular part of it at all. The anchorage would suit; it is a quay we require.

28328. Do you think the one quay would be sufficient and suitable for the whole district from which we have heard delegates?—It would suit by far the greater number of them, but perhaps it would not be very convenient for the whole of them.

28329. If you were to choose one place, the most convenient for everybody, would it be the place you mention?—Yes.

28330. *The Chairman (to Murdo Shaw).*—You have heard what your co-delegate has said?—Yes.

28331. Do you agree with it?—Yes.

28332. Have you anything you wish to add?—No, nothing, except that we complain of the small holdings and the large rents; and it has been that way since M'Leod lotted out the land and fixed the rent. We have been deprived of our peat ground which is getting exhausted, and we have to go a long way for the peats now.

Rev. JOHN M'MILLAN, Free Church Minister, Loch Broom—examined.

28333. *The Chairman.*—You have heard the evidence offered here to-day on the part of the delegates?—Yes.

Rev. John
M'Millan.

ROSS.

28334. You have been here the whole day?—Yes.

ULLAPPOOL.

28335. Do you generally agree with the substance of the evidence which has been given?—Yes, I do.

Rev. John
M'Millan.

28336. You have a statement which you wish to make?—Yes, but I fear it is too long for the Commissioners to hear at present. But as it would save time and would form a foundation for cross-examination, it might be as well for me to give part of it. Let me first of all begin with a general statement of the parish:—‘The extent of the parish of Loch Broom is about forty miles square, the proportion of arable land in this whole area is not proportionate to its extent, chiefly because it is a mountainous and pastoral country, but such as there is, if properly laid out for the benefit of the people and not on behalf of wild beasts, there is enough to rear up a very large population in comfort and happiness. There are in all, it is supposed, under cultivation at present, about 2500 acres, but how much that was once cultivated and sustaining a prosperous tenantry, could be reclaimed again, any one who walks the parish may see. At the last census, the population of the parish was 4191; in 1851 it was 4799; in 1861 it was 4861; in 1871 it was 4406. Thus it is seen that the population of the district is steadily decreasing. This is owing, *first*, to the gradual moving of the young to other centres of industry, and *secondly*, to emigration, which has largely decimated this parish; and were it not for the influx from other parishes to the village of Ullapool and other parts of the parish, the population would be much smaller than it is. Of this population about 425 hold crofts, besides cottars and such as hold plots of land attached to their houses, which cannot be called crofts. These crofts hold an average of three acres of land, some have more and some less. They have all between them something about 1300 acres. These crofters, who are mostly at the same time fishermen, are poor, and gradually becoming poorer, both through the failure of the fishing industry and the crops, as was the case last year. When you add to this increasing rents and heavy rates, with a poor rate of 2s. 9d. in the pound, besides school rates, road money, police rates, and, as in the village, water rates, it is easily seen that a people having a small and precarious income have enough to do. There are, in all, about 260 registered poor, besides 44 casual poor in the parish. The cost of supporting these amounts yearly to about £2668. This is a very heavy burden on a people whose burdens are otherwise numerous enough. Besides this there are ministers and a doctor to keep up. The rental of the parish is £15,002, 5s. 9d. There are several smaller subjects (farms, twenty-four) in the parish at rentals from £20 to £200, covering an area of fully 200 acres arable land, with hill grounds adjoining. These are fairly comfortable, and there are six large sheep farms, the highest of a rental of £1000. One of them is without a tenant (£500). And of deer forests there are seven, covering at least 300,000 acres. Much of this is high hill pasture, but all of it well adapted for sheep and cattle, and much of it could, with advantage, be still utilised for grazing, either separate from, or in connexion with, the low ground, and much also of these glens was under tillage and covered with cornfields and a happy tenantry. Take, for example, Rhidorroch itself. That glen is six or seven miles long. It was at one time under cultivation and could maintain scores of families in comfort, but now, like most of the best of the land in this parish, it is turned into a deer forest.’ I have a sketch of the evictions which took place from sixty to seventy years ago in this parish, beginning at the big strath; but with your leave I want to state some of the grievances and immediate causes of the poverty of the people. The area

occupied, first of all, is too narrow; that is one of the causes, and it is true of Ullapool; and if any of the delegates are examined they will enter into this grievance themselves. Secondly, there is the unfruitfulness of the soil and the untoward nature of the seasons. Thirdly, the fishing industry has failed. Combined with these there is the distance to the markets from the fishing ground, so that the fish lose their value before they reach their destination. To show how our people are being impoverished gradually, there were, ten years ago, eighteen large boats fit to go to the east coast fishing; there are now only eight, except crazy boats which ply around the coast here. Again, among the grievances, there is first the want of roads in some of the country districts, particularly two places on the Dundonell estate. No doctor or messenger can get to these places except by sea, and the children can only attend school at the risk of their lives. This must hinder the education of the children to some extent, and make the attendance irregular. The next grievance is the distance of the medical officer from the people. The road round about is twenty-five miles long; it could have been made ten miles by taking it through the Big Rock—not through the precipitous rock, but round another way, which would not have cost more than was expended upon the twenty-five miles. My idea is this, that the road twenty-five miles long has been made mainly for the purpose of suiting the sportsmen; it is out of the way entirely for the people. The people must come and go through that Big Rock as heretofore. I am not going to blame any person, but the fact is there. The road is useless for any of us, although we have to go sometimes. That is the great grievance.

28337. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—How long is it since that road was made?—Eight years; it is round about altogether. Then there is another grievance, and the marrow of them we might say—the insecurity of tenure; the people are afraid to lift their heads. They are tenants at will and they don't know at what moment they may be put out of their lots. In this state of things they have no independence; they must just do as their superiors tell them, however much it may be against their own light and sense of duty. The power of the factors and lairds appears to me as a mill-stone upon the people, and my soul has been frequently pained by this incubus resting upon them which they have no power to throw off. This power ramifies itself into everything—School Boards, Parochial Boards, everything and anything. No freedom can be exercised without danger to the interests of the individuals. This power must be broken at whatever cost. It pains me to speak in that way, but I cannot help it. It is not so much against the men that I speak, as against the system on which they are working. As I said yesterday when intimating this meeting, even although they should put myself in as factor, I would be tempted to do some of the things that these men do—two of them of my own congregation, excellent men—but the system under which they are working tempts even a good man to do it. As for Mr Gunn, he is an excellent man and gentleman, and I have been very glad to meet him in the Parochial Board; a man who, I believe, would not do an unjust act, but the system under which he and others are working makes them do what they would not. It is not with these gentlemen I quarrel, but with the system under which they are working. If you wish to hear the history of the evictions sixty or seventy years ago, I am quite willing to enter into that.

28338. I think if you would kindly give us that in writing, you might go on to give us any recent ones?—I have no recent ones except the Leckmelm case which is a world-wide business. These are all the recent cases here, but if I were to enter into the Braemore evictions long ago,

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Rev. John
McMillan.

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ULLAPPOOL.Rev. John
M'Millan.

before Mr Fowler came into possession, it would show how comfortable these people were before he occupied it. I have nothing but praise to give Mr Fowler. He is a gentleman in manners and conduct, and has done great good to the place, but he has not seen it his duty to give the land to the ousted race. He said there were only about 200 souls on his property. There is no outrun to the hill. They are crofters and he supplies them with labour and the country round about. There is nothing to be said of him but that he is a gentleman. But there are 500 acres of arable land in his possession where there were thirteen townships, maintaining seventy tenants with the greatest comfort, and so many horses and everything ; and although they had unpropitious years at times, yet the good years tided over the years of peril, and they were very comfortable, —much more so than the people are to-day. Coming to Inverlaul forest, there were sixty houses cleared there for one individual, the son of the proprietor of Dundonell, and he could not keep it three years. A Mr Horne came after him, and now it is in the possession of Captain Mundell, and the half of it is turned into deer forest, and as I understand the fences are already finished on the top. The farm was rented at £600. I don't know how much the return is or what is the rent of the new deer forest, but that is the history of that. All these people have been scattered and thrown into the creeks and promontories of our coasts, while others went abroad. A large number of the Inverlaul tenants settled upon the glebe of Dundonell which is the second largest glebe in Scotland, and there they are to-day ; and if you call the delegates from that place there will be something told of that district. As to Leckmelm, I have nothing to say. That battle has been fought by me, and I am not to enter into it again. At Achnarerich there is a large part of the best arable land in the country in the hands of the adjoining farmer, and the people want that, and it was the proprietor's mind before he died to give them it ; but the factor came in, and the farmer said it would pay better if he had it. The people want to get that back. That is the history of these things, and I need not go further ; but if you ask what is the remedy in my opinion, I will state what I think should be done :—‘ *Remedy.*—One practical way in which they could be remedied is, by the breaking up of large farms when the leases are out, or even buy them up at this moment, and turn them into club farms. This may be supposed to be a hobby of ours, but we are deeply convinced that there is no other way apart from peasant proprietary, of satisfactorily working the crofter population. I find most lairds and factors against this system, and I think it is easily guessed the reason why. It is well known that club farms give a greater hold and interest to the people in the lands. There is a union and unity in such clubs which have a greater power of resistance against high-handed oppression, which is not found among men working to their own hands. That is plainly the reason, as we take it, why club farms are so much disliked. But the want of them is the ruin of the Highlands and evidently it is the ruin of this poor, ill-managed parish. It is a little troublesome also to establish them. This system has this to recommend it, however, that no arrangement we have seen tried, keeps down the subdivision of crofts, and acts at the same time as a safety-valve to let off the ever increasing population of a district, like it. I need not wait here to explain the system I advocate, as I presume all the members of this Commission know fully the details of its working. I am happy to see in this Commission one gentleman whom I have the honour to claim as a countryman and a neighbour, and on whose estate there is such club tenantry, I mean Lochiel. You sir, have such a club farm at Kinlochiel and Corribeg, opposite which I was brought up ; and let me say before

‘ this Commission, as I have on another occasion, that I know no other crofter tenantry so comfortable as these are, and long may they continue so. ‘ They never require to look after even local fishing, their sheep and lands ‘ pay their rents and sustain them in all their other requirements. The ‘ same kind of farm was on the opposite side of the loch, on the estate of ‘ the late Colonel M’Lean of Ardgour, one of the fatherly proprietors of ‘ the Highlands, but alas how the times have changed! It is now under ‘ the foolish administration of Lord Morton, who has a mania for deer- ‘ shooting and deer-rearing. Miles and miles of this club system is laid ‘ waste under deer, and that once splendid tenantry, the like of which I ‘ have not yet seen anywhere is now ruined and impoverished, and could ‘ not for the life of them re-stock the ground though they were to get the ‘ chance. In fact the whole Highlands are ruined by such foolish ad- ‘ ministration of affairs. If the Royal Commission would allow me, I ‘ would humbly impress upon them the importance of the club-farm system ‘ with all the earnestness of which I am capable. Of other remedies I ‘ have none to suggest; nothing but what I know to have worked in the ‘ past and will work at all times and places if properly and perseveringly ‘ managed; but it requires all that, strict rules and a firm hand to guide ‘ affairs, only I would suggest this further, which is an essential condition ‘ to its working efficiently, viz., a permanent hold of the land. More ‘ leases of a few years will never do. Few people know why Highland ‘ crofters dislike leases unless they be perpetual leases. Indeed, practically, ‘ it was ever so under the old Highland lairds who loved their people and ‘ were loved and honoured in return. I would suggest then a perpetual ‘ lease of the land and full compensation whenever one leaves by his own ‘ good will, or forced out for some serious cause. Of other remedies, as ‘ we have said, we have none to offer. We believe there must be pro- ‘ prietors of some kind, unless the land be made the property of the nation ‘ and apportioned to the people as Palestine of old. Our Government can ‘ do anything they please, and if they are wise they will attend without ‘ delay to the interests of the people. It is not our business to prescribe ‘ remedies; we point out the disease. It is theirs—it is the work of this ‘ Commission—to discover both the disease and the remedy; but let them ‘ depend on this, that if no redress come—if deer forests are not curtailed ‘ if not altogether suppressed, and if factorial power be not exercised with ‘ a little more caution and softer hand, the time will come, nay, it has ‘ already come, in which the people, so long groaning under a yoke of bond- ‘ age, will and must assert their rights, and not with bated breath either. ‘ Such a conflict between the people and those above them and over them ‘ can have but one issue. But before that issue is reached many and ‘ serious evils may be produced as the fruit of the contention. There is ‘ nothing wiser for any governing body than to give way when they see ‘ dangers ahead, if that be not done, the consequence will be what happens ‘ to the fair bark driven by the heedless and reckless steersman on to the ‘ rocks which lie before him. The whole is shattered and wrecked. It ‘ is a grave evil to put class against class, landlord against tenant, and ‘ tenant against landlord; but this must be the inevitable result of all ‘ laws relating to land being in favour of the monied few and adverse ‘ to the interests of the many, only because they are less fortunate ‘ in their lot—in other words, that they are poor. We are all inter- ‘ dependent on each other. No man can say I have no need of thee. ‘ The rich are dependent on the poor, as they are called, as well as the poor ‘ being dependent on the rich. Every human being has necessary relations ‘ with some of his fellow-creatures which he can no more repudiate than ‘ he can deny his own existence or his debt to our mother earth. It i:

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' time now these relations were understood. It must be the aim of all right-minded men to insist on this point; to preach the duties of property, now that its rights are beginning to be realised as wrongs, after having served for centuries as a catch-word to justify a thousand forms of oppression. The great and ignorant cry is, I can do what I like with my own, No, we say there are scores of things in a man's possession and which he calls his own, he dare not do with it what he likes. I dare not do what I like even with my own life, nor my children's, nor even to that of the very horse I employ, much less with property in land which God intended for the benefit of all his creatures. Let us not be considered wild or radical when we make these statements, we speak the words of truth and soberness, we are no agitators in the sense that word is generally used, but we must agitate until we receive redress. The radical spirit is abroad, and the Highlander who would allow any one to rule him, however weak in horsemanship, has at last learned to kick, and will no longer allow every novice to take his seat on his back. If laws are to be made, let them be made not for one clan, let them be just and impartial. If not, as Professor Blackie says, we may awake some morning and find ourselves sitting on the verge of a social volcano.'

28339. *Professor Mackinnon.*—How long have you been in the parish?

—Ten years.

28340. In addition to this place and the part of the country where you have been brought up, is there any other part of the Highlands you are acquainted with?—I have travelled through the most of the Western Highlands. I have been much in Sutherland and Caithness. I know Argyleshire well, and the islands of Lewis and Skye and other portions.

28341. And there, and here, and in your own native place you have given a great deal of attention to this question?—I have within a few years, and incidentally before, as a crofter's son I might say, and I know the question well by experience, and since a few years ago I have been forced to pay attention to it.

28342. In addition to the evidence which was led before us to-day, I suppose you have read more or less the evidence which was led before us elsewhere in those places you know?—Yes. I have followed it as closely as I could, and as my time would allow me.

28343. And so far as you are able to judge, you think the people have been on the whole giving a fair representation of their condition?—Yes, I honestly say that; that they have not overdone it in my view.

28344. They say they are poor and that the cause of their poverty is the little they have of the land; do you agree with them in that opinion? Yes, that is one of the main reasons of their poverty—the narrowness of the area which they occupy.

28345. And you also agree with the almost unanimous request they make, that they ought to have more land?—Yes, but under different arrangements. It will never do to give one man a little more, and less to another. You must have club farms; you must have one shepherd, and one mark upon the sheep. It would never do to let one man get on and another sink down. I have no indictment to bring against the factors; their position is a difficult one; but the great thing is the rent—to supply the rent to the proprietors—and other questions are lost sight of entirely.

28346. You are aware that club farms have been worked to advantage elsewhere?—I am.

28347. Of course that plan is chiefly suitable for a district where a great proportion of the land is pastoral and not agricultural?—Yes.

28348. You would not advocate it in places where the croft was chiefly

ROSS.

ULLAPOOL

Rev. John
M'Millan.

if not wholly agricultural?—No, I would not, because no scientific agriculture will do with hill pasture. It is the sheep on the hill pasture, and the cattle, that pay the farmer, even the large farmer.

28349. You would have this stock on the common hill grazing, and you would have the arable portion fenced?—Yes.

28350. As it is being done mostly here?—Yes.

28351. And one of the advantages of club farms would be that they would act as a chief inducement to prevent the subdivision of crofts?—It would never be done if the laws of the property were properly worked, and I would insist upon that. Too indulgent a proprietor may spoil a tenantry as well as a despotic one. Things go to sixes and sevens where there is a too indulgent proprietor.

28352. He allows the people to subdivide too much?—Yes, as in the Lewis. Things are allowed to go too much their own way, and there is a lack of a proper guiding principle or rule. There must be rules, and they must be exercised with a very firm hand—I would insist upon that—and no subdivision.

28353. Even supposing you were to have a club farm, you would require to increase the holdings very much from what they are?—Yes, to perhaps double or three times their extent.

28354. And your plan of increasing them would be by removing some of the people who are there to other equally suitable places?—Yes, in the parish—to the glens. But even although you were not to enlarge the crofts at all, if you were to give a large portion of the hill and sheilings, and keep the low ground for wintering purposes,—in that event, with small lots, they would get on very well.

28355. You think the small crofts they have would carry more hill stock at present?—Oh! no.

28356. Then how would you do?—I don't perhaps take you up—the present hill pasture is it?

28357. No, but the present agricultural area could carry with advantage a greater amount of hill pasture than there is along with it just now?—Oh! yes, to be sure. If those grazings which were cut off by deer forests and sheep farms were given to the people, even with the crofts they have, they would be twenty times better off than they are. Everything depends on the stock in the Highlands.

28358. So that even without transplanting them, you could improve them?—Yes; if the proprietor would give the hills to the people, the people would rise up ten degrees and more in prosperity.

28359. Do you think there are some places throughout the parish under pasture just now that could, with at least as equal advantage as many of the crofts, be cultivated and made crofts of?—No doubt of it. There are a great many stretches that could be turned with the plough. The slopes of Inverlaur itself could be brought in, a great part of them.

28360. The description the people themselves give of their condition is that they are so poor that even although they got those enlarged holdings, they could not stock them; how could you get over that?—They could not stock them unless they got some means—unless they got the loan of money some way. But could not the proprietor do that and get interest, as Sir Alexander Matheson has done? Stock the ground and let the people pay up the stock and everything until they get upon their legs; and now they are going as gentlemen to the markets with gigs; they are as well off as the proprietors themselves. That is the only feasible way I see of giving money to the people, not to all but to the best. Some people cannot do anything but lounge. But let it be given to men who

ROSS. can use it ; give them money and let them pay it back by degrees. We have scores in this parish who could do that.

ULLAPOOL. 28361. But you agree that the proprietor should maintain so much authority as would be sufficient security for the advance of the money ?
Rev. John M'Millan. —Yes.

28362. Control and management of the stock ?—Yes, under proper and just laws—if he would let club laws be administered ; and I would not say not to evict. I would evict a man who would not pay rent or who was guilty of a misdemeanour. You must have strict rules and abide by them, and that would teach the people to be more diligent in their work.

28363. With respect to fixity of tenure, I think you gave your opinion in favour of a perpetual lease ?—Yes, that is the best way I could see.

28364. How then would you fix the rent ?—As to the working of a perpetual lease, I first of all thought of a life lease. Then I saw that would end with a man's life and would not stand for his son. Then I changed the expression to a perpetual lease or fixity of tenure—that is that no man should be put out of his holding except for misdemeanour or not paying his rent.

28365. Supposing you get the rent fixed at what was reasonable and fair, how would you proceed in fixing the rent for the future ? you would not mean that the same rent should continue for ever ?—Well, of course, with club farms it would require to rise after perhaps a number of years ; but there would require to be a sliding scale to regulate that, which I cannot enter into at present. But although I don't go into any remedy except club farms I hold that our Highlands will never get on until our people have some individual interest in the land. Whether you can give them that interest by a club farm or not, I cannot say. But whatever be the method of working, I want more interest in the land, that the people may settle down for ever if they wish to die there.

28366. Of course times might come when the rent, instead of being raised might have to be reduced, so that the arrangement under a perpetual lease would have to be such as would apply either way—that would have to be done now and again ?—Yes.

28367. Who would be the proper person or persons to fix what would be a fair rent ?—My poor opinion is this, that an independent person or court would be the proper way to fix the rent at different times when the restoration of the land should take place, and that it should not be allowed to be in the hands of the factor and landlord—that there should be some guiding principle for factors and lairds. It is a difficult thing, and I only lay down a general principle, but there are many other things which would require to be settled.

28368. You know the present rule with regard to the transfer of stock on big farms. When the lease is out the incoming tenant is obliged to take the stock of the outgoing tenant. In your club system when a tenant would leave voluntarily would there be any obligation upon the remaining part of the township or the incoming tenant or the proprietor to take the outgoing tenant's share of the club stock ?—This is the way I have seen it done, and Lochiel knows this perfectly well—the proprietor is tenant in place of the tenant that leaves. He takes everything and holds it as for the person who has left, and when the fresh tenant comes in, he gives it over to him, and of course if the new tenant leaves, he gives it back to the proprietor again, so that the co-partners have nothing whatever to do—they have no loss whatever.

28369. The proprietor holds the share until the new tenant comes in ?—Yes.

28370. Would there be any difficulty in a thing of that kind in one man holding two or three shares?—My own father held two shares.

ROSS.

28371. There would be no difficulty about that?—No.

ULLAPOOL.

28372. So that a strong energetic man with a strong energetic family could so improve as to run up and make a good thing of it?—He might get the whole perhaps himself through time.

Rev. John
M'Millan.

28373. But that might be too much?—If things would allow it, but it is not generally the case.

28374. There is nothing to prevent it?—No, but when there is a croft vacant there are hundreds after it; and when you have a farm vacant today rented at £500 or £600 you cannot get an offer. But let there be a croft of from £12 to £30 vacant and you will get scores of offers.

28375. I asked the question of Mr Fowler about large farms or crofts; I see upon the valuation roll there are about a dozen such in the parish. Do you know the tenants of these?—I know some of them, and they are fairly comfortable, every one of them showing that if you rise a little you will make the people comfortable. I differ from Mr Fowler on that point.

28376. Do you think it would be possible, where so much of the surface of this parish is pastoral and so little arable, that there might be some considerable number of prosperous tenantry occupying holdings from £50 to £100 of rent?—Yes.

28377. Without loss to the proprietor?—No loss, but gain I believe, if deer forests were put out of the question. Mr Fowler himself has 500 acres of arable land, and that could with great gain be put into the hands of the people. The proprietors consider it is better to have it in their own possession. But if you look to the prosperity of the country, which is to have many stalwart people upon it, it would be the best thing to give the land to the crofters.

28378. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You have just stated that Mr Fowler himself has got 500 acres; do you mean that within the forest?—No. I have the figures from good sources, and I understand there are 500 acres in the little strath and 500 in the big strath.

28379. A thousand acres altogether?—Yes, in the hands of the proprietors themselves; and about 1300 in the hands of the crofters.

28380. Do I understand you to say there were sixty houses in Inverlaul cleared away?—Yes.

28381. And in Leckmeln fourteen?—Sixteen crofters in Leckmeln if I remember well, and about one hundred souls.

28382. Is there any one of them now holding land?—Each of them has about a quarter of an acre as garden ground.

28383. We have heard something of the early history of that place. What has become of these one hundred souls?—They are still most of them on the ground. They have their houses, and their children are in the employment of Mr Pirie. I must say for Mr Pirie—and I had to do with him as going to do what I considered wrong—that he has proved a very kind master to the people under the new regime of things.

28384. Of the one hundred people who were there before the changes took place, how many have been obliged to leave?—A pretty large number of the young. Some have gone to America, and they are scattering here and there just day by day.

28385. You stated there were about one hundred souls; how many may there be now in your opinion? will there be fifty souls?—Oh! yes; there are two men here who may be examined.

28386. But several have left?—The young have left.

28387. We now come down to a place called Corrie; has there been any depopulation there?—Yes, long ago. There is only now a shepherd's

ROSS.

ULLAPOOL.

Rev. John
M'Millan.

house, and that place could maintain a number of families in comfort. It is upon the Duchess of Sutherland's property.

28388. Why has Ullapool such a deserted appearance?—There are many reasons for that. I did not go into this because there were other witnesses to be called; but a great number of the people have come into the village of Ullapool.

28389. Dispossessed people?—Yes, it is commonly the refuge for these poor people, and every one when he comes, if he can, keeps a cow by paying so much for it, and consequently there is far too much stock upon the hill, which is limited already. The reason of the impoverished state of the village is the number of poor people thrown into it, and the breaking down of houses.

28390. Are you able to state from your own knowledge that pauperism, which seems extensive in this parish, arises in a great degree from driving the people out of their homes?—There is no doubt of it, and I told that to the members of the Parochial Board, that they should try and prop up these men in the holdings instead of driving them out.

28391. Do you know the estate of Dundonell pretty well?—Yes, pretty well.

28392. Is there much land in forest or sheep farms there which was formerly occupied as arable ground?—Yes, 500 acres, and there is a farm worth £500 of rent vacant just now.

28393. There are 500 acres now vacant?—Yes, between the farm and what is in the hands of the proprietor; and there is a very large deer forest.

28394. Can you tell me what extent of ground has been recently added to the forest of Dundonell?—A very large amount, but I could not give the exact acreage. I believe the whole put together is worth about £2000 of rent.

28395. Has there been an addition made to the Duchess of Sutherland's forests?—Yes, in Coigach.

28396. At the expense of a sheep-farm or crofter's?—At the expense of a large sheep-farm. It was not in the hands of crofters. It was threatened also to take the crofters land from them, but it did not come to that.

28397. What township was that?—Auchiltibuie I think, and a large tract of the Coigach district.

28398. Was Auchiltibuie threatened?—I am not sure, but there was a large tract of the Coigach district. I think it was behind Auchiltibuie, between Baden Tarbat and Auchiltibuie.

28399. You have heard what Mr Fowler stated to-day, and you have yourself borne testimony that so far he is a good landlord and gives employment; do you concur in his idea that the parish of Lochbroom is quite sufficiently populated?—Yes; as it is, too well populated. I don't say it is that, if the poor people would be allowed to scatter here and there into the glens, and get the land they were dispossessed of back again.

28400. It is a very large parish?—Yes, the extent of the parish is forty miles by forty miles, and that is a great deal of pasture.

28401. Four thousand of a population is not very much for these thousands of acres. It was 4191 at last census.

28402. That does not seem a very large population?—No, with the number there is in the village of Ullapool following the fishing. There are about 900 souls here alone, on the property of Lady Matheson.

28403. I suppose you are not against the people emigrating voluntarily

ROSS.

ULLAPOOL.Rev. John
McMillan.

to other countries?—No, and that will work by itself if you have proper rules upon the estate; it will work by degrees as it did in my own country. You need not force them; they will accommodate themselves.

28404. Do you consider that, if the status of crofters was improved and enlarged, and there was a regulation made that there was to be no further subdivision of the enlarged crofts, the people would be disposed again to subdivide and bring about again the misery many of them are now in?—No, they would not; they would not be allowed to do it; and I don't think, on Lochiel's estate, I know of any such thing.

28405. In well-regulated club-farms you are not aware that this system of subdivision does prevail?—Never.

28406. Even without the state interfering, do you think the good sense of the people themselves would go against it?—Yes, but it belongs to the rules of such club-farms that they are not by any means to be subdivided, and of course that is enough.

28407. Were you obliged this year to apply for some of the money which was subscribed in the south for the destitute people?—I was, and I was very reluctant to do it, it was a matter of necessity.

28408. You were pretty active in this matter?—I was.

28409. Did you do so before you were fully satisfied of the necessity of the step?—I did not. I called the attention of the proprietors first, and they came forward, and then generous friends in the south supplied what the proprietors did not do.

28410. Would it not seem strange to an outsider that in an enormous parish like this with a limited population, it was necessary to apply for external relief?—Yes, and to show that what I advocate is the thing, none of our crofters who were in good condition came forward to ask one pound of meal or money. No one got it but the poor people who had no land or only patches of land. The people who had any stock had as much credit as tided them over.

28411. I suppose, as a Highlander, you don't like to make application for charity?—I do not, and I hope I will never have to do it again; it was very much against my grain to have to do it.

28412. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—I don't know whether you understood Mr Fraser-Mackintosh's question; but do you mean to say there are 500 acres of arable land in the Dundonell forest?—No, I mean round about the laird's house, and down to the river—down to the sea. I mean the whole strath of Little Lochbroom between what is occupied by the laird himself and the farm of Dundonell, as I understand about 500 acres.

28413. But it is used for productive purposes, and is not turned into forest?—No, but the other side is a forest entirely.

28414. But the arable land is still used for productive purposes?—Oh, yes, it is not made forest; it is contiguous to the forest.

28415. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Is it now under cultivation?—Yes.

28416. Is it turned by the plough?—Yes, and the proprietor has the rest under grass and under sheep.

28417. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Where was the principal destitution?—The most of it was in the village of Ullapool. I must say to the honour of the crofters, that very few from the country came forward for relief. They would have taken it if they could have got it in large measure, but they would not condescend to take two or three stones of meal, and they would not get more than that at a time. Those who got any of it were broken-down people in the village, and those who had no land and whom we knew thoroughly well to require it.

28418. Did the people from the Big Strath or Leckmeln get any?—No.

28419. *Mr Cameron.*—You mentioned that the large fishing-boats have

ROSS. been reduced in number?—Yes, from thirty to eight, and they cannot get gear for them; they have not the money. They cannot be trusted for it from the bank, because they are so poor.

ULLAPOOL. 28420. If the fishing is a paying concern, how does it happen that these persons have not been able to get their tackle replaced?—Of course the fathers got old, and the sons went away because the fishing was not paying, and there are various other reasons.

28421. The fishing was not paying?—It was not, and the people were poor, and everything combined made them give it up.

28422. Are the eight boats they have now of the new class?—I think there are eight of them going to the east.

28423. Are they of the new class?—Most of them; because they must be all decked now.

28424. You stated that the land added to the Duchess of Sutherland's forest was a sheep-farm?—Yes.

28425. But you did not mention whether what was added to the Dundonell forest was also a sheep farm?—I suppose it was.

28426. I understood you to say the land had been lately added to the deer forest?—Yes.

28427. It was not taken from the crofters?—No, from the farm; when the farm became vacant the proprietor made half of it into the forest.

28428. You are aware that sheep-farms are difficult to let just now?—Yes.

28429. In such a case as a sheep-farm falling vacant, do you object to the proprietor making it into a deer forest when he can find nothing else to do with it?—Not when money is the thing in view. When a man must replenish his purse, he must do it.

28430. But it is a question of doing something with the land?—But if it is broken up and given to smaller tenants, I believe that might be done.

28431. But I am alluding principally to land not suitable to be broken up?—I don't know any land in Lochbroom that could not be broken up for small tenants.

28432. Is it the fact that in forming a deer forest you take always the highest and worst land—land that could hardly keep sheep, and leave the more profitable land in the hands of the sheep-farmer? Would not the natural inference be, that if crofters are to get land, they should get first the more suitable and better pasture, and when they filled that up, that they should go to the deer forests?—Yes, but I have shown that the low ground will never pay the crofters; they must have a large out-run.

28433. Have not the large sheep-farms a large out-run?—Yes.

28434. Then would it not be more suitable to give the crofters, if they are to get additional land, the large farms, out-run, and all?—Yes.

28435. I presume you would not have any objection to let the deer forests in the meantime remain as such, rather than be quite vacant?—To be sure I would, and where I would have sheep the deer would be allowed to go. The deer were wilder formerly than they are now, and it was better sport, for it cannot be called sport now. It was better sport when the deer were in the corries and far off wild places. They are now like sheep, and you can kill them with a stick if you like.

28436. You have nothing more to add to what you stated to Professor Mackinnon about the possibility of arriving at some conclusion with regard to stocking the farms, because, I gather, you are convinced that the pastoral system is adapted for the Highlands, and that it should be in the hands of the crofters and not in the hands of large sheep farmers?—Yes.

28437. You have nothing to add as to how you would stock these

lands if they are to be given to the crofters?—No, I have nothing to add. Of course there are some here who could take small farms of from £16 to £17 of rent.

28438. I suppose you are aware that stock is never considered available security, being a kind of floating subject?—I know there are great difficulties; but something must be done.

28439. But what that something is, you are not able to say?—I have just given my opinion. I don't go into ethereal remedies. Let the whole of Auchiltibuie be turned into a club farm up Strathkennar. I know some people object to that, and the reason of it is, that there are two or three big fellows who object and keep up with the factors and say 'No, down with it,' and the factors keep a deaf ear and a shut eye to all the clamour of the poorer people. Let club farms be the rule and not the exception, and you will see that they will renew and reform things in the Highlands without going into the difficulties of peasant proprietor. I want practical things which I have seen carried out, and nothing else.

ROSS.

ULLAPOOL.

Rev. John
M'Millan.

WILLIAM GUNN, Esq., Factor on the estates of the Duchess of Sutherland, Countess of Cromartie (44)—examined.*

28440. *The Chairman.*—You have been present here to-day during the course of the inquiry and have heard what has been stated?—Yes.

William:
Gunn.

28441. Do you desire to make some statement?—I do. I have a written statement which I should like to read:—'On the Coigach or Cromartie portion of the parish of Loch Broom, owned by the Duchess of Sutherland, Countess of Cromartie, there are nineteen townships comprising 237 crofters and 5 cottars. The crofters occupy as nearly as possible 700 acres of arable land, and close upon 30,000 acres of pasture, at a yearly rent of £1067, 10s. 9d. or about 8d. per acre over head with the arable thrown in. This gives an average of 3 acres arable and 120 acres pasture to each crofter at an average yearly rent of £4, 10s. The total rental of the Duchess of Sutherland's property in this parish is £5460, of which £1690 is derived from sheep grazings and £2700 from shootings and fishings. There are only two farms of any size—one rented at £550, and the other at £500. There are nine smaller grazings ranging from £35 to £115 of rent. I have traced the rental of the crofter holdings in Coigach back for forty years, during which period, and probably much longer, the rents remained unchanged until 1878, when they were revised and a re-valuation made. Prior to 1853 the Lotters of Achiltibuie, Badenscally, and neighbouring townships to the north of the Big Rock, were sub-tenants of Messrs Mackenzie, general merchants, Ullapool, to whom, in addition to certain money payments, they were under certain obligations paid in kind. In 1853 all these sub-tenants, I believe, much to their satisfaction, were taken on as holding direct from the proprietor, at the old rents. This continued until 1878, when, after an outlay of many thousand pounds on roads and other useful works of improvement, it was felt that the time had arrived when some small return should be obtained for so large an expenditure. The most important and costly of these improvements was the opening up of the district with new roads, which, with branches to and through the various townships along the coast line from Coulnacraig to the extreme point of Rieff, extend in all to close upon forty miles, constructed, much of it, through a very rocky difficult

* For further evidence of Mr Gunn, see pages 2642 and 3248.

ROSS. 'country—at a cost of over £11,000. If we exclude the loop line to
UILLAPOOL. 'Loch Inver, which connects the counties of Ross and Sutherland, there
William Gunn. 'are seventeen miles, thirteen of which, may be regarded as specially for
 'the accommodation of the people of the district. The cost of these
 'branch and purely local roads may be put down at £3000. An improved
 'meal mill, with accommodation for cartwright and carpenter business,
 'cost £940—a rent, but a very inadequate one, is got for this last outlay.
 'Timber, lime, and glass, are given free to crofters who rebuild their
 'houses on an improved plan, and slates are supplied at a reasonable rate
 'of interest. This assistance has produced most satisfactory results.
 'During my own connection with the district (I became factor in 1867)
 'over one hundred houses have been either entirely rebuilt or sub-
 'stantially improved, and a number have been slated. That the tenants
 'themselves who are at the whole expense of the erection—on an average
 'about £30 for each house—should have done so much affords the best
 'evidence of a commendable desire to better their condition, while it is, at the
 'same time, most gratifying to the Duke and Duchess of Sutherland, that
 'so many of their people have been able to take advantage of the
 'assistance offered for the improvement of their dwellings. I
 'have already stated that a re-valuation of the crofter holdings was made
 'in 1878. This task was entrusted to me by the Duke of Sutherland
 'and his Commissioner (the late Mr Loch) partly I suppose because of
 'my knowledge of the district acquired during the previous eleven years
 'while the new roads and other improvements were being planned and
 'constructed, and partly because there was no desire to rack-rent, and it
 'was probably thought that as I should myself be the person to impose
 'and collect the new rents I would probably be more careful than strangers
 'not to exceed what might be regarded as fair and just to all concerned.
 'There being a strong tendency on the part of well-to-do crofters to over-
 'stock, the first and most important step was to fix a summing for
 'each township and each lotter therein. One great advantage of this is
 'that the poor man, who is unable to have his full complement of stock,
 'can get value for his grazing from the well-to-do tenant. We experience,
 'however, very great difficulty in putting this into practice owing to the
 'unwillingness of the people themselves to give information as to over-
 'stock. Although there are very few lots but what can be turned with the
 'plough, the rates fixed for the arable land do not exceed 10s. on an average,
 'with the patches and borders of green pasture thrown in. The rates
 'for stock vary according to the quality of the grazing, and are as follows:
 '—For cows, from 7s. to 10s. each; young cattle, 4s. to 6s. each; sheep,
 '1s. 6d. to 2s. 6d. each; horses, 15s. to 20s. each. Low as these rates certainly
 'are they yield an increase on the old rent of £176, or an average rise of 15s.
 'on each allotment. On one township of eight lotters (Auchnahaird) a
 'reduction of 20 per cent. was made on the old rent, levied by the
 'tacksman whose sub-tenants they were. On Isle Martin—seven lotters
 '—there was no rise; while in numerous instances old men having no
 'able-bodied sons to work for them and pay the rent, the increase has
 'been allowed to stand over. I should also add that in all cases brought
 'under my notice, care was taken not to impose any increase of rent
 'in respect of land reclaimed or otherwise improved by the tenants within
 'the previous fifteen years. Although the croft rents may be said to have
 'been stationary for fifty years, the farm rents in the same district have
 'in several instances risen 100 per cent. and in some cases even more.
 'It will, I think, be admitted that the small tenants get fully a half
 'more wages now than thirty years ago, while they get nearly double the
 'price for their cattle that they could have got even twenty years ago.

' This is very much the result of the great improvement in the breed
' brought about by the introduction in recent years of well bred bulls at
' the proprietor's expense—a system of helping the people which cannot
' be too strongly recommended. The desire to slate their houses is also
' on the increase and deserves to be encouraged, as the constant flaying
' of the surface for divot required for thatched roofs is ruinous to pasture.
' To show that the new roads are of use to the people I may mention
' that carts and ploughs are much more numerous and are yearly on the
' increase—while the labour provided in the making of these roads has
' done good in various ways. It has taught many of them to use a pick
' and spade to advantage, and it has encouraged them to set about
' improving their crofts by trenching waste, draining, and removing
' boulders, &c. It also enables their children to get comfortably to school,
' of which there are no fewer than six on the Coigach property. I must
' not omit to mention that with the exception of one or two inland town-
' ships the great bulk of the population live near the sea and that many
' of them are more dependant upon fishing than upon their crofts. I am
' glad to be able to bear testimony to the fact that while doubtless there
' are some indolent people among them as there are in most communities,
' there are many very industrious, and strive hard to better their condition,
' and if there is one thing more than another that retards their progress,
' it is the want of good harbour accommodation and regular facilities,
' which they do not now possess, of getting the produce of the sea to a
' ready market. At present there is no telegraph and only two posts a week
' to this important district, with a population, according to the last census,
' of 1615. I trust that you gentlemen will have the goodness to represent
' this to the proper quarter and recommend that Government aid be given
' towards providing these facilities which are so much required.
If you will now allow me I would like to make one or two remarks upon
the evidence which has been given. Allow me first to refer to the
delegate John M'Lean. This crofter is entitled to keep one horse,
three cows, two followers, and twelve sheep. In inquiring for the
return given to the Commission, the stock actually kept was found
to be two horses, four cows, one follower, and fourteen sheep. This
man has $3\frac{3}{4}$ acres of arable land at a rent, including pasture, of £5, 8s. He
made reference, as did some others, to the charge for horses. I wish
particularly to explain that. There are many crofters here who I am
sure will bear me out when I say that there is nothing so ruinous and
destructive to the best part of the grazing than the keeping of too many
horses. Frequent complaints were made by these that their neighbours
kept too many horses, and we found that unless a limit was made to the
number, and some charge made, the evil would go on increasing. There-
fore when this valuation was made, and some time before it was com-
pleted, intimation was given to all who then held horses, and any others
who might desire to hold them, that it was very desirable in their own
interests to put a limit to their number, and that a charge varying from
15s. to 20s. would be added to the rental of those who desired to keep
them. This man M'Lean's father had a horse, and I believe M'Lean had
one at that time also, or shortly before. He may have been without a
horse at the time the charge was put on, but he made application to have
one, and he did not give us to understand so far as I know that he had
not one for two years. It is singular if he was not able to purchase one
for two years that he should have immediately afterwards bought two.
He has one on his croft and another somewhere else. The same delegate
referred to the want of security. Now I am not aware of a single
instance of eviction, or enforced removal from the Cromartie estate within

ROSS.

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ULLAPPOOLWilliam
Gunn.

ROSS.

ULLAPOOL.

William
Gunn.

the last fifty years but one. That case happened in my own time. It was the case of a man M'Leod who lived in Glenstrathan. He was a man who had a family, and a very idle man; his circumstances are well known. He allowed his dwelling-house to tumble to pieces, and it was for nothing else but an example to his neighbours that he was removed; and to make sure that a good case was made out, the Duke of Sutherland's late Commissioner, Mr Loch, accompanied me to the spot, and when we arrived there, his roof was covered with a sail as the only protection he was able to give his wife and children; and yet he was an able-bodied man, and I believe is so still. Reference was also made, by the same delegate I believe, to a feu on the Isle of Tanera, and to the ruinous state of the fences. Well, I have a distinct recollection of the condition of those fences having been brought under my notice some time ago, and at that time I represented the matter to the then proprietor of Letterewe, to whom the feu belonged. The delegate also made reference to the boats, and I may mention that last year £60 was contributed by the Duchess of Sutherland towards the repair of boats damaged by the severe gale of October 1881. Other delegates complained of the great scarcity of arable land. I believe that the small tenants of Coigach have all the available land in the district, with the exception of some forty or fifty acres, and the great bulk of that is attached to small farms. The same delegates also complained that there was no harbour or safe port. It so happens that within a quarter of a mile of this man's residence there is one of the safest little ports of the whole district, and we have only lately completed a road to that port. It is opposite Isle Risdale in the near neighbourhood of Altandu. It was also stated that they were charged for sea-weed from Isle Risdale. That island belongs to Lady Matheson, and I was not aware it was the custom to make a charge for sea-weed. It was said that the tenants of Auchnahaird were paying a tax of 7s. 6d. for sea-weed to the tacksman of Auchnahaird. This is the first time I have heard of it, and if a charge is exacted it is a most illegal one. I shall now refer to the evidence given by Murdo Stewart, Auchiltibuie. He has five acres of good arable land on the shore, and his share of 14,000 acres of pasture. He is entitled to keep four cattle and six sheep. He actually keeps seven cattle and thirty sheep. In his evidence, if I took him up properly, he stated he only owned one or two cattle beasts, and that he never owned half a dozen sheep in his life. But the explanation is this, that although he is the tenant, a brother of his owns the rest of the stock and shares the lot with him. For the five acres of fair arable land he pays only £2 of rent; for the grazing of seven cattle 30s., and for the sheep he only pays 15s. Reference was made by most of the delegates, and very strongly by the Rev. Mr M'Millan, that a great mistake was made in not taking the road as they call it through the Big Rock. Now, Sir Kenneth Mackenzie will bear me out that he heard the evidence of the most competent road contractor and road engineer in the Highlands, the late Mr Lewis Russell, who was employed to look out for the best and most advantageous line of road through the district. He examined with very great care this particular road from Kinchillish, and his verdict was that it was impossible to make a safe road there; in fact he said it would cost more than most railways—over £1000 a mile. And further, he said if the road was made there, it would be dangerous and would not be there long, as the rocks are very precipitous, and it would be constantly liable to injury. Allow me now to refer to the case of Alexander Grant. He complained that we refused to give him compensation for his buildings, and I believe he stated that he expended £40 on

improvements. He was two or three years in the place, and left of his own accord. I am not aware that he expended £2 or even £1 upon the land, but he did build a shell of a house. When he left it, it was a house without a single division in the inside, and so badly constructed that before we could make it habitable we had to pull down the couples and 2 feet of the front wall to make it at all useful. The byre and barn at the time he left—I saw them myself—were also in ruins and propped up with wood. When these props were removed, the building tumbled to pieces, and at this moment there is not one stone above another. He spoke to me about compensation, but my answer was that he owed twelve months' rent, and looking at the state of the buildings, I thought the one was a very good set off for the other. But if it could be shown that the buildings were really worth more than the rent in arrear, the matter would be taken into consideration. His reply was that a Royal Commission had been appointed, and he would take good care to bring forward his case. That being so, I thought it better to let it stand over and have no settlement under such a threat as that. A statement was made by other delegates that the best of their land was taken and added to Badentarbat and Auchnahaird. I made inquiry, and my information is that no such changes have taken place within the last fifty years. Deer forests were referred to by the Rev. Mr M'Millan, and I would wish to explain the circumstances under which the last clearance was effected. I refer now to Drumraonaidh or Coulmore. It was cleared in 1879. The ground cleared was very high, and formed part of the farm of Inverpolly. The lease of that farm was out, and as sheep farming was not paying and this high land was very risky, the tenants refused to renew their lease. We advertised the farm as a whole and did not get a single application for it. We discovered that the reason was that the farm was not self-supporting and that there was too much high ground in proportion to the low ground. The idea then occurred of clearing the high part and leaving as much of the high ground with the low as would make the farm self-supporting. As such, the farm was advertised, and even then we were unable to let it, and we were obliged to take it into our own hands. The value as sheep grazing of that part which was cleared could not be put down at more than £200 or £250. We let it for the first year as forest at a rental of £600. Reference has also been made to Rhidorrrach forest, which I believe was one of the first cleared forests in the Highlands. I believe there are people here now who can bear testimony to what I say, that a great part of the land forming the forest of Rhidorrrach was regarded as very unhealthy and unsound for sheep. I believe it was good grazing for cattle, but for sheep it was regarded as very unsound. It was cleared gradually and by degrees. It was cleared by the late Cromartie, then proprietor of Coigach estate. He was a man who was extremely kind to the crofters on his estate, and I am sure those of them now present will bear me out when I say so, and that he would have been the last to have evicted or be unkind to any of the small crofters on the place. As it happens, there were no crofters on Rhidorrrach. There were a few small sheep farmers, for whom other farms were provided on the estate, and there was no question, as far as I can ascertain, of any complaint by any tenants about their removal. I have only further to state that the delegates who appear from Coigach, I have the best reason to believe, have not given expression to the opinions and views of the Coigach people generally. They are at most the outcome of a few discontented individuals, of whom there are doubtless some in every parish and district in the country.

28442. Why do you say that the delegates who have appeared to-day do not express the real sentiments of the people—what ground have you

ROSS.

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ULLAPOOL.William
Gunn.

ROSS.**ULLAPPOOL.**William
Gunn.

for saying that?—I was at Coigach within the last week, and I was informed that at a meeting called for the purpose of appointing delegates only two people appeared.

28443. Was that one particular case, or was that the case in several places?—It was in the most important townships of the whole district—Auchiltibuie and Badenscallie.

28444. The township we visited on Saturday?—Yes.

28445. And there was no general meeting at all?—No.

28446. How then were the delegates elected?—I suspect they were a good deal self-elected.

28447. Do you think there may possibly have been other meetings of which you were unaware, at which the delegates were elected?—I believe there was another meeting at Ullapool at which people were appointed without acquainting the people in the district of it.

28448. Were there persons present from those townships?—There may have been one or two present, but nothing like a fair representation of the people.

28449. You mentioned the system under which new houses are built, if I understood you correctly, lime and wood for the roof are given in those cases?—Yes.

28450. These are given freely without any price?—Without any price whatever.

28451. Where slates are asked for, are they supplied on credit?—On credit.

28452. How long are the occupiers allowed to pay?—Just as they are able; we take £1 or £2 as they are able, and they pay a low rate of interest on the sum.

28453. What proportion or value of the whole cost of the house is supplied by the proprietor, and how much is left to the occupier?—I should say the average cost to the tenant of erecting a house is about £30, and the average cost of the material supplied by the proprietor would be about half that sum.

28454. The whole house would cost about £45?—Yes, not a slated house, but a thatched house.

28455. Adding the slates, how much would it be?—That would add about £15 or £16 to the cost.

28456. In that case, the whole cost would be £60, of which £45 would be at the expense of the tenant?—Yes, that would be about it.

28457. Have such houses ever been built?—Numbers of them.

28458. In which the tenant has supplied that?—Yes, but I am merely putting a money value upon what the proprietor would have to do.

28459. The occupier naturally attaches some value to it?—Yes, certainly.

28460. In a case of that sort, is there any verbal or written engagement taken on the part of the proprietor that the tenant, in case of death or voluntarily leaving, or eviction for failure to pay rent, is to receive any indemnity for his outlay?—We have no written agreement with any of the tenants, but there is always a distinct mutual understanding that if the buildings are worth anything to the ingoing tenant, they are paid for. I don't know of a single instance, except the case of Alexander Grant, of a house which has been so built where there has been any change. Changes are very rare on the Cromartie estate, and any changes were changes from buildings which were dilapidated or nearly so, and of little value. In such cases as these it is a usual thing if the buildings are worth anything to the incoming tenant, that he pays one rent for them. We charge no rent for the buildings. If they are of any value to the incoming tenant there is a distinct understanding that whatever value is in the buildings it is paid over to the outgoing tenant.

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William
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28461. Who pays it?—The incoming tenant.

28462. Does he pay it down on the spot or by instalments?—As a rule he pays it on the spot, and if there is any difficulty in settling the value, it is referred to their own neighbours as arbiters mutually appointed.

28463. The proprietor pays no compensation for improvements; it is the incoming tenant?—Yes.

28464. In the case of one of these improved houses worth £60, supposing a vacancy did occur by death, without any natural heirs to hold, and that it occurred shortly after the building was raised, and the building was not much impaired, the incoming tenant would have to pay the value assessed by arbitration which might be £40 or £50?—Yes, and failing him, the proprietor would have to do so.

28465. Supposing that no incoming tenant could be found to undergo this expenditure and enter the holding, what do you think would be done on the estate?—The proprietor would step in and pay the valuation.

28466. To the heirs whoever they might be?—Quite so.

28467. But no such occurrence has ever taken place?—There has not been a single instance I can recall of any new house or really substantial house having to be taken over.

28468. In the case of the roads, you have mentioned two kinds, main roads and branch roads?—Yes.

28469. By main roads, do you mean the public roads maintained by the county?—I do.

28470. And what are branch roads?—They are not so maintained: they are maintained at the expense of the proprietor.

28471. How were those branch roads made; were they made entirely at the expense of the proprietor?—Entirely, and the main roads also.

28472. The crofters did not give any labour or assistance whatever?—None whatever; they were paid very good wages for all the labour they gave, amounting to many thousand pounds.

28473. The delegate Robert Grant stated that he had not been allowed to take away the timber of some portion of the house; do you remember anything about that?—I don't remember anything about the windows. The house was so badly built that I don't think the windows would have been worth taking away.

28474. But you don't remember anything about that?—No.

28475. In the case of the horse which is alleged to have been paid for for two consecutive years, although it was not kept, were you aware that you received rent for these two years when there was no horse kept?—No.

28476. Did you hear it to-day for the first time?—I did.

28477. You stated that horses were apt to be kept in greater numbers than was good for the common pasture, or necessary for the cultivation of the crofts, and therefore it was thought desirable to restrict the number of horses kept, and that an additional pound of rent was imposed; but might not the number be restricted by regulation instead of imposing a rent upon the horses?—It is very difficult to enforce a regulation of that sort unless there is some consideration paid; the difficulty would be in deciding who were to keep them.

28478. We understood from the delegate that the ground officer had, as it were, made up a list, and decided who were to keep them?—He was asked to go round and ascertain those who wished to keep them.

28479. If a man had come to you and said he had been unable to buy a horse for two years, would it have been consistent with the regulation of the estate to charge him with a horse which was not kept, or would you have remitted the rent of the horse to him?—It would be impossible

ROSS.

to have people changing their horses constantly in that sort of way. Once the thing is fixed, it would require to be fixed for a period of years, or we should never know who had horses or who had not.

ULLAPPOOL.

William
Gunn.

28480. If a man's horse died, would you charge him with the dead horse for the rest of the time?—If he had not a horse, he would have so many more cattle.

28481. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—It was stated by the witness Grant that his byre, which you said was in ruins, had been turned into a dog kennel?—That is not the case. The dog kennel, as several here can testify, was built on an entirely new foundation and some distance away. It might be on the same site but not above the old building.

28482. You made reference to the fact of my having been on the Road Board of the county, and of my having known about Mr Russell's report. Mr M'Millan has mentioned the road might have been made round the back of the rock, a shorter way than the present?—I think it was the face of the rock Mr M'Millan referred to.—*Rev. Mr M'Millan.* I understand Mr Russell reported upon the face of the rock. He nearly broke his legs when he was making the examination, and he came to the conclusion it was impossible to make a road there. It never was contemplated to make a road there; but the other way it was quite possible.—*Mr Gunn.* It is not likely the Duchess of Sutherland would have gone round thirty miles if a shorter road was possible.

28483. *Mr Cameron.*—As I understood you, in answer to the chairman, you said a house might be built but not slated for £60?—£45,—£30 contributed by the tenant and £15 by the landlord.

28484. For a non-slated house?—Yes.

28485. Built with dry stone walls or mortar?—Mortar supplied by the proprietor.

28486. What would that house be thatched with?—Thatched with divots and rushes.

28487. What can the house be built for where the wood, lime, and slates are supplied by the proprietor, and the stones carted and all the work done by the tenant?—The slates would add about £15 to the cost.

28488. Would heavy wood be required?—The wood would be heavier also.

28489. What would a slated house of two rooms cost?—Considering that the wood would require to be heavier it would be fully £70 for a slated house.

28490. Could it be done for that?—I believe it could in that quarter. There is native stone close by and they have no expense of quarrying.

28491. What would the proportion of that come to for the landlord's share?—About £20 I should say, exclusive of the slates, which of course are paid by the tenant.

28492. Twenty pounds for lime and wood for the roof?—Yes, and sarking.

28493. Do the people here prefer the old houses, or do they like slated houses?—They are getting more into the way of slating now; they see the advantage of it, that a slated roof does not require to be repaired after every gale. And they see too that the practice of flaying the surface of the ground for divots is ruinous to the best of their own pasture.

28494. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You made in the conclusion of your statement some reference to the character of the delegates. Now, it is the duty of the Commission to do all they can here to protect those

people who come before them. Do you know the Free Church minister of Auchiltibuie?—I do.

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ULLAPOOL

William
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28495. Is he a person of honour and credit?—I believe he is.

28496. Do you think he is likely to be a party to anything in the way of misrepresentation of the people?—No, I don't think he would willingly.

28497. Look at that paper (showing); is that his writing?—I believe it is.

28498. That is a statement from Coigach and was handed in to the Commissioners by one of the delegates, and it was stated it was written by the Free Church minister. Do you suppose that the minister for one moment would be a party to prepare a document of that kind if he did not suppose the people who asked him to do it had a good status to do so?—That might be so.

28499. I think you stated the reason that the pound for the horses was put on was because there was a complaint on the part of some of the crofters that too many were kept?—That is so.

28500. Does it not occur to you if it was to be put on, that the pound should be given to the crofters whose pasture was destroyed by the extra horses, and not put into the landlord's pocket?—There were always so many horses kept in each township on the grazing. If there were no horses there would be cattle and sheep, for which the proprietor would receive rent.

28501. But I don't see that the complaint of the crofters, that too many horses were kept and their pasture spoiled, was any way improved by a pound for the horses going into the pocket of the landlord?—How can you make out that it should go into the pockets of the tenants?

28502. Because it was their pasture that was destroyed?—It was the proprietor's pasture from which he would be deriving rent if they had more cattle or sheep.

28503. It is not a fixed money rent?—No.

28504. How is the rent fixed?—I have explained it in my statement very fully; it is fixed by putting a certain price upon the arable and pasture land, and a certain price upon each beast. I don't know of any other proper way of doing it.

28505. Do you make the rent separate?—Yes, for each holding and for each township.

28506. But do you do it separately for each animal?—We do; there is a limit fixed of stock for each tenant.

28507. That is what is called the summing?—Yes.

28508. Is that really observed at Auchiltibuie, because the person we met said, one of the great complaints was that there was no such thing?—It certainly is observed, and our great difficulty is to prevent the people having more than the summing; that is the difficulty we complain of, and that some of themselves who are unable to put on the full complement of stock complain of also, that others who are more able put on more than they are entitled to.

28509. Why did you select the horses and not charge a pound for a cow?—Because they must have a certain number of horses to till their land, but they are apt to have too many.

28510. Must not they have a certain number of cows and sheep?—Yes, and they have.

28511. Do you show that pound in your receipts separately?—No, but our summing shows it, and the tenants are quite well aware of the stocking they are allowed according to the rent.

28512. Supposing a man kept another horse more, would you

ROSS. put another pound on?—No, but we would object to his keeping it.

ULLAPOLLO. 28513. Supposing he kept a horse less, would you take a pound off?—I am not so sure about that, unless there was an understanding. I don't know that it would do to let them alter their rental at any time as they chose.

28514. *The Chairman.*—If they kept a horse at the house or purchased food, would you charge them the additional pound?—Certainly not, but that is not the case; it is well known that all the horses graze upon the common pasture.

28515. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—About the rise that took place upon the crofts about three years ago, the number of crofters altogether was 237, and you added to the rental £176. Upon consideration, was it worth while for such a small sum to disturb all these people?—Well, I don't think they could expect to get so much done for them and pay nothing in return. I believe that small increase represents not one per cent. upon the money laid out to their advantage.

28516. I think you stated that the principal money laid out was for roads?—It was, the greater part of it.

28517. But don't those people all pay road money?—Not now; I am not aware that they do.

28518. How is that?—Because we have not charged it; whatever we may do, we have not done it in the past.

28519. You don't exact anything in the way of statute labour?—No.

28520. Was that because you had some kind of pity upon the people?—I think we have shown our pity by doing a great deal for them during my connection with them—during the last sixteen years. I believe their condition is very much improved from what it was when I first knew them.

28521. We saw a number of houses very greatly improved, no doubt; we saw houses in four stages, and we entered one house of a man M'Leod, as a specimen. He has I think three rooms below and three above. Do you know the person I mean?—I believe I do.

28522. We were informed he got no assistance for the house?—That may be so; there are some who are above asking for assistance, and I think that is the best evidence that they don't need it. I believe his house is slated. It was not for a number of years, and we offered to give him slate. He is a well-to-do man and was above asking for assistance.

28523. I now come to another house below the road. Were you ever in a house occupied by an old frail man?—I know the house perfectly and have seen it repeatedly; the owner is James M'Leod. He has two allotments and on several occasions we have offered him assistance to rebuild his house. His house is without exception the worst in the whole district.

28524. You have stated that Drumraonaidh or Coulmore was cleared in 1879, but you don't say how many acres were cleared?—Speaking from memory I really cannot say, but I should say from 25,000 to 30,000 acres.

28525. You also stated that you were unable to let a part of Inverpolly although you advertised it in the market. Did it ever occur to you to try if the smaller people would take it?—I have never had an application for more land since I was connected with the Cromartie estate; I never heard that the people considered they had too little land until to-day.

28526. We were told there were a number of families at one time on the ground of what is now the Rhidorrrach forest; have you observed remains of old buildings there?—Very few; there are remains of an old fence and the like of that. I see no evidence of small tenants.

28527. Your own words were small farmers, graziers?—Yes.
 28528. Were any of these men paying £30 rent?—They were all above £30 I believe.

ROSS.

ULLAPPOOLWilliam
Gunn.

28529. Is there any arable land fit for cultivation in Rhidorrrach?—There are about 40 acres, but it is flat and level and without drainage outfall, and in a moist climate I believe it would never pay to cultivate it, and as far as I know it never has been cultivated.

28530. You stated it might be good for cattle but not for sheep?—That is my opinion.

28531. What is the extent of Rhidorrrach?—25,000 to 30,000 acres.

28532. It used to let?—It was, and it is let now.

28533. What did it used to let at?—I am unable to say; it is so many years since it was converted.

28534. Was it ever let as forest before?—Yes, it is a very old forest; one of the oldest in the Highlands.

28535. What was it let at before it fell into the family's own hand?—I am not aware that the rent of it as forest has ever been under £700, but the forester is here and can say.

28536. Do you recollect the name of one of the oldest tenants before the present man? has it always been let?—It has, except perhaps an occasional year when the proprietor might keep it in his own hands, which was very rarely.

28537. And it was never under £700?—I am not aware; it may have been, but I cannot speak back for a number of years.

28538. Why is it in the valuation roll of this current year at £350?—This year it was unlet, and that was the grazing value. It was valued as grazing. The proprietor, when the forest is unlet, is bound to return it at its grazing value, and that was £350 as far as I could ascertain. Its value as forest is £850.

28539. Can you inform us of the acreage of Coigach?—I can not.

28540. Is it roughly 200,000 acres?—No, I should say nothing like that?

28541. Is there a considerable portion of hill land there belonging to crofters?—As I have said, there are close upon 30,000 acres entirely under crofter's stock.

28542. (*To Rev. Mr M'Millan.*) Mr Gunn said, 'I have only to state that the delegates who have appeared have not given expression to the opinions and views of the people generally.' We wish to understand by what process these delegates were elected?—I don't know exactly how they were elected, but at Coigach I believe they had meetings themselves in the absence of the Free Church Minister. They had meetings before that, immediately after the minister left for the fishing station, with Mr Murdoch, I may say.*

JOHN MACLEAN and MURDO STEWART, Auchiltibuie—recalled.

28543. *The Chairman.*—(*To John Maclean.*) Will you state exactly John Maclean. how you were elected? How many persons were there present when you

* Subsequent Note by Mr GUNN, dated 7th January 1884.—Some of Alexander Grant's statements are worth noticing, in view of the general cry for more land. For a rent of £6, 6s. he held a superior lot of arable land, and grazing for 1 horse, 7 cattle beasts, and 30 sheep. Compare this with his admission, that to Mr Fowler of Braemore, he now cheerfully pays £4 for a cottage, without even a garden attached. He complained that he could get no work. This is very strange, seeing that so many thousand pounds had been expended by the proprietor in that district on employment for all willing to work. As a matter of fact, no tenant could be more considerately treated. Some ten years ago the small sheep farm of Keanchulish fell vacant, when a preference was given to Grant and a brother of his, both natives. They were, however, only three or four years in possession when they quarrelled, and we had to take the farm off their hands, paying them some £900 for the stock. It was then that he applied for and got the lot at Coulnacraig. At his outgoing from Coulnacraig we had an offer of a higher rent for it, but we thought it better to divide it among the adjoining tenants, who were well able to stock it.

ROSS. were elected a delegate, and when was the meeting held? How many heads of families were there present paying rent?—There were eight present who were paying rent in addition to others who wished that I should come here and represent them; but the most of the people were away from home. If those who were away had been at home I don't doubt but that they would have been all present.

28544. Was that in Altandu alone?—Altandu alone.

28545. Were there any strangers present?—Nobody except the members of the township. There were no strangers.

28546. Was the minister there?—He was not at home, but the minister was present when the statement in his handwriting was prepared.

28547. [To Murdo Stewart.] How were you elected?—I was elected for a place called Polglass at this end of Auchiltibuie. There were about twenty people present from various townships. There would have been a great many more present, but the most of the people were away at the time.

28548. Twenty heads of families?—Yes, there would be about twenty heads of families; there were from four to five townships. Two of the men who were not present at the meeting at which I was elected sent money towards the payment of my expenses coming here.

28549. Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.—Do you know of the meeting Mr Gunn referred to, at which only two were present, at Auchiltibuie?—I never heard of such a meeting.

JOHN MACKENZIE, formerly Crofter, Leckmelm (64) examined.

John Mackenzie. 28550. *The Chairman.*—Have you any croft?—I have still about a quarter of an acre of land at Leckmelm.

28551. What statement have you to make?—Leckmelm was long ago divided into four townships. Three of them were under crofters, and one of them was a farm tack. The people were well-off at that time. One of the townships where there were four people paid about £20 of rent. In another township there were eight people who paid £40 between them; and there was a third township called Incroash which was divided amongst three tenants who sub-let to three other tenants, making altogether in the township six people. I don't know the rent of that third township. The sub-tenants paid £14 of rent. In the year 1832 every person upon the estate was summoned out of his building. The two central townships were then lotted out into thirteen lots. In the township in which there were six tenants, these six were thrown in amongst the other thirteen tenants who had the two townships. In these two townships there are now twenty in all. Seven full lots were given to seven of those twenty, and the rest was divided among the other thirteen, at that time the land was rather disjointed, a patch here and there with a heap of stones now and again right in through it. When the lots were apportioned out among them in this way, the people began to clear the stones off the surface of the land, and to improve and cultivate it so as to make it one continuous ground, and improve it in every way as they were able. Another township was cleared in order to make room for the innkeeper that was in Strathmore, and a portion of the hill which the tenants had at the time was taken from them and added to the farm which was given to the innkeeper. But still the rent was kept on the township after the hill was taken from them. The people were in this condition until the year 1842. In that year three townships were cleared in Strathmore—that is upon the Braemore estate—and some of these were thrown in among the tenants of Leckmelm, some of the existing tenants in those townships were sent away without the proprietor's knowledge. The proprietor was at the time away on the Continent.

28552. Who was the proprietor?—Mr Davidson of Tulloch. When

the proprietor came back he began to ask me what had become of those people, and when I told him, he replied that the thing had been done without his knowledge. In the following year a cold wind came into the land which has still remained, and that was the division that arose among the people in consequence of the Disruption. Then the son of this inn-keeper who was settled among us was appointed factor upon the estate, or rather manager over the whole estate, and messages used to come from him and the ground officer to the effect that unless all the people should go to the church to which they were wont to go they would be removed from the estate, and it was alleged this was the proprietor's order. There were some that obeyed this order but others refused to obey, knowing where they could get the milk, and that when they got it they would drink it sweet. This state of affairs continued for thirty-four years. The people still continued to improve the land and clear the surface of it of stones, but only some of us cleared it all. Then the young proprietor, who was at that time living on a portion of Strathmore, thought it proper to come and add to our rents. Over £20 was added to the rental of the place at that time, making the rent over £80. Then a black day for the Highlanders came round after that when the schools were placed under the control of the State. Then we began to quarrel as to who should be elected members of the School Board. Mr Davidson was then at Innerbroom, and our young proprietor became a candidate, thinking that everybody who had a vote in Leckmelm ought to give the vote to himself. There were seven properly qualified electors at that time, but through a change of tenancy and the like of that there happened to be only at that date of legally qualified voters, five. Mr Davidson only got four votes in Leckmelm, and he got angry with us and increased the rent by £20 again, so that the rent thus became over £100.

28553. *Sheriff Nicolson*.—When was the rent raised last before the estate was sold to Mr Pirie?—Just that same year I think.

28554. What year was that?—I think 1879, if I am not mistaken.

28555. What had the rent been before that?—The place was rented at £60, I suppose; then over £80, and then over £100.

28556. Was it raised from £80 to £100 in the last year that Mr Davidson had it?—Yes.

28557. How many tenants were there then do you think?—About sixteen.

28558. How many are there now?—There are sixteen still who hold bits of land from the proprietor.

28559. Were you all paying the same rent at that time?—No, not at first; but we were afterwards.

28560. What was the highest rent paid by anybody?—£5, 15s., at the first.

28561. What time do you refer to?—When the lots were first given.

28562. In 1879 what was the highest rent?—£8 on the whole lot and £4 on the half lot.

28563. How many people had whole lots?—I think seven.

28564. And the rest had half lots?—Yes.

28565. What cattle were the whole lots able to support?—They were allowed by the proprietor more than they were able to winter. They were allowed four cattle and two followers, or three cattle and three followers as they liked.

28566. Had they horses?—One horse each.

28567. And sheep?—Twenty-four for each lot.

28568. Were the people in a comfortable condition?—They were in a

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comfortable position some of them; those who had the full lots, but not those in the half lots.

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John Mackenzie.

28569. Were those who had the full lots able to make their living out of them?—Not able—far from that; I have seen me some years when paying the high rent, buy as much as between thirteen and fourteen bolls of meal for my family.

28570. Because you could not make it out of the land?—Yes.

28571. And were you cultivating the lands as well as you could?—I was.

28572. Had you not good crops?—Sometimes, but the failure of the potatoes was very bad.

28573. Which failure?—The failure in the potato crop.

28574. Has there been a periodical failure of potatoes?—Some years more than others.

28575. Did you never get enough of potatoes out of the ground to support yourselves?—Oh! yes, by buying some meal; but never without that.

28576. Now that the land has been taken from you, you have just the one-fourth of an acre on which to grow potatoes?—Yes.

28577. You have no corn, and no horse or cow or sheep?—No.

28578. Are you as comfortable as you were before?—No, far from that; but I might be worse than I am.

28579. Do you get regular work from Mr Pirie?—I daresay I will get that if I like, but I am glad he is here; there are things he is not aware of. I went to work two years ago in the garden for the manager, and I continued there for about a month. For the days I wrought I was paid sixteen shillings. Next month I worked out more—I had more days—and, before I was paid, the Fast Day in connection with the Established Church came round and I went to the garden and commenced to work, not being aware that it was the Fast Day. The manager came into the garden where I was, but never said I was doing wrong or doing little. He was quite agreeable all the time I had been working there, but he came in and said ‘This will not do.’ ‘What is wrong?’ I said. ‘Do you know this is the Fast Day?’ ‘It is singular,’ said I, ‘that would be unknown to me.’ ‘It is,’ says he. ‘Where?’ says I. ‘In the church,’ says he, ‘up there.’ ‘That is in the parish,’ says I. ‘Yes,’ says he. ‘Yes,’ says I; ‘but the day we parted with the Established Church we parted with it and all its ceremonies,’ I said,—‘I am not going to quarrel with you over my work; do your work when you like.’ ‘None will be working here to-day’ he said. I then went home and commenced my own work. The same day he had to go to the hill himself and look about the marches with the factor, pretending he was going to church and he was not there. In the course of a few days after that the pay day came round, and when I was paid I took the money given to me and went away, and on looking at the amount of money I found I was two shillings in the week less. Next day when we met he asked me how much money I had got. I took my pass-book out of my pocket and told him the number of days and the amount of money I had received marked at the end. He said, ‘That is it.’ I said: ‘are you going to give me more?’ ‘No,’ he said. I said, ‘You reduced me two shillings a week;’ and he said, ‘That will be your wages.’ I said ‘Why did you not tell me before?’

28580. Are you sure that Mr Pirie authorised that?—I am sure he never heard of it until now. The manager then came round and gave me a lot of curses, and said, ‘I don’t care whether you be willing or not.’ ‘I am not willing,’ says I, ‘and keep your swearing to yourself; keep your

'mouth clean as a Christian speaking to another;' and I went off and left him there. One day I had a piece of work I had not finished, and I went and finished it, and left him and did not work any more till I was called last year, and when I was called I did not give him an answer. This year I was called again to work in the garden, and I would be paid for it. When pay time came up he paid me according to the rule, at the rate of sixteen shillings.

28581. It comes to this, that your wages are not satisfactorily paid to you for the work you do?—I would take more if I could get it.

28582. What are the general wages paid?—I cannot tell you that exactly.

28583. Is it sixteen, or seventeen, or eighteen shillings a week?—Some of them get that.

28584. Do they constantly get work?—Yes, when the weather permits, since Mr Pirie got the place.

28585. What do they do for milk?—Buy it from Mr Pirie.

28586. Do you get a constant and satisfactory supply?—Yes, when it will be.

28587. Are there times when there is no milk?—Yes, likely; when it will be, they will get it.

28588. Are you allowed to keep hens?—For that I was not caring; I don't care much about hens.

28589. Are you allowed to keep hens?—I am not very sur^.

28590. Is anybody forbidden to keep hens?—Yes, they were.

28591. Are they?—I cannot say about that just now.

28592. Why were they forbidden?—Because they had too many, and they were destroying the fields. I had one at that time, and I think at the present time that one is still about the house.

28593. But on the whole your present condition is not so satisfactory as it was before?—No; but it might be worse, of course for all we do Mr Pirie pays us. When we were giving over the sheep and crop and stock, I asked the gamekeeper what reduction we were to get for the rent, and said that surely the half year's rent would be reduced. He said, 'You are perfectly right, and I will write about it,' but it came round at the end that we had the whole half year's rent gratis by Mr Pirie's orders.

28594. What do you pay for your houses and ground?—Just now for the site of the houses which belong to myself, and for the piece of potatoes and liberty to cut peats, we pay twelve shillings a year.

28595. Is that the rate all the people are charged?—I think so.

28596. Do you consider that much or little?—It is rather too much, I consider; it is rather too little in a way; but it is high enough for the way we have it.

28597. *The Chairman.*—Did you build your house yourself?—Yes; along with my father.

28598. Have there been any new houses built by Mr Pirie?—Oh; yes, a great many.

28599. What does he charge for the new houses?—I cannot say; there is none of them occupied by the tenants.

28600. Are all the people living on the ground still that belong to the estate, or have some of them gone away?—No; they are not all living there, a good few of them died a few years ago, old people. Some of the young people went away to New Zealand, Australia, Africa, and India.

28601. What became of the houses of those who went away?—I don't know. I am not aware of any family that went away altogether, except one man who left about sixteen years ago for New Zealand with his whole

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John
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family. His house was given to some person down from the strath. We wanted it from the factor, but he would not give it to us.

28602. You say that no family went away leaving their house behind them?—One family sixteen years ago.

28603. Did that family get compensation for the house?—No, nor for the improvement of land.

28604. That was before Mr Pirie's time?—Long before.

28605. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Was the land bearing hay at the time you had it?—Yes I was keeping under hay the most part of my lot.

28606. Had you any rotation of crofts?—Just a fourth part of it.

28607. Every year you changed it?—Yes, but the last year I took it all except the fourth part of the larger lot.

28608. Are there any old people on the place who are unable to work now?—Yes.

28609. And who have no other means of living?—About their means I cannot say, but I believe some of them have no means.

28610. And they have only that bit of ground to live upon?—Yes, There are some on the estate who have no ground at all, but they were not in the books of the proprietor.

28611. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Are there any people from Leckmelm on the poors' roll?—I know there were, but I don't know whatever there are any now, I think there are two still.

28612. Have you any security that you won't be turned out of your house next year?—Not the least, and never had; that is what keeps things in the position they are. We are dependent on the good-will of the proprietor.

28613. Leckmelm is very good ground?—Part of it.

28614. Were you living below the road?—Most of my land was below the road, but when we built the house, about 1849, the road was made through the place and we never got anything for that.

28615. Did you build any dykes?—Yes; all the dykes were built about it and still are. Some of them were rubbishy built as they were in a hurry to get the stones out of the field, and they were building them without using a hammer.

28616. I saw a goodish dyke at the roadside. Was it you who put it up?—I put up part of it.

28617. Did you get value for that?—No, not a penny. I built a dyke on both sides of the road so long as I had to do with it.

28618. You kept the dyke a little back from the road?—Close to the side borders; we were willing to save as much of the land as we could.

28619. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—How long have the two or three paupers you know been on the roll?—I am not sure.

28620. Were they on the roll when Mr Pirie bought the property?—No.

28621. They have come on since then?—I think so. The man is not able to work and had not much stock to give over at the time of the valuation. He was lame.

ALEXANDER GEORGE PIRIE, Proprietor of Leckmelm (47)—examined.

Alexander
George Pirie.

28622. *The Chairman.*—Have you any statement which you wish to read?—I have a written statement which I should like to read:—
‘The estate of Leckmelm was purchased by me in 1879. The object in view was to make it residential for about half the year. It had not

' been so previously. The extent of arable ground is about one hundred acres, the rest being moorland and plantations. The arable was partly cropped as a small farm and partly occupied by crofters, to the number of about fifteen; these subsisted on the produce of the small crofts, and such fishing as fell in their way. Half-a-dozen cottars also resided on the estate. After the purchase I was requested by some of the people to provide work to enable the population to eke out their means, as of late years little of that had come in their way. After consideration I found, that the only means of providing work was by taking the whole land into my own hands, making it into a home farm, and sinking in the soil more money than at first ever thought of. The limited area of the arable ground, and the limited number of the crofter population enabled this to be done, much to the benefit of the land and of the population. The change created a great outcry among outside agitators, though not so much among the people chiefly interested. These last would doubtless have preferred both crofts and permanent work and wages; but as this was impracticable, in consequence of the limited extent of the ground, most of them soon saw the impossibility of having both, and realised the benefits likely to accrue to them from the change. I carried out my views in defiance of the outside agitation, and, in place of small crofts of partially worn out land, the people are now in receipt of regular work and wages, with their cottages and potato gardens at a nominal rent, and they have the same opportunities of fishing as before. The old amount of rent paid in lots by the crofters was about £90 a year. The amount of wages they and their families now receive for work done exceeds £800 a year, which is far in excess of any profits possible from the crofts they held, even on the most liberal computation. They are employed at farm work, at garden work, at plantation work, as gillies or as yachtsmen. As a proof of the improvement in their circumstances, the population on Leckmelm required no outside help during the past winter, while so many in the Loch Broom district around were raising the cry of destitution. It may be of some practical importance if a few details are given, showing what has been done at Leckmelm by treating worn out or partially worn out land in a proper manner, and what therefore could be done elsewhere. Much has been said by the deputations on the west coast as to the state of destitution having been caused by the land being in a worn out state, and not capable of producing much more than, if as much as, the seed put in, and the only cure proposed by them is to grant the tenants larger holdings. How larger holdings of soil, incapable of even returning the seed put in, can benefit any one, passes comprehension. Such an increased holding would only cause increased work, without giving increased return. The question of putting the present holdings into a more satisfactory state of production by enlightened and scientific treatment is one of a more feasible character. Doubtless there would be many difficulties to be overcome in consequence of very small and divided plots, of old habits, and of the dislike to adopt new ones, natural to a people who have lived very much apart from the world; but a few facts based on practice may have some tangible bearing on the question, and may show what might be done, provided the inherent difficulties could be overcome. It may be assumed, that so-called worn out land means land where the soil is deficient of certain ingredients necessary to

ROSS

ULLAPOOL

Alexander George Pirie.

ROSS.

'the particular kind of plant sown; and that these ingredients are wanting in consequence of their having been absorbed by successive crops, and of their not having been returned to the ground in some shape or other, such as in proper manure. On taking the land at Leckmelm into my own hands I found much of it worn out or nearly so. That is to say the crops were poor and diminutive. On inquiry I found that it had been cropped for a lengthened period, while the chief or only manure had been sea-ware. This sea-ware is deficient in some of the ingredients necessary to plant life, while it holds others in excess. The consequence, which would naturally be looked for in a soil largely manured by it, would be an ample supply of the ingredients which sea-ware possesses in excess, and a want of those in which it is deficient. A small area of land was treated as a testing ground. No manure was given to it. Grain was sown in one patch and peas in another, both patches being contiguous. The crop of grain was practically nil, while that of the peas was good. It is known that grain requires an ingredient in which sea-ware is deficient, and in which the soil, as I have explained, would therefore also be deficient; while peas, on the contrary, require an ingredient largely supplied by sea-ware, which the soil in consequence held largely. So practice and theory were here at one, and gave me the clue for future working. Upon this I acted and with good results. The system of renovating the land has now been three years at work, and at the end of another three years I hope to find the whole ground in good heart and capable of producing good crops. The cost of renovating the land amounts, irrespective of draining, to about £3 per acre per annum. This may seem a large sum, and it might be difficult to get West Highland crofters to bury ready money to this extent; but, though I cannot consider farming in the west of Scotland a very lucrative concern, I can say, from the short experience I have had, that the amounts spent in manures and soil ingredients have been well expended, for the crops each year in excess over those attainable on the unmanured ground more than repay the value of the manures used for renovation. As a proof of this I can quote a crop of twenty-two tons of turnips per acre after treatment—and besides this the manorial treatment leaves the land each year in an improved state; that is in one more capable of yielding permanently good results. In other words a judicious and full treatment spread over six years will, I believe, renovate the land; while the annual outlay during these years will be recouped each year by the excess of crops consequent on this outlay.' There are one or two remarks made by Mr M'Millan as to what are called the Leckmelm evictions, but I don't think it is necessary to go into that, because every crofter who was on the estate of Leckmelm is there still with one exception, and that one I evicted for reasons which I am quite prepared to state, but which for the man's sake I would rather not state. I think it better to say as little as possible. There is one point upon which there was a good deal said about that case; I was informed by the newspapers that I turned the man out in a starving state with his wife and family into the streets. As it turns out, I happened to know at the time that he was pretty well-off, but I had no notion he was so well-off as I have ascertained he was. I have a letter in my pocket showing that he was in treaty for a farm from Dundonnel at £30 a year, and was prepared to take over stock to the extent of £400 or £500. Mr Mackenzie of Dundonnel seems to have known as much as I did, and declined to accept the man as tenant. The fact of his offer, however, showed that he was in very flourishing circumstances.

ULLAPPOOL.
Alexander
George Pirie.

28623. I think there was a question asked at the last person who was

here as to whether there were any new houses built for the people?—There are only two houses in which two people are living. One is occupied by the shepherd who was on the estate before; he occupies his house rent free. It is practically a new house, for though it was the old shooting-lodge, I had to take it down and practically rebuild it. The other house was let to an old crofter, or the son of an old crofter. He is a yachtsman, and gets £1 in summer and fifteen shillings a week in winter, and I charge him one shilling a week for rent. As to milk, the population before I took the estate had some cows which were supposed to give milk; they gave but a small quantity. When I took everything from them I thought it but proper that I should make arrangements by which I could supply them with milk. I have fifteen cows from which I supply my own house with milk and butter, and in addition I supply the whole of the crofters. I believe I also sell from thirty to fifty pounds' worth at Ullapool after supplying the crofters with all they require. I don't think I have any other remarks that I wish to make; but your Lordship and the other Commissioners may wish to put some questions to me which I shall be glad to answer.

28624. I understood you to say that in taking the arable ground of this small estate into your own hands your principal object was to afford the people profitable work?—Yes. I would have had no objection to have the crofters if I could have had ground enough for myself and also have been able to give them work. But the estate is small and I had no opportunity of doing so.

28625. I would just ask you whether you consider it possible, or would have considered it possible, to employ the crofters in improving their own holdings and houses, charging them interest on the outlay incurred in that manner?—I don't think it would have been practicable, I never could have got the ground into the working state it is in now. The ground was broken up into long narrow stripes and it could not have been ploughed or farmed properly. The first thing I had to do was to take down from one-half to two-thirds of the dykes, and form reasonable fields which could be properly worked.

28626. About remodelling the holdings of the crofters, would not it have been possible to have kept them and to have placed each of them in possession of a small holding of a proper shape?—I could have made the whole estate into a co-operative farm, I suppose; but in that case I should never have bought it, because there would have been no possibility of coming here and providing myself with produce, and also to have continued the crofters. As it is at present the amount of arable ground is too small for me to work profitably. With the staff of horses I have I could work other thirty or forty acres with great comfort and more profit.

28627. Are the tenants of the old houses which still remain gradually dying out and departing. Is their number reduced?—I should think there are a great many more people on the estate now than there were. I give employment to perhaps a father and two sons. For instance, there was a lad who was coming forward to give evidence just now—I suppose he has left—I don't know whether his father is employed, but I know his brother, who was an ex-policeman, came down here when work was to be got and for two or three years these young men received about £80 a year from me between them. These two could not possibly have worked on the croft along with their father.

28628. Would it have been possible, with a farm of considerable extent in your own hands, to have allowed the crofters to retain as much land as would have supplied each family with a cow?—But I have not the land; there is not room. I should only have been too happy to have

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ULLAPPOOLAlexander
George Pirie.

ROSS.

done that if I had had the room. It is not as if I had a large estate, or one on which there could be land brought in. The estate might have been left as it was and turned into a sheep-farm with a non-resident proprietor, If the proprietor is to live upon the estate it is not practicable to work it in the way suggested, unless he means simply to go down for a month or so in August. I shall permanently require on the estate more people than there were of crofters, but, of course, the question is whether they will choose to accept the work. There is plenty of work going on just now, but they like to work as it pleases them. A year or two ago I had to bring a man from the east coast. I wanted a man to take a particular situation on the farm. I only knew of two men who could take it. I offered it to one of them, as I would have much preferred taking one of the people on the place. The wage I offered was seventeen shillings a week and a free house, but the man declined the place because he wished to work when it pleased him. I then offered it to the other, but he said he would not clean a cow on the Sabbath, and I thought animals required to be cleaned as well as fed.

28629. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Are you quite satisfied with all you have done?—Perfectly.

28630. Do you think the reducing of the crofters from the status of crofters to labourers dependent upon you is for their benefit?—Certainly, because I think a man who is able to work and make his own livelihood is in a far nobler position than a crofter who every five or six years has to go and cry out 'I am destitute and want help.'

28631. There is no question you have taken away everything from them except the house and a quarter of an acre of land?—None whatever. At the same time, I am not objecting to the crofter system if it is worked properly and if it is suitable for the estate. I am only speaking for myself, and I am satisfied with what I have done on my estate; there was nothing else that could have been done practically.

28632. Will those people who have been reduced from the position of crofters ever be satisfied with their lot now?—I don't see why they should not. I have not the slightest reason to think they are not.

28633. You think they are?—Perfectly, they are in a far better condition financially, and, I believe, physically, than they were before.

28634. You heard, did you not, the examination of the only person from your estate?—Yes.

28635. Did he express the opinion you do now?—Not altogether, for this reason that under the old *regime*, before I bought the estate, he held a double croft. He was farm manager and worked for Mr Davidson on the farm, and I suppose was chief lord and king there; and naturally, now that he is no longer the chief man, he does not like it.

28636. I presume these people did not want to give up their lands?—Certainly not, if they could have got work and wages besides.

28637. They did not give them up voluntarily?—Certainly not, because they expected work and wages as well as the land.

28638. You say the land was taken from them against their will—then if so far as the crofters and their lands are concerned, with regard to yourself may it not be said that it was a case of *veni, vidi, vici*?—Of course.

28639. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Do you really think a man is in a nobler position who is working for day's wages to another, than a man who has a bit of land on which, if he is industrious, he feels that he occupies a position of some little importance in the country, and holds up his head with a little more dignity?—If he is in the position of a small farmer who can tide over bad times, I quite agree with you; but if he has a small bit of ground and requires to appeal to the south for help, I think

ULLAPOOLAlexander
George Pirie

he is living on charity, which I think has a bad effect on the moral character.

28640. Did you, in fact, find all the people in the condition of being unable to support themselves in a creditable manner?—I will not say that they were not able to support themselves in a creditable manner, but I say they are in a far better position now, and are far better off than they ever were before.

28641. I think it is quite possible their physical condition may be improved, but I only speak of it as a matter of dignity and status?—It is a matter of sentiment, and I can quite understand the feeling of sentiment. I happen to come from the east coast, where that sentiment is not quite so extreme. I don't see it in the light of sentiment when it is a question of subsistence.

28642. Are there any old people who are unable to work?—Yes, there is one. I was not aware there were four people on the poor's roll, which there seems to be, and who, the roll shows, were there before I came, but I know one old man who gets something from the poor's roll, and he gets something from me now and then. He exists really, and that is all.

28643. You must recognise that that is a very sad thing for a man who formerly kept several cows?—I think he was quite incapable of that. He had an acre and a half which he was unable to farm, and his wife is dead and he has no relatives.

28644. What is his name?—Black Donald.

28645. There is an old man of the name of MacLeod; is not he in that position?—My impression was that there was only one man on the property who really has no relatives to depend upon and nobody to look to him.

28646. In the case of a man who falls into that position, I suppose when he dies his house will just be swept away?—Well, there have been one or two swept away, because they were inclined to sweep themselves away. When the shepherd and his father went into the new house, their house being rather better than others, a family removed into their old house. The worst houses are always taken down as any change is made.

28647. Do you propose by-and-bye to remove the people from the present houses to a barrack?—That is my idea. It may or may not be a barrack. It is a castle in the air in the meantime, and may or may not come about.

28648. But that was the idea in building the place?—Yes.

28649. That the people should all live together?—In one block of buildings, so many cottages entering from the outside and so many from the inside, but the houses being perfectly separate otherwise. In spending the money, I have laid it out with that view, but whether that may come about is another question.

28650. I presume the people would prefer to remain in their houses in the meantime?—The first idea on going to a new house is that it is very bare and clean and disagreeable, but six month's occupation alters all that.

28651. *The Chairman.*—What is the nature of this common lodging you project?—Simply a block of eight cottages in two rows, one storey below and one above, making sixteen houses in all.

28652. With separate doors for each family?—Yes, an entirely separate entrance for each.

28653. With lots of ground?—Well, the ground cannot be exactly at the cottage. It will have to be about a hundred yards away; the ground will not adjoin the cottages.

28654. What is the object of consolidating the dwellings of the labour-

ROSS.

ULLAPOOL

Alexander
George Pirie.

ROSS. ing people?—First, because I want the place as a residence for myself in the meantime, and, secondly, because it is a more economical way to build.

ULLAPOOL. — 28655. How many would there be in each block?—There are two rows, and six in each row, and two at the end. Of course it is simply carrying out the principle that I have seen adopted in country districts on the east coast of Scotland; on a farm with which I am connected there are a great many on the same principle.

28656. Is it not more common to make a block of two dwellings?—Two or four; there are generally four, I think.

Alexander George Pirie. 28657. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Is there a store on the property for the supply of goods?—There has been a shop and there is a shop. The owner of the shop came to grief; he became bankrupt, and his father and brother are taking it over.

28658. Is it intended for the use of your work people?—I have nothing to do with it. It is entirely for the crofters to choose whether they will purchase there or not.

28659. *Professor Mackinnon.*—I think you stated, as one of the reasons for converting this crofting population into a labouring population, that it was to prevent periodic destitution amongst the people?—No, I did not say to prevent that, because I did not at that time know of the periodic destitution; I had not the experience of this last winter.

28660. I did not take down the statement, but if I remember you mentioned in your evidence that there was periodic destitution in the district every four or five years?—I mentioned it as a fact. I said that I thought it a more noble position for a man to earn his daily bread by labour, rather than to farm a piece of ground on which he could not exist.

28661. Have you found that these people have had to apply to the public for charity every four or five years?—I cannot say.

28662. I understand you to say that?—No; my explanation was that I had no opportunity of giving them work without taking the land into my own hands.

28663. You stated that one of them was worth £400 or £500?—The one who was put out.

28664. The man who was examined a little ago seems a substantial man?—I believe he is; but he knows best himself.

28665. So that it would appear that these people were rather prosperous?—Yes, but I think these two had much the largest stock.

28666. You gave us a general opinion with respect to the population on the west coast, and said ‘How larger holdings of soil, incapable of even “returning the seed put in, can benefit any one passes comprehension?’—That, of course, I take from the public newspapers.

28667. Have not you found yourself that it was necessary to enlarge these holdings in order to improve them—to put them under one management?—I have put the whole property into one.

28668. In order to improve it?—Yes.

28669. And don’t you think those people on the west coast, if they could manage to consolidate a croft would do the same?—Not unless they put manure into it; you have no chance of getting a west Highland crofter to manure his land as I have done.

28670. What portion of the west Highlands are you best acquainted with?—I don’t know them except from going along the coast and from travelling through the west Highlands. I know nothing of the Highlands practically, as Mr Fowler does.

28671. Would you be surprised to find three or four acre crofts with crops to beat the large farmers in the district?—Yes, as I am speaking from

the evidence which has been given to the Commission of the state of matters which has necessitated this Commission. ROSS.

28672. These people ask for larger holdings in order to make them better which is the very thing you have done yourself?—I have no objection to give them larger holdings. I think it is an admirable system; but I say George Pirie. that is of no use unless they improve the lands.

28673. It is for that purpose they want the land?—Then why don't they improve their small holdings?

28674. This was stated in your paper as a reason for not giving them larger holdings?—The latter part of my paper was to show what I have done and what the land can produce when properly worked. It has nothing to do with the question of crofters at all.

28675. But you are not aware if any west Highland crofts are worked with advantage?—No; but I have no great experience.

28676. And you don't think if the crofts were made larger they would be made better?—Most decidedly, if you doubled the croft and the people worked it properly.

28677. But don't you think it would be more easy for them to work the croft properly if it was doubled?—No; I can't say that.

28678. If it was trebled?—Not even trebled, an ordinary croft. I mean that if you have a croft of three acres and put in a certain proportion of seed, and that croft gives out about the same quantity of seed as was put on, I don't see how a crofter can be benefited but the opposite by having three times the amount of land. He gets nothing more out of the land and he has three times the work.

28679. Don't you think he could clear away the dykes and straighten the banks and work a shift rotation as you are doing—if he had a larger area?—Not unless he manured it properly.

28680. Could not he manure it properly too?—Yes, if you teach him how to do it.

28681. That is what the crofters say they could do, if they had a larger area?—I don't know that.

**ALEXANDER MACKENZIE (42) assisted by ALLAN MACKENZIE (78),
Letters—examined.**

28682. *The Chairman*.—[To Alexander Mackenzie]—What are you? —I take charge of a yacht for Mr Morrison. Alexander Mackenzie and Allan Mackenzie.

28683. Where is your residence?—Letters.

28684. Have you and your co-delegate crofts?—No. *Allan Mackenzie* —I had a croft but it was taken from me fifteen years ago.

28685. Were you elected a delegate?—[Alexander Mackenzie]—I was chosen as a delegate, but Allan Mackenzie appears for himself.

28686. Are you acquainted with the condition of Letters?—I am pretty well acquainted; I have been there since I was a boy.

28687. What complaint have you to make at Letters?—They have the same grievances as the people of elsewhere, but they are not altogether ill pleased with their landlord for all that.

28688. Who is the landlord?—Mr Cameron, the parish minister.

28689. What is your complaint if you have any?—They are particularly complaining of the extent of their land. It is about twenty-eight yards in breadth at the foot of the croft in some of them; in others it is broader

ROSS. than that. It is very difficult to work the land. They have to carry all on their backs, their manure and everything else.

ULLAPOOL. 28690. Can the minister make your crofts any wider?—There is a piece of ground on the upper end which they had before, and which might be added to the crofts. At that place there were four lots formerly.

Alexander Mackenzie and Allan Mackenzie. 28691. When was it taken away?—I am not quite sure; it is a good many years ago. Some of the people went to America.

28692. Did the minister take the land into his own hands?—He did.

28693. Do they pay their rents regularly to the minister?—Some of them do not pay rent at all; they cannot.

28694. But do all those pay rent that can?—I think so.

28695. Is the minister an indulgent proprietor?—He is very kind to them in some things. Some of the rents were raised when the election for the School Board was impending, in order to entitle the occupants to votes.

28696. But if the rents are not paid it does not much matter whether they are raised or not?—But they are afraid that the person who comes after may be more severe, and that if they don't pay they will be turned out.

28697. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Have you any other complaints?—I don't know of any other great complaint that they have, except that they could wish the proprietor to allow them to keep some sheep.

28698. Have they any sheep?—No.

28699. [To *Allan Mackenzie*.]—What do you complain of?—My complaint is that I was deprived of my land fifteen years ago. We were left for twelve years in a bothy into which the sea came and destroyed everything. About three years ago the minister gave us another house. I held a croft formerly under his predecessor, Dr Ross, and I kept some sheep, and the present minister complained that I had those sheep. He had forbidden our having sheep. I suppose it was on account of that that he took my land from me. I was not in arrears.

28700. Would you not have been better off if you had given up the sheep and had kept the land?—I had always been accustomed to sheep, and did not like to part with them.

Rev. WILLIAM CAMERON, Established Church Minister of Lochbroom
(80)—examined.

Rev. William Cameron. 28701. *The Chairman.*—Do you desire to make any remarks on what has been stated by the two last witnesses?—I have to remark with regard to the young man who spoke, Captain Mackenzie, that he is a son of a crofter. The same man has another son. Both the sons are yachtsmen. Alexander Mackenzie has been for many years yachtsman to Mr Morrison, and has been receiving handsome wages. His father is immensely in arrears to me, and Alexander Mackenzie has never contributed a single sixpence to his father's rent. He had nothing to do with the land. He erected a house upon his father's croft without my permission, and there he lives. The other son put up a house adjoining his father's house. He has no land either, but he is in constant employment. Both of them are exceedingly well off, and the father is a poor man. With regard to Allan Mackenzie, he told you that he was turned off his lands, but he forgot to tell you why. Both he and a neighbour of his were people of some

substance in money. They had grown-up families beside them and were able to work their land more efficiently than some of the people; and not only so, but they kept heavy stocks of sheep upon the land—more sheep than the land could possibly carry. I objected to the sheep altogether for this reason—that the hill ground which they had was too limited even for their cattle, the other tenants had, I believe, no sheep. They have a few now, back and forward, but these two men to whom I refer had, I am pretty sure, upwards of 300 sheep between them—a number of sheep that was too large for the ground on which they were. I remonstrated with them year after year on the subject of reducing their stock and removing it, but all to no purpose or effect. At last I summoned them to see if that would bring them to terms. I had no wish to remove them, but I summoned them both, and then they promised that they would remove their stocks, or reduce them at all events. But still, instead of reducing them I rather think they increased them. They were allowed to go on in this way for a year or two more, and I saw how the other tenants were suffering; the grass of their cattle being completely destroyed and eaten up by the sheep of these two people, who gave their fellows no compensation or recompense. I summoned them again to see if I could bring them to terms. The officer, on going with the summons, was met by a large crowd made up of the families of these men and some of their neighbours, who took possession of the officer's papers and tore them up before him. The officer had nothing for it but to return and to report that he had been deforced. The authorities at Dingwall took up the matter and sent a party of men, who took the offenders to Dingwall; but I had nothing to do with that. The men were confined a few days in Dingwall jail. I could not keep my face to this kind of lawlessness, and told these men that both of them must go out; and out they went. But they took their own time. Allan Mackenzie kept violent possession of his lot for several years. From the first time of the summons, I understood I was entitled to charge double rent when he continued to retain his lot and he got notice of that, but still he never paid a single penny. I rather think he did not pay even the old rent; I think there was a balance against him. After this affair of the officer from Dingwall, I summoned the two men to the court for their arrears of rent. They appeared there and both of them solemnly declared before the Sheriff that they had not a single penny of arrears due. I saw that I could not keep my face with them any longer, and I insisted on their removing and they did remove. Allan Mackenzie, and the other man too, have been doing a good deal in the way of droving, and it is not with an empty hand a man can drove in this country. They were making a good deal of money no doubt in that way. Allan Mackenzie, after he removed to this submarine house of his, still carried on his own affairs, and was acting as a flesher. Notwithstanding that, I believe ever since that day he has had two cows on the place and a number of sheep. He has and always has had sheep on the place; but the number I don't know. I believe at this present moment that a man who pays not one penny of rent has two cows on the place.

28702. Would you desire to make any general statement upon the subjects which interest this Commission?—I think that Mr Fowler of Braemore has anticipated any remark I would have wished to make on the subject. I heard what Mr Fowler stated, but I could not hear what some of the other witnesses said. I would be inclined to endorse almost all Mr Fowler said. The people's crofts are small, but I believe, small as they are, the population being a fishing population, find it difficult to manage even those small crofts. They cannot work at them in winter on

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account of the weather, and they are generally employed then preparing nets for fishing. Then spring comes on and they have the whole work of the lot to do in a few weeks in order to get it forward so as to enable them to go to the fishing. They labour hard then, no doubt. They go to the Lewis fishing in the early part of spring when they have got their land sorted and sown and their peats cut. Then they leave the whole work of the lots to the members of the family who are left behind, their wives and children. Their lots are small, but if they continue to be fishermen as well as landsmen, I don't know that it would be a great advantage to them to have much larger lots. I should like to see them comfortable, but I don't think it would be an advantage to them to have a very large lot, and for this reason—if they have a very large lot, they require more hands and more time to work it, and the best part of the fishing season is past before they can engage in fishing. But if it can be arranged that they could get throughout the parish nice sized farms so as to make them a kind of middlemen, I think that would be desirable; because there is a great gulf betwixt the higher and lower classes. If there were farms, I should say, of not less than fifty acres, with a considerable stretch of hill ground attached, I think they would be able to keep their family comfortably. But then they would have to confine themselves to the land. They would have work for a pair of good strong little horses. With less land than that I don't see they could support a family and be able to send their sons to trades. I would like to see a gradation of classes,—small tenants, middle tenants, and large tenants, and shooting tenants besides. It was remarked by Alexander Mackenzie just now that there were lands that could be given to the tenants. I don't see where these lands are. The lands that Allan Mackenzie and the other man had I have divided and made into small lots. There were several young men who got married and who were hanging about their fathers' houses, and I thought it was much better that they should have something of their own, however small, than be hanging about that way, and I divided the lands for them. I would like to give them more land, but I cannot give them what I do not possess. I am trying to make the best of it in that way. Alexander Mackenzie said there was some land of people who went to America. There were three families went to America a good many years ago, and I was exceedingly sorry to part with them; but it was a matter of necessity with some of them. They had to labour and were not able to save their families. They had relations in America who were in very comfortable circumstances, and their relations induced them to go to America, and they did, and upon the whole they were, some of them, in rather comfortable circumstances. But there was one family, a young married man, who had for a long time to support his father and mother, and his family was increasing and he saw he could not manage at all. He was corresponding with his brother who told him there was a lot of land waiting him in America if he would only go out. The young man saw he could not manage at home, and engaged his passage for Quebec or Montreal. He engaged his passage before he went to the fishing—he had a share of a boat—and when he came back he found that he could not manage after all to go, and that he would forfeit something like £5 which was a great consideration for the poor fellow. I saw him and he told me this. I said—‘Don't lose heart, but after you have made such preparation, wind up your affairs and let me know how matters stand.’ He did so, and after all he found that he would be a few pounds short. I said—‘Poor fellow, I can't see you at a loss; go on with your arrangements and I will give you what shall enable you to go away.’ I gave him what he wanted, £5, and said ‘you had better take this £1 over; I am sure you

'will stand in need of it.' He would not take a penny more. He said he thought he would have what would do. He was about £12 or £15 in arrears at that time; but that was nothing at all.

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ULLAPOOL.

28703. Who got the lands which those people rented?—This ground I have got in my own hands, as it adjoins ground in my own possession; but there are two tenants yet. With regard to this poor fellow, I may mention that when he got to Glasgow he ran short; he had only two shillings when he went on board ship. He wrote me two lines saying he wished I was there. He got on with his family, but I fortunately took the precaution to give him a letter to the Emigration Society. I did not know who they were, but I gave him that letter simply stating that he was a decent good fellow, very poor, and that I was afraid he would land in poverty in America, and that if he called at their office they might rely on what he stated. He did call at the office. He had 800 miles to go up the country, and they sent him forward and provisions along with him.

Rev. William Cameron.

28704. Did he do well after that?—He got on very well at first, but the poor fellow was killed by a tree which he was cutting down.

ALEXANDER MATHESON, Crofter, Ullapool (66)—examined.

28705. *The Chairman.*—What statement have you to make?—'Our hill pasture was valued by Robertson, Keanchulish, and M'Martin, Leck-melm, at £50, or 5s. per cow. At that time feuars could keep any number of cows on the hill for 5s. each; now they pay 5s. for first and 10s. for every one above that number. Strangers evicted from other places keep cows and sheep on the hill, and consequently feuar's cattle are ill used. The hotel ground is walled in, and their cattle should graze in common with others, but the best part of the hill is kept for their use, and other cattle going there are worried by their dogs. Feuars are not allowed to keep sheep, all sheep on hill being those of strangers.'

Alexander Matheson.

28706. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—What other complaint have you got besides what is in the paper?—The people coming in from other properties are troubling us by taking our hill pasture from us. There never was any right to the Ullapool tenants to have sheep.

28707. Have you applied to Mr Mackay, or the local factor about that right?—Mr Mackay and the factor and the chamberlain and Mr Munro, the local factor, put up a paper ordering the sheep to be removed, but that has not been done.

28708. Have you anything else to say?—We think we are charged too much for the grazing of our cows. Formerly we paid five shillings and now we have to pay ten shillings. We have only a little hill and there are too many cattle on it. There are ten horses on it. It is as much as there is of it, if there is a square mile and a half.

28709. *The Chairman.*—Do the strangers who put their sheep on the hill pay any rent?—Not for the sheep.

28710. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—If you found any of these strange sheep why did not you point them?—That was never done; it is the people in the town that these sheep belong to. There are no fences.

28711. Why is Ullapool such a deserted, poor-looking place?—Because there is no land round about it for the people, and the fishing has not succeeded as it used to do.

ROSS.

POOLEWE, ROSS-SHIRE, FRIDAY, JULY 31, 1883.

POOLEWE.*Present:*—

Lord NAPIER AND ETTRICK, K.T., *Chairman*.
 DONALD CAMERON, Esq. of Lochiel, M.P.
 C. FRASER-MACKINTOSH, Esq., M.P.
 Sheriff NICOLSON, LL.D.
 Professor MACKINNON, M.A.

ALEXANDER MACGREGOR, Shipwright, Strath of Gairloch (35)—
 examined.

Alexander
Macgregor

28712. *The Chairman.*—Have you been chosen a delegate by the people of Strath Gairloch?—Yes.

28713. What kind of meeting was there of the tenants—how many were present, and how were you elected?—I cannot tell the number present, but I can tell the way in which the meeting was called.

28714. Relate that, if you please?—The crofters of the Strath had a preliminary meeting. I was not present at that meeting, but at the second meeting I was present, and one of the members proposed my name as a delegate to appear before your Lordship and the Commissioners.

28715. About how many people were present at the meeting at which you were proposed and chosen?—There might have been thirty or forty.

28716. How many of those may have been heads of families or tenants paying rent?—I could not say how many; but I can say that, so far as I know, only three people were present who were not crofters themselves at one time, or sons of crofters. The three exceptions were the chairman, the Rev. Mr Mackenzie, Dr Robertson, and Mr Lamont the schoolmaster.

28717. So that there may have been twenty-five or twenty-six present who were either occupiers paying rent or representing them?—Yes.

28718. How many holdings or occupiers are there in the township?—Maybe about fifty.

28719. You think that about half the people were present, or their representatives?—I am not sure that half the people were present; they were not at home to be present.

28720. Are the people away at the fishing just now?—It was during the summer fishing season. At present they are at the east coast fishing.

28721. Are you the son of a crofter or tenant?—I:3.

28722. Is your father alive?—No.

28723. Can you tell me why the people didn't choose one of their own number—a tenant occupying land—to represent them?—I cannot tell; I never asked an explanation.

28724. You cannot imagine that they had any particular motive?—I don't know any motive they might have unless that they thought I would just say what they wished.

28725. Were there any strangers at the meeting advising the people, or were their selection and their memorial a spontaneous expression of their own feelings?—There were no strangers present.

28726. Have you a written statement to present?—It is hardly meant as a statement, but it was meant to include the conclusions the meeting came to:—‘The principal grievances of which the crofters complain are ‘the smallness of their holdings, the insecure manner in which they are held, and that under the present estate regulations they cannot expect

'any compensation for improvement, as they limit and restrict compensation to such an extent that at the end of twenty years none whatever is granted, a state of things which we consider to be entirely wrong, for we hold that the proprietor has no right to appropriate the value of the tenants improvements after the lapse of any number of years. The hill pasture has undergone a process of curtailing to gratify the farmers on both sides without any reduction in the rent, but when a piece was taken off the farm of Shieldaig, held by the Marquis of Bristol, the rent was reduced according to valuation. Present rents are too high. The township of Strath paying, including hill rent, estate labour, and rates, something like £230, and if the estate labour was exacted according to estate regulation, the sum would be considerably higher. Estate labour should be entirely abolished. The sea-weed which grows without trouble to any one is mostly in possession of large farmers who do not require what they have of it, and the crofters not being allowed a sufficient quantity have to buy of them.'

28727. What is the name of the particular township?—Strath of Gairloch.

28728. What is the size of a complete croft?—About four acres.

28729. What is the stock—the summing—kept on the hill grazing?—I wish to state now that so far as I knew it was not that I was able to give the best information that they put me forward. The time was rather short, and I have not the exact totals or the like of that, but I have no doubt it is all made up in the manager's statement. So far as I know the summing is two cows and about sixteen sheep.

28730. Two cows with followers?—Yes, and sixteen or twenty sheep.

28731. Any horses?—Some of them keep horses, but very few.

28732. Is there any restriction with reference to the number of horses kept?—I am not aware of any restriction.

28733. What is the usual rent of such a croft?—The rents vary very much—from £1 up to £6.

28734. For the same sort of croft?—According to the value placed upon them.

28735. According to the quality of the croft?—Yes.

28736. What can you say is the ordinary or average rent for a whole croft capable of keeping this summing? What did your own father pay?—My father occupied one of the dearest crofts in the Strath—number one croft in the Strath—it came to about £8 or £9.

28737. It may have been also one of the best. What would you consider the average rental for the average quality of croft?—I did not think of speaking of the average so far as I have found them. I should think some of them are worth about £1 an acre—a few may be higher; that would be about £4 a croft—from £4 to £5.

28738. Are there many of these whole crofts subdivided, or are they all held undivided?—Very few are subdivided.

28739. When were the present rents fixed?—I cannot give the exact number of years ago; but there are two other delegates present from the Strath older than I am, who can give most of the information.

ROSS.

POOLEWE.

Alexander
Macgregor.

ALEXANDER MACKENZIE, Crofter and Carpenter, Strath of Gairloch (56)—
examined.

28740. *The Chairman.*—We understand that the whole croft in Strath Gairloch is about four acres, and the summing two cows and followers

Alexander
Macgregor.

ROSS.

POOLEWE.

Alexander Mackenzie.

and sixteen or twenty sheep. What is the general rent?—The average area of arable is from $3\frac{1}{4}$ to 4 acres; the summing is two cows and a young beast, and about sixteen sheep.

28741. And what is the rent?—£3, 10s. to £5 would be the average, but it ranges from £1 to £6.

28742. What is the reason of the great diversity?—It is in consequence of old and poor people being on some of the crofts, or owing to the difference in the soil?—It is the worst crofts that are cheapest. They were all valued by a surveyor at the time the rents were fixed.

28743. How long is it since the rents were fixed?—The rents were fixed in 1842 or 1843. When the present manager came about twenty years ago, the rents were slightly reduced; some slightly raised and some slightly reduced.

28744. The rents are substantially the same as they were forty-two or forty-three years ago?—Yes, the rent of the place is about what it was forty years ago.

28745. During these forty years has there been any reduction of the hill pasture?—No.

28746. Has there been any subdivision of the crofts?—There are a few in the Strath that have been subdivided since that time; I cannot tell about the rest of the estate.

28747. How do people get money to pay the rent; is it from wages at the fishing or off the croft?—By what they make off the outcome of the stock, by labour, and the proceeds of the fishing—especially the fishing.

28748. Have wages of labour increased during the last forty years?—Yes, very much.

28749. And the price of stock has increased?—Yes.

28750. Has the gain from the fishing increased?—I cannot say that the proceeds of the fishing have increased. They don't make more out of the herring fishing anyhow, but there is the cod and ling fishing. The prices of those fish are better, and probably they will make more out of that than they did.

28751. The area of the holding has remained the same, the rent has remained the same, and the prices of the stock and fish have increased?—That is quite the case.

28752. Then I hope I may also say that the condition of the people generally has improved?—The crop of the croft is practically worthless, it has changed very much—it has changed almost entirely within that period. I have a croft myself of $3\frac{1}{4}$ acres, and I have not sent a grain of oats to the mill for the last three years, only I sold three barrels of oats last year of the proceeds of the previous year, and I have only one head of cattle, and I only kept one cow before. If I had kept more stock I would have required to buy about twenty stooks of corn for each head of stock.

28753. Is this owing to the bad seasons or to the permanent depreciation of the soil?—The weather may have had something to do with it, but the land is poor, and stony, and rocky.

28754. I see there is a complaint about the difficulty of getting seaweed—explain that?—The portion of the sea-shore which is set apart for the crofters is nearly worthless for sea-ware, it does not grow upon the rocks there, and the rest of the sea-ware round about the coast belongs to the farmers.

28755. Is the right to gather that sea-ware exclusively reserved for their tacks; do they possess an exclusive right under their leases?—Yes; I think when a farmer gets a lease he gets the right to the sea-ware upon his own shore in the lease—to the whole of his own shore.

28756. Is there upon the shores of the farms plenty for the use of the farmer and for the use of the crofters?—Undoubtedly.

ROSS.

28757. What do the farmers charge you for the sea-ware?—The price was 5s. for the load of a boat of 16 feet keel, or 1d. for every creelfull.

POOLEWE.

28758. If you had nothing to pay for sea-ware would you use a great deal more for your crofts?—Yes, and it would improve our crofts very much, for nothing makes better crofts than manuring the land with sea-ware. We have spoilt our crofts by manuring with guano from the want of sea-ware.

Alexander
Mackenzie.

28759. Have you represented that to the farmers and to the proprietor?—There was always a complaint about it which they might have heard.

28760. Did you ever ask the farmer to give you the sea-ware which he did not require, for nothing?—No, there was no need; he would not give it to us; it is not likely he would.

28761. Are all the farmers the same, or are some of them more generous than others?—I only went to a few of them. There were some who refused and some who gave the sea-ware.

28762. What are the regulations about estate labour?—Sixty hours in the year.

28763. When you give that labour do you receive any wages?—No.

28764. Do you receive any food?—No.

28765. Did it always exist as an obligation in old times?—It has certainly existed since 1851, since I took a croft.

28766. If it is inconvenient for anyone to give labour himself is he allowed to find a substitute?—Yes, he can provide a substitute; of course at his own expense.

28767. What have you to pay for a day's labour if you provide a substitute?—Perhaps 2s. 6d. or 3s.

28768. Is this labour given to the proprietor or to the farmer?—There was some of it done upon the proprietor's ground, but it is chiefly upon the roads; there is scarcely anything done now to the property, it is all upon the roads.

28769. Is it the branch roads which lead to your crofts?—Yes, the branch roads.

28770. Then it is for your own good?—Yes, there is also some of it used in repairing the march fences between ourselves and the big farmers.

28771. Does the farmer work too?—Yes, he just makes a share; the big farmer only builds a crofter's share of the dyke—an equal share with one crofter.

28772. There is a complaint about the regulations on the estate with reference to compensation for improvements—explain that if you please?—When one builds a house he gets the wood for the roof, and according to the estate regulations which are printed, if a crofter is in possession of a croft for twenty years there is no compensation given for the house even supposing he had expended £20 or £100 upon it.

28773. When you want a new house do you apply for it, and do you always get the assistance of the proprietor?—No. I don't require to ask the permission of the proprietor to build a house, the houses were built when the crofts were let. If it were in disrepair I should begin to do it, and I should go to the proprietor and ask for the wood for the roof.

28774. And he would give it?—Always.

28775. Who gives the slates?—There are no slated houses; we just get the wood for the roof.

28776. In building a new house, how much of the expense would a crofter be at?—I am repairing my own house just now. Supposing I wer-

ROSS.

to fell it to the ground it would cost about £30 to build it again in addition to what assistance I might get from the proprietor.

POOLEWE.

28777. What would the assistance of the proprietor be worth?—About £3, 10s. or £4.

Alexander

Mackenzie.

28778. Who supplies the lime?—The tenant.

28779. Have there been any removals or evictions in the place, within the memory of the present generation, except for non-payment of rent?—I cannot very well tell, because I only entered into possession myself in 1851, but ever since Sir Kenneth Mackenzie became proprietor of the estate there have been scarcely any sent away. He is a very kind landlord.

28780. Do you suffer at all from the depredations of the deer or game?—No, nothing.

28781. In your memorial you say: ‘The hill pasture has undergone a process of curtailing to gratify the farmers on both sides’ what does that mean?—Yes, there has been such a process; the last instance of it was ten years ago.

28782. Describe what it was?—Just a bit that was taken from the better side of the hill and added to the adjacent farm.

28783. Did you get another bit instead of it?—Yes.

28784. Was this in the way of straightening the marches, or was it a large bit which was taken away and given to the farmer?—It made the march rather more correct than before, but the reason was that the farmer wished to get it; he did not get exactly all he asked, all the same.

28785. Was any reduction of rent made in consequence?—No.

28786. Perhaps it was not large enough to make a reduction of rent?—Well it was large enough to become an object of desire to that farmer anyhow; if it had not been worth money he would not have set his eye upon it. It is a good large bit, and it is one of the best portions of the pasture, although I cannot tell the acreage of it.

28787. Is your stock troubled or vexed by the farmers or shepherds, or do you live on good terms with these people?—Yes, we have good neighbours; we have no complaints to make on that score.

28788. Have you any complaint to make about the gamekeepers?—None whatever.

28789. Is your hill pasture fenced in?—Yes, indeed it is.

28790. Who paid for the fence?—We did our share of it; we don’t know whether it was the proprietor or the tenant who did the other share.

28791. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—What was the name of the farm to which this bit of pasture was added?—Auchtercairn.

28792. What is the name of the tenant?—Dr Robertson.

28793. Has he a large possession in Gairloch?—No, it is not very large; there are no large farms.

28794. Would you be able to pay your rent out of your croft if you did not labour otherwise?—No. Except that I like to have a cow and a house I would have nothing to do with a croft, if it were not for these and the potato ground it would be of no service to me. I have made the calculation several times, and I have the idea that I could buy in the market as much as my croft produces cheaper than by the labour expended in producing it on the croft.

28795. Anything you sell will be such as a young beast?—Yes, I sell nothing else.

28796. Was it therefore a kind thing to deprive you of the best part, or a very good part of your pasture without giving any compensation?—It was a loss, not a kindness.

28797. Are you allowed by the regulations to keep a dog?—No.

28798. Or a gun?—No.

28799. Is there any attempt in the regulations to compel the people to be sober?—The people are left very much to their own free will in that respect, but they are a sober people, not only in the place, but all over the country.

ROSS.

POOLEWE.

Alexander Mackenzie.

28800. That being the case—and I for one am delighted to hear it, and believe it thoroughly—what cause was there to insert in the estate regulations a clause to this effect: ‘should the tenant wilfully infringe any of the preceding rules and conditions, or fail to maintain good neighbourhood, or neglect to provide in terms of law for his children, or be habitually drunken,’ &c.,—what is the meaning of that?—The rule was laid down, not because the people were not a sober people, but in order to put them upon their guard that in the event of anyone being found so, he would have to leave the district.

28801. You don't consider it a reflection upon the character of the people that they are obliged to accept such a clause?—No.

28802. Are you obliged to pay the rents the year before the crop is reaped?—I am not paying anyhow, and perhaps there are a few who do not pay it, but the general rule upon the estate is to pay the rent beforehand.

28803. Are you aware that you must pay at Martinmas 1883, say for the crop of 1884—that that is the estate regulation?—No, that is not the way it is put in the books, but as the crofts were allotted out first, before they yielded crops the rent was paid, and the thing was continued.

28804. Look at the first article of Estate Regulations?—There is that regulation, but it is reversed in my case. I pay in Martinmas next for the crop of the year 1883.

28805. Would you consider it a hardship to pay your rent a full year beforehand?—I never heard it complained of.

28806. What estate labour has a crofter keeping a horse to give?—I cannot tell exactly; but if he brings his horse he gets off for three days instead of six.

28807. Do the crofters pay road money?—I think not excepting statute labour—that is six days. We pay poor rates, but we pay no road rates.

28808. The proprietor pays the road rate for you?—I suppose so; his own share of it.

28809. What grievance, then, have you got?—That our land is small, and that, in proportion to its value it is dear.

28810. Could it be extended if the proprietor so willed it?—The proprietor has not much to divide amongst us, but there is a little, and so the holdings might be a little enlarged. There are other modes in which the condition of the people might be improved. A community of fishermen might be planted in various places where nobody dwells; in, for example, the two islands of Longa and Horrisdale.

28811. What would you do with these two islands?—I would send three or four crews to one place, and they could have a cow and an acre or two acres of land for each family.

28812. Would that keep them in comfort with the produce of their own labours on the sea?—Yes, if the fishing would continue as at present they would be better off in that way; and these islands—I speak especially of Longa—are accessible and convenient for the fishing industry.

28813. Who possesses the island just now?—The tenant is Mr Macdonald, and the proprietor is Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.

28814. Does the tenant make any use of it except for grazing?—No, nothing.

- ROSS. 28815. When you sell a beast what market do you go to?—There are markets in the place
- POOLEWE. 28816. In Gairloch?—Yes; and at Tollie, half way between this and Gairloch.
- Alexander Mackenzie. 28817. Are there any shops in Gairloch?—Two.
28818. Can you get anything to buy there?—I cannot get everything I want, but I get the common necessities, meal and groceries and clothes and boots.
28819. Who keeps these shops?—Both people are of the name of Macpherson.
28820. Have they been long there?—A long time.
28821. Is there anybody connected with the estate who deals in meal and supplies the people?—I know nobody who keeps meal but the manager.
28822. What is his name?—Mr Mackenzie.
28823. Does he carry on an extensive business?—Yes, he sells oats and guano.
28824. Does he buy things from the people?—Nothing, unless maybe a head of cattle now and again.
28825. Would he be displeased if the people did not give him the offer of the best of the beasts?—No; he is just exactly like any drover so far as I know; he does not care.
28826. Have you ever sold a beast to him?—Yes, I sold him a cow last year.
28827. Did you get a good price?—I got almost all I asked for it.
28828. Is it or is it not a grievance in the place that an official of the estate is also a dealer?—I never heard the tenants complain of it among themselves, but I believe it is a matter of complaint with the other dealers whose custom is spoiled.
28829. Are you aware whether Sir Kenneth Mackenzie, the proprietor, knows of such dealings going on?—I cannot tell.
28830. Is it necessary for the requirements of the district that an official of the estate should be a dealer in this way, or should the business not properly be thrown open to the world?—It would be quite easy for other people to do it, and the more that other traders get of the traffic the more they would like it.
28831. But would it not be better for the people?—I don't think it would.
28832. How long has this been going on? Did the previous ground officer carry on such a business?—No.
28833. Was it ever heard of on the estate until this man came?—Not that I have heard of.
28834. Did the people wish him to start this business?—I cannot tell.
28835. Does he carry on the business for his own behalf or from a philanthropic desire to benefit the district?—I think every trader trades for his own benefit; but he may benefit the community as well.
28836. Are the people of the township in arrears for their rents, or are their rents pretty well paid up?—I believe they are not quite clear of, arrears, but I don't know that their arrears were ever less than they are now.
28837. Was there some destitution in Gairloch last spring?—Yes, but that arose from the loss of the crops last autumn; and the potatoes were quite a failure.
28838. Are you aware that the clergymen of the locality found it necessary to make application for assistance from other quarters?—Yes,

and they got assistance, and it was of service when it came into the country.

28839. Can you say from your own knowledge of the whole circumstances, that it was necessary for the committee and others to have made that application?—Yes, I think it was necessary; I don't know what the condition of some of the people who got assistance would have been without it.

28840. *The Chairman.*—[To Macgregor]. You have heard and understood everything he has said?—Yes.

28841. Do you agree with all that he has said?—Not with the whole of it.

28842. In what respect do you disagree with it?—He said he had no fault to find with the neighbouring tenants in their treatment of the crofters' stock. I remember the crofters' stock being poinded by the neighbouring tenant on one occasion.

28843. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Anything else?—When I was a small boy I used to herd my father's stock upon the portion of the hill pasture which has been taken from the crofters and given to the farm of Auchtercairn, and if the cattle strayed over the march at that time they would be poinded. Since that time I have seen cattle coming from the grazing upon the other side—that is the place called Little Sanda—and these were poinded also; and many of the people to whom they belonged were from home at the time.

28844. Do you differ from your colleague in any other respect?—No.

28845. *The Chairman.*—Did you not prevent the cattle from going over the march?—Yes, when I was there. I remember upon the occasion of the inspection of the local volunteers at Dingwall that some of the crofters' cattle were thrown down and carried away to the pound.

28846. How long ago was that?—Perhaps nine or ten years. With respect to the statute labour, not only is it done upon roads and upon fences, as the other delegate stated, but I am of opinion that I may have seen it being done upon the fence between the arable ground and the hill pasture of the farmer—that was a fence not upon the march of the crofter at all. [Intimation that sixty hours' labour would be required of the witness produced, dated 23rd February, 1881].

28847. Were you a crofter then?—No; I was a householder. I have a fifty years' lease of the house.

28848. Is it a condition of the lease that you have to do this labour?—No, not of the lease of the house; but in the event of my doing it, it is stated that I would get other privileges, right to peat ground and sea-ware.

28849. Therefore you have to perform the labour?—I have not done it. I only pay 5s. of ground rent, and I think 10s. in addition for statute labour is an excessive sum.

28850. Have you anything else to say?—Upon the farm of Sandabeg there was a regulation made within the last few years that anyone who in future should cut peats there, must pay 5s. a year for every bank that he might cut; now the people used to cut peats there, in former times, free of charge.

ROSS.

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POOLEWE

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Alexander
Mackenzie.

KENNETH MACKENZIE, Crofter, South Eradale (44)—examined.

28851. *Mr Cameron.*—What are your grievances?—We are paying rent for the hill pasture and for the lots, and that is difficult for us to do. We think we should have the hill pasture along with the lots; when the

Kenneth
Mackenzie.

ROSS.

POOLEWE.

Kenneth
Mackenzie.

lots were taken first the hill pasture went along with them. The town in which I am, and the adjacent one, were in the hands of eighteen tenants before they were lotted out. They paid £8 each; and they had a horse, nine milk cows, and twenty sheep each. Now, the whole of this is divided into forty lots and about thirty families. What we wish is that the hill pasture should go along with the croft as before, or else to get more land in order that we may have more room. The hill pasture is very bad; it would have been better if the one half of it had been a sheet of water instead of being dry ground. If it were so it would not destroy our stock as it does. It is a very unhealthy place for stock, and it is also full of peat hags, where they are drowned. Stock can only graze upon it four months in the year; it is very unhealthy. I defy anyone present to say he ever saw hill pasture so bad. I have travelled over many a one but I never saw one so bad.

28852. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Do you wish to be removed out of it?—Where shall I go?

28853. Wouldn't you like to go to a better place?—If I could only get it.

28854. Is there any place near you that you would like?—There is a forest which marches with our hill pasture.

28855. Is that a deer forest?—Yes.

28856. How long has it been a deer forest?—At least for the last twenty years back, perhaps more.

28857. Is that good desirable ground?—It is very good sheep ground.

28858. Better than yours?—There is no comparison between the two.

28859. When was your place divided into lots?—About thirty-six years ago.

28860. Who was the factor at that time?—I cannot tell whether it was a Mr Anderson or Mr Macrae. The estate was under trustees, and perhaps the management was not so very good.

28861. What stock do you keep?—Two cows, and five sheep, and two or three young cattle, but the land cannot support them. I have no horse.

28862. What rent do you pay?—£4 to £5 for arable ground and hill pasture combined.

28863. When was the separation of the arable ground from the hill pasture made in the rent?—Just the year when the place was allotted.

28864. Is there anybody who has a croft without hill pasture?—Everybody that has a croft has the right to put a beast upon this pasture, and we pay so much for every head we put on. I think there will be about fifty families that have a share upon the hill.

28865. What is the rate which you have to pay per annum?—The rule is this:—there are 6s. for every cow, 3s. for a stirk, and 1s. 3d. for a sheep—a calf or a lamb goes free.

28866. Do you consider that too high?—Yes, when it is upon the lots that we pasture them, except for a short time when they are out upon the hill.

28867. Do you consider the rent of the lots too high?—Yes, I think it is; some of them are twice as high as they should be.

28868. Have they been raised since they were first fixed?—I don't think so. Sir Kenneth has not raised the rents except when there has been a change of tenancy; one or two of them may have got a slight increase of rent. But there was interest to be paid upon money expended upon them, and that increased the rent.

28869. In what shape was the money expended?—Trenching and draining.

28870. Who did the work?—Some of it was done by the people to whom the lots belonged; the other was done by outsiders.

28871. And did the people to whom the lots belonged get payment for it?—Yes.

28872. From the proprietor?—Yes. They paid the rent for it which is still exacted.

28873. How many of them are still in that condition?—A good number; I cannot exactly tell.

28874. What did it come to generally?—It varies very much. Some of them pay about 30s., or about 1s. for every £1 expended; but I don't pay any myself, and cannot give the exact figures.

28875. When were these improvements made?—Thirty-six years ago, and they continued for five or six years. We were promised at the time that this charge should cease at the end of twenty years.

28876. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—What is the size of the deer forest?—On the portion of it which belongs to this estate of Sir Kenneth Mackenzie it is about four miles long by three broad.

28877. Has the shooting tenant any land which he works?—Yes, he has a farm in Shieldaig.

28878. You are a native of Gairlech, and well acquainted with the whole district?—Yes.

28879. Before the land was made into a forest how was it occupied—was it occupied partly by crofters and partly by large sheep farmers?—The crofters had at one time—but beyond my time—a portion of the forest; afterwards that portion of ground was made into a sheep farm, and then it was made into a forest.

28880. Divide your rent into the portion you pay for arable, and that you pay for pasture?—We pay £2, 9s. including taxes, for the croft, and last year I paid close upon £2 for the hill.

28881. Is there any restriction upon the number of beasts that may be sent to the hill if you pay these sums of 6s., 3s., and 1s. 3d.?—There is no restriction so far as that is concerned; I may send as many as I please. I would only have three of them next year if I left them there.

28882. Supposing the crofters took it into their heads to send a very large number of stock to the hill, wouldn't the effect of that be to make the value of the pasture much less to the crofters themselves, while, at the same time, it would be much more valuable to the proprietor because of the increased rent he would get for it?—They cannot keep much stock upon it; the ground is very unhealthy. Every man tries to keep upon it as much stock as he can, but instead of the stock increasing it decreases. The greater the stock upon the hill the greater the rent to the proprietor; but I am not prepared to say that the greater the amount of stock the worse for the crofters, because we have them there only for four years altogether. There is a fixed rent for the pasture over the hill of about £49, but the average rent it yields every year is about £60; every person, meanwhile, being entitled to put as many beasts as he pleases on it; and I don't think the people ever restrict the number of beasts which they are to put on; as a matter of fact people put as much on as it will hold, but it is a bad place.

28883. As there is no restriction upon the number of animals on the hill, is it not clearly an advantage to the proprietor the more beasts there are sent to the hill?—It appears that the proprietor does not get more than the stated rent, for when the number of the animals increases the rate per animal decreases; for it is only a stated rent that goes to the proprietor at the beginning. For instance, the ordinary average rate is 6s. per cow, but, in the event of their being a large number on the hill, it might be down to 5s. 6d.

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Mackenzie.

MALCOLM MACKENZIE, North Errdale (68)—examined.

ROSS.

POOLEWE.Malcolm
Mackenzie.

28884. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Are you prepared with any statement?—I am—‘At a meeting held by the crofters of North Erridale, on the 2nd day of July 1883, they resolved to place the following grievances before the Royal Commission. (I.) Previous to 1843 the whole arable and pasture land belonging to the township was occupied by twelve crofters only, at a rent of £50, 8s. sterling. In the said year 1843 or thereabouts, and while the Gairloch estate was under trustees, the arable land was divided into lots, and for the purpose of raising more money the hill pasture was separated from the lots under a distinct rent. By this new arrangement the rents now raised, exclusive of all rates, amount to £95 sterling, making an increase on the former rent of £39, 12s. annually. (II.) In the place formerly occupied by twelve, there are now twenty-three crofter families, a number which our township of North Erridale is not capable of supplying with the necessities of life. Food for man and provender for beast must be purchased elsewhere, and the money for buying these must be earned in other places. (III.) We do not complain of our present proprietor Sir Kenneth S. Mackenzie. Generally speaking he is a good proprietor, specially kind to poor widows who may be left with weak families, and taking a warm interest in the education of the young. But he did not remove the burden of rent laid upon us by the trustees who held the estates immediately before him. (IV.) We want—(1) the hill pasture along with our lots same as our fathers had it; (2) a reduction of rent; (3) more land.’

28885. What rent do you pay?—£3, 16s.

28886. How much land have you?—Four acres arable land.

28887. You pay £3, 16s. for that along with the hill pasture?—Yes.

28888. What stock do you keep?—Two cows, and two young beasts, and three or four sheep.

28889. Do you find the pasture too small for them?—No, not for all that I have.

28890. You have not to buy any food for your beasts?—No, if I had more I would have to buy.

28891. Had you ever any more than two cows?—Yes, I had formerly a great many more.

28892. Where were you then?—Just where I am. I was paying a twelfth share of the township before it was laid out.

28893. What stock had you then?—Two horses, eight milch cows and young animals, and about fifteen sheep.

28894. And how much did you pay for that?—£5, 14s.

28895. Where were the additional crofters brought from who were put into this place in 1843?—There were some of them in the place—cottars. The greater number of them belonged to the place, and they got lots. The land yielded greater increase at that time than now. I have seen, in my day, a great many changes upon the estate. The ground yielded four times more than it does now.

28896. Did any of the people come from other places?—Two or three came from the outside.

28897. And the other ones had been cottars until they got lots?—Yes, they were cottars, they had no land except what we chose to give them.

28898. How did they manage to live at that time?—They raised some potatoes at home, and they had fishing at home and elsewhere; and out of the proceeds of their earnings they bought meal.

28899. Was there any other land in the township that could have been

given to these people to improve their position, except what was given to them?—No, there was none near us that could conveniently be given. There were two bits of pasture land which belonged to us at that time, and which were afterwards given to some people who now live upon them.

28900. Was it not a great benefit to these cottars that they became crofters instead of being left as they were?—We don't know that it was much to their benefit; they lived quite as well then as now.

28901. If they lived quite as well with a little bit of land, how is it that you are not living as well, if your land is little less than it was?—Because the land does not now give the increase it did.

28902. Do you think that the land is so much reduced that it cannot now bring forth the same crops that it did forty years ago?—It does not give such increase among us. No doubt the land has the capacity to yield it if it were made to yield it. It was by their wages that most of those cottars, who depended upon us, lived.

28903. What could be done to improve the land?—I am an old man; it is the young who can give that information.

28904. But you should have had more experience in cultivating the land?—I am not so sure of that.

28905. Can anything be done in the way of trenching or manuring the land, more than has been done already?—Yes, there could, on some of it.

28906. And why don't you do that?—They do as much of it as they can.

28907. Has anybody among you any fear of being put out of his place if he improved his land?—Our present proprietor is the friend of the poor; more so than any one we ever had. He is not an object of fear to any one; but we don't know what might befall.

28908. Do your people find a difficulty in paying their rent?—Yes.

28909. Are they much in arrears?—Yes, some of them.

28910. Are you yourself?—Yes, I am.

28911. Did all the inhabitants, or those of them who could, attend the meeting at which you were chosen to represent them?—The greater number of the people were away out of the place, but those who were at home were all there together when I was elected. The greater number of those who were away had a meeting before they went.

28912. Are the young men all away at the fishing?—Yes.

28913. Are you near the shore?—Yes, and a very rough shore it is; we very often cannot approach it when out fishing or when getting supplies.

28914. Have you no good place of refuge near you?—Yes, we can run into the loch here.

28915. Do your men fish regularly when the weather permits?—Yes, the greater number of them.

28916. What kind of fishing?—Herring, cod, and ling.

28917. Do they make a good thing by it when there is a good year?—Yes, when it is a good year.

28918. Have they any difficulty in disposing of their cod and ling?—No difficulty whatever.

28919. Who takes it from you?—There are two curers upon the other side of the loch who take it from us.

28920. What price do they give for cod and ling this year?—8d. a fish for both the cod and ling.

28921. And are the men regularly paid in money for their fish?—Yes, so far as I am aware.

28922. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Were you well off before this allotting took place in 1843?—Yes, I had as much as my needs required.

ROSS.

POOLEWE.

Malcolm
Mackenzie.

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28923. Was not the effect of the arrangement whereby eleven additional people got land in this township to impoverish both?—The effect was to impoverish us who had the land; but some of those who had the land were better than they were before.

Poolewe.
Malcolm
Mackenzie

28924. Are they better off now—those who got it?—No they are not, were it not for their earnings they would not be in any condition at all so far as their lands are concerned.

28925. You were asked what would be the best way to improve their condition. Supposing that these eleven crofters were settled somewhere else, and the old crofters or their descendants got the lands as they had them before—get the pasture which was taken from them—and at the old rent, would they be all right then?—Very likely we should be. I cannot very accurately determine it, but it would very probably be an improvement on our condition.

28926. Is not that what you want in your paper?—I suppose you have all seen what is in the paper.

28927. ‘The hill pasture along with our lands as our fathers had it?’—Yes.

28928. ‘Reduction of rent?’—Yes.

28929. ‘More land?’ Do you approve of that?—Well, so far as I am concerned my day is nearly done, and it is but little that I can take of land. That is what the young would wish for.

DONALD MACKENZIE, Crofter, Second Coast, Gruinard (74)—examined.

Donald
Mackenzie.

28930. *The Chairman.*—Have you been elected a delegate?—I cannot tell whether I was elected or not; but they told me I was the oldest man.

28931. Was it at a public meeting that they told you that?—Yes, there was a meeting.

28932. Were there many people at the meeting?—Yes.

28933. Many heads of families and payers of rent?—There was a sermon, and a minister was present. There would be half a dozen heads of families at least.

28934. Was it on Sunday?—No.

28935. What was the sermon about?—There was a stated service, and the meeting was for the discussion of this question.

28936. Had the service any reference to the rights of the people or the sufferings of the people?—All these things were discussed after the sermon was over:—‘*To the Royal Commissioners.* My Lord and Gentlemen—‘ We are under the necessity of bringing under your notice that the rents of our crofts are by far too high; this is chiefly because some of our low land and best hills we had were taken from us, and attached to large sheep farms, and no reduction of rent. All this was done by evil and senseless factors, who had too much influence under our late proprietor. ‘ These three tremendous factors—one a retired merchant, one an officer in the army, and the other a great terror for putting away poor people—these inebriate three caused our estate to be in arrears, also in heavy debt to merchants; therefore what would clear us from this debt is to get improvements on our lots, and the land in the old way in which the old wise men had put it out for us; also to get harbours on our rough shores to save our lives and increase our fishings. We have nothing against our present proprietor, P. L. Banks, Esq., of Letterewe and Gruinard, he acted very kindly in sympathy and lenity in providing us with potatoes, oats seed, and meal, &c. *First Coast Township:*—The best of our hill

'and low land was taken from us, the low land was let to a new tenant.
 Whenever we heard it we at once assembled and prevented the man taking possession, afterwards we were compelled to pay the appointed rent in addition to our old rent, which we consented to in fear we would be put away. *Second Coast Township* :—Our best hills, even some of our peats and some of our low ground pasture, were taken from us, after we ourselves offered the same rent for it as the man to whom it was let.
Third Sand Township :—The best of our hills and a good deal of our green pasture were taken from us. This green pasture we had for our milk cows, upon which we depend a great deal for part of our living, and the hills we had for summering our horses, cattle, and sheep, such as Ben Chasqun. All the Gruinard estate had the use of Ben Chasqun.'

28937. Who was the late proprietor?—Mr Bankes.

28938. When did the family of Mr Bankes get possession of this estate?—He bought the estate about forty years ago.

28939. To whom did it belong before that?—Mr Davidson of Tulloch.

28940. Were you contented under Mr Davidson of Tulloch?—Yes, and well we might be.

28941. Did he raise the rents before he sold the estate?—No. The place was lotted out in Mr Davidson's time, and the rents that were very high were placed upon others—some more than others. My own lot was rented at £8, and afterwards I found the rent was too high, and they took £2 worth off the lot and put it on to another man, and charged me £6.

28942. Did Mr Bankes make any changes when he came?—Yes, he was making changes now and again; it was during his time that we lost all the hill pasture, some three miles long.

28943. Did Mr Davidson take any hill pasture from you?—No.

28944. What did Mr Bankes do with the hill pasture?—It was given to others. There was another side we had for summer shielings, and the year following he took that from us. We offered £10 for that place ourselves; but we did not get it. It was given to the tenant for £10.

28945. Was all the land which was taken away given to the tenants, or was it used in part for deer forests?—It was all placed under sheep, none of it under deer.

28946. Did the tenants remonstrate with the proprietor or factor when his was done?—Yes.

28947. When the hill pasture was taken away from you what reduction was made in your rent?—Not a penny. I believe that £7 was added to the rent of the place, but not a penny was taken off.

28948. Did Mr Bankes do you any favour or any good in other respects to make up for it?—Nothing.

28949. Has any improvement been made in your condition of recent years?—Nothing, but such a thing was never thought of.

28950. In this memorial you speak of three terrible factors, is the last of these factors in the management now, or are they all gone?—No, these three are all gone, and just as well, perhaps; but the factor we had last—not one of these three—we had nothing to say against him; he was a very fine man.

28951. And the factor you have now?—We have had no factor since the present proprietor came into possession.

28952. Does the present proprietor show any inclination to make your state better?—We don't know, but our belief is that if he could our condition would not be worse than it is.

28953. Have you made any request for the restoration of the hill ground or the enlargement of the crofts?—No, we don't think that he

ROSS.

POOLEWE.

Donald
Mackenzie.

ROSS.

would do it, or if he were to do it it would be only for something in return.

POOLEWE.

Donald Mackenzie. 28954. You stated that the proprietor was kindly in giving you potatoes, oat seed, and meal; was it the proprietor who did it himself or was it done by subscriptions from the south?—Yes, it was the proprietor himself who provided it, but we have to pay it back.

28955. Have you to pay back all the potatoes, oats, and meal, or only what was given for seed?—Everything; what we ate, as well as what we used for seed. What we got from him was chiefly seed.

28956. And how long will he allow you for the paying of it back? Is it all to be paid back in one or in several years?—We don't know.

28957. You complain that peats have been taken from you, are you obliged to pay for the peats which you formerly had free?—There are some who pay for the old ground which was taken from us. When that ground was taken from us we had to come on to our own land to cut peats, for they are scarce and far away.

28958. How much will it cost a family for peats for the year?—5s. or 6s. perhaps.

28959. And you cut them and cart them yourselves?—Yes.

28960. Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.—Is there a large number of crofters at Gruinard?—Yes, there are three townships included in that paper.

28961. Were the grazings of Benhasken of considerable extent?—Yes, it is of considerable extent, but it has nothing to do with the pasture which was taken from us. Our forefathers had it, but that is not grazing which was taken from us.

28962. Who has the grazing which was taken from you?—It was a Mr Thomas Golan.

28963. What is the name of the place?—Badantsluig.

28964. Do you know the farm of Drumchork?—Yes, very well.

28965. Is that a big farm?—That is where our proprietor lives.

28966. Is it a big town?—No, there is a great house on it, built two years ago; all that was there was cleared away.

28967. How many people were cleared out of what now goes under the name of Drumchork?—I don't know about the number of families that were in Drumchork, but there was a place adjacent to myself out of which the people were cleared and scattered throughout the whole earth, and the people of Dingwall came and pounded them upon the stones; and the meal that was being prepared for the family was taken away off the fire, and thrown outside.

28968. Who was laird at that time?—It was during the late laird Mr Bankes' time. Then the officers went up to the roof of the house—meanwhile they had not extinguished the fire—and they cut down the roof with hatchets, and when it fell it took fire and continued burning during the Sabbath day.

28969. Was it a bad day for Gruinard when Tulloch had to sell it?—Yes, it was; we would not have lost our hill pasture had Tulloch possessed the land.

28970. Can you instance anything that Mr Bankes ever did, during his possession, to benefit the crofters?—Yes, a little. He made us drain our land a bit, and we were paid for that work; and he was doing a little work—there was not much—in making piers and that. It was a rough coast, and the boats used to get broken, and he did some work in that way, at the piers.

28971. Was Mr Bankes reputed to be a wealthy man?—Where could you find a wealthier?

28972. When Mr Bankes died was his eldest son living?—Not long

after he died his eldest son died too ; his two sons died shortly after he died himself.

ROSS.

28973. Did the eldest son leave any family ?—Yes.

POOLEWE.

28974. Are they proprietors of the property ?—No, it is a son-in-law who possesses the estate.

Donald
Mackenzie.

28975. Are the crofters on the estate of Gruinard generally in poor circumstances ?—Some of them are. They are not to say bad ; some are worse off than others. I am as badly off as anyone upon the estate myself.

28976. Was any application made for outside charity to help some of the people to lay down their crops and to keep them alive ?—There was some assistance came to the place, but I got nothing of it.

28977. Who wrote the paper which you presented ?—A lady belonging to the place.

28978. Does that paper really represent the true feelings of the people of the district—the three coasts ?—Yes, I think it does.

28979. It was prompted by no outside interference ?—No, there were no outsiders in among us.

ALEXANDER MACKENZIE, Crofter and formerly Fisherman, Midtown,
Inverasdale (65)—examined.

28980. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Do you produce any written statement ? Alexander Mackenzie.—Yes. ‘Statement respectfully submitted to the Royal Commission (*High-lands and Islands*), by Alexander Mackenzie, sixty-five, crofter and fisherman, lot 14 Midtown of Inverasdale, duly elected delegate by crofters and cottars of the townships of Midtown and coast of Inverasdale :—I occupy a croft of about four acres, of which about three acres are under cultivation. I came into the occupancy of the croft about thirty-seven years ago, and almost all the arable portion of the croft has been reclaimed during my occupancy, I have a share of the common hill pasture, and my stock at present consists of two cows, a small beast, and a few sheep. I pay £1, 6s. of rent for the croft, and about £1 for hill rent and other expenses incident on my share of the hill pasture. In a favourable year the produce of the croft does not afford subsistence for my family for six months, and it does not yield half enough to “keep” my cattle. The staple manure is sea-ware, and the united testimony of the crofters is that it is the best manure they can get to produce a good crop out of the soil of their crofts, and yet the most of it is held by a neighbouring proprietor and a large farmer, from whom the crofters have to buy it at the rate of an average of 10s. for as much sea-ware as will in land of ordinary fertility manure the sowing of two bushels of oats. The sea-ware held by the crofter tenants in connection with their crofts is so scarce that, in order to give the land full justice, each crofter would have to expend 30s. yearly on sea-ware. The most of them cannot afford this extra outlay. As a rule those who can at all afford it expend from 15s. to £1 annually on sea-ware, while to make up for want of sea-ware and of means to procure it, they are engaged for a considerable time in the course of each spring season dragging tangle-weed out of the sea, and it proves to be a very inferior manure. Were there a sufficient quantity of sea-ware held by the people in connection with the crofts, the latter would be much more productive than they are, and the expenses and labour connected with the holdings would be greatly diminished. In 1841 the township of Midtown was let to crofters, and the rental was

ROSS. ‘then increased by £15, and subsequently, when the crofts were re-
POOLEWE. ‘arranged, there was a further increase of £10. The present rental is
Alexander Mackenzie. ‘£54, 14s. for crofts and £20 for hill grazing, making a total £74, 14s.
‘There are twenty-nine tenants, of whom twenty-seven are paying under
‘£4 of yearly rents. The hill grazing is paid for in common. About
‘forty years ago the township of Coast was occupied by fifteen tenants
‘paying a gross rental of £37, 10s. Now it is occupied by eighteen
‘tenants, and the yearly rental is £48, 2s. for crofts, and £19 for hill
‘grazing—total £67, 2s. The crofters’ hill grazing is largely trespassed
‘on, and overrun to a great extent by sheep and cattle and sheep stock
‘from an adjoining farm, and consequently the crofters do not receive
‘nearly the full benefit of their outrun. Representations on the subject
‘of a march fence, for which the crofter tenants offered to pay half the
‘yearly interest on the outlay, have been made to the proprietor and to
‘the estate manager, the latter actually declined to comply with what the
‘crofters considered a reasonable demand in regard to the erection of a
‘march fence. Thirty-six years ago or thereby money was advanced by
‘Government to improve the Midtown crofts. Some improvements were
‘effected on several of the crofts, while others reaped no benefit, yet a
‘sum was added to the rent of each tenant, which sum was said to be a
‘yearly instalment which would repay principal and interest in twenty-one
‘years. This additional annual sum has not yet been deducted from the
‘rent, and has now been paid for fifteen years over the stipulated time,
‘both by those who received no benefit from the money as well as by
‘those who did to a certain extent. The present proprietor, Sir Kenneth
‘Mackenzie, has invariably shown great kindness to the people. He is
‘the friend and benefactor of widows and orphans, to many of whom he
‘gives land rent free. It is much regretted that he does not reside more
‘frequently on his Gairloch property, as should such be the case it is
‘believed the management would give more satisfaction to the crofters
‘than it really does, I believe that much of the poverty existing among
‘the people of the townships I represent can be traced in some measure
‘to hardships endured by the crofters under the oppressive management
‘of the factor on the estate, and his underlings, during Sir Kenneth’s
‘minority. At the time of the destitution consequent on the potato
‘famine, the factor seized a large proportion of the crofters’ cattle for
‘arrears of rent. Cows were taken away for £1 of arrears, and in some
‘cases for less. In some cases instead of the arrears being wiped off, the
‘tenants had to pay sums ranging from 4s. to 6s. for the grazing of the
‘cattle while they were in the factor’s hand previous to being sent to
‘market; I can if necessary give cases in point relating to the oppression
‘and gross mismanagement during these hard times, from the effects of
‘which some of the people have not yet recovered. All the factors and
‘managers of my time have had of the “fat of the land,” and left the
‘people in poverty.’

28981. Who wrote this paper?—A man belonging to the place, but it was we ourselves who gathered together and gave him the statements.

28982. Had you more meetings than one to appoint delegates?—Two.

28983. Were they well attended?—Not very many at the last one, the people were away. There were a good number present at the first meeting.

28984. And this paper, I suppose, represents the feeling of all the people in the township?—Yes.

28985. Of those who were present and those absent?—If not I should not have been here. It would not have been worth my while at my time of life.

ROSS.

POOLEWE.

Alexander Mackenzie.

28986. What is the name of the farm, or the name of the tenant to whom you are obliged to pay money for your sea-ware?—Many farms round about the loch here; wherever the sea-ware is.

28987. But you say 'most of it is held by a neighbouring proprietor' and a large farmer,—what are the names of the proprietor and the farmer?—When we went down where we are there was only one man there, and the sea-ware that that one man used was divided amongst thirty, and the share of each was but small. One of them is Mr Mackenzie, the brother of Sir Kenneth.

28988. What is the name of the farmer?—Mr Reid of Island Ewe.

28989. Is it a fact that, every year you are paying money for the sea-ware, more or less?—Yes, it is the case every year.

28990. That is, in fact, an additional rent?—We pay additional rent as well as that, but that may also be considered as additional rent. I have two cows and a few beasts, and I house them at the end of October, and they don't come out until the following May, and my croft is not able to feed them more than half that time, and many of my neighbours are in the same position. I have to provide provender for them during the other half.

28991. The mischief seems to have occurred in 1841; who had charge of the sheep at that time—who was the factor on the estate?—I could not very well tell, but the estate was under trustees, and there was a large number of people who had something or other to do with the management of it, and I could not say who was over them all.

28992. Who was the individual that took some of the crofters cattle for arrears and only gave £1 for each?—A Skye man of the name of McLeod whom we had as factor here at that time; and we had another of the name of Anderson who was not a whit better.

28993. The land was allotted and subdivided, and additional men put in and additional rent put on. Is it from that time that we are to date your poverty?—The hardship began at that time when the lots were made out, and the potatoes failed too.

28994. You state in the paper that that got you a shake from which you were a long time in recovering—the potato failure and the taking away of your cattle?—There are many among us who have never recovered from it and never shall.

28995. You say you are trespassed upon by some farm, what farm is it that troubles you?—John Mackenzie, Loch Draing, whose stock mixes with those of neighbouring places.

28996. You wish to put up a march fence between your place and his?—Yes, we have wished that for a long time.

28997. The paper also tells that the proposal was declined by the estate manager. Is that correct?—Yes, it has been declined, I am afraid.

28998. Why don't you apply to Sir Kenneth himself?—We spoke to the proprietor, but he said we would require to get them put right—that he would look after it.

28999. Then I presume you may fully expect that that will be done since it has been brought under the proprietor's notice?—The sea-ware is a great grievance. We are in danger of being drowned many a time when we are getting it.

29000. Have you spoken to Sir Kenneth about it?—No, we did not speak to him; we are under the impression that he knows about it, the manager knows about it anyhow.

29001. You say yourselves you would wish Sir Kenneth to stay more among you; I want to know why you don't go to Sir Kenneth himself?—We thought he knew all about it; but we know there are some things

ROSS. being done of which he does not know all the same, and that is the reason why we wish he would always live upon the estate. We don't complain of the rent nor of the proprietor, but of surrounding circumstances.

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Alexander Mackenzie. 29002. You say 'it is much to be regretted that he does not reside more frequently on his Gairloch property, and should such be the case it is believed the management would give more satisfaction to the crofters than it really does'?—He would have the people better, and he would know about everything better.

29003. Is it or is it not a fact, without entering into particulars which might be invidious, that the crofters do complain of the present management and would wish the proprietor to come and reside more frequently upon the estate, to look into matters more closely himself?—There is nothing that I can more truly say than that their desire would be that he should live more on the estate, and know more of it.

29004. And of the people?—I know that many of his people would shed their blood for him.

29005. *Mr Cameron.*—You state that your croft contains four acres, of which three are under cultivation, that you came into the occupancy of it thirty-seven years ago; that your stock consists of two cows and small beasts—and how many sheep?—About eight or nine at last Martinmas.

29006. That your stock consists of that, and you pay £2, 6s.—is that so?—Yes.

29007. Do you consider that rent too high for that land and that number of cattle and sheep?—No, there is no complaint about the rental.

29008. You say it does not yield half enough to keep your cattle?—No, it does not; it can only feed one properly. If it could feed more I could keep three.

29009. How do you feed the other ones?—I buy provender for them. I was three times in Harris for provender.

29010. Where do you get the money to buy the provender?—I make themselves buy it sometimes—sell them; but I have always been about the fishing, and have made more money in that way. I have also made wages whenever I could.

29011. Do you find it easy to make wages where you live?—I don't make wages there; but there are some of the people who have some work from the estate manager.

29012. What are the ordinary wages paid to these people in the summer time?—About 2s.—perhaps 1s. 8d. and perhaps 2s. 6d. a day for men.

29013. Is there plenty of work to be got at that price?—No, I never saw as much work going on as would keep the people, if they all went to work, for a month.

29014. But take only those who require it?—Well, we had meetings about things of that kind, about the getting of work and that, this year already, and there were some people who said they had been refused work, others who refused to work, and there were some who got work.

29015. You stated just now that there were no complaints on the score of rent. In this statement you mentioned that the rent was so much, and has been increased by £15, and then further by £10. Is it not a fact that in this paper there is a complaint of the dearness of the crofts?—I never heard a complaint, properly speaking, of the rent being too high. For my own part my complaint is not about the rent, but that we are not able to make a livelihood out of the place.

29016. Do you want more land?—I don't see any ground to get, unless the people who were put in upon us were sent back to where they came from.

29017. Where was that?—Inverewe, Tournaig, Island Ewe—I am one of them myself. There were twenty-six thrown in upon this place.

29018. Your remedy is to remove the people from where they are and to put them on the places you have mentioned?—I don't know that they would get them.

ROSS.
—POOLEWE.
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29019. But is that what you propose?—Yes.

Alexander
Mackenzie.
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29020. Are these places all sheep farms or crofts?—Well, yes, every-
thing that is of worth is under sheep.

29021. But are these places sheep farms or crofting holdings?—They are under sheep. Some of the previous delegates spoke about Longa and Horrisdale; that would suit us to settle a fishing community there. For the last forty-five years I have been fishing all over the western coast, and during my first recollection there was not an island of them that was not occupied by crofters. Beginning with the island of Hauda up to this side of Cape Wrath, all right along the coast there was not an island but was occupied by tenants; and, in my time, we fishermen had through stress of weather to lie up for days, sometimes for a week, and we found these tenants exceedingly kind to us. Now supposing we had to lie up for stress of weather, and supposing we were without food, there is nobody to give us a meal.

29022. Has that anything to do with the management of this estate?—No.

29023. Are the people in your township much in arrears of rent?—I don't think there is much arrears just now.

29024. Is there less than there was five years ago?—I cannot tell. I know there was a large amount of arrears when Sir Kenneth came into the estate, and that he was very good to people, wiping off a pound now and again till it was reduced.

29025. You say that all the factors and managers have lived upon the fat of the land and have left the people in poverty; does that refer to former factors?—Yes; it refers to a past time—to a long time ago, when we were oppressed; and there are people who have not yet recovered.

29026. 'All the factors in my time have had of the fat of the land and 'have left the people in poverty'; what factors does that refer to?—I speak first of Anderson.

29027. How long ago is that?—Thirty-eight years.

29028. Does this sentence include the present man?—No.

29029. What was the name of the man before him?—Macrae; he was one of the best we ever had.

29030. Who was the one before him?—M'Leod.

29031. Does this statement apply to M'Leod?—Yes.

29032. And was the one before him another included in this state-
ment?—Anderson certainly was one. I refer to these two.

29033. Then the last sentence is so far incorrect that it does not refer to the present factor or his immediate predecessor—Mr Macrae?—Yes, it is incorrect in that respect.

29034. Is it not a fact that Sir Kenneth Mackenzie is practically his own factor, and that the person who represents him is more a ground officer than a factor?—I cannot tell what the powers of the manager may be, but he is virtually our manager or proprietor.

29035. Do you think many of the Highland proprietors know their people better or live more among them than Sir Kenneth Mackenzie?—I cannot say. There may be many who know their people well, although I do not know. We know Sir Kenneth very well, and we see him once a year, and although we should see him twenty times we should like it all the more; and we would like it still better if we were seeing him always.

29036. He speaks the language of the people does he not?—Yes, but perhaps not so well as he would wish.

ROSS.

POOLEWE.Alexander
Mackenzie.

29037. Do you not think that Sir Kenneth Mackenzie knows more about his crofters and mixes more with them than most Highland proprietors, partly owing to his knowing the language?—I don't know any, taking him all in all, unless, perhaps, a proprietor who lives somewhere in the district of Appin in Argyllshire, who knows more about his people and their affairs than Sir Kenneth.

DONALD MACKENZIE, Manager of the Gairloch Estate (43)—examined.

Donald
Mackenzie.

29038. *The Chairman.*—You have been present during the proceedings this forenoon and have heard all that has been stated?—I have.

29039. Do you wish to make any remarks upon what you have heard?—I shall be very glad.

29040. Then make your statement now.—I have prepared a statement. I am manager of the Gairloch estate, the property of Sir Kenneth Mackenzie, Bart. The total acreage of the estate is 162,319, and the rental is £8297, 6s. 3d. sterling. The number of acres at present under cultivation is 2149, of this area there are in the possession of crofters 1482 acres arable and 41,866 of grazings, making a total of 43,348 acres. The total rent paid by crofters is £1688, 2s. 5d., being £1207, 16s. 5d. for arable and £480, 6s. for hill grazings. The average rent for every acre of their arable land amounts to 16s. 3½d. and for their hill grazings they pay an average of 2½d. per acre. Combining their arable and hill grazing the average rent per acre is 9½d. The whole number of rent paying crofters is 448, and the average rent paid by each is £3, 15s. 4½d., being for arable land £2, 13s. 11d., and for hill grazings £1, 1s. 5½d. per crofter. The highest rent paid by any crofter is £30, and the lowest is 8s. 2d. The crofter population including cottars, habitually resident on the estate, amounts to 2227, making an average rental per soul of 15s. 1½d. The total population of the estate is about 3495, and as a large number of crofters' dependents are frequently from home at service or fishing, and therefore not reckoned in the number habitually resident, it may fairly be estimated that the real crofter population is about 3000, leaving only about 495 persons not of the crofter or cottar class. In 1853 the arable land in crofters' holdings was much the same as now, but their hill grazings were 41,331 acres, a gain of 535 acres during the last thirty years. The addition arose by the conversion of part of a farm into two crofts and by the grant of hill grazings at Kenlochewe, making altogether a gain of 12 acres arable and 975 acres pasture. On the other hand about 20 acres were deducted from the Strath-bill, and the drove grazing at Loch Maree valued at £3, and extending to about 440 acres with about 12 acres arable are now included in the Loch Maree hotel farm. In 1853 the total rental of the crofters amounted to £1846, 9s. 10d. Combining their arable and hill grazings they paid an average of 9½d. per acre. The number of crofters then was 486 giving an average rental to each of £3, 15s. 11½d. Comparing the present with 1853, the gains are all in favour of the crofters. They have now 535 acres more than then; they pay £158, 7s. 6d. less rent than then. Combining arable and pasture they have the land at an average of ½d. per acre less than then and each crofter now pays an average of 7½d. less than then. The total stock possessed by the crofters at present is 78 horses, 1122 cows, 502 stirk, and 4593 sheep. The amount paid in the summing for grazing varies from 15s. to 7s. 7d. for a horse (for one hill only that highest charge applies,—the Kenlochewe

' grazings—the next highest being per cow 5s.) 10s. to 2s. 6d. for a cow,
' 5s. to 1s. 3½d. for a stirk, and 1s. 8d. to 5½d. for a sheep, and the average
' is 12s. 1⅔d., 4s. 0⅔d., 2s. 0⅓d., and 8⅓d., respectively. Of late years
' a great improvement has been noted in the breeds possessed by the
' crofters, and the higher prices obtained in consequence. Formerly
' complaints were rarely made of the size of their holdings. I notice that
' delegates in other places frequently complain also of the exhaustion of
' the soil. I admit our crofters give the ground manure enough, but
' there are two serious defects in their system of tillage, the want of
' draining and subsoiling. The ground is too frequently only scratched,
' and this to a great extent accounts for the alleged exhaustion. With
' proper tillage and subsoiling the land would show no sign of exhaustion,
' and with their heavy manuring the crofters should raise good crops.
' The want of drainage causes late sowing, resulting in late reaping, and
' thus the crops are sometimes destroyed by the gales and rains late in
' autumn. Another cry has also recently been raised. It is said the
' crofters are getting poorer, but the real fact is that they now live much
' more comfortably than before. It is not uncommon to see the head of
' the family at home for six months of the year, indifferent about being
' employed; and it is too commonly the case that the sons and daughters
' who go out to service in summer return home at Martinmas, remaining
' in comparative idleness till Whitsunday. In such circumstances it is
' surprising to me to know how they get along so well, when I consider how
' constantly the working classes—ploughmen and artisans for instance—
' have to stick to their employment all the year round on the east coast.
' I speak from personal knowledge on this subject as I know the east and
' the west equally well. In order to compare the rental of the crofters
' with that of the sheep farmers, I select a sheep farm surrounded with
' crofters and crofters' grazings. The average rental per acre on it is 6½d.,
' while the crofters have their grazings at 2½d. per acre. At present there
' are forty-four crofts held rent free, the old rents of which amounted to
' £86, 8s. Of these holdings thirty-seven are held by widows and poor
' aged persons, while seven are gifted to others. Within the last twenty-
' six years arrears amounting to £3219, 8s. 11d. have been struck off in
' favour of crofters. The arrears now outstanding amount to £1584, 14s.
' of which £1506, 1s. 6d. is due by 205 crofters, while the arrears due on
' large farms is £58. Any crofter may have a nineteen year's lease, and
' practically our crofters are never removed so long as they pay their rents
' and conduct themselves properly. A copy of our conditions of set is
' printed in the crofters' rent pass-book which I have here. There are
' fourteen sheep farms on the estate, and their total acreage is 77,648.
' Of this area 506 acres are arable, and 77,142 acres are under grazings.
' The total rental from sheep farms is £2267, 11s. 2d. Taking the arable
' land at 16s. 3½d. per acre, the same rental as the crofters pay, the average
' rent per acre of grazings is 5½d. for sheep farms, being fully double the
' rate paid by crofters. The area under sheep farms in 1853 was 87,973
' acres, showing a decrease of 10,145 acres during the last thirty years.
' The rental of sheep farms at the same date was £1776, 6s. 4d. showing
' an increase of rent in sheep farms of £491, 4s. 10d. within the same
' period. On the estate there are three deer forests, and their total acreage
' is 38,020. The rental obtained from these is £650, being at the rate of
' 4½d. per acre, the grazings of the Kenlochewe forest being very inferior.
' There are also four grouse shootings, and the rent obtained from them
' and fishings amounts to £2205, giving a total of £2855 from shootings
' and fishings. It may be noted that the valuation roll shows a rental of
' £20, 17s. less than the actual rent. This arises thus, the roll is over-

ROSS.

POOLEWE.

Donald
Mackenzie.

ROSS. 'stated by £27, but we receive £47, 17s. for fees which do not appear in the roll, leaving a balance of £20, 17s. to be added to the roll.—**DONALD POOLEWE.** 'MACKENZIE.' The first delegate—Macgregor—spoke of the estate labour. His father got leave to build a store on the Strath on condition that he would put no fireplace in it, but instead of doing that he made fireplaces, and then his son got a lease of the same place. He signed this lease, binding himself to work sixty hours labour in the year, but he never wrought a day, and I do not see how he can complain. So far as regards the sixty hours, we have never got it. They never come out early in the morning, and a great many of them don't do the work. I may say that his father also had a mill at the Strath, and he got his arrears abated by the proprietor. The next delegate, Alexander Mackenzie, complained of the sea-ware. I believe there is some truth in that at Strath, but the farmers of Auchtercairn and Flowerdale have the sea-ware on the shores of their farms. The delegate made one slight mistake. He stated that they had no sea-ware except what bounded their properties, whereas they have some on Shieldaig on the opposite side of the loch. We never put into practice this 2d. an hour for non-performance of labour; it is for the benefit of the crofters solely in making roads through their townships. There are carriage roads now all over the estate except on the Loch Torridon side. The proprietor provides superintendence, finds tools, and builds bridges, and the people had a little labour when convenient in the dead of winter. I don't think, therefore, they can complain on that score. They find it a great benefit to them. As regards compensation, we have not yet been able to test it, where a man who has built a house has gone away at the end of twenty years. Then again, with reference to the twenty acres of land taken off Auchtercairn, I may say that the acreage of that hill grazing is 3740 acres, and the rent of the whole place is £35, 15s., or a little less than 2½d. per acre, and twenty acres at that amounts to 4s. 2d. The proprietor built a dyke on the march, but there have been complaints of trespassing back and forward, both by the sheep farmer and the crofters. The dyke is a low one with two wires on the top, and in the building of it the crofters laid down the stones for half the distance and the proprietor did the other half and built the dyke, and put on the wires at his own expense. As regards the clause about drunkenness I have had no experience of it, it is a dead letter.

29041. Is that owing to the absence of drunkenness?—I am glad to say that there is not much drunkenness going. There may be one or two cases in a large population; I dare say there was not much necessity for putting that into the regulations, at the same time I do not suppose it will do any harm. The next delegate—Kenneth Mackenzie, Eradale, spoke about the quality of the hill grazings in his township. I admit it is the worst grazing on the property, and in the winter time or early spring the tenants of that township made an application to Sir Kenneth Mackenzie, or rather a request, to reduce the rent by one-half or give them the hill at a valuation. Sir Kenneth immediately replied that he would do so, and when he came up to Gairloch—which he did specially for the purpose—he offered them what they wanted, and they preferred not to go on with the valuation, and there the matter rests.

29042. They preferred not to have a valuation?—Yes.

29043. How was the valuation to be made?—It was to have been made by each selecting a valuator, and the valuators would choose an oversman—just as sheep and other valuations are made. The same delegate stated that the rates for grazing cows and sheep were 6s. for a cow, and 1s. 3d. for a sheep. I may explain that this arises from the fact that the assessments—school rates, and poor rates, and shepherd's wages—are collected

along with the rent. The real rent is 5s. for a cow, 2s. 6d. for a stirk, and 10d. for a sheep. The rent of that hill is $3\frac{3}{4}$ d. per acre, and we have other hills better than it much cheaper. Then, Malcolm Mackenzie, from North Eradale, need not complain about paying his rent, for he does not do it; he is nine years in arrears at the present time.

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POOLEWE.
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Donald
Mackenzie

29044. Do you mean that he has been in arrears every year for nine years, or that he has not paid any rent for nine years?—He paid part of rent during that time. He pays rent perhaps every three or four years.

29045. His gross arrears amount to nine years' rent?—Yes.

29046. And for how many years has this been accumulating?—It has been going on for more than nineteen years; during the last seven years I think he has paid two rents. The next man was Alexander Mackenzie from Midtown, Inverasdale, who spoke about the march fences. The application no doubt was made, but, remembering the great expense of fencing the crofters' hill grazings, it was a serious matter to undertake, considering also the small rents paid by the crofters on the estate from whom demands would come to be made.

29047. Would they co-operate in putting the fence up so as to save the proprietor a portion of the expense?—The co-operation would be that they would promise to pay interest, and that might be done for a few years, but they would soon get tired of it, and the fences would have to be kept in repair.

29048. They would not work?—I don't know, but there is so much of it that they would prefer to get it done by the proprietor, and promise to pay interest on it. Mackenzie's rent is stated at £2, 6s., but in that he must have included the rates, because his real rent £1, 6s. for the croft and 14s. for the hill. I was a little surprised at his remarks about overcrowding. He spoke about so many people coming there; and having heard that he intended to speak on that subject I prepared a few remarks to be submitted in reply. 'The complaint made by this delegate is very surprising; 'he applied to us to allow one of his sons to get a new lot in his own township, and about two years ago, much against my will, this was done. Two 'years ago he succeeded in getting this place for his eldest son. Any 'overcrowding or subdivision that takes place is against our will, and the 'crofters are themselves entirely to blame for it. Sir Kenneth does not 'want overcrowding, and I am supposed to do all I can to prevent it, but 'I am sorry I cannot manage it. It is not, however, getting worse, and 'the population is not increasing. It is inconsistent of any person to 'complain to your Lordship of what he himself persistently and actually 'permitted. This township is overcrowded he has said, and that over- 'crowding has been caused, in some measure, by the settlement of one of 'his sons there; and if the crofts are too small why does he keep one of 'his sons to succeed himself?'

29049. There is a feature in the management of the estate which seemed to us rather exceptional, and that is that the hill pasture belonging to the townships appears to be rented separately upon some system which I have not fully understood. They pay a rent for the arable holding and a separate rent for the hill pasture. Would you explain how that system is regulated?—When I came here nineteen years ago I came from the east coast, and I did not know much about Highland matters. But the thing has been going on, and there has been one township that has made a request to get their lots apportioned to their crofts. We did this at Aultbea, but they did not seem to get on any better than those who had their hills separately rented.

ROSS. 29050. Is it an old practice of this estate to rent the hill pasture separately from the arable ground?—For a long time it has been so, it has been going on for at least thirty years.

Poolewe. Donald Mackenzie. 29051. Do you know the reason for this innovation or change being introduced?—I don't know. It happened, I think, when Sir Kenneth was a minor.

29052. How is the rent of this common pasture regulated? Does every crofter pay so much per head for the stock that he is allowed to keep upon it?—They have the management in their own hands. Some of the hills are managed in this way, they have it divided into shares—they have equal shares, and make a calculation of what stock it will keep, and pay in that manner; while with some of the other portions they pay for whatever stock is on, so much per head. If there is a big stock it makes a light rate, but if there is a light stock it makes a high rate. Sir Kenneth Mackenzie always gets the same rent.

29053. Whatever number of animals is kept?—It does not matter what number of animals is kept Sir Kenneth charges the same rent, whether he gets it or not.

29054. And they manage it among themselves?—Yes.

29055. And when one man is able to put on a large number of stock and a poor man has none, or only a few, does the man who has the large number pay the rent to his poorer neighbour who cannot afford to keep stock?—Yes.

29056. But they manage that among themselves?—Yes; if there is any injustice done they complain at once to me or the proprietor, and we try to rectify it.

29057. How is the annual rent paid; is it all brought by one person?—They collect the money at home and send one man whom they call the headman.

29058. Do they elect that headman or do you appoint him?—They manage that themselves; they choose their own headman.

29059. Or do you indicate him and do they accept him?—We never indicate him. We ask them to name him.

29060. Does he do anything else for the township? Is he a sort of representative of the township in any other way?—Not particularly. We look upon him as the biggest man there at the time.

29061. If anything went wrong in the township would you speak to him or to the crofters all together?—I might speak to him first; but I would speak to anybody.

29062. Do you think this system of independent management of hill pasture is generally acceptable to the crofters? Would they rather have that than have a common system of each man paying the rent for the hill pasture in connection with the arable rent?—Some of those who are well off and who have more stock, would prefer to have the hill attached to their crofts, but the poor people would prefer to pay for the numbers they had.

29063. Have the tacksmen or farmers the absolute right in their leases to appropriate the whole of the sea-ware on their shores?—I believe they have. I don't know about all their shores, because there is one farm at Shieldaig where the Strath people get ware.

29064. Is there really a surplus amount of sea-ware on the tacksmen's shores which they don't require?—No. In some cases it would be a good thing to get the sea-ware re-arranged, but that cannot be done until the leases expire.

29065. With reference to the question of exhaustion of the soil, which might be prevented by labouring the ground better, has any encourage-

ment been given to deep trenching with the pick? Do they ever trench themselves?—As a rule I may say they do not.

29066. Has the experiment ever been made of getting them to trench, and paying them wages?—What I mean by sub-soiling is that they don't plough the land. They work with the *cas-chrom* and don't dig deep enough.

29067. *Mr Cameron*.—Would you kindly explain further how the hill pasture is managed. Is it managed by a system of club farms?—No, it is not.

29068. Each crofter has his own stock?—Yes.

29069. Are any of the crofting farms managed on the club farm system?—Not any.

29070. Are you aware that that has ever been tried?—I am not aware; not in my day.

29071. Have you known or heard of its having been tried elsewhere?—I have.

29072. Do you think that system would be suitable for the crofters here?—They are too numerous, I am afraid, to agree among themselves about it, nor would they have the stock. Sir Kenneth would very likely try it.

29073. But he found it was not practicable?—They don't approach him on the subject; I don't think they want it.

29074. Would it be possible to change the system from the present one to that of a club farm; or would it be surrounded with difficulty?—I am afraid it would be very difficult to do here where there are so many people.

29075. Do I understand you to say that the ordinary rent paid for hill grazing was at a rate of 5s. per cow, 2s. 6d. per stirk, and 10d. per sheep per year; or did that only refer to one particular spot?—That is the highest except at one place; but I find they add taxes and shepherds.

29076. But that is the basis of the calculation?—Yes.

29077. Is the estate labour considered in the estate regulations as a portion of the rent—or of the value paid by the tenant to the proprietor—or is it an extra?—Every tenant has got it; it is a condition. I don't know whether I may call it part of the rent, but it is part of their obligations.

29078. And under the obligation may the proprietor accept that labour for any purpose which he thinks a benefit to the estate; or is it supposed to be devoted entirely to the purposes of the crofters?—Entirely for the crofters' benefit—for the roads in their own townships.

29079. Roads and fences?—Roads particularly.

29080. There was one of the delegates—Macgregor—who did not agree with the other in regard to this point. I think he mentioned that he had noticed on one occasion that this labour was exacted for purposes which were not specially connected with the crofters?—He spoke about a fence; but that was a march fence in their own township.

29081. Have the crofters ever applied to the proprietor for a commutation of that labour into money to be added to the rent?—I am not aware. We don't find them very willing to do the work. Although it is called sixty hours' labour, in practice they don't work thirty hours, and a great many don't work at all. We never exact it from the old and feeble, and if a man is away from home we are never very severe.

29082. In your opinion, if it were commuted for a money payment they would be worse off than they are?—Much worse; I don't think they would like that at all.

29083. What class of cattle do the crofters keep?—Highland cattle.

29084. Are they a tolerably good class of cattle?—They are improving, they are fairly good stock.

ROSS.

POOLEWE.

Donald
Mackenzie.

ROSS. 29085. Have you noticed, since you have been here, that the soil under cultivation has deteriorated in quality during the past nineteen years?—I cannot notice anything of the sort. I don't see any difference.

Poolewe. — Donald Mackenzie. 29086. Do you think the crofters apply more sea-ware to the soil than is beneficial?—I think they do; but if they would stir the land better it would help it; they don't cultivate deep enough, nor drain it enough.

29087. Do many of the crofters improve the land in their immediate vicinity by drainage and by turning up fresh land?—There is very little of that done.

29088. I see they are allowed compensation for doing such work?—Yes.

29089. But you find they don't talk much of that?—No they don't; on the contrary, Sir Kenneth is always ready to trench land for any of them at 5 per cent.

29090. Have many people applied for that?—Only one or two, and their applications were granted.

29091. Is there much land in the immediate neighbourhood of each croft which they might improve?—Not much; but some of the crofts might be improved.

29092. There would not be much use of trenching land in these localities unless it had been previously drained?—No, it would be waste of money.

29093. It would require draining too?—Yes.

29094. The draining I suppose is an expensive process here?—It is.

29095. And there is no tile factory near here?—No.

29096. Is there any draining done at all?—There is a little draining done here and there—with stones.

29097. Do the crofters apply much farm-yard manure to their land?—I suppose they apply all they have got; but they seem to have more belief in sea-ware.

29098. What bedding do they use so as to make the manure?—I am afraid they don't use much bedding, they have their own straw and bracken.

29099. Do the cattle not consume their own straw?—Yes, they do.

29100. They won't have much left?—The cattle would not leave much.

29101. There would not be much left for bedding if the cattle ate up the straw?—Not much.

29102. Are there many ferns for bedding?—In some places.

29103. Not in others?—Not in others.

29104. I suppose if they could see their way to make more farm-yard manure it would probably be the best thing they could use for their crofts?—I believe so.

29105. Better than artificial manure or sea-ware?—If they would mix the sea-ware with the bedding and scrapings it would make a good manure, in my opinion; but I don't know. I should think, however, it would be better than the bare sea-ware.

29106. Have the crofters much difficulty in keeping up a sufficient supply of peat for fuel?—It is very plentiful in most places. It would be difficult in some places. At Aultbea it is rather far away.

29107. Are they sufficiently well supplied with roads for carrying the peats?—They carry the peats on their backs as a rule; they have no cart roads to their peats.

29108. Do the men or the women carry them?—Both, I think.

29109. We have heard the complaint that there is an island which supplies a quantity of sea-ware beyond what the tenant requires to use himself, and that the tenant charges for the sea-ware so taken by the crofters; was that part of the bargain when the tenant took the farm?—

It was part of the bargain, I have no doubt, or he would never think of selling it. I know it was part of the bargain.

29110. You know it was included and taken into consideration in fixing the rent which the tenant paid for the farm?—Yes.

29111. Therefore a consideration would have to be given if this privilege were taken away from the tenant?—Yes.

29112. Has the tenant ever expressed any desire to get rid of this obligation, and to give to the crofters the free use of the sea-ware?—No, I don't think so.

29113. Would he be inclined to do it if the proprietor were to come to some arrangement with him to reduce his rent by so much, and perhaps charge the crofters so much additional for the privilege?—I daresay he would be willing to do that if he got some money.

29114. How long has his lease to run?—About nine years I think.

29115. In making a new arrangement would you recommend the proprietor to come to some fresh arrangement, seeing that the present arrangement is ground of complaint to the crofters?—I am instructed to look out for that at every vacancy.

29116. And to take advantage of every expiry of lease in order to come to any arrangement which may be more satisfactory to the crofters?—Yes, and regulate the sea-ware to everybody.

29117. So as to do away with the grievances which exist at present?—Yes.

29118. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—I think you stated that the population of the whole of Gairloch was about 3495—on the estate?—Yes.

29119. And the proportion of those who may be said to belong to the crofter class is about 3000?—I think so.

29120. And the crofting class hold about 43,000 acres?—Yes.

29121. Fourteen large sheep farms have 77,000 acres?—I believe that is right.

29122. How many people may be living upon these fourteen large sheep farms?—I did not consider that.

29123. But taking the crofters off you have about 495 to come and go upon, how many of these are upon the sheep farms?—I would not like to say, without considering.

29124. Why did you draw up the exact population of the crofter class and not the exact proportion upon the other places?—I drew up the proportion for the crofters and the large sheep farmers by themselves.

29125. But the population you did not?—I took out population according to the returns required by the Commissioners.

29126. Would there be upon these farms a couple of hundred people?—No, I don't think so.

29127. There are three forests with an acreage of 38,000 acres?—Yes.

29128. How many people will be upon these 38,000 acres?—Only game keepers.

29129. Will there be fifty on the three forests?—There won't be more.

29130. How long is it since these forests were made?—1842.

29131. Were the whole of them made then?—With two small exceptions they were.

29132. Do you know, from asking people who were there before you came, what land they consisted of before they were turned into forests?—Were any crofters removed, or were the large farms done away with to make the forests?—The highest parts of the large farms, parts which were almost useless for sheep, were taken—the worst land on the estate.

29133. And the best for the deer?—I believe the deer would like good land too.

ROSS.

POOLEWE.

Donald
Mackenzie.

ROSS. 29134. But can you tell me whether or not there were any people removed to other parts of the estate in 1842?—I can. There were four people transferred from one small part of the Kenlochewe forest—two crofters and two cottars—on all the estate.

Poolewe. —
Donald Mackenzie. 29135. How many sheep farms were broken up?—There were no entire farms broken up. There are three deer forests, and part of three farms were taken.

29136. What are their names?—One was Kenlochewe or Talladale.

29137. I want to know the names of the farms?—The heights of Kenlochewe was one farm, and part of Talladale and part of Tagan.

29138. You state that, so far as your observation went, the people seemed to be better off than they were before, and lived well or dressed well; and you stated that some of them did not leave home for six months. Is it a fact that they seem better off than when you came?—I think they are.

29139. You also said it was necessary to strike off £3000 of arrears; does not that look as if the people in arrear were ill off?—I don't know. Sir Kenneth is very good at striking off the arrears.

29140. Do you think he struck off arrears from those who were not entitled?—I believe he did.

29141. You don't consider that a symptom that people were pretty poor or unable to pay?—This went on for twenty-six years—these arrears.

29142. The £3000 is spread over twenty-six years?—Yes.

29143. How much would that be in a year? £115 a year would it not?—It does not quite come to two rents.

29144. Do you think that the people who have come forward to-day have any good grounds for the complaints they have made?—They must know best themselves, but I am surprised that they never spoke to Sir Kenneth or myself about these matters.

29145. Did you hear some things to-day that you did not know before?—The complaints were very trifling, I think; they are very small matters.

29146. Do you think that all the people here came from curiosity?—A good many of them, I think.

29147. Not because they had any serious grievances?—I should not like to say that altogether. I cannot judge other people's minds.

CHARLES ROBERTSON, Surgeon, Achtercairn (58)—examined.

Charles Robertson. 29148. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—You have lived in this district for a long time?—Since 1847—the year of the destitution.

29149. Have you been a practitioner all that time?—Not for the last ten years.

29150. Are you a farmer also?—I am.

29151. Have you had a farm all the time?—Except for the three first years.

29152. You are well acquainted with the condition of the people?—I was at one time, but I have not been going so much amongst them of late.

29153. Do you think there has been any material change in their condition?—When I first came to the country it was in a transition state, and the people did not depend so much upon manual labour as they do now. They depended upon their crofts, and fishing; and the country was isolated, there were no roads into it. Loch Maree road, which opened up the country, has been made since. Since the potato famine the people have not

depended so entirely on the crofts and fishing, but have betaken themselves more to manual labour.

ROSS.

29154. Do they go in much larger numbers to the south for work?—Yes, I think there is about fifty for every one who went at that time.

POOLEWE.

29155. Where do they go chiefly?—To all parts of the country—Ross, Moray, Banff, and even Ayrshire, and some to Roxburgh.

Charles

Robertson.

29156. Do the young women go as well as the young men?—They do.

29157. How long do they generally stay away?—Some stay a great many years and some return again; and some only stay for six months. The great majority of them only stay six months and return to work their crofts.

29158. At what time of the year do they go?—Some go in spring, perhaps about the end of April; but most go in May to the feeing markets.

29159. And so far as you know do they contribute considerably in that way to the support of their families?—Very considerably.

29160. Are they generally frugal and well-behaved?—I think so.

29161. Have you noticed any improvement in the mode of life of the people during your acquaintance with them?—I have; in dress and education and everything there is a great improvement.

29162. Do you think they have less food than before or of a worse kind?—I think their food is very much improved. More meal is imported into the country, and I think they live better than they did in former days.

29163. What kind of food do they use most of?—Oatmeal, especially from Banff and Aberdeenshire.

29164. Meat is not much used amongst them?—No, not much; fish is principally used amongst them.

29165. Have you observed any improvement in their houses and in the way they keep them?—Yes, a great improvement.

29166. You have heard, I suppose, the various complaints which have been made to-day?—Yes, I have.

29167. By the men representing the various districts?—Yes.

29168. Do you know anything of the particular places of which they speak?—Yes, I know most of the places.

29169. Do you think the grievances have any substantial ground?—In some instances there may be cause for them. If you could mention any of the grievances I could speak to them. One of the grievances was sea-ware. They are very much dependent upon that for their crofts; but these farmers are just as dependent. You may say it is an additional rent what they pay for artificial manures.

29170. Formerly there was nothing got for the sea-ware?—Previous to my coming a civil engineer from Banffshire laid out the property into crofts, and I think it was he who put the rent upon the crofts; the sea-ware was allocated to different townships at that time.

29171. *Mr Cameron.*—Have you any general statement to make which you think would be beneficial to us in our inquiry, and which you think should be made known?—No, I know of nothing.

29172. Not as to the condition of the crofters?—Of course it is natural that the crofters should wish their crofts enlarged; but I think it would be much better if a number of them were made labourers and made dependent on their labour, and fishing villages created as they have been on the east coast. I know Sir Kenneth has been endeavouring, as the crofts fell vacant, to enlarge the crofts of those remaining, and there are some in this neighbourhood who have two crofts instead of one, and I think they are much more comfortable than those who have only one croft.

ROSS. 29173. Do you think they have a sufficient amount of hill pasture, or would they be the better of more, provided they could not get more arable ground?—I don't think their hill pasture is properly managed; they don't keep proper shepherds.

Poolewe. Charles Robertson. 29174. Would you approve of the system of club farms?—I think so. I have often advocated club farms such as they have in Skye and Applecross; I think they are a great improvement upon this system.

29175. Do you think there would be any difficulty in arranging for club farms being substituted for the present system of management?—There would be a little, because some of the crofters are poorer than others, and they would not be able to pay for their proportion of the stock.

29176. That is to say the small crofters with one cow and a stirk would find it difficult to make an arrangement suitable for the larger crofter who has more cows and more sheep?—Yes.

29177. But could not the difficulty be got over by a system of shares—if the smaller crofter had one share and another two or three and so on?—The small crofter would then lose his proper proportion of the profits.

29178. The club farm would only embrace the hill stock, and would not interfere with the arable ground?—I refer to hill stock.

29179. If the small farmer put in a fewer number of beasts he must only expect a smaller share of the profits?—That would be so; but he pays the same rent for the arable land, and I think it is an advantage to have a proportionate share of the hill.

29180. But the arable ground would not come into use in this system of the club farm; it would be independent?—But each arable croft should carry a full share of the hill farm. Now say there is a good profit on sheep—two sheep won't yield the same as five.

29181. You assume that the arable ground is all equal to start with?—Yes, and I say the share of the hill ground is twenty sheep, and the crofter having only five would be at a disadvantage with the other man who had twenty, even although the rent was less, of course he would not have the profit that the sheep yield.

29182. But where the summing is two cows and twenty sheep for one crofter, and four cows and forty sheep for another, could it not be arranged that the smaller crofter should have half the profits which the larger one had?—Yes, but I think the smaller crofter would be at a disadvantage. I think it would be better if the crofters could have an equal number of cows and sheep; sheep at any rate.

29183. Practically the difficulty would only be where the crofter had not his full summing?—Yes.

29184. Where he had his full summing there would be no difficulty?—No difficulty.

29185. Even although that summing should be much less than that of the larger crofter?—Yes.

29186. Because it would be arranged by the mode of shares?—Yes.

29187. To follow that up, as far as your experience goes, are many of the crofters in such a position that they are not able to keep the stock up to their full summing, or only a few?—I think there would be a great many of them not able to put stock on.

29188. And therein would be the difficulty of changing the present system into that of a club farm?—Yes.

29189. And you don't see any way of getting out of that difficulty?—No.

29190. Do the crofters here show much inclination to fish?—They do.

29191. Do you think that some of them might be established near fishing grounds, with small crofts, to their advantage?—Yes.

29192. And to their inclination?—Yes. I am aware there were two or three such villages some time ago, but like others they got very anxious to possess land, and I don't think they have prospered or done better than they did when they had only a small bit of arable land.

ROSS.
—

29193. Have you had any opportunity of comparing the condition of the crofters here with those on other estates in the West Highlands?—Yes.

POOLEWE.
—
Charles
Robertson.

29194. What is the result?—In Applecross they compare pretty well—I think they are doing much better in Applecross. I may mention a fact in regard to Applecross which occurred some time ago. Lord Middleton purchased my wether lambs, and some of his club tenants were competitors with him and offered within 6d. of his price. They sent a shepherd and a headman from the club farm across for the purpose of purchasing the lambs.

29195. That speaks highly in favour of club farms?—It does indeed.

29196. Have you compared the condition of the crofters here with that of those in Skye?—I am not so well acquainted with Skye, but I know of many club farmers in Skye selling wool to great advantage in Inverness.

29197. *The Chairman.*—You were a witness of the great scarcity and distress preceding Sir John M'Neill's inquiry in 1851?—I was.

29198. You were examined, I believe, before Sir John?—I was.

29199. You have also been a witness of the distress here last year?—I was.

29200. Was the distress subsequent to 1848-49 more severe than that caused by the failure of the crops last year?—It was more severe, because labour was not plentiful in the country at the time. The people could not get work, and they were not accustomed to work. Although the potatoes failed them that year the cereals did not; they did not lose them as they did last year. In October last there was a gale of wind which destroyed almost all the cereals in the country.

29201. Am I to understand you that the failure of produce of various kinds was greater last year than in 1847-48?—I am not sure that the failure was so great, but it was nearly so; the failure in cereals was greater last year.

29202. The grain failure was quite as great last year as previously, but the people were better able to withstand the failure than they were before?—Yes.

29203. What is that due to?—On account of their being able to get employment. The spring fishing turned out very well; and labour was more plentiful throughout the country; and not only so here, but a great many went elsewhere.

29204. Why was it more plentiful here—what description of additional labour has been created?—In some of the farms they were making roads; and the proprietor was offering them labour—he offered to give them employment.

29205. And they were more accustomed and able to seek for labour outside the place?—Yes.

29206. Do you think their being better able to support the scarcity this time was at all due to the accumulation of savings?—No, I don't think so. I think it was more owing to the people's being better able to do something for themselves.

29207. You don't think that in the course of these thirty years the people have accumulated any more wealth?—In some parts of the parish they may have done so, but in others they have not.

29208. Comparing the people of that period with those now, are they more wealthy?—I don't think they have, as a whole, accumulated more wealth.

ROSS.

Poolewe.Charles
Robertson.

29209. Comparing the people physically with those of thirty years ago, do you think the people at that time were better able to bear hardships?—Was their physical condition superior?—No, I think they are better accustomed to labour now than they were then.

29210. Do you think they are stronger now?—I think so.

29211. One of the changes that has taken place in the diet of the people is that they eat white bread and drink tea, I believe?—Yes, they are using tea.

29212. They take far more tea and loaf bread than they formerly did?—Yes.

29213. And that has been progressing?—It has.

29214. Do you think this is accompanied by bad effects at all? Do you think the substitution of tea and coffee for broth and so on has been an unfortunate and prejudicial change?—No, because I do not think tea is used to such an extent as to be prejudicial.

29215. Do you find the people take as much broth as they used to do?—It is fish they use principally—they don't use much meat.

29216. Have they the same supply of fish as before?—Yes.

29217. You don't think the prevalence of luxuries and foreign commodities has had any bad effect on their health?—No.

29218. Is there any form of disease prevalent now; or is there any difference in the form of disease compared with what it was?—I think a low type of disease is prevalent in all parts of Scotland at present. It has been prevailing more than it did in former years.

29219. You remember the state of the country and the condition of the people before the great deterioration in the potato crop?—I do; but not in this county. I am a native of Aberdeenshire.

29220. Do you remember that there was plenty of good potatoes?—I do.

29221. Do you think the great failure in the potato crop all over the country has been a great misfortune to people; and have they felt it very greatly?—Well, I don't think it has been a very great misfortune. I think the people—especially of the west coast—used potatoes and fish, and now they use more bread; I mean they depended more on the potato crop than now, and when the potato failure came they felt it the more.

29222. We have heard a good deal to-day of the great clearances effected by a Mr Bankes; do you remember these clearances?—I do.

29223. Were they before you came into the country?—The great part of them was after I came into the country.

29224. Had these clearances a very serious and calamitous effect upon the population—were they very deeply felt by the people?—The clearances were very harsh at the time; but I think those left behind are in a better position than they would have been, their crofts are larger, and I think they are more comfortable than they would have been had the clearances not taken place.

29225. Then the clearances were not all effected for the purpose of forming large farms and deer forests? Did they take place in any degree in order to improve the crofts of those who remained behind?—In some degree they did.

29226. On the whole, in your long experience, you seem to say there has rather been an improvement than a deterioration physically, and morally perhaps, in the condition of the people?—I think so.

29227. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Can you give the names of any townships upon Gruinard in which the crofts of the people have been enlarged by removals?—Sand.

29228. The crofts were increased there?—They were.

ROSS

POOLEWECharles
Robertson.

29229. To the old people?—Yes.

29230. Do you know how many cases of that kind there were—have you ever been there?—Often.

29231. Can you state how many crofts were improved?—I could not state how many there were previously, but I know there are not so many there now. There have been a great many houses pulled down; and the crofters now have what arable land belonged to these houses previously. In almost all the townships there a number of crofters were removed, and those remaining possess the land.

29232. Some of the delegates say part of the hill pasture had been taken from them?—A portion of the hill pasture, I have no doubt, was taken from them, and Drumchork was added to the sheep farm.

29233. In the case of Sand, where you say additions were made to the arable land, can you say whether or not any of the hill pasture was taken from them?—I am not aware whether or not there was any hill pasture taken from them there; I rather think not.

29234. You said that the physical and material state of the people had improved since your time, and you attributed that, to some extent, to the fact that they laboured more and were more accustomed to labour?—Yes.

29235. Must not that progress, therefore, be entirely due, or almost entirely, to external resources and not to their native parish?—It is in a great measure due to external resources.

29236. No great thanks then to the land of their native parish for this improvement?—No, I think it is in great part owing to the crofters and their families—to what they earn in other parts of the world.

Rev. DONALD DINGWALL, Free Church, Poolewe (48)—examined.

29237. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—How long have you been clergyman Rev. Donald Dingwall here?—Six years.

29238. Are you a native?—I am a native of Ross-shire—the other side of the county.

29239. You have had occasion, during the time you have been minister here, to come very much into contact with the people?—Yes, every day.

29240. How many people have you charge of?—The congregation as a whole will be close on 2000.

29241. There are two churches in the parish?—There are two charges in Gairloch, and two churches in connection with our charge—one at Aultbea and the other at Poolewe.

29242. You have been present to-day and heard what has been stated?—I have.

29243. Have you taken any part in assisting any delegates from your neighbourhood in framing any petitions or statements?—No, I took no part in framing any of the statements.

29244. At the request of the delegates?—No, I refused to do that; but I met with the people, and said they should appoint their delegates, and I told them what points they would be specially examined on.

29245. Then you left matters entirely to themselves?—I did.

29246. And so far as you are aware have the matters which have come before us to-day been spontaneous emanations from the people themselves?—I believe they are entirely.

29247. Do you wish to make any statement?—No doubt there were some questions brought up to-day which I knew would be brought up. One was with respect to rent. I never heard any complaint from any

BOSS.

Poolewe.

Rev. Donald Dingwall.

of Sir Kenneth's tenantry about rack rents until the questions about the matters before the Commissioners were observed by the people, and then I heard of only one individual who complained of his rent being too high.

29248. I suppose I may take it for granted that as a rule the crofts are small?—Too small, and the townships too much crowded. It is impossible for the people ever to rise out of their poverty in the present condition of the crofts.

29249. In point of fact, the rent is really earned elsewhere in the country, or from the sea?—Almost wholly. I only know two or three of the crofters who can sell to any extent, and the majority of them are not able to keep stock on the hill—few of them are able to do so.

29250. Do you think that, upon the whole, contrasting what they have been for the last eight years with their condition at the beginning of that period, is their condition better or worse?—I would not say there has been much change in my day; but old people say that the population of the townships in all parts of the parish has been more than trebled, within their recollection. And the hill pasture which their forefathers had was taken from them without any reduction of rent being made; that is the universal cry. Then, as to why they are not bettering this land, Mr Mackenzie, the manager, brought forward the question of their title to good cultivation, namely, that there should be trenching, and that the *cas-chrom* or spade should be laid aside for the mattock and spade. But, then, the people have a universal feeling that that is not improving for themselves, and that they have no guarantee that they shall reap much benefit from it. Some with whom I have been speaking say that they won't do it; that they can point to croft after croft which has been improved by men who had to pay an extra rent for it perhaps immediately after, but not on Sir Kenneth's estate. I never heard of rent being raised or any obstacle thrown in the way of improving by the present proprietor. The people all speak kindly of the present proprietor, and there is reason to do it. But there were farms where there were clusters of crofters together, and the small patches of land that each had were near to each other so that good farms could be made out of them. We have several farms down at Aultbea which were turned into large farms, and all the people turned off the land. The farm of Airds, Drumchork, was one of these. The people were turned out of their holdings, and on to the hillsides to dig and delve, and they did not know but when that was turned into good land they might be again turned away elsewhere.

29251. And that has a discouraging effect upon the people?—Yes.

29252. Is that a comparatively recent affair within the last thirty years?—It is since the estate left the hands of the Davidsons.

29253. Can you suggest any remedy for the present state of matters—the crofts being small and the people crowded?—Not so long as any new proprietor may come in and take the land away from the people and turn them off, and make their hill pasture into large sheep farms.

29254. What I ask is do you see any remedy?—Not unless more land can be given to the people, and they have a guarantee of compensation, or a hold of the land for themselves and their descendants.

29255. We find that the acreage of the Gairloch estate in this parish is 158,000 acres, and that the population is under 4000; do you think these could be re-distributed a little better than they are?—Pretty extensive tracts of country have been put under deer in our parish. There are the farms of Fisherfield and Gruinard and Letterewe, but that is not the doing of the present proprietor, because it was in contemplation before he had possession. Then about Letterewe, the stock was sold off two years ago I think.

29256. Can you give us a rough estimate of the extent of Fisherfield ?—I cannot give the extent.

ROSS.

29257. Or of Letterewe ?—I cannot give the extent.

POOLEWE.

29258. Are they separate forests or one combined forest ?—I think they are in one forest ; that is my impression.

Rev. Donald Dingwall.

29259. Do you know whether any crofters have been removed there ?—No, but I know that some of the land now under deer there was in the hands of the people thirty years ago for summer shielings, such as Benhaschen.

29260. What is Benhaschen just now ?—Deer forest.

29261. What is the name of the forest ?—I don't know ; it is called Gruinard estate.

29262. Then it comes to this, that in the parish of Gairloch forests are extending ?—Yes.

29263. Do you know how the people look upon it ? Do they look at the deer forests with the same disfavour as they regard the sheep farms ?—Very much like that. Because the large sheep farms are very much in the hands of absentee farmers, and they take out of the place all they can get and leave very little to benefit the people.

29264. Is there a considerable population upon the estates of Gruinard and Letterewe still ?—Yes, a considerable population.

29265. Upon the whole you cannot say that the state of the crofters is satisfactory at this moment ?—I think it is very unsatisfactory, when there is no way of their doing better or of improving their condition—that is of improving their condition at home. They go from home and get their earnings there.

29266. We were told in Sutherland that the only remedy was to send half of the people away. Do you approve of that remedy ?—I would first fill the land at home which is under sheep and deer ; and then let the question arise when those parts of the country are filled up.

29267. Suppose the crofts were enlarged to the extent the people themselves wish, whereby a family could be supported from the produce, would you be in favour of any strict rule against the subdivision of the croft ?—I think subdivision is increasing the poverty more and more. It is the ruin of the crofters.

29268. Do you think if such a thing were done the people who suffer so much from subdivision would be inclined to strictly adhere to this rule and keep the croft entire ?—Family feelings influence them greatly, and a father having, perhaps, his son beside him would be very anxious to get leave to divide his croft and give a share of it to his son. I believe law would be required to control feelings of that kind.

29269. You think it would not do to trust to the feelings of the people ?—It would not do at all.

29270. *Mr Cameron.*—You mentioned that you told the people what points they would be examined upon. I suppose you mean you told them what points they would probably be examined upon ?—I took my cue from the newspapers with regard to that ; from the manner in which the delegates were examined in other districts.

29271. Did you recommend what they were to say ?—No, I did not tell them what to say ; they asked me to put what they had to say on the paper, but I declined.

29272. You did not tell them what to say ?—No, we have had conversations, and I have given my opinion, but I did not dictate to any person.

29273. You mentioned that the hill pasture was taken away forty years ago ?—I don't know what year.

29274. There has been no hill pasture taken away within forty years ?—

ROSS. There is one of the delegates who was here to-day who can speak to that.

Poolewe. 29275. But the principal portion of the hill pasture to which you have been referring was taken away forty years ago?—The shielings were taken away.

Rev. Donald Dingwall. 29276. A large quantity?—Yes, but there was hill pasture taken away more recently.

29277. Do you think the crofter of the present day, as a matter of fact, suffers from the hill pasture having been taken away from his father more than forty years ago?—Of course, just as any son will suffer from the loss of any privilege which his father had, and which he might expect to inherit.

29278. Would you go no further back than forty years, or would you say hill pasture taken away eighty years ago was a detriment also?—When it makes it impossible for a man now to live as comfortably as his father did when he had the hill pasture. When the portion left to him as his share dwindles down from one-twelfth to one-twentieth, he cannot live upon it and bring up a family.

29279. I agree with you. But while that could apply to a man who had his hill pasture taken away from him last year, would it apply to a man whose pasture was taken away 40 or 100 years ago? Would you not fix some limit within which a man has by experience, or his father's experience, managed to get on without it?—No doubt some have managed to get on. On the hill here he may get on by adding the fishing to what he had at that time; but now the townships have been so crowded that there is no way of getting on.

29280. But the townships were more crowded long ago?—No. When these shielings were taken from them, and when the crofters were put out of the other townships, that the latter might be turned into larger farms, the existing townships were overcrowded.

29281. But you don't feel inclined to draw any limit as to the remoteness of the period from which you may date the deterioration of the people—you think the people suffer from what was done 100 years ago?—Not so far back. We have men here to-day who were themselves deprived of these hill pastures, and who have been dwindling down ever since.

29282. Within the life of a generation people have deteriorated, but you are not prepared to go beyond that?—I have not thought of it.

29283. You don't think it is a better test to take the actual condition of the men, and the area of arable ground and stock he keeps, and the rent he pays. Don't you think that is a better test than to look at what happened so many years ago? Would you not rather take these, and see whether the hill pasture is proportionate to the arable ground and the rent proportionate to all of them, and take that as the basis upon which you would estimate whether a man is comfortable or not?—But I find the rents remain the same while the land is being taken from them.

29284. But if the rent represents a fair value for what the man is in the enjoyment of, would not that satisfy you?—Yes, if there were sufficient land that men could live on it. But when the land is such that a man cannot live upon it or bring up a family on it, he cannot attend fully to his land nor to any other business.

29285. Your idea is that the man should be a farmer entirely and have a croft large enough to support himself and his family without fishing or extra labour?—It would only be then that I could say the crofter population were comfortable.

29286. Then in order to bring about that happy state of things what would you suggest?—I hope I am not understood as referring to hill

pasture or land being taken from Sir Kenneth's tenantry; I don't understand that, with respect to the population generally the townships must be broken up to a certain extent, and as crofts became vacant—the people may give them up—the other crofts should be made larger and the people in the town fewer, or the poverty will continue.

ROSS.

POOLEWE.

Rev. Donald Dingwall.

29287. You recommend that it should be done by a gradual process?—It would be difficult to begin otherwise without dealing harshly with people.

29288. Would not that take a long time?—Not long in some townships.

29289. But if you take the crofts only as they fall vacant you will, of course, have to wait a good many years?—It changes very often. It would be a very difficult matter to remove some of those who are already in possession.

29290. Might you not take advantage of a large sheep farm occupied by a sheep farmer, or a deer forest, and then, when a suitable opportunity occurs, might you not place some of the crofters there?—The difficulty would be for them to stock it.

29291. You see no way out of the difficulty except waiting for occasional vacancies amongst the crofters?—I think so.

29292. *The Chairman.*—Don't you think it might occasionally be possible, without transferring the people to new places and imposing upon them the necessity of new buildings and stocks, to increase the area of the existing holdings by adding land taken from the large farms adjacent to the existing holdings?—In some townships that could not be done. And then the matter of cultivation of the land would be a difficult matter for the people. They could not, except for a short time in winter, trench or take in any new land.

29293. You don't think they could add by their own industry to the area of the existing holdings if the land were offered?—No, I don't think many of them could.

JOHN MACKENZIE, Crofter, Laid (74)—examined.

29294. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—You have a written statement?—Yes. 'To the Royal Crofter's Commission, Laid, 31st July 1883. My Lord and Gentlemen—I beg most respectfully to submit to your consideration that the people of Laid, whom I represent, are in poor circumstances—deeply in debt to the proprietor and the local merchants. They are all, with very few exceptions, crofters and fishermen, and their lots are small, and for some time back unproductive—now in a good season, the crops shall scarcely support the people for six months. They humbly ask increase of land, both arable and pasture, fixity of tenure, compensation for improvements on land, offices, and dwelling houses, and the construction of a harbour at Laid, which is a most suitable place for a fishing station—there is not another more so on the west coast. A great fishing industry might be created here—shoals of fish pass and repass our coast, but we cannot get to them for want of shelter and proper accommodation to boats on our shore. Our fishermen, wherever they fish, go as far to sea as others, and those who go from this locality to Wick and the east coast for hire are in the greatest demand, and get the highest wages in these great centres of fishing industry. These facts are notorious, and prove that they have energy, skill, and aptitude for marine pursuits inferior to none; but as soon as they return home they are under the

John Mackenzie.

ROSS.

POOLEWE.

John
Mackenzie.

' necessity of hauling their boats ashore for the want of proper quays.
 ' And the few who venture to fish here, in the winter season, lose too often
 ' their boats and fishing materials. The bay of Gruinard is magnificent,
 ' both broad and deep and protected by a breakwater of beautiful islands,
 ' but the landing port at Laid is dangerous in stormy weather, and always
 ' destructive to boats, but could be made an excellent harbour. Very
 ' recently a boat from Ullapool, while entering our port, having on board
 ' two clergymen and twelve other passengers, in day light and comparatively
 ' calm weather, struck on a rock and instantly sank in the deep water, the
 ' two ministers were good swimmers, and by their prompt and active
 ' assistance, with the willing help of others who happened to be near—all
 ' the lives were saved, but some never recovered from the shock. The
 ' proprietor, Mr Bankes, and Mrs Bankes are benevolent and truly kind to all
 ' on their estates, and live among us, which we consider a great blessing—
 ' but they cannot make us all comfortable farmers—therefore our attention
 ' is principally directed to the abundant and inexhaustible treasures of the
 ' sea for a livelihood. We hope with great confidence that this auspicious
 ' event—the visit of the Royal Commission—is the harbinger of the boon
 ' we ask, viz., the construction of a safe and commodious harbour at Laid
 ' by state aid, local effort is out of the question for such an undertaking.
 ' Emigration here is unpopular—the people are attached to their native
 ' place, and shall not leave it if they can.—JOHN MACKENZIE, delegate
 ' from Laid.'

29295. Did you write this paper?—No.

29296. Who wrote it?—The schoolmaster of the place.

29297. Were all the people met when you were elected their delegate
 to come here?—Yes.29298. I suppose all the young men are away at the fishing?—Yes, the
 greater number are away.29299. Where are most of them just now?—Some are at Wick, some
 at Fraserburgh, and some at Peterhead.29300. I suppose none of the old men go to the east coast fishing?—
 Yes, the old go too.29301. Do you think a good harbour might be made at Laid?—
 There is no better site than in the bay of Laid.

29302. What side of the bay is it on?—This side of the bay.

29303. What wind is it most exposed to?—It opens to the north and
 north-east.

29304. Is it sheltered from the west and south-west?—Yes.

29305. Have you any large boats there, or are they the small boats of
 the west coast?—Yes, we have large boats; but they are away at the
 fishing just now. There are three or four large boats belonging to the
 place.

29306. Do these belong to the men themselves?—Yes.

29307. What did they cost them?—£120 or thereabout.

29308. Are they of the same kind as the Wick boats?—Much the same
 as the Wick and Peterhead boats.

29309. How many men are in each?—Six.

29310. Are they all partners in a boat?—There are five that have
 shares in the boat, and they hire the sixth man.29311. What do they do with the boats when they come back from the
 fishing?—If there is any winter fishing in the lochs they go to fish there.
 They have the boats up high and dry in the winter.29312. Could a pier be made at a moderate expenc about the bay of
 Laid?—All quays cost money; but there would be an admirable basin
 within it if a quay were built where I have mentioned.

29313. Would a rough stone quay, made with lime or mortar, be of any use?—Yes, there are very good stones; it might do very well.

ROSS.

POOLEWE.

John

Mackenzie.

29314. Have you anything of the kind at all?—No. If there were such a quay the loss of life would not be so great. We remember a boat full of herring being brought in, and she could not make a landing here, and they attempted to round the point and were never heard of more.

29315. Was any attempt to build a quay ever made at this place?—Never.

29316. Did they never ask the proprietor to assist them in getting up a quay to protect themselves?—Well, he put a bit of a quay up in the place where the steamer calls—a small place where a vessel can scarcely come in at all times of the tide.

29317. I suppose the kind of quay mentioned in this paper would be a pier with a breakwater, behind which the boats could lie in any wind; is that the idea?—Yes, a quay that would afford safety for the big boats.

29318. How many boats are there?—There are about ten boats belonging to the district, but they cannot approach the shore when the wind blows from the north.

29319. How many families are there in Laid?—Twenty.

29320. Would that harbour be of use to any townships round about as well as to your own?—Yes, it would suit the district about as well.

29321. *The Chairman.*—What kind of boats did they use when you were a young man?—Boats of thirty or forty feet keel.

29322. And how large are those they use now?—Twenty-five or thirty feet when I was young, and now they are thirty-five to forty. They were open when I was young, now they are decked.

29323. Do you approve of the decking?—I consider the decked boat the best; the most powerful.

29324. What other kind of boats do the fishers here use besides those. Do you fish for lobsters?—Fourteen to eighteen feet keel boats.

29325. What fishing are they for?—Lobster and long line fishing; and all sorts of fish about the shore.

29326. Do you use the smaller boats still?—No, none smaller than fourteen feet.

29327. You have just the two classes of boats?—Yes.

29328. What wood are the large boats made of?—Larch fir; we get them from Wick and Peterhead.

JOHN M'LEAN, Crofter, Sand, Gruinard (72)—examined.

29329. *The Chairman.*—Do you remember before the clearances were John M'Lean. made on the Gruinard estate?—I remember of the estate being held by five proprietors—the two Davidsons, Henry and Duncan, and three Bankes's; I remember when the people were evicted from the estate. That was done in old Bankes's time.

29330. When the people were evicted what became of the old arable ground from which they were turned out?—The land was taken by other people. The chamberlain we had at the time took £30 worth of our grazings unknown to the proprietor and gave it to other people. The arable ground of those who were cleared away was given to people who were in the place.

29331. Did the people who remained in the place benefit by the others being turned out?—I cannot tell. The people are in that place yet.

ROSS. 29332. Did the cottars who had no land before get the places which were vacated by those who were driven out?—Some of those who received land were cottars without land; others were crofters there, and their holdings were enlarged.

Poolewe. John M'Lean. 29333. Are the holdings in this place—Sand—rather better than usual?—I cannot tell whether the crofts are better or not. They were injured by the pasture ground being taken away; and the rent is high.

29334. I see there are two big crofts, one belonging to Alexander Mackenzie and another to the widow of Donald Mackenzie—how were those big crofts formed?—They are not much better since the hill was taken from them and low ground was taken from them—what they had for the cattle.

29335. Are these two people comfortable in their crofts?—Middling, but the hill is taken from them.

29336. What sort of houses have they—slated houses?—No, very poor houses.

29337. One, I see, pays £21?—Well, the house is not a great deal.

29338. Has the widow not a good house?—She has an ordinary house. The house would do if the land were good; but it is not good.

Osgood Henry Mackenzie, Proprietor and Farmer, Inverewe (41)—examined.

Osgood Henry Mackenzie. 29339. *The Chairman.*—The last witness told us that their fishing boats were made in whole or in part of larch wood. I see you have been an extensive planter; have you ever made any estimate of what the value of the wood would be in this country?—No, I have not. At present I think the price of the wood is very low; much lower than what it was some years ago.

29340. Is that the case even with larch wood?—I cannot say. I have never sold any wood; my wood is all young; but I think it is all low.

29341. You have probably planted your wood with a view to ornament?—Yes; and the trees are quite young.

29342. How do you find the larch thrive?—It thrives very well in some parts, but I have planted it in rather bad soil. I think, however, planting would do a great deal of good to the country.

29343. And would be eventually profitable?—I think so.

29344. If you had, at the present time, larch in a state of maturity, would you not find a good market for the sale of the trees?—I have heard that the market is not good for any kind of wood—not very good.

29345. But is there not a considerable improvement going on in the building of better houses?—Yes, all the new houses are good compared with what they were.

29346. And should that not create a demand for timber?—It should.

29347. Have you planted a great deal of hard wood besides larch?—No, I have planted but little altogether. If I had more money I should like to plant thousands of acres, but it is rather expensive work.

29348. Planting involves not only the employment of labour, but a good deal of permanent labour?—A great deal. That can be seen in Loch Broom, which will give work for many years, and it has given a good deal of employment in Gairloch for many years.

29349. Is the wood cut on the Gairloch estate used for the domestic purposes of the country as well as for roofing?—Yes.

29350. Also for fencing?—Yes, for the posts.

29351. Is fencing increasing now in the country?—Very much; everybody wants fences, even the crofters. ROSS.
29352. So that the demand for stocks for wire fences would alone make a considerable market for the small wood?—Except when people are using iron entirely. In this wet climate wood soon rots when it is not good. POOLEWE.
29353. Are you a sheep farmer?—I am to a small extent.
29354. What kind of sheep?—About eight hundred cheviots.
29355. We have heard a great deal about the deterioration of the pasture in this country owing to the extensive use of sheep upon the ground, is that consistent with your experience?—There is no doubt about it.
29356. What do you attribute that to?—Because the sheep feed during the day time and go up and lie on the rocks at night and leave the manure there; whereas cattle always lie on the best places at night.
29357. You mix the cattle and sheep?—Yes, but I have only lately taken to cattle.
29358. Do you find the introduction of cattle both useful to the pasture and profitable in the market?—It is certainly useful to the pasture, but I don't know that there will be much profit made out of them.
29359. What class of cattle do you use?—Pure West Highland.
29360. Do you find that shorthorn crosses are being introduced here?—We have not tried them here, but it is a very good cross.
29361. Has anyone tried it?—Nobody in this parish.
29362. Do you think it is likely to be tried?—I don't think it is very likely; it is so troublesome to be constantly buying in fresh Highland heifers.
29363. You would not like to see the cross propagate itself?—I don't think that is a very good system, getting cross bulls to the cross cows. It has not been found good with sheep.
29364. Is there any improvement visible in the crofters' stock?—A great improvement.
29365. So that they are getting better prices?—Yes, four times what they got thirty-five years ago.
29366. *Mr Cameron.*—What other employment have the people besides what they obtain on their own crofts in this district—apart from the wood planting?—Very little indeed.
29367. I suppose, except upon Sir Kenneth's estate and upon his own works, there is, practically, none at all?—Very little. I give a little, and Mr Bankes used to give a little, but nothing to benefit the people in any way.
29368. Do they get much employment from shooting tenants?—A good deal, for a short time.
29369. That only lasts while the shooting tenants are here?—Some of them have gardeners.
29370. Do tourists employ many?—Yes, a good many are employed by hotel keepers—they are employed as boatmen for the fishermen.
29371. And it gives them a fair market for eggs and poultry?—Yes, it has raised the prices.
29372. What do they get for eggs at the present time?—About 6d. a dozen.
29373. And when the cattle were so cheap they got much less I suppose?—I remember then getting 2d. a dozen.
29374. What do they get for a chicken?—One shilling.
29375. It was mentioned in the examination of the first witness that the manager kept a shop in the village of Strath Gairloch?—That was a mistake; he certainly did not.

ROSS. 29376. Do you know anything about the privileges which the manager has?—He has no privilege whatever.

Poolewe. 29377. Has anybody on Gairloch estate the right to keep a shop?—
Osgood Henry Mackenzie. Every one.

Mackenzie. 29378. *The Chairman.*—Is there any of the land in this parish now occupied as a deer forest which would be available for planting trees?—I don't think there is very much in the parish. There is a great deal of land under sheep available for planting, but I don't think there is any under deer.

29379. You think there is very little forest area?—Very little of Gairloch or of Kinlochewe.

29380. Are remains of trees found in the bogs and mosses?—Yes, very large magnificent trees.

29381. Of what kind?—Almost all Scotch fir, but some oak.

29382. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You have no crofters yourself?—No.

29383. What is about the acreage of your estate?—About 13,000 acres.

29384. Did the whole of it once belong to the Gairloch family?—None of it, except Kernsery.

29385. To whom did Inverewe belong?—To Sir George Mackenzie of Coul.

29386. In former times, before it came into your possession, were there not a number of small tenants in it?—Yes.

29387. Were they removed all at one time or at different times?—I think there were three sets of tenants removed within the memory of man.

29388. You stated to Lord Napier you thought there was not much of the acreage under deer that would plant, and you immediately added that the bogs were filled with wood?—Yes.

29389. Is not that a little inconsistent?—Where there is a great depth of wet peat you would require to remove that or drain it before trees would grow, because the trees are mostly on the hard, the peat has grown since.

29390. But that would only apply to peat bogs?—Yes.

29391. Is there any reason why larches should not grow on the bogs?—There are a great many hard bits that would grow Scotch fir. I meant to say I did not think the deer forests in Gairloch were suitable—probably from their being on the higher ground and poor soil.

29392. You have been present all day?—Yes.

29393. And have heard all the people have stated?—Yes.

29394. Can it be considered that the present position of the crofters in this parish, apart from the earnings they make in the south, is satisfactory?—No; I don't think so. We are always liable to poverty.

29395. Can you suggest any remedy?—I should suggest that they should be encouraged to emigrate, and that fishing villages should be made.

29396. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—You heard the witness from Laid speak of the want of a harbour for fishermen there; do you think there is, about the coast here, a want of accommodation to encourage fishermen?—Yes.

29397. Are there any particular places you would consider eligible for the erection of a quay?—I think Melvaig and Laid.

29398. Would it afford accommodation and protection to a large district of fishermen?—Yes, there are three large crofter townships there, which might be made much more comfortable if they had a pier.

29399. Could it be done without any great expenditure of money?—I think the Laid one might, but that at Melvaig would be more costly.

29400. *The Chairman.*—Is there any natural reef that could be used as a foundation?—There is a rock which runs out, and, if there were a

little bit put out at right angles from it; it might make a good breakwater. Laid is about three miles from Aultbea.

29401. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Do you think if a considerable number of the crofters devoted themselves more exclusively to the fishing it would be an advantage to them?—I think it would. I think they would be better fishers, and the others would be better crofters.

29402. Has the mode of fishing here improved during your experience?—I should say not very much. There is one place at Isle Horrisdale where the people are more energetic. I don't think they are very energetic at present.

29403. *The Chairman.*—Can you suggest any reason for the superior energy of the people there?—It is difficult to say what the reason is. They had very little land there; they were on an island—and had only a bit of potato land, and generally no cow, I think.

MALCOLM M'LENNAN, Crofter, Melon Charles (64), assisted by **KENNETH M'LEAN**, Crofter, Melon Charles (60)—examined.

29404. *The Chairman.*—Have you a statement which you wish to read?—We have:—‘The chief cause of our straitened circumstances is that we have too little land. Owing to this we cannot work the land so as to do it justice. We have all the land we have continually under crop. The land cannot keep a stock of cattle sufficient to supply it with manure. We cannot have any part of it under grass. The soil is thin in many places, and rocky, and some of the lots are under two acres. Before the last division, twenty-five crofters held what is now occupied by fifty families; there are besides nine cottars who have no land. The twenty-five crofters had the whole land for £110; we do not know the exact rent paid now, but we know it is much increased. Between £50 and £60 are now paid for the hill pasture, which the twenty-five crofters had free. The best part of the hill pasture is now given out as lots, and no reduction made in the rents. We had Government money for reclaiming the land. We got the value of the work we did in meal; the interest of this money is still a burden on us, though we were told at the time it would be paid up in twenty years. It is right to add that all these changes were made before the present proprietor came to the estate—the greater part when Sir Kenneth was a minor—by the trustees and factors. There have been no changes in Sir Kenneth's time. We most willingly give him credit as being a kind, considerate, and benevolent landlord.—**MALCOLM M'LENNAN**, delegate, from North Melon.’

Malcolm
M'Lennan,
and Kenneth
M'Lean.

29405. *Mr Cameron.*—You say that the rents have not been increased of late years, when was the last increase?—Forty years ago; it was before Sir Kenneth's time.

29406. When was the division of the lands?—At the same time.

29407. The rents were increased when the division took place?—Yes.

29408. Have you any idea as to what the crofters would like to get?—The young people wish for more land, and the old people wish for cheap land, as cheap as it was when their fathers possessed it.

29409. You mean that the young people would like to get more land and to pay a fair rent for it?—Yes, they would expect that; but they don't see the land suitable for them within reach.

29410. What happens in your district when a vacancy occurs from death and a man has no son?—*Kenneth M'Lean.*—The regulation is that if the next door crofter should be a suitable man, and could take up the

ROSS

POOLEWE

Osgood Henry

Mackenzie.

ROSS.

croft, it would be added to his. But it almost always happens that it is given to another man. The wish of Sir Kenneth would be to increase the crofts.

Malcolm
M'Lennan,
and Kenneth
M'Lean.

29411. Does the other man come in from another place?—It is a new man perhaps from the same township.

29412. Is the new man a cottar or where does he come from?—Anyone will get it who is on Sir Kenneth's own estate. He will choose the one who is most suitable for it.

29413. And what becomes of the croft when the man leaves?—Another gets it.

29414. Another crofter is brought on to Sir Kenneth's property from another estate?—Not now; it was so once.

29415. So that as the joining together of the crofts goes on, each crofter will have more land?—No, I cannot see how that would be possible unless something would come in the way to diminish the people.

29416. Are there many cottars in your place?—There are a few, but there were more formerly than there are now.

29417. How do they earn their living?—Fishing of all kinds, and anything else that may turn up.

29418. Do you consider your rent fair?—We do not know very much about it, but a good while ago there was money advanced to trench the land, and at that time we were promised—it was during Sir Kenneth's minority—that the interest charged would cease in twenty years; but the interest is continued.

29419. I suppose the value of the improved land is the same as it was ten years ago?—So far as I can judge of that—I am not a very good farmer—the land is not so good as it was some ten years ago. It has been successively cropped since I was a boy at least. The amount of the arable land is so small that we cannot give any portion of it rest. There are a few who are beginning, now and again, to leave portions of it out to rest, in the belief that the remaining portion will yield better crops than the whole would have done by continuous cropping.

29420. *The Chairman.*—We were told by the previous witness that Mr Donald Mackenzie, manager on the Gairloch estate, was in the habit of trading in cattle. Can you tell us anything about that. Did you ever hear of it?—I have heard of it before.

29421. Has Mr Donald Mackenzie got a croft or small farm in his own occupancy?—I believe he has some land about his house, but not a large extent of it.

29422. When Mr Donald Mackenzie purchases cattle, does he purchase them in the open market from everybody, or does he go round and ask the crofters to sell him their cattle?—I can tell very little about it; but I remember his buying two cows in my own place, and I know the people who sold them were not in arrears or in debt, and that they rather pressed him to buy them than otherwise. I cannot tell anything more about it.

29423. Is there any dissatisfaction felt in connection with his practice in this respect?—He didn't buy much in the district where I am, and I never heard a word of complaint about it.

29424. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Would it be safe or prudent for them to complain?—If he oppressed them in any way it would be quite prudent of them to complain of it.

DONALD MACKENZIE, Manager—recalled.

29425. *The Chairman*.—As the statement was voluntarily made by the last witness, I wish you to have an opportunity to explain about this alleged custom of purchasing cattle?—I hold a farm in the low country—about 100 acres arable;—and I also hold about 190 acres of pasture here, a small island which was taken off a large farm, and about 110 acres at my own house; and I never bought a beast yet on the Gairloch estate or anywhere else except with hard cash and with the full consent of the seller; indeed, I have been pressed to buy cattle, but would not accept of them unless they suited me.

29426. Where is this low country farm?—On the Conon estate, in the parish of Urquhart.

29427. And you buy cattle to take them there and feed them?—No, I buy them when I require a cow to kill, or a few beasts for grazing. I buy them sometimes and keep them on my own grass and sell them again; but I never bought an animal for which I did not pay hard cash like any other man. I am not a cattle dealer.

29428. And you do this with the full knowledge and consent of Sir Kenneth?—Yes; I don't know what the meaning of this cry is.

29429. *Mr Cameron*.—In the course of these purchases has it never happened that you have endeavoured to buy beasts from a crofter, and have failed in the matter of price, and that he has sold them to somebody else?—Yes. I buy cattle in the market. I don't make a habit of buying cattle. I buy a few in the year; I don't remember when I bought a beast from a crofter.

29430. But you have bargained with a crofter as you have done with other people?—Yes.

29431. And if you didn't agree about the price the crofter has not sold you the beast?—Yes, that is so.

29432. And you have dealt with the crofter as any other cattle buyer would deal?—Quite so; and I don't find it a bit easier to buy better from a crofter than from anyone else. They are quite able to take care of themselves.

29433. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh*.—Do you consider it consistent with your office to transact or deal with people who are very much under you in this way, in buying their animals?—I have never made a practice of it.

29434. Do you consider it consistent with your office as factor or ground-officer to transact, with crofters and people who are dependent on your good will, in the matter of buying beasts from them?—I would not consider it right to do it to any extent; but I think it would be rather hard if a fellow might not buy a cow or a stirk once or twice in a year. It is so little that I really do, that there could be nothing said about it. I don't believe it would be right to do it to any extent on a large scale.

29435. Have you been reading the reports of the evidence given in Skye?—Yes.

29436. And you observed that complaints were made that the factors or bailiffs were in the habit of buying and selling cattle?—Yes.

29437. Do you not deal in meal considerably?—I will tell you how I did with it. I brought meal home some years ago for the work people, and I gave it to them so cheap that I was bothered by other people, and that is more the people's fault than mine. I was anxious for several years to get out of it. I would be glad to give the trade up.

29438. Do you deal in anything else but meal?—I supply all the crofters and farmers with seed, and the hotel-keepers with corn.

ROSS.

POOLEWE

Donald
Mackenzie

ROSS.

29439. You have a regular store?—I have not.

POOLEWE.

29440. Where is it stored?—It is not stored at all. I get orders for it, and people come to the steamers and take it away.

Donald

29441. But you get a commission?—I do.

Mackenzie.

29442. Do you state positively that Sir Kenneth Mackenzie is aware of these transactions of yours?—I think he is; everybody is aware, I think.

29443. Are you aware of any dissatisfaction being expressed in any manner by people of the district at your dealing in this manner?—Do you mean by the people?

29444. Yes.—The reverse of that. They complain that I wont have more dealings with them; and I should be glad if you took any man at random, in the crowd, and examine him upon that point.

29445. *The Chairman.*—I think it is fair, as you have said, that we should do that.

JOHN MACDONALD, Crofter, Opinan (39)—examined.

John
Macdonald.29446. *The Chairman.*—I see you have a statement?—Yes.—‘We, the undersigned tenants of Sir Kenneth S. Mackenzie, Bart., are very much surprised, grieved, and disappointed, to hear for our own and others’ sakes that an attempt is proposed to be made in the interest of certain shopkeepers alone, to object to Mr Donald Mackenzie supplying the tenantry with a change of seed oats annually, as he has been kindly doing to our very great benefit for some time past. Were it not for Mr Mackenzie, the one-half of the ground on this property would not be laid down; he is also a public benefactor in various other ways—for instance, he has compelled the meal-dealers to reduce the price of their meal very considerably, while, at the same time, he invariably kept very superior meal, and, whether people had money or not to pay for it, he always supplied them ungrudgingly. Moreover, Mr Mackenzie, for the convenience and great benefit of the Gairloch estate tenantry, kept eight superior bulls, for the use of which he makes a very moderate charge; but at the same time he never objected to the tenants keeping bulls themselves of the right kind, if able and willing to do so. Through his instrumentality the breed of stock has greatly improved, and fetched better prices in the markets than formerly, as we all very well know and appreciate. The Royal Commissioners and the outside public would have heard more of poverty in Gairloch, were it not for the forethought, consideration, and kindness of Mr Mackenzie. Every person interested in the prosperity and well-being of the people of Gairloch would be sorry that anything should be said or done against Mr Mackenzie’s transactions, to dissuade him or discourage him in any way.’ Signed by JOHN MACPHERSON.

29447. Who wrote this?—A lady belonging to the place was the writer, but we ourselves are the authors of it.

29448. Thirty-six signatures, all made by the people?—Yes, these are the genuine signatures of the people.

29449. You never heard any complaint among the tenantry with regard to the dealings of Mr Mackenzie in meal?—No. It is from him I buy my seed oats and guano. I have taken these things from him as a crofter for the last five years, and if I could get them cheaper anywhere else I would go there.

29450. Have you more confidence in the quality of the seed and the guano, because you get it from the factor for the estate?—No, not par-

ticularly because it is supplied by the factor, but because it turns out well every year.

ROSS.

29451. But surely you have always got the factor here whom you could reproach if it were not good. Is it not an advantage to have it on the spot?—I would take it from the one that I could get it best from, and cheapest.

POOLEWE.

John
Macdonald.

29452. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—How was it known beforehand that any such statement as that was to be made here to-day?—We heard it remarked about a week ago; and we were afraid it might be brought up, and we thought if it were brought up, the effect of it would be that he would cease to supply us.

29453. Would you like to see the business and mercantile transactions in Gairloch under the factor and ground officer?—I cannot exactly tell about that, but I know that it is from him that I get my own supplies.

29454. Would you or would you not like to see the mercantile transactions of Gairloch in the hands of the factor?—It is quite possible that, if it were entirely in the hands of the factor, it might be the worse for us—that is quite possible; but at present there is opposition—and perhaps I may get advantage of it.

29455. Is it not more likely that the fact of business being carried on by the factor and ground officer will kill all opposition than the reverse?—That might be, but when there are a good number of merchants, as there are, there is opposition, and we get the advantage; we go to the cheapest man.

29456. The factor, then, is underselling the other merchants?—I think he is.

29457. You say in this paper the complaint has been made in the interest of certain shopkeepers alone; who are the shopkeepers?—I cannot tell who the traders referred to are, but we heard that traders were complaining that he was injuring their trade, and we did not want that he should be put down because we considered him the better man.

29458. Did any of the traders appear here to-day?—Not as delegates, that I am aware of.

29459. What was the meaning of getting up this paper then?—The reason of getting up the paper was, that we heard the matter was to be taken up as against the factor to-day, and we thought perhaps the effect of it might be used against him in such a way that he would cease to trade, and we consider him the best trader of them all. For five years I have been taking supplies from the same man, and I would not get credit from another man.

29460. By whom was it supposed that the matter would be taken up against the factor since no delegate from the shopkeepers has appeared?—I cannot name any man who was to have taken up the matter to-day. We were told the matter was to be taken up in the interests of the local merchants.

29461. Have the local merchants no right to make a complaint?—Yes, and they have the right to make it here.

29462. Have they done so to-day?—I did not hear it.

[ADJOURNED.]

ROSS.

SHIELDAIG, ROSS, WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 1, 1883.

SHIELDAIG.

*Present :—*Lord NAPIER and ETTRICK, K.T., *Chairman.*

Sir KENNETH S. MACKENZIE, Bart.

DONALD CAMERON, Esq., M.P. of Lochiel.

C. FRASER-MACKINTOSH, Esq., M.P.

Sheriff NICOLSON, LL.D.

Professor MACKINNON, M.A.

KENNETH MACKENZIE, Seaman and Fisherman, Shieldaig (50)—examined.

Kenneth Mackenzie. 29463. *The Chairman.*—Have you been elected a delegate?—Yes, for those who lost their houses by the former proprietors in this village.

29464. Was there a public meeting?—There is no one in the village of the old race that would make a public meeting but widows and poor people, and that sort. It is not the present sort in the village that are the old residents.

29465. But there are some heads of families?—Yes, and there are some of them here.

29466. How many chose you?—Four or five.

29467. How many heads of families do you think there are paying rent in the village?—I think six or seven.

29468. Have you got a statement?—No, I have no business on the land but for fishing and trading by sea.

29469. Make your verbal statement—say what you have to say?—I would prefer to say it in the Gaelic. The village of Shieldaig was built in 1800 under authority of the king. No person could be got to build it until the year 1810, when strict orders came that it must be built; unless they would build the village within three years they would require to quit it. This is the reason why it was built: I will read it myself.—‘Great destruction of property at sea by ships of the French navy between the island of Lewis and the mainland in 1800. Part of the speech of His Grace the Duke of Argyle, who was a member of Admiralty at that time.—‘We are able to build ships, but the great question is how to man them? ‘Every person who has knowledge knows that a ship of war is a costly article: to trust such an article to the scum of cities and towns, such as tailors and shoemakers, country shepherds and ploughmen, would be foolishness. We want different sort of people. The greater portion of the people fit for manning our ships lies between Corswall Point and the Orkney Isles, and unless the Highland proprietors grant sites for building villages, we are not able to man all our ships at a short notice. ‘In this year, 1800, His Majesty George III. and his Lords in Council marked the village of Shieldaig for bringing youths to the knowledge of the sea. The site is good for a village, having a fall of water from 15 to 18 feet. His Majesty’s Lords in Council promised the best of terms to a society for building the said village on a lease renewable for ever. Society formed 1810, site measured having a speeching green, walking greens, bleeching green, and cross roads. Chief members of the society, and the sums of money advanced for trade:—J. M’Kenzie, Esq., Derbyshire; Walter Bain, Esq., £700, city of Glasgow; J. M’Kenzie & Sons, £900; D. M’Donald & Co., £600; M. M’Kenzie, cooper, £500. By those men the village was built. The king promised them £1 for every ton registered that a vessel would be; so a vessel of

50 tons was getting £50 for fitting her out for sea. He promised them 7s. of price for every barrel of herring they would get, and sell it where they liked; £1 for every ton of cod and ling; and he promised them a justice of the peace and a schoolmaster. He promised them salt without duty, and the duty at that time was about £8 a ton; and he promised them salt without duty—they were getting it for 15s. a ton or the like. He promised them to run a line of road between this and Loch Carron, and they made that line and kept it up to the time of Lord Stewart, and then it was thrown on the county. He promised them more, but I cannot recollect the other promises. But every promise of them was fulfilled in my own day. And the village stood one of the finest villages in the west until the year 1859. The village, then the property of the state of Applecross, came into the hands of Her Grace the Duchess of Leeds, and the rule was in the hands of the gamekeeper. The village was broken down. He promised them that they would get it on a lease renewable for ever, but these were the terms of the lease, that they would agree to remain under His Majesty's rules and laws, any person who would put sheep on the means of the village, £50 fine; any person who would have two shares in one name on the means of the village, £20 fine. Now, in this year when the gamekeeper got the rule, he abjured all these regulations which were laid down by the Government, and substituted some of his own. It was an article of the lease that it would fall if they would become drovers or shepherds. In 1859 the innkeeper and a local merchant asked that the place should be put under sheep, and they got permission; so that they placed some five hundred sheep upon it, and thus injured the stock of ewes and brought the people into poverty. Now, this innkeeper and merchant quarrelled with the people of the village, and they asked them to pay for the grazings. They began to ask that the people of the town should pay the wages of the shepherd for attending the sheep upon their own grazings. This was the beginning of trouble. The gamekeeper took the side of the innkeeper and merchant, for he preferred shepherds and sheep to mariners and sailors. Then the row began. Then he began to deprive those who opposed this measure of their land. And I will now tell what became of the people who were against this oppression. One of them went on a trip to Ireland with his vessel, and took a cargo to Ireland. We went to Ireland for a cargo, and the gamekeeper got two policemen who took the owner out of the vessel, and took him as a prisoner and rogue to Dingwall and kept him until both the vessel and cargo went by the winter and they were lost. After that the gamekeeper went to his house when he was from home, and took out all that was in the house and spoiled it, and would not allow any one to preserve it for him, to the value of £200—he was thinking it was something like that. The man is a poor wretched man and stops in the village yet.

29470. You must tell us shortly?—Well, that is the most of it all. The next proprietor that came was Sir John Stewart, and he took the houses from the widows and those people, and made his own property of them.

29471. Before the village was built whom did the place belong to—who was the proprietor?—Thomas Mackenzie, Applecross.

29472. Were there any people living here before the fishing settlement was made?—Yes, the place was given to five or six farmers before the village was built.

29473. Small farmers?—No, those were not small. There were no sheep at that time; the forester would not allow them.

29474. When the village was built was the ground lotted off, so much

ROSS.
—
SHEILDAIG.
—
Kenneth
Mackenzie.

- ROSS. arable given to each?—When the village was measured every lot was measured with it and every man took his own lot at that time.
- SHEELDAIG. 29475. A lot of arable ground?—Yes, twenty shares in the village.
- Kenneth Mackenzie. 29476. About how much ground did each get?—About an acre.
29477. Of arable land?—Arable land.
29478. Was there a large common pasture?—Plenty.
29479. And at that time how much did you think each lotter could keep—how much stock?—Two cows; that is the standard of the Government; they must not exceed two cows each.
29480. Any sheep on the hill?—No, they are fined if they keep sheep in this village.
29481. No sheep, nothing but cows—any horses?—No horse; they must keep to their trade.
29482. How does it stand now; how many lots are there in the village at present?—Twenty; they cannot be altered.
29483. Any subdivision?—No.
29484. How much stock do they keep?—There is no more than seven in the village just now I think. There is no one in the district that has a cow from the proprietor but strangers.
29485. Do they still have the same number of lots?—The same number is in the village, but two or three are given to one.
29486. How many cows does each keep?—Two cows for every lot if they like to keep them.
29487. What rent do they pay?—£3, 10s. for every lot.
29488. And who do they pay it to?—Mr Murray at present.
29489. Has the rent been raised or has it always been the same?—It is a fixed rent by Government; it must be about £60. On the improvement Sir John made he added £10 to the rent; and I think it is worth it; he put a fence round it and drained it, and the like of that.
29490. There has been no change in the hill pasture?—No.
29491. No change in the lots and no change in the rent except the £10?—No.
29492. There is no complaint about the land?—No, but may be there are other people in the village who complain for land, but my complaint is about the fishing.
29493. What is the real reason of the decay of the village; is it because those good regulations have been lost, or is it because the fish are lost?—No, the fish are not lost, but the regulations have been taken off the village. I have a vessel myself, and I was not given power to repair her, and she must fall over on her side.
29494. Is it true that the fish do not come in here as they used to do long ago?—Generally, they come some years; and some years not. But there is plenty of fish in general.
29495. In those old days when there was a bounty for the fishing, and when the people practised the fishing better, what sort of boats had they—large boats, or the same as they have now?—They had big fishing vessels and boats fishing then; and they were curing fish and sending them to the principal markets of the kingdom.
29496. Who supplied the people with those big fishing boats?—It was themselves who did it.
29497. The Government did not give them?—No, themselves were bound; those who advanced the money for the trade; they built the vessels by order of the Government, and took those vessels to the people for working them.
29498. They supplied the people with them?—They were bound to do that.

29499. Are there any of those vessels still left?—No, since the laws and rules were taken off the whole village is done.

ROSS.

29500. They have no large boats now?—There is not so much as a fishing boat since twenty three years back except one.

SHIELDAIG.

29501. They have small boats?—No, only boats fit for carrying ware and peats.

Kenneth Mackenzie.

29502. In other places there are fish-curers who supply the big boats; is there no fish-curer here who would supply these big boats?—No; there is no such thing here; it is the village itself that is working by fishing.

29503. Have you ever asked any fish-curer to come and establish himself here and bring boats?—He could not do anything unless the rules and laws of the village would be given back again and the village given to the people.

29504. Some of those rules were rules for bounty—paying so much for every cran or ton of fish; you know that the bounty system has been abolished everywhere?—Yes, but it is the byelaws of the village we want.

29505. What is that?—That the lease must be renewable for ever, and when the lease comes to an end in the village the trade is done.

29506. Do you mean the lease of houses?—Yes.

29507. But you said the rent has not been raised and no change made?—There is a difference in a parliamentary village between the means of the village and sites and stances. The proprietor may make a change if he likes in the means; that is when a man falls to poverty and cannot pay his share of the means he will give it to another; but the house and garden are fixed to him for ever.

29508. But suppose they had this fixity of tenure and poor people could always remain in the same house, how would that help the village to buy those good expensive boats?—It is the members in the village that are bound to set up the village—bound to work it up. If we could get the village we could build boats and vessels ourselves and set out to the fishing.

29509. Do you mean that the present proprietor of the village ought to fulfil the terms of the old leases?—That is what we want—will be keep all the rules of His Majesty or not? If the present proprietor keeps the village to himself, it is of no use then to the population under that rule.

29510. Has the present or the late proprietor turned anybody out?—Plenty—the late proprietor, Sir John Stewart.

29511. How long ago?—Sixteen or seventeen years ago, and less than that.

29512. But he is dead and gone now; has the present proprietor turned anybody out or made any changes?—Not yet.

29513. Have you any reason to apprehend that he intends to do it?—This is what I will say about the proprietors, unless the Government keeps the proprietors back we are gone.

29514. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Did you or your father own one of those building lots in the village?—Yes.

29515. Have you got it still?—No, it is in the hands of the proprietor; it is for that I am speaking and for other houses in the village.

29516. How did the proprietor become possessed of it?—By the game-keeper getting hold of the rule of the place.

29517. For how long was your lease—ninety-nine years?—Oh no, it is a lease renewable for ever.

29518. Was there a rent payable?—Ten shillings of feu.

29519. Was it always paid?—Yes, but he would not take it at last. They won't take the feus in this place.

29520. What did you do with your lease?—The leaseholders in this

ROSS village, because it is a parliamentary village—a great number had no written leases. There were no writings of that sort going about here, but just a parliamentary title the same as the schoolhouse under the Act. And there was no wall taken then less than 8 feet side walls.

SHIELDAIG. Kenneth Mackenzie. 29521. Did you get any money for that house when the proprietor took it?—No, and no other in the village who lost houses. The houses are in the hands of the proprietor in the most of the village.

29522. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—What was the name of the gamekeeper who did so much mischief to you?—Mr Fraser.

29523. What was the Christian name?—I don't remember.

29524. Is he here yet?—Oh! no.

29525. Who was the person who went to Ireland?—Donald Mackenzie, master of the "Enterprise."

29526. Is he yet alive?—Yes.

29527. Do any of the people in Shieldaig pay feu-duty?—Yes, from 5s. to 10s., and 15s. is the highest—7s. and 8s. they commonly are.

29528. Can the proprietor increase that rent?—I cannot tell that, unless he is able by Act of Parliament to increase it at the end of ninety-nine years.

29529. This place seems very poor?—No wonder.

29530. Will you again say why it has fallen into this poverty?—Yes, because His Majesty's bye-laws have been taken away and the gamekeeper's laws put into the place.

29531. Have you a copy of the bye-laws you refer to under the Act of Parliament?—We have the Act of Parliament for the villages, but we have not the bye-laws. The bye-laws are signed amongst the people.

29532. Is there a printed copy anywhere?—No; it is an old thing, and the village was broken down in that bad manner, and a great number of the writings were taken away and spoiled, and everything in the village. There were writings two hundred years old.

29533. The people that have got right to the lots have the same right of pasture that they had before?—Yes.

29534. And for the same amount?—The same amount except 10s. for fencing the place.

29535. You said there were twenty lots originally?—Yes, twenty shares.

29536. But there are not so many now?—Yes, there are, but there are three given to one.

29537. In how many hands are those twenty lots now?—I think seven or eight. But no one in the village knows better about the land than I.

29538. Is it against what you call the bye-laws for any man to have more than one lot?—Yes, because the Government wanted seamen and fishermen to fill up the navy in time of need.

29539. You said Sir John Stewart turned out some of the people—where from?—From the houses, and he took the best of the houses too.

29540. In this very village?—In this very village.

29541. Were they in arrear?—No, he would not take feu-duty at all.

29542. Did the people who were so used not employ a lawyer in Dingwall to defend them?—Every lawyer and every clergyman was against us at that time. It was our duty to give notice to the nearest clergyman, and we went to the minister of Applecross and Lochcarron, and when they got the thing they got as small as tailors.

29543. In place of standing up for the thing they got so small?—Yes, they got as small as tailors, and if these people would stand as men they would have been alive.

29544. Did you know a man of the name of Roderick Mackenzie?—
Yes; he came to the village about 1840.

ROSS.

SHIELDAIG.Kenneth
Mackenzie.

29545. Is he able to come out?—Yes, and he knows more about the land than I do, because I am not working the land, but am a seaman and fisherman.

29546. He knows better than anybody?—I think he knows more about his own business—what was that but work the land?

29547. What is it you want?—We want to have the village given us under Her Majesty's rules and bye-laws as it was given from His Majesty George III. and the Lords in Council.

29548. What more?—And that our houses would be given back, and allowing us to build boats and vessels to go to sea. There has not been a fishing boat in the village for twenty-three years back, and we have no vessels for carrying anything back and forward to us, and the country was in a miserable state before the railway was opened—nothing more. Although the people would get good crofts in this country, it is of no use to give them crofts unless the village is given to the parish; it is for the benefit of the parish that His Majesty granted the site. Our people are thinking if they get crofts they will get oats. No such thing unless they change the seed; and the country to get seed from is Ireland, and Kintyre for potatoes. Every inch of ground is marked out for seed and potatoes for this country; and every inch of ground from the mouth of the Bann to the mouth of the Belfast Lough for oats. It is worked out to us for oats. Although you get Scotch oats in this country they will grow but they will not grow meal. One measure of Irish oats is better than two of our own. And Ireland is good, but unless you change seed every three years it is a poor country, and the same with us. And to get the village would be a great benefit to the people.

GEORGE MACKENZIE, Crofter, Fasag, Loch Torridon (84)—examined.

29549. *Mr Cameron.*—Were you elected a delegate by the people, or did you come to speak for yourself?—I came for the place I reside in. George Mackenzie

29550. Did they elect you to speak for them?—I don't know that.

29551. You have come on your own behalf to speak for yourself and the people?—Yes, I can speak.

29552. You are a native of the place?—I am a native of Shieldaig. I went to Fasag in 1859.

29553. Who was the proprietor then in Torridon?—Colonel M'Barnet.

29554. How came you to go in 1859?—For some amusement to myself.

29555. Was there a vacancy?—Yes, this estate was sold at the time.

29556. Was that in 1859?—Yes.

29557. What were you before you went?—A crofter.

29558. How came you to lose your croft here?—The estate was sold.

29559. Did you get notice of removal or did you go for your own amusement?—I required to go.

29560. Were you removed by the proprietor from this place?—Oh! for certainty I was.

29561. Were many other people removed at the same time?—We were only in the town, three.

29562. Who got the houses you were removed from?—It was on the estate itself and no one occupied it.

29563. Were the houses pulled down?—Yes.

ROSS.

29564. There were houses in the village?—Yes.

SHEILDAIG.

29565. At that time used you to fish?—Yes, I used to fish.

George

29566. Was that your principal occupation?—Yes, and sailing by sea.

Mackenzie.

29567. You were a sailor?—Yes.

29568. Was the fishing good in those days?—Yes, very good.

29569. Were there more fish in the loch in those days than there are now?—Yes, by far. There were no fish at all last year.

29570. Do you know why there is so little fishing going on here now?—We have no fishing.

29571. But do you know why the other people fish so little?—Just as much as they will get.

29572. Why don't they try to get more; is it because they are too poor to have boats, or because there are no fish in the loch?—They have a few boats.

29573. But there is not so much fishing as there was when you were young?—Oh, no.

29574. Were you born here?—I was born at Balgie.

29575. Tell us about your place at Torridon?—Under the reign of Colonel M'Barnet, and we only had a few patches for potatoes.

29576. How much rent did you pay?—Sometimes 8s.

29577. You mean that some people paid 8s., and others more?—Yes.

29578. What was the highest rent you were paying?—Double that, 16s.

29579. What did you have for that?—Potatoes.

29580. And a cow?—No. There was not a cow in the whole place, except one, the inn had one.

29581. How long did that state of things go on?—Every year until Mr Darroch came.

29582. What year was that?—I don't remember what year it was.

—Mr Darroch. 1873.—*Witness.* And they were very displeased.

29583. What were they displeased with—because of the want of potatoes?—And that same was very scarce. We were put to another place on the other side of the river, and we were taking potatoes through the village, and through the sea by boats.

29584. How many were there besides yourself on this place?—Twenty-two families.

29585. And none of you had anything but a small bit of potato ground, except one man who had one cow?—There were no cows at all but one at the public house.

29586. What happened when Mr Darroch came?—He swept us from that place altogether.

29587. Where did you go to?—To our own side; and he gave us the best park he had, and has been showing us every good comfort until now.

29588. Have you each a cow now?—Oh! no; they could not buy cows.

29589. But you are more comfortable than you were before?—For certainly we are, and we expect to be too. For my part I think our proprietor is the best in the whole north.

29590. And the whole twenty-two families are there now?—Yes, just near the same.

29591. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—You have been at Fasag since 1859?—Yes.

29592. As a catechist?—Yes, and as an elder.

29593. Are most of the inhabitants members of the Free Church?—Yes, the whole of them.

29594. I hope your services are acceptable to them?—Yes.

29595. How is it you were not chosen as a delegate by them?—I know

they would take me for that ; and different times I have spoken for them when they could not speak for themselves.

ROSS.

29596. But why were you not selected on this particular occasion ?—I am sure I was.

SHIELDAIG.

29597. But your name is not on the list given in ; there are only Duncan Macgregor and Donald Maclean—are they older men than you ?—No.

George
MacKenzie.

29598. Have they been longer there than you ?—Yes.

29599. Do you suppose that in what you say upon this matter you express the feelings of the people among whom you live ?—Well, I think so. If I tell what is false they will come up here against me.

29600. Has their condition improved, in your opinion, since you went there ?—Greatly.

29601. They have got more land, have they ?—Yes.

29602. And better land ?—Yes, the best on the whole estate.

29603. Is it fenced on every side ?—Yes, below and above.

29604. How many families are there ?—I think twenty-two.

29605. Are their lots of equal size ?—Some better and some worse.

29606. Do they pay the same rent ?—Yes.

29607. How much ?—Thirty shillings per acre. I have not the park, but half an acre, and I pay 15s. for it, and I am very well pleased with it.

29608. How many acres of arable land have they ?—It is reckoned to be eleven.

29609. The whole park ?—Yes.

29610. That is among them all ?—Yes, among us all.

29611. What pasture have you besides that ?—Plenty pasture ; they have the hill for the cattle, those that can put them on it.

29612. Are they able to raise crops enough to support their families on the half acre ?—Yes, unless the potato disease would molest it.

29613. Are they able to raise corn enough for their cattle ?—Scarcely ; some may be at a time ; it is only about seven families that have cattle.

29614. How many cows have these ?—As many as they please.

29615. What is the largest number of cows that any man there has ?—Some two and some three, and some calves, and so on.

29616. Have they sheep ?—Not one.

29617. How do these people pay for the pasture ; is it according to the stock they keep ?—Certainly.

29618. So much per head of cattle ?—Yes.

29619. How much ?—I don't know.

29620. Then how do the people who have no cows get on without milk ?—They buy it if they have money to do so.

29621. From the rest ?—Yes.

29622. I suppose there are times when they will get none ?—Oh! yes.

29623. Had these people cows before they were removed to that place ?—No.

29624. Then they are no worse in that respect than they were before ?—They are far better now than they were before. They were before in a very destitute state.

29625. Are there any able to make their living entirely out of their land ?—Scarcely ; they are working.

29626. What work do they get ?—The proprietor gives them work every day.

29627. All the year round ?—Yes, and so they have that to do.

29628. What wages do they get generally ?—Two shillings and sixpence a day, I think.

ROSS. 29629. And what other occupations have they—do they fish?—Yes, sometimes.

SHIELDAIG. 29630. Are there any of them that regularly fish?—No.

George Mackenzie. 29631. Do any of them go to the east coast fishing?—Plenty.

29632. Are the young men mostly away there just now?—Yes, most of them; every one that can go.

29633. Where did you live before you went to Torridon?—Balgie, on the borders of this estate.

29634. *Mr. Fraser-Mackintosh.*—When there were Mackenzies in Torridon—the lairds?—Yes.

29635. Who came after the Mackenzies?—Well, I am not sure.

29636. Did anybody come between the old Mackenzies and M'Barnet?—Yes, I think so.

29637. Are you allowed to keep any sheep?—No.

29638. Is that the case all over the estate?—They could not take the hills.

29639. Were there a number of people in Torridon when M'Barnet got it?—Plenty.

29640. What has become of them?—They have been cleared off the land altogether.

29641. Were there a lot of townships cleared?—Yes, every one that is yonder on the other side of the river; they were in arrears.

29642. Did they go abroad?—Some of them, and some not.

29643. Were there any of them allowed to stay upon the remaining part of the property on the other side?—Yes, but the thing was very hard upon them after all—brooding evil upon them every year. The people of the place can tell that better than I; I was not in the place.

29644. Is the population just now very much less than it was when the M'Barnets came?—I think there are more.

29645. Were the places that the people were removed from, on the side of the river, good places—good land?—Yes, good land.

29646. Was that the reason why they were removed?—No, because they were in arrears and did not pay the arrears.

29647. Who got their places?—I think it was a man from Lochalsh.

29648. A large farmer?—Yes.

29649. You have stated that the people in Fasag were shifted once or twice; after you first went to Fasag you said you were shifted?—Yes, in our croft but not our houses.

29650. Has the present proprietor done everything that can be reasonably expected of him to benefit yourself and the other crofters on the estate?—For certainty.

29651. Does he live among you?—Yes, and he is very fond of us too, we think long when he is away from us.

29652. I think you said he gives a good deal of work, doesn't he?—Yes.

29653. Does he encourage the people to improve their crofts?—Yes, he has given them every encouragement and every comfort.

29654. And are they improving their crofts?—Yes.

29655. So far as you are aware, there is nothing whatever to be said against the proprietor's management of the estate in any way?—No indeed; I do not see it. I see everything doing right among the sick and needy, and he is always leaving in my hands some money wherever he will go, and he is still doing that every year for the sick and for the needy.

29656. Are you acquainted with the estate of Applecross?—Yes.

DUNCAN BEATON, Crofter and Fisherman, West Aligin (53)—
examined.

ROSS.

SHIELDAIG.Duncan
Beaton.

29657. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Have you any statement to make on behalf of the people of West Aligin?—I have—‘*Statement by the Western Aligin Crofters:*—We possess one and a half acres of arable land for which in previous years we paid £4 rental, but this year it has been reduced £1. We are uncertain, however, whether this reduction is to be permanent or not. When Mr M'Barnet bought the estate we possessed individually fifteen sheep, five cattle, and a stirk, for which each of the twenty crofters then residing in our township paid £5 rental. The trustees of the younger M'Barnet, however, deprived us of the privileges then enjoyed by us. This they did, we think, by imposition. They promised that if we parted with our sheep stock, they would pay us £50 annually for the use of the grazing, but this they paid only for one year. Matters then went from bad to worse. One hardship was endured by us after another. No sooner did we lose our stock of sheep than we were deprived of grazing for our cattle. Previously we had, as already stated, five cattle in addition to the stirk, but now we were not allowed to keep any save one cow, the calf of which we were forced to sell or kill before it was six months old. It is only fair to add that our rental was reduced from £5 to £3, but notwithstanding this reduction we were in poorer circumstances than when we possessed the grazing. Our grievances were further increased by the fact that we were at the same time deprived of about one-fourth part of the arable land for the benefit of the proprietor's shepherds. In consequence of all this we gradually fell into arrears as we possessed nothing that we could sell save the one calf. Such were our circumstances when Mr Darroch bought the estate, who since his residing among us has showed us several acts of kindness with a view to better our condition. His first act was to pay our arrears to Mr M'Barnet's trustees, lest we should have to part with the only cow we then had, he himself giving us work by which we could partly repay him. If at any time we were unable to pay our annual rent, he never forced us to do so, but always gave us time until circumstances so changed as that we were able to pay him. Without any solicitation on our part, the calf which we were formerly compelled to part with when six months old he allowed us to keep until it was one year old. This year he further extended our privileges by allowing us to graze another additional head of cattle. We consider, however, that our rental is high when we take into consideration the quality of our land; and that our condition would be improved if we possessed more land, and got an opportunity of keeping additional stock. The above is written out by me as reported by the people themselves, JOHN M'NEIL.’

29658. According to this paper you have nothing whatever to complain of except that you have not so much land as you would like, and that you pay more than you would like?—That is all; we have no further complaint.

29659. Is the arable land that you have good?—No, it is very bad.

29660. Do you get good crops out of it?—The crops look better than the land; this year the crops look very well, but the land is very bad.

29661. Do you consider £3 too high a rent for what you have?—Yes, I think it is.

29662. What would you consider a proper rent yourself?—Between 50s. and £3.

29663. Would you like to get a man to value it?—Yes.

ROSS.

SHIELDAIG.

Duncan
Beaton.

29664. Would you take your chance?—Yes, we would be very glad to do that.

29665. What would you say if he said it was worth £5—would you be pleased then?—Yes, we would be quite pleased with what he said; but no man of conscience would value it at that.

29666. Is there any better arable ground for you that you could get?—There is very little available arable ground, almost all the possible arable ground is cultivated.

29667. What would you like Mr Darroch to do for you?—The proprietor was doing very well towards us; he was doing what he could. He cannot give us what he has not; but we consider the land dear. We would like very much if we would get additional grazing.

29668. Is there more grazing you could easily get if he pleased to give it to you?—Yes, there is what would be of great service to us.

29669. How is it occupied?—There is a hill upon which we have cattle, but it is not settled upon us but for the year, and we would like to have it permanent so that we could stock it.

29670. Who had it before you got it?—My father and my grandfather and my great-grandfather had that hill.

29671. Is there anybody else who is likely to get it if it is not given to you?—No, we are not afraid, but we don't know anything about it. We know we are in want of it.

29672. Are you not allowed to put any stock upon it except cattle?—We do not get it for that purpose, and perhaps there were some among us who could not provide the other stock even if we got permission; but if we did get permission we would endeavour to stock it as we were able.

29673. With sheep as well as with cattle?—Yes, if we could.

29674. *The Chairman.*—You said you got leave to keep an additional beast—did you get additional land to feed the beast?—Yes, we got this year that hill that I have spoken of.

29675. Do you pay additional rent?—We were not told that we would have to pay rent; perhaps we may have to pay a little additional rent, we do not know. But if we had an additional cow to our summing we had to work ten days' labour for it.

29676. How do you get the winter feeding for an additional beast?—We buy here and there if we do not have it ourselves.

29677. How much will it cost you in winter for the food of the additional beast?—40s. to 50s.

29678. Would you rather pay for an additional cow in ten days' labour or give £1, 5s. in money?—Ten day's work; that would be easier than to pay 25s. a year.

29679. What season would the proprietor take the work in?—I think we would afford to work; he is not hard upon us in that respect.

29680. What sort of work is it—is it work on the roads for your own good, and fences—or work for the proprietor's good?—The last bit of work we did was for our own good; making a road for ourselves.

29681. Was that the road to your own township?—Yes.

29682. From the high road?—Yes, from the public road.

29683. How long is this new piece of road?—Five miles.

29684. Is it good now—can you take a cart upon it?—No, it is only a path.

29685. Who has to keep it up—are you to do so or the proprietor?—We keep it up at the proprietor's expense.

29686. If the proprietor offered to help you to make a cart road would that be a great convenience to you?—Yes, it would be a very great convenience, but we have neither cart nor horse.

ROSS.

SHIELDAIG.

Duncan
Beaton

29687. But if the proprietor offered to make a cart road would you help with your own labour?—What could we do with a horse and cart, what would be the use of a cart without a horse.

29688. If the road was made you might begin to buy horses and carts?—Yes, if we could afford it, we might.

29689. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—How long have you been paying rent?—Thirty-three years.

29690. Was it to the M'Barnet's you first began to pay rents?—Yes.

29691. Did the M'Barnet family live upon the estate?—Latterly the proprietor lived for the most, but formerly he only lived occasionally.

29692. Did he spend any money in improving the condition of the crofters?—No, anything we have got in that way has been from the present proprietor.

29693. Were the rents raised in your time or in the time of the M'Barnets?—Yes, it was raised during M'Barnet's time. The rent was raised during his time and the tenants were increased. The place had only sixteen families at first, and they were increased to twenty.

29694. Did you hear what the previous delegate said about a number of people being removed from one side of the river?—I could not understand him supposing I did hear him.

29695. Is it not the fact that a great number of people were cleared from one side of the river during M'Barnet's time?—Yes, they were sent across to our west side from the south side.

29696. Are there any people at all on that south side of the river now?—There are about sixteen or seventeen families yet.

29697. What is the name of the place?—Inveraligin.

29698. Were there many people removed from the estate altogether during M'Barnet's time?—Yes; some went away voluntarily to America and Australia.

29699. Had they any reason for going?—They got money from the old laird of Torridon.

29700. Which laird was that?—Mackenzie.

29701. Was it poverty which took them away—were they starved out?—What else, but that they could not remain after the land was taken from them.

29702. Was it a good day for the people of Torridon when the present proprietor became possessor?—Yes; every benefit we ever got has been got since he came.

29703. Was it a bad day for Torridon when the M'Barnets got it?—M'Barnet was not hard with respect to the rents, but he was not laying out money upon improvements.

29704. Was he a popular proprietor?—Yes, I am not aware there was any cause of his being unpopular.

29705. Was there any cause for your being dissatisfied with him?—He put sheep upon the place and kept it in his own hands, and that was the beginning of depriving us of our hill pasture and stock.

29706. Do you point to anything at all that the present proprietor can do for you otherwise than has already been done?—No, unless he will give us additional hill pasture.

29707. But if he continues you in the hill pasture you last got, will you be satisfied?—Yes, but we would not like to have a rent that we cannot pay.

29708. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Have you had any sheep since Mr Darroch came there?—No; we had no sheep when he came, and he got sheep for us and they had to be sent away. We were not understanding one another amongst ourselves about those sheep.

LOSS.

SHIELDAIG.

Duncan
Beaton.

29709. And that was the reason you had to part with the sheep?—Yes. It was myself that purchased them, and the stock was deteriorated, and we were getting afraid that the money that was invested in them could not be realized, and so we sold them.

FINLAY M'BEATH, Crofter, Deruner (64)—examined.

Finlay
M'Beath.

29710. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—What statement have you to make?—At a meeting held by us on the 23rd day of July 1883, we, the crofters of Deruner, on the estate of Mr Murray of Lochcarron, proposed to place the following grievances before the Royal Commission:—First, that twenty years ago our hill pasture was turned into a deer forest. Since that time we were not allowed to keep one single sheep, and in about one third of our arable ground we can sow nothing whatever as it is completely overrun with deer; but notwithstanding all this we pay exactly the same rent now as we did when we had sheep, and our crops were not destroyed by deer. Secondly, that the deer every year destroy our crops, and if we preserve anything from them it is by watching the whole night, by the doing of which we are prevented from earning a livelihood elsewhere. We scarcely sent a grain to the mill during the last twenty years, and often we are compelled to buy oat seed. Thirdly, that we repeatedly asked our former proprietor, Mr Stewart, to fence our land under such conditions as he himself might choose, but were as often refused. Subsequently we offered to fence it ourselves on condition that we should get compensation for the outlay in case of our leaving or being removed from the place. No such promise, however, would be given us. Since all the townships around us have been fenced our condition is doubly worse. We cannot understand why our township alone is left without a fence. Fourthly, we are not even allowed to take ewes for wintering on our arable ground as other crofters on the estate are. We may add that our forefathers lived on this estate from time immemorial, and so far as we ever heard or knew, behaved themselves always in strict accordance with law and order. Our demands are very reasonable, viz.—(1.) permission to have a few sheep; (2) a fence to protect our crops from the deer.

29711. How many crofters are there in Deruner?—Five.

29712. What is the name of the neighbouring township that is fenced?—Camusfail.

29713. Is it on the same property?—Yes.

29714. Are there other villages on the same property that are fenced?—Kinloch upon the other side is one that is fenced; the gamekeeper lives there.

29715. But are there townships occupied by crofters that are fenced in your neighbourhood?—No, except Shieldaig here.

29716. Is Shieldaig fenced?—Yes.

29717. Are they allowed to keep sheep at Camusfail?—They have a few.

29718. How many families are there at Camusfail?—Only one family.

29719. What rent do they pay there?—I cannot tell.

29720. What is the rent of the township of Deruner?—£3, 2s. each.

29721. Do you not know the reason why you were not allowed to fence your own land?—No.

29722. Is there any one here who can explain the reason?—I cannot tell.

29723. Is the late proprietor's ground officer here?—Yes.

29724. Would he know the reason?—I cannot tell; he is here himself.

29725. *Mr Fraser Mackintosh.*—How large is the forest that you told

was created twenty years ago?—I cannot tell; I never heard of its being measured.

29726. Is it so very large that it was never measured?—It is not so very large.

29727. Were there any people removed to make that forest?—No.

29728. How was it occupied?—It was hill pasture for crofters. They had it the same way as they had the low ground.

29729. How many crofters had the right to put their animals on it?—There was one man that had a great deal of stock upon that hill; then there were two other townships in addition to ours which had right to send stock upon it.

29730. What was the name of these two townships?—The Glen of Shieldaig. The sheep had the run of the hill.

29731. You say you got no allowance of rent when this pasture was taken away?—Yes, there was £1 taken off the land at the time we were deprived of the pasture; but shortly afterwards that £1 was added to the regular rent.

29732. Do you know if a similar practice was adopted towards the other townships which had right to the grazing?—I cannot tell; but I know the rents were raised all round at that time.

29733. Do you also know that the subject let to you was all reduced at the time the forest was made?—The nearest town to us got it anyhow; I cannot tell for the others.

29734. How long has Lochcarron been the property of the Stewarts?—About twenty-one years.

29735. Was there any forest upon that estate before the Stewarts came?—There was no forest, but there were deer.

29736. Although you do not know the extent of the forest, is it a large portion of the estate?—Yes, it is pretty wide, but it does not by any means make the great portion of the surface of the estate.

29737. To whom did Lochcarron formerly belong before the Stewarts?—Mackenzie of Applecross.

29738. Do you recollect when the Applecross estate was belonging to one proprietor?—Yes.

29739. Was there any forest, strictly so-called, upon the part of Applecross now belonging to Lord Middleton?—No, not at first. There was no forest, strictly so called, but there was a place among the higher grounds where the proprietor used to shoot, but no stock was kept there.

29740. Do you know a place called Auchnashellach?—Yes, I know it, but I am not acquainted with it.

29741. Do you know that it is under deer?—I hear that some of it is under deer at least.

29742. Was it so in the time of Mackenzie of Applecross?—No.

29743. Is the place called Coolin part of Applecross forest?—It is far away from our place, but I hear it is.

29744. Do you know any other part belonging to Mackenzie of Applecross, besides the ones I have asked you about, which are now forest?—I don't know about other places in that state.

29745. Do you know a place called Craig?—Yes, I have gone that way.

29746. Is that a forest?—I understand it is now.

29747. And all the places you have mentioned were at one time the sole property of the Mackenzies of Applecross?—Yes; they were part of the Applecross estate.

29748. Do you know a man called Duncan M'Lean, Slumbae?—I may know him, but I am not aware that I do.

29749. Where about does he stay?—Right opposite from where we are.

ROSS.

SHIELDAIG.

Finlay

M'Beath.

ROSS. 29750. How many miles?—It is just right opposite the steamer; it is not a mile by sea; it is three miles by land.

SHIELDAIG. 29751. Have you asked your present proprietor, or made any complaint to him that you are without this fence?—We never asked himself personally, but we asked his servants. He himself has only lately come into the place, and we have not had much opportunity to speak to him.

29752. Is it not always better to go to headquarters when you have the opportunity?—We have not had the opportunity; it is only twice we have seen him since he got the place.

29753. You are seeing him now?—Yes.

29754. Don't you think it would be a wise thing to take the opportunity of speaking to your landlord?—Yes.

29755. Do you complain of anything except this matter of the fence?—No, and we do not know what he may do about the fence itself; we have nothing to object to as far as he is concerned.

29756. Have you complained more than once to the officials of the estate?—Oh, yes, more than once; I did once, and there was another man made a complaint on another occasion.

29757. What was the nature of the answer you got?—It was the other man that was the spokesman; I was not at home at the time; but he says they refused to put up the fence.

29758. *The Chairman.*—How many families were there on the three townships whose common grazing was taken away?—There would have been about thirty at that time; there are not so many people in this place now; there were twenty and four and five.

29759. Do the other townships suffer from the deer as well as your own?—No, the march of the other townships is fenced.

29760. Does the injury from the deer still continue?—Yes; we sit up every night to watch them.

29761. How long does the injury last during the year—all round, or in a particular period?—In harvest. When the potatoes appear above the ground they begin to eat them, and continue eating them until the shaws get very big, then they stop. Then they begin again when the corn is ripe; and when the potatoes are ripe they eat the potatoes and continue right on until the crops are closed up.

29762. Has the former or present proprietor ever given you any compensation for actual damage done?—Nothing.

29763. Did the former proprietors ever employ a paid watcher to keep the deer off your ground?—Not since I was born.

29764. If the present proprietor was inclined to put up a deer fence, would you help him in the transport of materials, or by labour, or in any way?—Yes, we would be very glad to assist him in every way.

29765. Was the forest all made up of this hill grazing of the crofters, or was the hill grazing only added to another larger area?—The tenants had right to graze over the whole of the land which is now forest; and now a great portion of the low ground, because of the deer, is quite useless to us.

29766. Has this forest ever been let to a tenant?—I am not aware that it was ever let; it was Sir John Stewart's own sons that used to shoot over it.

29767. Have you any idea what the value of the ground occupied as the forest would be if it was let as a sheep farm or a deer forest?—I am not able to judge; I have no idea; I am not a very good judge of the value of land.

29768. About how many sheep would it graze?—We ourselves had one hundred and twenty sheep upon it—the six of us.

**Finlay
M'Beath.**

ROSS.

SHIELDAIG.

Finlay
M'Beath.

29769. When the hill grazing was taken away from the other two townships as well as yours was the rent of the other two townships permanently reduced, or was the rent of them raised too?—The rent was reduced the same as ours, but it was afterwards increased the same as ours. The whole of the estate was increased, as far as I am aware at that time.

29770. Then whatever the grazing or forest value of the old common pasture is now, it is a clear gain to the proprietor?—Yes.

29771. But he has never done anything to benefit the crofters of your township?—Nothing.

29772. Who paid for the fence round the other two townships?—I cannot tell.

29773. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—When did the present proprietor get possession of the estate?—A year last Whitsunday.

29774. *Mr Cameron.*—How many crofters are there at Deruner?—Five.

29775. What rent do they pay?—£3, 2s. each.

29776. Were you elected as a delegate by the crofters at Deruner, or by the other crofters in the neighbourhood?—My own township.

29777. You represent the five crofters and not the rest?—Yes.

29778. How long would the fence require to be to protect the arable ground of yourself and the other crofters against the deer?—A mile would cover it—scarcely a mile.

29779. Was it the impression of the people when they sent you to represent this grievance, that the Royal Commission had power to order the fence to be put up?—I cannot say.

29780. Is it your own impression?—Well, yes, we thought that perhaps you had the power, that we were to get justice like other people.

29781. Would it be a very difficult fence to erect, this mile?—No, not very difficult.

29782. Have you any reason to think that the present proprietor would be unwilling to listen to any reasonable request about it?—I do not say that he would refuse to put up any reasonable fence.

29783. Did the one hundred and twenty sheep you refer to as having been grazed on this belong to your own township or to the other township besides?—My own township.

29784. How many sheep, besides the one hundred and twenty grazed, belonging to the other crofters?—I cannot tell.

29785. Was it more or less?—In the glen upon the other side of us they had more sheep each than we had.

29786. Can you mention what the number of sheep used to be that belonged to the crofters in former times on the grazings here?—I can not.

29787. What would be the value of the grazing of one hundred and twenty sheep at the current rates?—As things go to-day, 3s. a sheep perhaps.

29788. Do you think sheep farms let for 3s. a sheep?—I cannot undertake to say.

29789. Don't you think that many proprietors would be glad at present if they could get 2s.?—Yes, where there are very large places perhaps.

29790. But according to your own view of the value of sheep grazing, that of one hundred and twenty sheep would be £18?—We were not looking at it that way; we had the right to the hill as part of our crofts.

29791. If you now got liberty to stock it with sheep, would you be able to buy the sheep to put on the ground?—Some, perhaps not all.

29792. How many of the five tenants?—Two at least.

ROSS. 29793. So that two would be able to buy sheep?—Two at least, and perhaps four.

SHIELDAIG. 29794. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—All of them could buy some sheep?—Yes, perhaps some of them could buy more or less, but probably the whole five could not buy the whole number.

DONALD M'LENNAN, Ground Officer on the Estate of Lochcarron (58)—examined.

Donald M'Lennan. 29795. *The Chairman.*—Did you hear what the previous witness said with reference to the alleged depredations of deer upon a particular township?—Yes.

29796. And the want of a fence round it?—Yes.

29797. Would you explain to me what is the nature of the injury, if any, the deer cause to the township?—I believe the evidence as given is quite correct as to the destruction of crop; there is no denying that.

29798. How long have you been ground officer upon this property?—Nearly seventeen years.

29799. What measures were taken in previous times to protect the crofters against the deer?—None for that township.

29800. What is the particular reason why protection was given to other townships and not to this particular township?—I could not tell you; but I know there was no provision made for fencing for that township. The houses are dotted throughout the arable land here and there, and they could watch them out of their beds.

29801. So that they could watch them without trouble out of their beds—they could not watch them when sleeping?—They had all families, and one would be out and another in.

29802. Then you think it is a reasonable thing that crofters should sit up or keep awake to protect crops?—No, I do not.

29803. If any injury was committed by deer was anything done to compensate the people?—Nothing.

29804. Or to help them to sit up at night?—Nothing.

29805. Then what do you think ought to be done in a case of this sort?—Well, I think the crops ought to be protected wherever they are.

29806. But supposing the proprietor was inclined to assist to protect the crops, what sort of fence do you think could be put up?—We generally go in for iron fences entirely.

29807. And if a fence was put up in what respect do you think the crofters could co-operate with the proprietor, and save him some part of the expense?—I am afraid they could not do much in that township. They might provide the stones and put them on the ground, which would be so much.

29808. Help to transport the material to the ground?—Yes.

29809. Do you think the crofters would be glad to do that?—I think they would do that. I think I would take my chance of that.

29810. You seem to me to be willing that anything reasonable should be done for the satisfaction of those crofters?—Certainly; and I should not like to see the poor men's crop lost.

29811. *Mr Cameron.*—Did you ever suggest to the former proprietor what you now seem willing to admit was a reasonable thing?—I have spoken of it occasionally, but perhaps I never went so far as I ought to have gone.

29812. Was the last witness correct in his estimate of the distance the

fence would require to be made?—I don't think it is quite so long as a mile; I think it is under a mile.

ROSS.

29813. On and off you agree with him?—I never stepped it, but judging by the appearance of the ground it is under a mile.

SHIELDAIG.

29814. Is it tolerably easy of access—would it be expensive?—About £s. 6d. a yard.

Donald
M'Lennan.

29815. A 6-foot fence?—We do not generally make them so high as that—may be $4\frac{1}{2}$.

29816. Is it your experience that a $4\frac{1}{2}$ fence is of use?—Yes, if you keep it a good piece away from the crop.

29817. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—It is stated here that the tenants of this township of Deruner offered to fence themselves if they were promised compensation in case of leaving; are you aware of that?—I never heard of that, and I do not believe they could do it.

29818. Has anything been done of late in the way of fencing the townships?—We are fencing here now.

29819. Have you done much?—We are going on. We have a mile on hand behind the church here just now to protect the crofters' crops.

29820. At Shieldaig?—No, further down the coast.

29821. The first witness examined to-day gave an account of the ejection of the feuars at Shieldaig, were you present when he gave that account?—I heard his evidence, but I was not on the property when that took place. I have seen no evictions in Shieldaig since I came.

29822. Do you know if any such evictions took place, have you heard of them?—I have heard of him being evicted by the late Duke of Leeds and a widow also.

29823. Do you know on what grounds they were evicted?—I cannot go into that; it was not in my day, and I never could get right at the bottom of it. There were some reasons I believe, but I could not get at them.

29824. *The Chairman.*—Is there any remark you wish spontaneously to make in connection with any evidence you heard to-day?—Well, I thought the remarks about the one hundred and twenty sheep were extravagant. I do not believe, from the extent of hill ground taken from that township, that those five tenants could maintain or support one hundred and twenty sheep. And the other township he spoke of, Kinloch, when the ground was cleared there was only one tenant there; and I believe he is present here to-day. The rent of that township was, I think, £10 or £11. That tenant went to the other side of the property of Lochcarron where he got three lots instead of the holding he had here. In point of fact, there was only the township of Deruner cleared of sheep. The village of Shieldaig had a piece of ground called Glen Shieldaig, and they were subtenants of Mr Scott, who had the large sheep farm.

29825. What the delegate said in answer to my questions was this, that about thirty families had been deprived of their hill pasture when the hill pasture was taken away; or at any rate, that thirty families had, at a previous period, a share of it; do you think there ever were as many as thirty families at any period having contemporaneously a share in that hill pasture?—I think the first man who was called here to-day said there were only about nine or ten tenants in the village of Shieldaig. They were subtenants of this Mr Scott at the time of the clearances for sheep. They had a stretch of Glen Shieldaig, and when Mr Scott's lease expired their term of grazing expired, so far as I can understand. Well, that was about nine; and then one at Kinloch and five at Deruner is fourteen. He also talked of Camusfail where there were four. I never saw but two there; and now there is only one; and that one has as

ROSS. much privilege as the four had before; and we inclosed this place with a ring fence.

SHIELDAIG. 29826. So that there would not be above fourteen or fifteen put out? —I could not make it more than that.

Donald M'Lennan. 29827. However constituted or let, what do you think the value of this deer forest would be as a deer forest? —It is in a good situation—I should say £1000.

29828. But that would include dwelling-house and other things? —Certainly, everything—garden, fishings, and all.

29829. What would the value of the grazings be? —Mr Miller's rent would be about £300 odds.

Mr Cameron. 29830.—What is it called in the Valuation Roll? —Glen Shieldaig.

29831. Is there none in Lochcarron? —No.

The Chairman. 29832.—Is there anything else you would like to say? —No.

Mr Fraser-Mackintosh. 29833.—How long have you been manager? —Seventeen years.

29834. Do you think you know, or are qualified to give as good an opinion, as to the number of crofters who were deprived of the pasture, as a man who has been here all his days; he stated thirty, and you stated eighteen or nineteen? —He ought to know, but I am afraid he is not quite sure of it himself.

29835. You won't put your opinion against his? —No.

29836. You stated there were no evictions in Shieldaig in your time; were there any other evictions or attempted evictions in Lochcarron in your time? —Oh, yes.

29837. Do you know a family of the name of Maclean? —I know several Macleans. Perhaps you allude to a case in Slumbae.

29838. Is there an old man eighty-two years of age still living at Slumbae? —I believe he is still living.

29839. Was there an attempt made to evict him? —Yes.

29840. At whose instance? —At the proprietor's.

29841. Had you anything to do with it? —Not directly.

29842. What had you to do with it indirectly? —A misunderstanding with the son.

29843. Why were the eviction proceedings stopped? —I had nothing to do with that; I did not stop them.

29844. You would have preferred perhaps that they were not stopped? —No, I would not. I had nothing to do with the action.

29845. Were you in court in connection with this matter? —Not personally, the case was in court.

29846. Were you obliged to pay damages in connection with it? —Yes.

29847. What did you pay those damages for? Why was it you agreed to pay damages rather than that the case should go on? —The case did go on.

29848. Then it was a decision of the sheriff that was given against you? —Yes.

29849. You are still manager of the estate notwithstanding the change of ownership? —Yes.

29850. Can you tell me what the extent of this forest we have been referring to is? —It is considered to be about 12,000 acres.

29851. Was it all constituted at one time? —I think it was.

29852. Was it in your time? —No, it was before my time.

29853. Were all these 12,000 acres pasture to which certain

crofters on the estate were entitled to send their sheep and cattle?—There were three or four townships which had so much privilege on it.

ROSS.

29854. Over the whole of it?—No. There is a place called Balgie tenanted by one man, in the low country. His lease expired at the time of the clearances and Scott of Tulloch got it.

SHEILDAIGDonald
M'Lennan.

29855. Scott of Tulloch got Balgie?—No, Donald Mackenzie.

29856. And part of Scott of Tulloch's farm?—Part of Tulloch.

29857. And when the part of the crofter's land constituted the forest?—Yes.

29858. All these three put together?—Yes.

29859. Is it correct that there was an apparent reduction made in the rent of the crofters when the pasture was taken from them, but that it was added in another year?—I am not aware of that.

29860. That was before your time?—Yes.

29861. Did the rental of the property increase much in your period?—No, not with the crofters.

JOHN MACKENZIE, Crofter, Annat (72), assisted by **Roderick M'BEATH**,
Crofter, Annat (60)—examined.

John
Mackenzie.

29862. *The Chairman.*—Have you been elected a delegate?—Yes.

29863. Have you got a paper?—That is our paper, but it was not given to me. “In the multitude of people is the king's honour, but in the want of people is the destruction of the prince.” (Prov. xiv. 28). Again, woe is pronounced against those who join house to house and field to field, till they dwell alone in the midst of the land, and no place left for the poor to dwell in (Isaiah v. 8). *The Honourable the Royal Commission, now making Inquiry into the Condition of the Crofters in the Islands and Highlands.* Gentlemen—May it please your honours, we the crofters of Annat of Torridon do hereby unanimously crave your attention to the following remarks respecting our condition as crofters. Our holdings at present consist of one acre and a half of arable land, of very poor and unproductive quality, a great deal of it being mossy and boggy, and in some places below the level of the high water mark, so that portions of it are flooded by the high spring tides. Such portions of it as are high and dry are composed of rough gravelly soil mixed with sand—this quality of land is valued at £1, 10s. per acre, thus amounting to £2, 5s. per $1\frac{1}{2}$ acre, also the grazing of one cow valued at £1, 15s., all of which amounts to £4. Likewise, last year the poor rates were 1s. 11d. per £, School Board 8½d. per £, and one ½d. per £ for registration and public health, in all 10s. 10d. No doubt there is a difference in the quality of the soil on this estate, as well as there is on other estates. But who thus valued the land we do not know, we do not suppose that the proprietor himself did it. But whoever was the valuator, he had not, it appears, the welfare of the poor crofters at heart, but the reverse; the device being not live and let live, but we will give them this hungry morsel with plenty of salt on it, if they can swallow it let them do it, if not let them go where they can get better, we will disgust and starve them out; this has been the order of it in other places in the Highlands as well as here. Our stock, as before mentioned, consists of one cow and a calf which is generally sold at the age of fourteen or fifteen months, this year realising an average of £5, according to quality, and sometimes there may not be a stirk every year. This is all that goes to the market from our croft, not a boll of meal comes from the mill as the produce of

ROSS. 'the croft, but many are bought throughout the year. The estate of Torridon, which was bought by Mr Darroch from Colonel M'Barnet some ten years ago, may be divided into five districts or hamlets, Wester Aligin and Easter Aligin, Fasag, Annat, and Badanmhuyie, and as it is expected that delegates from these will appear before the Commission, we will refrain from making any reference regarding them, but only that they are on the same level with ourselves. In the year 1838 Mr M'Barnet, who was a West Indian or South American planter, bought this estate from Seaforth M'Kenzie. Before this time, the crofters on the estate had the benefit of the hill pasture all round, having a fair summing of sheep on the hills, and goats also—two or three milch cows—or as many as they could conveniently winter, with plenty of arable land to cultivate and plenty of wool for making blankets and other cloth for men and women, a commodity of which we are now deprived, the rent at that time was ranging from £3 to £4 and £5, the people, having horses and ploughs among them. At the time when Mr M'Barnet bought the estate, in the year '38, there were about eight families in Annat, having all the arable land then available, and the hill pasture, and as many cattle as they were able to keep, and some horses and ploughs at a rent of £6. On the north side of the river, which was then called Derrynapuaran, or in English the Grove of Springs, there were about twenty-six or twenty-seven families, the majority of which paid Seaforth M'Kenzie for their crofts and hill pasture from £4 to £5, according to size of croft. They had an offer again of the hill pasture from the new proprietor at a rise of rent, which they did not accept, and the consequence was, that they were ordered to clear their sheep off the hill, and dispose of them the best way they could, cattle and all being served with writs of ejectment from crofts and houses. The proprietor stocked the hill for himself; some of the families emigrated to America, and others removed whither they could get an open gate. As there was no force used to eject them from their houses, some stuck to their houses, and are alive there yet. Then it was surmised that the Annat crofters, on the south side of the river, had their tenancy or holding too cheap, so that seven families on the north side had an offer of crossing the river which was accepted, and the arable land subdivided in equal lots, having their share of hill pasture and all set down at £5 rent. Now the rent nearly doubled, fifteen families paying £5 each. In this form we had the privilege of the hill pasture and grazing for cattle, until the year 1868. The lease being out, a new factor came on the field, Adam Currer, acting under Colonel M'Barnet's trustees, he gave us notice that our tenure of hill pasture and croft were ended, and that he would buy the most of them, that is the stock of sheep; we obeyed the order, gathered them to the sheep fold, where they were sorted and valued by the factor and his assistants to their own satisfaction, and stocked the hill again for the trustees. In February 1868 a letter was sent from the trustees in our behalf, to the ground officer, with instructions, giving us an offer of the arable land, with one cow for stock, at a rent of £3, or in case of refusing this offer, the terms of which were read before us in both languages, we would have to fit and remove from our houses and all. We accepted the offer, but at the same time we were told that we durst not take possession of the ground until the arrival of the factor, who was to give us the full permission. He delayed his journey so long that we were getting impatient, and as we had some sea-ware ready on the shore and beginning to decompose, some of us were for starting the planting, but others were opposed to this, through fear of trespassing. Ultimately the factor made his appearance on the ground, but to our horror and mortification we

' were told that we were not to get a yard of it, and he would hardly speak to us at all ; so we applied to the ground officer for the letter or document which was sent to us, and read in our hearing, but he refused to give it up. This document ought to be kept by us, but he, the ground officer, said that he would keep it as safe himself, and it is in his safe custody to this day. We threatened to cite him before the sheriff at Dingwall ; he said, when there, he would deliver it up, but this threat of ours was never carried into execution. We were now in a dilemma what to do, we had nothing to show as our authority to take possession of the arable land, whether the factor knew anything about this letter or document we do not know, nor by whom the resolution of giving us the land was reversed we do not know, but to all appearance the factor knew something about it. Now we entreated and importuned the factor to give us, if not more, some potato ground. At last he, the factor, consented to give us a slice of the arable land, now the whole acreage of arable land in Annat is reckoned to be about forty-five acres ; nearly two-thirds of this was marked out and appropriated by the factor as a common or grazing park. The remainder was given to us, with the grazing of one cow, at a rent of £3. At this time there were about twenty families on the north side of the river, who were getting small plots of ground for planting potatoes, before Mr Currer the new factor appeared on the ground they would not now get a bit of the ground to plant anything. But to tighten the reins of oppression, which make a wise man mad, upon our necks, they were ordered to cross the river and get a share of what was allotted to us, for planting potatoes only—and the rest given to us to make the best of it, so this state of things remained unaltered, until Mr Darroch appeared on the field and took possession of the estate in the year '73 as proprietor, and set about ameliorating and reforming this anomalous state of things. First he relieved us of those who were sent among us to plant from the north side of the river, and supplied them with more or less land to plant corn and potatoes on the north side near their own houses. There were eighteen families in Annat, having their share of what Mr Currer allotted to us, and an order was issued by the factor that the calf, as soon as possible, be despatched or disposed of some way, almost as soon as it was dropped by its mother. Fearing that this order would not be carried out to the letter, we were ordered to send the calf to their dairy, to be fed for themselves of course, valued at 10s. per head, and as we had no bull of our own at this time, we were charged 5s. each calf for the use of their bull. As some were feeding their calf to kill it themselves, the factor, suspecting that some might be kept concealed in our houses, on a November evening entered our houses, with a candle in his hand to light him into corners where he imagined a calf or a stirk might be concealed. These things have reduced us to the lowest term. What can be expected to arise from such treatment but penury and destitution. As before stated, Mr Darroch dealt out to eighteen families some twenty-seven acres, divided among ourselves in equal shares of one and a half acre for each family, with grazing of one cow ; he also supplied us with a bull free of charge. At his entry into the estate the people got plenty of work, at his new buildings, road forming, and wood planting ; and even just now, those who got seed from Mr Darroch last spring are getting work to pay it. He claims no work to be done to him in addition to rent, and pays for all work executed for him. We have ample run for the cattle, there is no restrictions upon us to take sea-ware, and cut peat and turf in proper places ; in all these things we declare that the proprietor made us something better than he found us, so that, excepting,

ROSS.

SHIELDAIG

John
Mackenzie.

ROSS.

' the land question, we give Mr Darroch credit as a kind, affable, and munificent gentleman, ready to succour the necessitous who apply to him, if it is in his power to relieve them. Now with regard to the tillage of our land, there is not a horse, nor a cart, nor a plough in possession of the crofters here, the boat is the sea cart, carrying the sea-ware to the shore, the creel is the next cart, carrying from the shore to the field; the old *cas-chroum* to delve, and the hand rake to smoothen the surface; all these comprise the farming implements of the crofters here. Yet we struggle with it for the sake of a home, and indeed most of the homes, or houses here, are of a very homely description—old reekies, consisting of two or three apartments, the third occupied by the cow and the hens, entering by the same door with the human inmates. The landlord affords timber free to those who may be disposed to build a new cottage, and promises compensation in case of removal, but as long as the old ones stand, they will be occupied. The people are disheartened from building new houses on account of the smallness of their holding, unless compelled through sheer necessity to do it, and very few among the crofters can afford the expense. The whole of the hill pasture of Torridon is a deer forest, not a sheep farm on the whole estate; the proprietor found it cleared of sheep, and so it remains. What we want in the meantime is that the land which we cultivate be valued by an experienced agriculturist, according to its quality, and if so done we are willing to take some more of it, at least, as much as will keep another cow with proportionate out-run, otherwise we cannot take more of it. And also if we could get pasture for a few sheep, say, a dozen for each family, or even half a dozen, would be so much help. Since we lost the hill pasture fifteen years ago we are running out of night and day cloth, both of which in former years, when we had the wool, were manufactured at our own firesides. There are eighteen houses in Annat where fire is kindled, the population of which is about sixty-six, old and young. Of the former eighteen families who paid full rent and rates fourteen planted last spring. The young of both sexes, as soon as they attain puberty, make off to where they can best live, some of the young men go to trades, others emigrating to the colonies, whence cometh complaints, especially from New Zealand, that the insatiable and avaricious spirit which pervades the hearts of too many at home has gone abroad, even to that colony, where the land in a great measure is engrossed and monopolized by land speculators, buying up large blocks of the land from Government on easy terms and reselling it by auction in small divisions, at exorbitant prices, to the detriment of the people. Gentlemen, these enormities cry loudly for redress and reform at home and abroad. As the foregoing pages may not be paragraphed to the taste of practical writers, it is hoped that defects and defaults in the composition, construction, and arrangement of this somewhat unpleasant narration will be excused. Now, wishing the efforts of the Royal Commission every success, we remain, Honoured Sirs, your obedient servants, the crofters of Annat.'

29864. Did they draw up any paper?—My information is that thirteen of them signed the paper.

29865. Why did they not give the paper to their own delegate?—They chose another man before me as a delegate.

29866. Where is the other man?—Sitting over there—Roderick M'Beath. The paper remained in the possession of the writer of it.

29867. Do you know as matter of fact that that is the paper [showing]?—I could not read, but I believe it is the paper.

29868. Can you write your name?—No.

29869. Is this your name 'John Mackenzie'?—Yes, that is my signa-

SHIELDAIG.
John
Mackenzie.

ture. The paper was not read to me, and I made a mistake in that respect.

ROSS.

29870. [To Roderick M'Beath] Look at that paper?—[Roderick M'Beath] That is my signature; I wrote it myself.

SHIELDAIG.

29871. Do you know what is in it?—I heard some of it read.

John

29872. Why did you sign a paper which you had not heard read over? —We were all gathered together about the time of its composition and telling what was to be put down.

Mackenzie.

29873. Who wrote it?—John Macdonald.

29874. What is John Macdonald?—He is a brother of a crofter in the place.

29875. What is his own occupation?—He just helps his brother.

29876. Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.—Do you remember the year 1838?—[Mackenzie]. Yes.

29877. How many tenants were there in Annat at that time?—Eight.

29878. What rent were they paying?—£6 each.

29879. Do you know if there were any arrears of rent due by any of them?—I cannot tell; I was not paying much attention at that time; my father was alive. The M'Barnets increased that rent of £6 to £10 each, and increased the number of families from eight to sixteen.

29880. So that the sixteen families each paid £5?—Yes. There was some peat ground reclaimed with borrowed money by the factor upon the estate at the time—Colonel Macpherson—and for this ground we paid 10s. each, but I cannot give dates.

29881. How long did you continue to pay £5?—About nine years.

29882. At the end of the nine years were the rents well paid or were there arrears upon the place?—I was not in arrears myself, but probably some of my neighbours were.

29883. Was it because you were in arrears that Mr M'Barnet let the place as a sheep farm?—I don't know that that was exactly the case.

29884. What do you think was the reason?—The manager that lived upon the other side of the burn thought that our place should pay better than it was paying at that time. Although some were succeeding others were not. We thought that was the reason.

29885. Then as a whole the Annat crofters were not succeeding at that time?—Some of them succeeded better than others.

29886. Who was the manager on the other side of the burn?—James Mackintosh. He was manager for a sheep farmer upon the other side of the river before M'Barnet got the property.

29887. The other side of the river was not a sheep farm before M'Barnet got the property?—Not exactly before he got the property—but before he got possession.

29888. Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.—Were the whole contents of this paper talked of by the people themselves before it was put in writing?—Yes.

29889. Does it represent their sentiments?—Certainly. There is one thing in the paper that I do not agree with; that is, asking Mr Darroch for sheep. He is an excellent proprietor, not to be beat in his dealings with the poor men anywhere. But the land is dear, a croft only having one cow and one calf. Then the tide burst in upon us, and the lower portion of our town is under level of high-water mark, so that the sea covers a greater portion of the inside and middle of our township now, and because of this encroachment of salt water, supposing the crops were coming to the ear they won't ripen.

ROSS.

CHARLES JAMES MURRAY, Proprietor, Lochcarron (31)—examined.

SHEILDAIG. 29890. *The Chairman.*—I believe you desire to make a statement on a particular point?—There was a point made by the inhabitants that the shingle is taken away from the south-east end of this village by the road commissioners and ships in search of ballast. By the removal of this shingle they consider these stances are endangered. Several high tides have occurred in the last few years, and one or two years ago they washed away the road in front of the village here; and they fear for the stances upon which their houses are built. They have complained, and there have been some local squabbles between them and the commissioners. I am not aware what steps have been taken in connection with the matter.

29891. Who is the foreshore supposed to belong to?—That is a question I cannot tell. It is claimed for the proprietor, and there is a statement put forward, which you heard, from the first witness, and which I do not understand, about its belonging to Government.

29892. With reference to ships taking it away for ballast,—have you interdicted the ships?—That has been prevented, I am informed, by the ground officer.

29893. Then the quarrel now lies with the road commissioners?—Yes.

29894. Have you made a representation to them?—I am prepared to do so.

29895. Is there any other point upon which you wish to make any remark?—Not at present.

ALEXANDER LIVINGSTON, Merchant, Fearnabeg (47)—examined.

Alexander Livingston. 29896. *The Chairman.*—What statement have you to make?—‘Complaint for North Coast, Applecross.—No roads, distance over twenty miles; people numbering about four hundred; three schools; children kept back for want of road; petition late Lord Middleton and refuse road; postman running twelve miles off the coast; service kept back with rivers and burns, and want of roads whatever. To this we humbly crave the Commissioners to draw their attention, and ever pray.’

29897. How far is the place from the public road?—Sixteen miles from the public road of Applecross, and twelve miles from the public road of Shieldaig.

29898. Which would be the most convenient place to be connected with, the sixteen or the twelve?—Both roads, to open the country.

29899. Which did you want first?—From Shieldaig we had a postman running to Fearnabeg, twelve miles.

29900. Would this road of twelve miles be useful to several townships besides your own?—Yes, to six or seven townships.

29901. Do you expect the road commissioners to make the road, or is it an application to the proprietor which you make?—We petitioned his Lordship for the road and he refused—he did not refuse it, but at the time we petitioned him he sent a note to the ground officer to go and measure the length between Inverbain and Applecross, and before that came into operation his Lordship died and it was never done.

29902. Would this road you desire be useful to those six or seven townships? Would it be useful to any other place, or would it only have a local utility?—It would be useful to the whole place.

29903. Supposing Lord Middleton consented to go to the expense of

making the road, or most of the expense, would the crofters in those different townships do something in the way of labour to help him?—They promised that at the time of the petition. They said they would put in a week's work to help the roads.

ROSS.

SHEILDAIG.

Alexander
Livingston.

29904. A week's work for each family in all the different places?—Yes.

29905. How many families would there be?—There would be different families according to the number of the people.

29906. There is a road already marked upon the map—what sort of road is it?—It is a road the proprietor takes there for the deer and game-keepers; it is not for the use of tenants.

29907. Is it good enough for the people to drive along with carts?—No, only a small road, four or five feet broad.

29908. You think the people would still be willing to give six days' labour if Lord Middleton would undertake the other expense?—I hope so, because they said it at first.

29909. Is there any great difficulty in the country?—Many difficulties. The country is blocked here for want of a road; the children cannot get to school.

29910. Would it be difficult to make a road?—The ground is pretty rough, and there are rivers and burns where bridges would be required.

29911. Would you require several bridges?—Yes, according to the number of rivers and burns.

29912. At first it might do if there were some bridges made?—Yes, but without a road they cannot do right.

29913. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Do you pay road money?—Yes, we were paying road money since the olden times, but when they put more rent on the crofters they put the road money in connexion with the money they put on the land.

29914. It is all one sum now?—Yes.

29915. How many people live in the town where you are from—how many families?—There are six families.

29916. Are there any other merchants but yourself?—Not in the neighbourhood, but there is one on the coast.

29917. How far from you?—About six miles.

29918. Is it by boat that you get things for your store?—Yes, we cannot do but by boats.

29919. Have you applied to the present Lord Middleton upon the subject?—No.

29920. He does not stay so much in the country?—No, he is confined now himself, and is not coming to the estate. We have not seen him for three years.

29921. Is it not a great loss not to have a resident proprietor?—I suppose so.

29922. Are your crofts cheaply rented?—Yes.

29923. You have no complaint on that score?—No, there is not much complaint of the crofts; the rent is reasonable.

29924. Are there many crofters on the estate of Lord Middleton?—Yes, lots of crofters.

29925. Are they all well off?—Not them all; some are not.

29926. Are there any representatives from the crofters here to-day?—There are other two from the estate here with grievances; I don't know what about.

29927. What are their names?—John M'Lennan, Cuaig, and Donald Macrae.

29928. Where is Cuaig?—About three miles from Fearnabeg.

29929. Further away from here?—Yes.

ROSS. 29930. Is there a large number of people about Cuaig?—Seven or eight crofters I suppose.

SHELDAG. 29931. Is that one of the townships which would be benefited by this road?—Yes. There are twelve villages along the coast altogether.

Alexander Livingston. 29932. And the road would benefit the whole of them?—It would.

29933. How many people might be living in those twelve townships?—About four hundred between young and old.

29934. Are you aware that now it is not the proprietor that is bound to make a road but the trustees of the district?—Yes, I understand so.

29935. Why didn't you send a petition to Dingwall to the trustees?—I never came to consider this until just now, and we would rather put that in the hands of the Commissioners.

29936. Have you anything else to say?—Not at this time.

DONALD MACRAE, Crofter and Tailor, Cuaig (63)—examined.

Donald Macrae. 29937. *The Chairman.*—What have you come here for?—I came to see what was going on.

29938. Have you got any representation to make?—I don't know that we have anything to say which our own proprietor would not do for us.

29939. Is there anything you wish to do for yourselves?—I think he himself will do all that we want.

29940. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—You have nothing to complain of?—No.

JOHN M'LENNAN, Crofter, Cuaig (63)—examined.

John M'Lennan. 29941. *The Chairman.*—Have you anything to say?—No.

29942. Why did you come here?—To see what you were doing.

29943. Are you satisfied?—Well, the deer come and eat our crops. It is a hard thing for a man of my age to watch out every second night to preserve my crops, and after all that the crops should be eaten up.

29944. Have you any one at home to assist you?—I have only two sons and they are at the east coast fishing to provide food for us.

29945. How many crofters are there in your place?—Eight.

29946. Do they all suffer from the deer?—Yes, in the same way.

29947. Do you appoint a watcher at night amongst yourselves?—Four every night.

29948. Does the proprietor pay them?—We never asked him to pay.

29949. Does the proprietor ever help you or pay you any compensation for the damage done by the deer?—We never asked the proprietor anything.

29950. Is it true that the deer really do you much harm?—Of course, quite certainly; how can it be otherwise? Although I could take my watch one night it would be very difficult for my wife, who might perhaps be nursing, to watch the next night. One might keep watch, but the other might not; and so the crops are lost.

29951. Have you asked the proprietor to put up a fence?—Yes, we spoke to him about a fence, and he said if we would put the stone ourselves he would put the iron.

29952. What do you mean by putting the stone? How high would you have to build the stone dyke?—Three feet high, all the stone wall.

29953. And how long would it be?—Over a mile.

ROSS.

29954. Are there many stones about the ground?—In some places there are plenty stones along the course of the dyke; in others not.

SHIELDAIG.

29955. Would you not do well to take the proprietor's offer and help him to lay the stones down?—Perhaps it would; I believe we would be better off than we are if we did; I am certain of it. But we thought that the proprietor might perhaps help in building the stone wall if we gathered the stones.

John

M'Lennan.

29956. Would you gather the stones if the proprietor would employ skilled labour to build the dyke?—I can only speak for myself; I would have been glad of that for many a long day; but the others are away at the east coast fishing and I cannot speak for them on that subject.

29957. Perhaps when they come back you will speak to them about that and make an offer to the proprietor?—Perhaps so.

29958. How far are you from the place where the iron-work could be got. Could it be brought to your place by sea?—Yes.

29959. Would you help to carry it up to the ground?—Everything we could; we would give assistance in every shape.

29960. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—How many heads of families did you say there are at Cuaig?—There are eight lots and three families that live upon the township in addition.

29961. Are all these families except two, yourself and the other man, away earning wages?—Every one of them except myself and my neighbour here. There is just one other man, and he is too old to come here—he is lame.

29962. Your crofts even at the best do not support you, far less when you are troubled with the deer?—No, they would not support us although there were no deer; we never look to that. They would help us; they would assist us; and they often assist us, although the deer are injuring us; but if fences were set up they would assist us very much.

29963. Were you deprived of anything when the forest was made a forest?—No, we have plenty of hill pasture. That is all our complaint.

29964. Are the deer increasing in number?—Yes, in our place anyway.

29965. Is there any township within some miles of you?—Yes, and that township the crofters themselves fenced.

29966. How many miles is it from you?—About a mile, or a little more. There is another township, Fearnmore, where the deer never came.

29967. Are you aware that the forest has been let for some years past?—I cannot tell; I know nothing about it.

29968. Are you not aware that the proprietor himself has not been sporting for some years?—I know the proprietor does not stop there; others do; I don't know whether it is a tenant or not.

29969. Although you might not wish to trouble your landlord at the same time, since the place is let to a tenant, why don't you come down upon the tenant for damage?—We did not know that we could do that, but evidently we know it now.

JOHN MACKENZIE, Ground Officer, Camustroil, Torridon (77)—examined.

29970. *The Chairman.*—How long have you been ground officer of Torridon?—Since 1827.

John

Mackenzie.

29971. Did you hear the statements made by the people coming from the

ROSS. Torridon estate?—I did partly. I did not understand the whole, I was such a distance off.

SHIELDAIG. 29972. Have you any statement you wish to make?—Yes. ‘I, John Mackenzie, son of the late ground officer, Torridon, was appointed ground officer shortly after my father’s death, 1826. Everything went on well until the estate was sold by Seaforth in 1838 to the late Mr M. Barnet. Immediately after the sale Seaforth requested me to call on him at Brahan Castle. On my arrival there he brought under my notice the large sums of arrears against the Torridon tenants, and enquired of me what course I would recommend him to take for the recovery of this large sum. I then brought under his notice that if he would take legal steps the whole parties were to be ruined, and that he could not expect to pocket much; but if he would be pleased to allow me to call no them and advise them to come forward willingly with some of their cattle that he would have the whole value of these cattle when sold by his instructions. He agreed at once, and gave me full charge to follow up my plan. Every one on the estate came forward willingly with some of their cattle, and both parties seemed well pleased. The very first thing our new proprietor did was to summon nearly all from the estate. Many families emigrated to North America then, but the whole of those got some help in money from Mr M’ Barnet. The four townships of Durry were then removed from their houses, and those who were not able then to leave the place had to build new houses at Fasag near the shore. The place then was let as one sheep farm—Durries, Wester Corry, and Inver Alligin. Then the whole of these poor people were entirely at the mercy of this sheep farmer and his manager. As there was not a factor or proprietor living on the estate, the whole of these poor cottars endured very great hardships, not getting more than one third of potato ground that they would require, and shifting them now and again as it suited their purposes; and continued so until the present proprietor got the estate, which turned out a very great blessing and boon to the whole of the Torridon people. Annat and Wester Alligin were allowed to manage as they thought best, as these two townships had sheep and cattle. At last the Wester Alligin people were made to believe by the sheep manager that if they cleared their sheep from the farm he would give them so much money for the wintering of the place, and as a number of them had no sheep, they pressed the others to accept of this plan, and all agreed; but whenever the sheep were cleared off the manager never took their wintering. But it was quite contrary with me and the Annat men, for it was thoroughly against our will that we parted with the sheep stock, as I had since 1833 the fourth of the hill grazing and stock. About this time the tenant of the sheep farms failed, and then the proprietor had to take his stock unto his hands, and then Annat and Wester Alligin had to part with their whole stock but one cow each, and the new rules were that all the calves were to be either killed or sold before Martinmas, being then only five or six months. During these years of the greatest hardships we had to buy so much of the sea-ware from these sheep farmers. The Annat people were threatened to be removed from the estate unless they complied with these rules. In 1872, when Mr Darroch purchased the estate, there were heavy arrears, but by much trouble and perseverance I bought up these arrears at a low rate, and paid a certain sum; the people got all the benefit of this transaction of mine. Then came the blessed change, for the first thing Mr Darroch made was to give an enclosed park on the Mains Farm for all the Fasag people (twenty families, with the sea-ware attached to it for 15s. each). Some of those with small families raise as much corn crop and hay as will pay their

John
Mackenzie.

'rent. At that time there was only one cow at Inver Alligin, and now, twenty families there have a milk cow and some yeld cattle at Fasag. No cows then, but now eight families have cows at Annat, each has three or four head of cattle, and so have they at Wester Alligin. At Wester Alligin Mr Darroch advanced them money to buy sheep stock for the hill there. The great majority of them were delighted with this, but some of them were not. However, Mr Darroch sent his manager with one of them to the Muir of Ord market, and bought hoggs there for them. After several years of experience they began to grumble, and frequently complained that it was not a paying concern, until at last it was nearly unanimously decided to sell the stock and to pay Mr Darroch his money, the balance remaining was then equally divided among them. At last Martinmas term Mr Darroch gave them and the Inver people the whole of the hill pasture of Wester Alligin for any overstock of cattle they would choose to rear and keep, for each cow was only to be charged for the year ten days work for him at the most convenient time for them to be absent from their own work. Mr Darroch has been uncommonly kind to each and all of us, old and young, in clothing and food; he has given the whole sea-ware, allows to cut peats, to pull heather and brakens wherever most convenient to us, gives timber for building and repairing all the houses gratuitously; at last Martinmas collection gave a deduction of £25 per cent., and last spring supplied the whole with oat seed and potatoes; takes the greatest interest in the education of the children, and often supplies them with books; on several occasions gave money for purchasing herring nets and cattle, and lastly, not the least boon has been the means of supplying us with a resident missionary, all the time officiating on this his property. I, John M'Kenzie, residing at Camustrole, Torridon, and a ground officer here since 1827, had the charge of the parish of Shieldaig during the Highland destitution, was elected a member of the Parochial Board of Applecross from the passing of the Act, and also a member of the School Board until last year, when I resigned voluntarily, so that I ought to know as much as many about the condition of the Torridon people, and I never saw them as well off as now. The Wester and Inver Alligin people have all the arable lands there, and on account of the good pasture for all the cattle on the estate I do consider that two cows are now as useful for dairy purposes and markets as three formerly. I omitted to state that Mr Darroch bought for us superior bulls and made a present of them to us. Some young cows this year got as high as £13 here, and stott stirks from £6, 6s. to £7, 10s. To all the people who did not go to the fishing he gives employment generally for their own comfort—roads, &c. And although some think the arable lands are too high rented, still, taking everything into consideration, I do not consider it to be so. Remembering past years when we would hardly be allowed to turn off their sheep from our crops, it was a happy day for us when these sheep of theirs were removed, and our cattle to be allowed to graze in these forests.—JOHN M'KENZIE.'

29973. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Did you hear what John Mackenzie from Annat said?—I did not fully understand.

29974. He said 'In February 1868 a letter was sent from the trustees on our behalf to the ground officer with instructions, giving us an offer of the arable land, with one cow for stock, at a rent of £3, or in case of refusing this offer, the terms of which were read to us in both languages, we would have to fit and remove from our houses and all. We accepted the offer, but at the same time we were told that we must not take possession of the ground until the arrival of a factor who was to give us

ROSS

SHIELDAIG.

John
Mackenzie.

ROSS. 'the full permission. He delayed his journey so long that we were getting impatient, and as we had some sea-ware ready on the shore and beginning to decompose, some of us were for starting and planting; but others were opposed to this through fear of trespassing. Ultimately the factor made his appearance on the ground, but to our horror and mortification we were told we were not to get a yard of it, and he would hardly speak to us at all. So we applied to the ground officer for the letter or document which was sent to us and read in our hearing, but he refused to give it up. This document ought to be kept by us. But the ground officer said he would keep it as safe himself, and it is in his safe custody to this day. We threatened to cite him before the sheriff at Dingwall, but this threat of ours was never carried into execution.' What do you know about that letter?—Nothing whatsoever do I know about that letter.

29975. But you were the ground officer at that time?—I was.

29976. And you recollect nothing about it?—I recollect nothing about it.

29977. Do you remember what changes took place in 1868?—I do; and I suffered more because I had one fourth of the whole of that stock myself. I was as much displeased as any of them, and had more reason to be so.

29978. And you don't remember that they got the offer of the place at £3 rent, with one cow; I do, and they were for years living under that offer paying £3 of rent.

29979. But there was some potato ground they were to get which they did not get?—I don't remember those particulars.

29980. What arable land had they for the £3; had they ever more than they have now?—No, nor so much, because those people at Annat, the twenty families at Fasag, were thrown in upon them that same year.

29981. But had they not the offer of that ground before the Fasag people were thrown in upon them; was there a letter sent by the factor to you offering that ground?—I cannot recollect anything about that letter.

29982. *The Chairman.*—In general, in all those years were the people very much persecuted and very unhappy?—They were, both on Fasag and Annat.

29983. And the ground officer was the same as the people?—Yes.

29984. It was not with your consent at all that was done?—It was thoroughly against my will altogether.

29985. Are you still ground officer?—I am.

29986. Then you must be pleased now to see the change?—And so I make a full confession of that.

29987. Does it make you happy?—It does in every sense of the word.

29988. Do you think that the people might still get a little more pasture with the consent of the proprietor?—The people are allowed by the proprietor to keep overstock on the condition that they are to give ten days of their work for the keep of that cow.

29989. Is their pasture within a fence or open behind?—It is open behind, and so much the better for us, it is better for our cattle.

29990. The overstock can go wherever they like?—We have the benefit of the forest.

29991. When they go far out do they meet deer—there is no sheep there?—not one. It was a lucky day for us when we got clear of the sheep.

29992. You pay £10 a year of rent?—Yes.

29993. How many acres of arable ground is there in your holding?—I cannot answer that.

29994. Supposing you were not the ground officer, but merely a crofter, and had this large croft of £10, do you think you would be able to make a living with your family?—And so I would certainly.

29995. I suppose you get some salary for being ground officer?—I do.

29996. Supposing you had no salary, but were a crofter and had to live off that croft alone, would you be able to make a subsistence off the croft and keep and support your family in comfort?—I would.

29997. Supposing you had a son who could help you?—Supposing I had a son, the more the better.

29998. But could you do it all yourself or would you have to be assisted?—Of course, assisted.

29999. How many cattle can you keep—what is your summing?—Just as much as the rest—three cows, and one or two followers for each cow.

30000. Any sheep?—No, not one upon the estate.

30001. A horse?—I have a horse.

30002. And how many acres of arable ground?—I did improve that croft of my own greatly—fenced and drained and greatly improved it.

30003. Had you any lease?—I had a nineteen years lease at my entry in the year 1833. At the expiry of that lease I got a new lease for fourteen years.

30004. Was the rent raised?—It was.

30005. How much?—I had to pay £2 more.

30006. And at the end of the fourteen years; what happened then?—Then we were deprived of our sheep stock. As long as that lease was in existence they could not do that. As the estate was then in the market we would get no renewal of leases. The property was intended to be sold; neither I nor they would get any new lease.

30007. Have you got a new lease then?—No.

30008. But you are not afraid of being disturbed?—Not in the least.

30009. Do you think that any industrious man would be able to live and support his family who had a croft or farm about the size of yours?—I do; but it is impossible to expect that a £4 croft will support a man.

30010. Would the tenant have sometimes to work for other people with his cart and horse and earn wages, or would he really get on without working for wages at all?—Well, with such a croft as I have at present, a person would have work enough on it for himself.

30011. *Mr Fras'r Mackintosh.*—All the year round?—All the year round.

30012. *The Chairman.*—What is the reason that people are not allowed to keep sheep on this property?—That is our new proprietor's rules.

30013. What is the reason for doing it?—He prefers to have it as a deer forest; that is all the explanation I can give.

30014. *Mr Cameron.*—Did the people ever have any sheep in Mr Darroch's time?—No; the whole estate was clear of sheep before his entry.

30015. Did the people have any difficulty in managing their sheep stock when they had them?—The Wester Aligin people were the only people who had sheep during Mr Darroch's time.

30016. Did the people ever ask Mr Darroch to have sheep?—I have not heard, with the exception of the Wester Aligin people.

30017. But you don't know whether the people as a body ever asked Mr Darroch whether they might put sheep in the forest or not?—Not to my knowledge.

ROSS.

SHIELDAIG.

John
Mackenzie.

DONALD MACLENNAN, Ground Officer (recalled)—examined.

ROSS.

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SHIELDAIG.

Donald
Maclennan.

30018. *The Chairman.*—We want to understand thoroughly the nature of the tenure of land in this village of Shieldaig—from whom the people hold, and what the nature of their tenure is. Are they feuars or tenants at will, or how are we to regard them?—As far as I understand, some of them have leases, fifty-seven years leases granted by the late Thomas Mackenzie of Applecross. There were about half a dozen such leases in the village of Shieldaig; and as far as I can understand they have all expired.

30019. Were there any feus for 99 years or 999 years?—None except the Government property, which speaks for itself; and the Free Church, I think there is a new feu for that.

30020. What do you mean by the Government property—what is the Government property?—Sir Kenneth can explain.—*Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.* The church and manse *quoad sacra* and a little bit of ground.

30021. *The Chairman.*—What are the people here at this moment—tenants at will, like the other inhabitants of the township?—That is my understanding of it.

30022. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—And the leases have expired?—As far as I understand, they are all expired.

30023. *The Chairman.*—You said you knew nothing at all about the alleged Government regulations which the first witness spoke to?—I never heard of them until to-day.

30024. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Did the Government acquire any right from the Applecross proprietor for the Fisheries Society?—I have heard about some Fisheries Society; that there were four or five villages of such on the west of Scotland, but I know nothing further about them; just mere talk; I never found anything to prove that.

30025. Since all the leases have expired, why is it you do not charge more than 5s. or 10s. for the houses, because I presume they are worth a good deal more?—Most of the houses have got land, and we charge for the gardens and not for the houses. Suppose a man lives upon his garden he has the house and garden combined.

30026. Have the rents of the people here been lifted at all?—Not in my time.

30027. *The Chairman.*—I see something like the foundations of a large stone pier here?—There were two or three such built by the Commission at the time of the destitution in 1844-45-46-47.

30028. What has become of them?—They are falling into ruin. There is an application just now by the crofters of Shieldaig to the new proprietor for the repair of those piers, and I believe he has a mind to do what he can, with their assistance.

30029. And will they be inclined to give a proper amount of assistance?—They are willing to do it.

30030. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—How many souls may there be in this village?—I should say over 100.

30031. What do they do chiefly?—They are a fishing population.

30032. Under what circumstances were the houses built, because they are much better than are generally to be found in the West Highlands?—As far as I understand this was a very prosperous fishing village about fifty or sixty years ago. I am told it was one of the best, and that there were several fishing smacks and good large vessels such as schooners, and somehow or another they have fallen into wreck and ruin; the people have fallen back and the vessels have disappeared.

30033. I suppose it was the encouragement of the fifty-seven years'

leases which probably induced the people to build better houses than usual?—I could not say as to that. I think a fifty-seven years' lease is a very dear lease for a good house; but it is better than nothing.

ROSS.

SHEILDAG.

Donald
Maclellan.

30034. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—I see there are ten people in the Valuation Roll who sit in the position of feuars, who are stated to pay feu duties of 5s. and 10s.; for instance, the merchants here, Peter and Duncan Grant, pay a feu-duty of 5s. a year—is that to Mr Murray?—No, they pay 24s. a year to Mr Murray.

30035. Who do they pay this 5s. to?—Not to Mr Murray. I have nothing to do with the return. I often find the assessor going wrong. There is always a mistake about these things. Mr Grant is here and can explain.

30036. Did they get a renewal of lease lately?—No.

30037. Have they a lease?—Not that I am aware of.

30038. Do they only pay 24s. a year for the house?—And the land along with it.

30039. But is not that house worth more than 24s. a year, if it is Mr Murray's house?—It is their house—they claim it, and so did their father before them.

30040. And without a lease they are allowed to remain in the house?—Yes.

30041. And they pay 24s.?—Yes, for the garden ground.

30042. The garden does not appear here?—No, it comes under another head.

DUNCAN MACLEAN, Butcher, Slumbae, Loch Carron (73)—examined.

30043. *The Chairman.*—What have you come here for?—I have very little cause of grievance for myself; I have come here to speak for the poor people.

Duncan
Macleap.

30044. Who authorised you to come?—I got authority from Clach-na-cuddin—from Dean of Guild Mackenzie, and several other people besides.

30045. Where was the place where the meeting was?—About Jeantown. There were only three houses, and there are ninety people now.

30046. What was the meeting—how many people were there?—We used to meet, so many of us, now and again, and they asked me to come and speak, not that I was going to put any one down.

30047. Why did the people in that meeting not elect you a delegate?—They were all long before proposing to do so.

30048. Have you any written statement or paper?—No.

30049. If you will make a short statement yourself we will hear it?—At the time of the Mackenzies they took the most of the best of the country, and gave it into a sheep farm, which was the curse of our Highlands. The estate was about that time about thirty-five miles long by twenty-five broad. And after that—the time when the Mackenzies sold the estate again—it was divided into so many parts when it was bought by the Duke of Leeds. They made so many parts in it that I saw sixteen proprietors in all the bits they put on. Now the best of it is under deer. There were thousands of sheep formerly on that, and plenty cattle and tenants, and even the ground is getting worse with heather and bog, that it would not maintain half of what it did before. And besides that, if the proprietors would give us the land we would give far more value than the great farmers do; for the great farmers get what they want, and we won't. We would be a great help to the Government rather than one man; we

ROSS. would give them so much revenue—tobacco, whiskey, and tea,—and pay all these things; and there would be a great deal of people in the country instead of one man having the best of it for a few deer. I could go on at the like of that for a while. And besides that the Government would have a good many soldiers.

SINELDAIG.
Duncan Maclean.

[ADJOURNED.]

ROSS.

BALMACARA ROSS, THURSDAY, AUGUST 2, 1883.

BALMACARA.

Present:—

LORD NAPIER AND ETTRICK, K.T., *Chairman.*
SIR KENNETH S. MACKENZIE, Bart.
DONALD CAMERON, Esq., of Lochiel, M.P.
C. FRASER-MACKINTOSH, Esq., M.P.
Sheriff NICOLSON, L.L.D.
Professor MACKINNON, M.A.

DUNCAN SINCLAIR, Schoolmaster and Registrar for the Parish of
Lochalsh, Auchtertyre (44)—examined.

Duncan Sinclair.

30050. *The Chairman.*—How long have you held your present offices?—Eighteen years.
30051. Do you appear here as a delegate?—Yes
30052. From what township?—From the townships of Avernish, Kinnamoine (that is, the end of the peat moss), and Alt-na-stu.
30053. How many years have you been in Lochalsh?—Eighteen.
30054. Of what county are you a native?—Argyleshire.
30055. Have you any written statement?—Yes, for the various townships.
30056. Will you have the goodness to read it?—I will:—*Statement of the Tenants of Avernish.* We, the tenants of the above township, wish to express our gratitude to the Royal Commissioners for giving us this opportunity of stating our grievances in regard to the land question. There are nine of us, including the mill croft, which croft pays a rent of £20, the mill included. Three of us pay £3, 6s. each and five £2, 7s. 7d., making in all a total of £41, 15s. 11d. The grazings, which are in the possession of a sheep farmer, pay a rent of £60, and carry a stock of 200 sheep. The first three crofters have between them about twenty acres in all, including rocks, bogs, and similar fertile soil. They each keep two cows, and sow about one quarter oats, which on an average yields about double that quantity; and they have to sow very thick, owing to the poverty of the soil. Each plants about five barrels of potatoes, and the return averages twenty-four barrels. The mill croft extends to about four and a half acres (arable), with "outrun" for two cows and followers. The remaining five crofters have fifteen acres between them of the same character and fifteen acres pasture, or keep for five cows. The sowing and planting is of the same description as the former. This was at one time an important township, and used to contain a large, prosperous, happy, and contented population; but thirty-four years ago the bulk of the people were expatriated, as usual, through the agency of the factor, who wished to form a sheep farm for

' his son. Those who were allowed by the proprietor to remain after the factor had expressed his determination to have them evicted, in these words, " Go you must, even though you should go to the bottom of the sea," were allowed a mere fringe of the township, bordering on the rocky sea-shore. These patches have been considerably improved since by the crofters at their own expense ; and, to make bad worse, some of them had to pay 14s. a year in addition to their rents for the use of seaware for their soil. When the people were deprived of their township in 1849, the land was left as a sheep-farm, and some years afterwards about one-fourth of it was turned into a plantation. The people one and all earnestly desire that the land of their forefathers should become their own again. They were led to understand that this desideratum might be granted last Martinmas ; but since then the intention, if it ever did exist, seems to have been abandoned, and, as far as the local authorities are concerned, leaves us more hopeless than ever. We therefore appeal to you, the Royal Commissioners, for redress of our grievances and restitution of our rights.—DUNCAN SINCLAIR, KENNETH FINLAYSON, delegates.' I may remark that I tried to put the paper as far as possible in the people's own language. It was translated from their native Gaelic.—*Statement by the Kinnamoine Tenants.* There are five of us, and we each pay £4 rent, or £20 in all, with rates and taxes. Each croft consists of about five acres arable land—mostly peat-moss and shingle, and there is about five acres of good pasture in common. Our stock consists of one cow each ; but this is too much for our pasture, and we have occasionally to tether them on our lots. We sow about one quarter oats each, and get a return of one and a half boll oatmeal on an average. We also plant about four and a half barrels potatoes, which yield a return of about five bolls, taking one year with another. Some of us generally rear a young beast, but we have to send them to graze somewhere else during the summer half-year. Our township is not an ancient one. It used to be not very long ago a peat-moss and quagmire ; but at the commencement of the sheep-farming mania, when the people were regarded as a nuisance to be got rid of by driving them out of the country like noxious vermin, or by crowding them into barren promontories or boggy hollows which were useless for sheep, our township was then formed by locating families there who had been deprived of good land in other parts of the estate. There were ten crofters in it at one time ; but in one way or another the number was reduced to five, and then the small piece of pasture we have was given to us. Previously the people had only the bare lots. Some slight improvements were effected by the proprietor, but the bulk of the trenching, draining, and fencing has been done by ourselves or fathers. We never got payment for any work done ; and if we were to remove under the present law, we could not claim any compensation, which we think very unjust. The houses of some of us are very wretched, and we all suffer great loss most years through the want of barns. We have often spoken to the proper authorities about this drawback, and offered to pay interest on the outlay for suitable buildings, but have always been refused. It is only the big farmers who get those favours. We were offered, however, wood and lime if we would build ourselves ; but then the buildings would be the property of the laird. If we were assured of compensation, we would put them up at our own expense. Our own peat-banks having become exhausted many years ago, we got others free on the township of Ardelve ; but these also having run out some years ago, we have had since to get them on some of the big farms, where we have been charged 7s. 6d. and occasionally 10s. a year

ROSS.

BALMACARA.

Duncan Sinclair.

ROSS. ' for them. We consider this a very great grievance indeed, as it is the custom, we believe, generally in the Highlands, for all who pay rent to have the right to fuel on the estate free of charge. It was never the rule, in this parish at least, till some of the present big farmers, through greed and the sanction or connivance of friendly factors, commenced to charge a good many years ago. Some of them do not charge at all, and others only 2s. 6d. a year. We don't think the proprietor ever knew of this iniquitous charge. Another complaint we have is that sufficient sea-ware is not allotted us for our requirements. We have to buy some every year, for which we pay at the rate of 3s. a boat-load. If we had more pasture and could keep several beasts, the increased supply of byre manure would enable us to do with less sea-ware. For a long time we have suffered great loss from the Conchra and Auchtertyre sheep eating up our corn and grass; but now, within the last few days, wire fences have been run up between us and these farms, so that we are secure from their depredations for the future. We believe that the coming of the Royal Commission here has been the means of conferring this benefit upon us. Having now stated our grievances, we may inform you of what we require in order to make us comfortable and contented. We want more land, especially pasture, at a fair rent, fixity of tenure, and compensation for improvements. There is plenty of good pasture land on the farm of Conchra, adjacent to our crofts, which would suit us remarkably well; and as Conchra farm is at present too large, this end corner of it might and should be added to our township. We consider that, in order to make us fairly comfortable, we should have holdings to carry four cows, one horse, and forty sheep each, and the whole to form a club-farm. We have one cottar living among us; and in the event of our township being enlarged, we would all be willing to let him have a share, more or less. We have for a long period borne poverty and hardship patiently, whilst we have seen strangers growing fat on our native land; but our patience is nearly exhausted, and we therefore pray this Royal Commission to endeavour to ameliorate our condition before matters come to a more critical state, and whilst it can be done with the minimum of loss to all concerned.—**DUNCAN SINCLAIR, FARQUHAR M'BETH, delegates.**'

30057. These are the memorials of two townships, have you a third?—
Yes.

30058. Read it?—*'Statement by the Alt-na-stu Crofters.* As a township we have suffered many grievances which we wish to state to this Royal Commission, and hope that its visit will be the means of bettering our condition. Whilst Lochalsh was in the possession of Lord Seaforth, our forefathers were the tenants of the neighbouring extensive township of Sallachy. When he sold the estate to Sir Hugh Innes, our fathers were deprived of the land which was let to two large tacksmen, who allowed them to remain in the houses for some years. Afterwards the land was given to our fathers again, but at such a high rent (£400)—double what it pays at the present day—that they all soon came to poverty, and their stock was taken from them by the proprietor, so that they were thrown out penniless. Some of them went abroad, and the remainder were given the steep, and at the time useless, nook called Alt-na-stu, where they, and after them, we have been since. It was as sub-tenants of Sallachy they were placed there at first, and continued so, paying exorbitant rents till the estate passed into the hands of the late Mr Lillingstone, who took them from under the Sallachy tenants, and having added a little more arable land and some pasture, made Alt-na-stu into an independent township. At

BALMACARA.
—
**Duncan
Sinclair.**

' present there are twelve crofters, of whom three pay £5, 7s. each, and the other nine £24, 1s. 6d., being £40, 2s. 6d. for the whole. Till two years ago the rent was £45. Our arable land, which is so steep that it has to be worked in terraces, extends to about nineteen acres; and our pasture, which has been set out for fifteen cows, won't keep half that number. We keep fifteen cows, but we have all to buy winter keep for them, and to summer them for some time on the neighbouring farm of Conchra, where we pay 1s. 6d. per week for each. Were it not for this they would die of starvation on our own land. We have been mostly taking our living out of the sea, but that is very uncertain where we are situated; and as may be supposed, by anybody who knows the exceptionally small and poor holdings we have, the most of us have a hard struggle to live at all. We feel it very hard and unjust that we should be made to work like slaves, by having to carry manure and seaweare on our backs up a steep hill, which has all to be cultivated by hand, as no horse could work on it, whilst there is plenty of good level fertile land quite near us, which if given us, we would pay for at a better rate than the fat Cheviot sheep, who presently enjoy it to the exclusion of the proper natives of the country. We would be satisfied with some additional land being added to our holding, or by giving us a portion of one of the big farms, for a new township where we could have three or four cattle, a few sheep, and a horse, at a fair rent. All the tenants agree in presenting this statement.—DUNCAN SINCLAIR, JOHN MATHESON, DONALD MACKENZIE, delegates.'

30059. I understood you to say that the English phraseology of these memorials has been translated by you?—Yes.

30060. It is therefore the correct English expression of what was stated to you verbally by the meeting?—It is the substance; of course, I may have varied from their expressions in the Gaelic.

30061. But there is nothing substantial introduced by you on your own part?—Nothing; and I insisted that they should appoint a delegate to come up to tell you that the statements in these papers are not my views alone.

30062. There is nothing in the terms of these memorials that I have to complain of, unless some expressions of rather unnecessary bitterness in the second one. I should like to know whether these expressions justly represent the feelings and expressions used by the people themselves?—Is it in regard to going to the bottom of the sea?

30063. That is one. Another is, 'at the commencement of the sheep-farming mania, when the people were regarded as a nuisance to be got rid off, by driving them out of the country like noxious vermin, or by crowding them into barren promontories or boggy holes which were useless for sheep'; is that a translation of the language told by the people to you?—That is the expression of the people. They know they have been regarded as a nuisance, and have been wanted to be sent abroad, and they know very well they were sent into these rocky promontories and boggy holes. That is the experience of the people, although it is not so bad as in some parishes.

30064. But what I want to know is whether the expression 'noxious vermin,' for instance, is a correct translation of the language used at the meeting or by the people in your presence?—Well, 'wild animals' perhaps would be the proper term; that passage refers to the deer forest. They say our Parliament and Legislature have been legislating for animals with the greatest care by means of the Game Laws, but have never passed any legislation for the people. It is to these matters that that passage refers.

ROSS.

BALMACARA.

Duncan
Sinclair.

ROSS.

BALMACARA.Duncan
Sinclair.

30065. I was only speaking about the terms themselves ; I was anxious to know whether they were proper translations of words and things said in your presence, or whether you had infused any additional strength into it yourself ; and I rather think from what you say that you did somewhat intensify the language ?—Well, I modify it to the extent of saying ‘wild animals.’

30066. You told me the meaning of Kinnamoine, the end of the peat moss ; what is the meaning of Alt-na-stu ?—The raspberry burn.

30067. Since the township of Avernish was formed, have there been any additional tenants brought in from other places ?—I am not aware that there have.

30068. There are just as many holdings as there were at the time that the township was formed as it now is ?—When the grazing was taken from them thirty-one years ago, so far as I know.

30069. Have there been any evictions from it during that period ?—I don’t know that they should be called evictions ; the people were a sort of induced to go by the proprietor or his factor, who wanted to form the grazings into a sheep farm for his own son.

30070. Have there been any evictions since then ?—No, none.

30071. The poorness of the crop is mentioned in connection with this township ; is there any ground for believing that the productive quality of the soil is gradually diminishing ?—It is a well known fact that it is so, by constant cropping.

30072. Is the same ground constantly cultivated with the same crops, or is a portion of the ground ever left out in grass ?—I am not sure whether they have any out in grass, but the only crops are potatoes and oats, and they are put down time about. One of the people themselves would be better able to speak to that.

30073. But you know the place ?—Yes, it is quite near.

30074. Have you been in all the houses ?—Not in all.

30075. But you know them by sight ?—Yes.

30076. In your memory, has anything been done to improve these houses, or are they much in the state they were in thirty-four years ago ?—Some have been adding to them, and some roofing them with felt instead of rushes.

30077. What is the character of the houses, are they houses in which the cattle and people enter by the same door, or by different doors ?—Different doors, so far as I know.

30078. Are they chimney houses, or houses in which the fires are on the floor ?—They have mostly chimneys, but I don’t know whether they all have. I know the proprietor gave one family last year money to improve their house, and it is a very good house now.

30079. Do you know whether there is any regulation on the estate under which houses can be improved by the tenant with assistance from the landlord ?—I have been given to understand that the proprietor is willing to give them wood and lime to improve their houses generally ; I think that is understood throughout the estate. But as these houses were mostly built by the crofters themselves, they have a disinclination to accept wood, because then they could not claim compensation, and they think when the houses have been altogether built by themselves they can claim compensation.

30080. Their common pasture was taken away in order to make a sheep farm thirty-four years ago ?—Yes.

30081. Who was proprietor thirty-four years ago ?—Mr Lillingstone.

30082. Who was factor then ?—A John M’Lennan.

30083. They have both long since disappeared ?—John M’Lennan died

this spring at the age of 98, quite a poor man, after having been a great man.

ROSS.

30084. When did the Mathesons come into this part of the country?—In 1851 or 1852, I am not sure which.

BALMACARA.

30085. At the time when the Matheson family came in here, do you know whether any representation or petition was made on behalf of the people for restoration of their old grounds?—I am not aware; I was not in the parish, and I have not asked as to that.

Duncan
Sinclair.

30086. Have you ever heard here, or anywhere about here, of grazing land being taken from farms or land in the occupancy of the proprietor and spontaneously restored to the crofters?—Yes, there has been a case of that in Lochalsh since last Whitsunday on the extensive sheep farm of Knockgorm, part of which was given to tenants in Attadale in Lochcaron, and part to tenants in Sallachy.

30087. Were these restorations of hill pasture formerly belonging to the respective tenants?—I don't think it ever belonged to the Sallachy tenants, but the hill grazings of Knockgorm belonged to all the townships in Lochalsh; they used to send their cattle and horses there in summer, and the lower pasture was allowed to go.

30088. The pasture the people desire to recover is pasture contiguous to their arable land—pasture on their own borders?—Yes; quite. They have a rocky fringe round about, and the pasture extends across the hill, and the sheep slope is planted.

30089. How large is the farm from which they wish to take it?—It carries a stock of 200 sheep.

30090. What they want is to obtain the whole of that?—The whole of that.

30091. It would not be worth dividing?—No; it is not extensive at all.

30092. You think the people would be able to stock it?—Some would not, but others would. But they would do it unitedly, they say. Those who are not able would be helped by those who are, and they would give a share to those who have not any—thrifty neighbours who have a little money.

30093. Do you think they would pay the same rent as the present farmer, or nearly so?—I think so. Their lots are considered to be much dearer than the sheep farms.

30094. Is this sheep farm held under lease?—Yes, I believe there is a lease.

30095. How long has the lease to run still—you say it might have been granted last Martinmas?—The tenant showed a disposition to give it up if arrangements could be made. He says he would not be a barrier to the people getting it, as he has other large sheep farms.

30096. Does he live on it?—No; in Kilellan, in a neighbouring parish. He keeps a shepherd here.

30097. One shepherd for so small a farm?—Yes, and it must be rather a heavy burden, I should think.

30098. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You have been taking an interest in the locality and the people, I presume, from your official position during the last eighteen years?—Yes.

30099. You wrote these three petitions from the townships at the request of the people themselves?—I have not done the actual writing of some of them, but I composed them.

30100. You have also stated that there are delegates appointed from each of these townships to come here to-day?—Yes, otherwise I would not have appeared in case it should be said I was representing my own views.

ROSS.

BALMACARA.Duncan
Sinclair.

30101. So far as your own personal knowledge goes of the circumstances, and your experience of eighteen years, are you disposed to concur in the views expressed in these papers by the people?—Quite—certainly.

30102. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Have you a large school here?—Not very. The average attendance for the last year was 49·79. I had the inspection yesterday.

30103. Is your average decreasing or increasing?—Decreasing, and so is the population.

30104. Is your average decreasing simply in proportion to the population?—About that.

30105. Do you think the attendance is really as good as it used to be?—It is not so numerous, but most of the young people are going away, and very few of the people are marrying, and the population is decreasing considerably. So that in proportion to the population they attend as well as they formerly used to do.

30106. You had your inspection yesterday?—Yes.

30107. What was the number present?—Sixty-one.

30108. How many were presented?—Thirty-nine, but a good many more left at the end of spring, who would have been qualified if the inspection had taken place then. There were forty-five qualified, but some of these were absent at the inspection, and only thirty-nine were presented.

30109. Do you know what numbers were on the roll throughout the year?—Ninety-eight were enrolled during the year.

30110. And only thirty-nine presented?—Yes.

30111. Have you to complain of the irregularity of the attendance of those on the roll?—I have certainly. It is the most unfavourably situated school in the parish. It was very suitable under the old parochial system, when the children did not come forward until they were pretty old, but now when they have to come in from Balmacara and Ardelve, three miles, they cannot come so regularly. So many come from Raivaig and Balmacara, and Avernish and Kinnamoine.

30112. Do parents make excuses for the irregular attendance of the children?—Very often at the time when the crops are being laid down, or the peats are being stacked, or when they are making hay and cutting corn.

30113. How many scholars have you in the fifth and sixth standards out of the ninety on the roll?—There were only three in the sixth standard, about six or eight in the fifth, and two in the fourth. But almost all those who left in spring were the bigger ones, and those who came in were younger.

30114. Do you find they leave school earlier than they used to do?—Yes.

30115. Why do they do so?—Because they think that when they require to send them in at the age of five they ought to be free to take them away when they come to thirteen. They come earlier and go away earlier, but I believe it would be far better otherwise. It would be better, I believe, if the age was raised from five to six, and that the children should remain at school till they were fourteen; it would be better for the Highlands.

30116. Do children go away to secondary schools more than they used to do?—Not many from my school, but a few occasionally. Most of them have taken to the sea, and I have some in good positions abroad. They take to that more readily than to college. I have just now one who is a missionary at Kyleakin, but as a rule they prefer mercantile pursuits now-a-days.

KENNETH FINLAYSON, Crofter's Son, Avernish (38)—examined.

ROSS.

30116*. *Mr Cameron.*—Is your father alive?—Yes.

BALMACARA.

30117.—And holding a croft and paying rent?—Yes.

Kenneth Finlayson.

30117*. Does the summing of the crofters correspond with the head of stock kept by the tenants?—Yes, undoubtedly; our own statement.

30118. Is it according to the stock they are entitled to keep?—Yes, undoubtedly.

30119. How many tenants are there?—Five tenants in that small village.

30120. In Avernish?—No, there are other three besides that, and the mill croft.

30121. How many tenants are there altogether?—Nine.

30122. Your father's name is George Finlayson. What is the number of cattle he keeps?—One cow, a follower, and a calf some years, and some years not.

30123. At the present moment?—One cow and one calf.

30124. And a two-year-old or one-year-old?—It is only two or three months.

30125. He has only a cow and a calf?—Yes.

30126. No other beast?—No.

30127. Do you know how many cattle are kept in the township altogether?—Some of them keep more in the winter, and put them to grass with the sheep farmer in summer time.

30128. Do people keep more stock in winter than they do in summer?—Yes; some of them.

30129. What do they do with these extra cattle in summer?—Send them to grass to the big farms wherever they can get grazing.

30130. So that you have wintering for more cattle than you have summering for?—Some of those who keep the extra stock have to buy winter keep for them in addition to their own produce.

30131. Are there any of the crofters who keep extra stock in winter?—Some buy cattle and others rear them; and then they buy from neighbouring tenants, in order to feed them in winter.

30132. So that the arable ground is more than sufficient to winter the stock allowed by their summing to be kept on the hill pasture?—Nobody need understand that; although there is land for them to stand on, it will feed them in winter without buying.

30133. But in point of fact the arable ground is more than sufficient to winter the stock which you are allowed by your summing to keep on the hill pasture?—No, it is not the fact that we have more arable land than will support our proportion of cattle for the summer grazing.

30134. If you buy cattle to keep in winter, surely that implies that you are able to keep extra stock in winter?—We have byre room for them and outrun room for them to stand on, but not to feed them; but we are entitled to buy food for them.

30135. Do you think the rents which you pay are too high?—I say that the rents are too high in comparison with the big sheep farms or tacks; but, *per se*, I don't consider they are too high.

30136. That is, compared with the usual crofting rents in the district?—Yes.

30137. I suppose what you really want is this additional farm to enable you to summer more stock?—Yes.

30138. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Is it not really the fact that the value of an animal may increase from the time you purchase it until the time

ROSS. you sell it, and that you buy cattle and keep them in order to turn an honest penny? Is not that what you mean by taking in these pasture beasts and paying for their food?—Yes.

BALMACARA. Kenneth Fiulayson. 30139. And the croft itself really affords nothing to that animal except the standing room of the byre?—The summing of the place is one cow and calf, and the extra cattle have no right to be there; only we agree among ourselves to tolerate each other for having an extra one.

30140. Does it harm the proprietor or anybody in any way when you buy a beast and buy its food from other quarters?—I am not aware that it is any loss.

30141. What is the name of the small farm adjoining what you would like?—Knockgorm.

30142. Do you know what rent is paid for that farm by Messrs Brown?—£60.

30143. Have the Messrs Brown got a great deal of land in this country?—They have land in Kilellan, but not so much as they used to have; part of it was made into deer forest.

30144. Have they a good deal yet?—I believe they have.

30145. Quite enough to enable them to dispense with this small piece at any rate?—Yes, if they were so inclined.

30146. Do you think that you or your father and the other crofters are quite able, if you get this land, to take it and do it as much justice as this non-resident sheep farmer?—Yes, if we got it at a reasonable rent.

30147. How would you like to get this reasonable rent fixed?—By comparison with the big sheep farms about.

30148. You are willing to give acre for acre?—Yes, according to the rental paid by the big sheep farms in the parish.

30149. You don't want to hurt the proprietor by this request?—No, it cannot hurt him.

30150. You would not like to hurt him?—No.

30151. Is he a good landlord?—Yes; but I would hardly know him although I met him on the road.

30152. What is the name of the son of the factor who wanted to get the farm from your predecessors?—I think it was William M'Lennan.

30153. Where is he?—He went abroad, I think.

30154. Did he ever get the farm?—No.

30155. Who got it when the people lost it?—Mr Brown of Kilellan.

30156. Was that all before Sir Alexander Matheson came?—It was for some years in the hands of the proprietor himself, and I believe it is since Sir Alexander came that Mr Brown got it.

30157. Did the people in the township make any direct application to the proprietor or factor when they heard that Mr Brown was willing to give it up?—They went to the factor, Mr Watson, who promised to represent their wish to the proprietor, but whether he did so or not we have not heard since.

30158. What do you do yourself besides farming—are you a fisherman?—Yes.

30159. Do you earn most of your living by the sea?—The whole.

30160. *The Chairman.*—Do you remember the trees being planted upon the hill?—Yes.

30161. Did that give a good deal of employment to the people?—Yes, they did get a good deal of employment then; but there were local factors in this district who would give them employment. But since then matters are changed, and now no one can get employment of any importance except strangers.

30162. Was there any draining done in connection with the planting?—
Yes.

ROSS.

30163. Has there been any employment given in connection with keeping the drains open and thinning the wood?—Yes, thinning the wood.

BALMACARA.

Kenneth
Finlayson.

30164. Is the wood well fenced, or has the fence been now thrown down?—It is up round some parts of the wood, and in other places it is broken down.

30165. Is the ground inside the wood pastured?—There was one part taken from us formerly, and we have got authority this year to pasture cattle inside that part of the wood.

30166. Is the pasture inside the wood as good as outside on the hill?—
No.

30167. Are you paying additional rent for pasture in the wood, or do you get it gratis?—I cannot say; we only got it at the last term.

30168. What stock did you put into the wood?—Nothing extra.

30169. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—At what fishing are you engaged?—The east coast fishing at Peterhead.

30170. Is that fishing not going on at this moment?—Yes, but I did not go.

30171. What employment are you engaged in this year?—Nothing.

30172. Is it from want of health that you are not employed?—I am quite healthy.

30173. If you are not living by your croft, nor by fishing, how are you living?—That is a question I am not bound to answer to anybody.

30174. You come here as a crofter's representative; what have you to do with the croft?—That I work it every year.

30175. Have you any brothers working at it too?—My other brother was working along with me on the croft.

30176. *Professor Mackinnon.*—You have between you in the eight crofts and the mill croft forty acres of arable land which you cultivate: how much has your father?—Three acres, as far as I am concerned.

30177. There are three who pay a higher rent than the others; how much arable land will they have?—Something about the same, or maybe four acres.

30178. How do they pay higher rent?—They have more pasture.

30179. Is not the pasture common?—No, the pasture is separate.

30180. And is the pasture of each separately enclosed?—Yes.

30181. Whether is your pasture ground or arable ground the larger and wider?—They are much about the same.

30182. And your summing is one cow and a stirk?—Yes.

30183. Do you sell the stirk?—Yes, sell it when it is a year old.

30184. And you never keep more than that stock on the summing?—Some years they keep them on the sheep farm.

30185. I mean within your own pasture?—No.

30186. But if your own ground is separately enclosed it does not really very much matter whether you keep extra stock or not; it is your loss if you don't keep it, and not your neighbours' loss?—They are divided into two sections, and each has not a separate pasture at all; the pasture is in common in two divisions.

30187. But you don't keep more than your summing in summer upon the common pasture?—No, it would not carry them.

30188. How about the wintering? Your crofts yield a crop that could winter more beasts than there is summer pasture for?—
Yes.

30189. In that respect, if you had more summer pasture you would go

ROSS. on with the crofts as you are and winter more cattle?—They would keep as much again as we have summer grazing for.

BALMACARA. Kenneth Finlayson. 30190. There was a far greater amount of stock upon the ground last winter than there was summer grazing for; were the people of Avernish able upon their own crofts, without going outside to buy anything, to winter the whole of their stock?—No, some of them had to buy; that is according to the labour they do in the spring time in the way of putting on manure, sea-weed, &c.

30191. But if the crofts were well cultivated in an average year, would they winter the stock you had last year?—I could not say.

30192. Off and on?—Well, the place is so small that nobody hardly can wait to lose that much time in the spring as to put the place in order.

30193. Suppose you got the place you are wanting, is it sheep stock you would put on, or cattle and sheep?—Cattle altogether, as far as I am concerned.

30194. Is there arable ground upon the farm you wish to get?—It is all arable land; the most of it is arable land.

30195. What stock is on it just now?—200 sheep, I believe.

30196. But you would turn it into arable ground?—Part of it.

30197. And put cattle upon the grazing?—Yes.

30198. You don't mean to keep sheep?—Not so far as I am instructed by the rest.

30199. You expect there is as much ground capable of cultivation upon that place as would winter well the cattle that would graze upon it in summer?—

30200. And you think you and your neighbours would be prepared to give the rent for it that is at present given by one man?—No, by no means.

30201. Supposing you got it at a reasonable rent, you would be able to stock it?—We would try and do it.

30202. The whole eight?—What would become of the four cottars who had none?

30203. I thought you said the crofts you have are not too highly rented looking at themselves alone?—I don't know whether you would call them highly rented or not; they are very small.

30204. Do you think that this farm is too highly rented?—I am thinking it is.

30205. Does Mr Brown think it is?—I don't know; I never asked him.

30206. How would you arrive at what you call a fair rent?—Take the crofts acre for acre with Auchtertyre or other places.

30207. You think at present the farm is over-rented?—Yes.

30208. But you would be willing to give the rent going in other places?—Yes.

30209. *The Chairman.*—There is a mill in the township?—Yes.

30210. Are the tenants obliged to carry their grain to that mill?—No, we are not bound to go there; but the mill is useless.

30211. Why is it useless?—Since the big farmers in the country gave up sending the corn to be ground, the mill has been neglected, because there is only bere sent to it and it is almost useless. I had corn there, and it was seven weeks before I could get it ground this year.

30212. Is that owing to the want of water or machinery?—Want of water and bad machinery both.

30213. Could water be brought to the mill?—Easily.

30214. How many people were supported upon this farm of old before the clearance?—Sixty families.

30215. How many acres do you suppose in this little farm were once under cultivation—regularly cropped?—I could not say.

ROSS.

30216. Would there be fifty acres?—I am certain there would be and more.

BALMACARA

30217. Is that land which was once in cultivation as valuable to-day as it was at the time it was put under the sheep?—No, nor half so valuable.

Kenneth
Finlayson.

30218. Is it getting worse every year?—Every year since the sheep were put on it is getting worse.

30219. Will a day not arrive when the proprietor won't get anything for it if it remains as it is under sheep?—It is very probable.

30220. And is it also probable that you and others who are willing to take it will not be able some years after this to give the same rent as you could give now?—I cannot say anything as to that, because we don't know what is to come, but we know what is.

30221. If it is bad to continue it as a sheep farm, must it not be equally bad ultimately for the purpose of making it arable ground?—I believe if it is cultivated it will be improved again.

30222. But if it is bad to continue it as a sheep farm, I ask you, must it not be equally bad ultimately for the purpose of making it arable ground?—Yes, undoubtedly.

30223. But if you began to put it in cultivation and put manure upon it, it would recover itself?—That is quite easily understood that it would.

FARQUHAR M'BEATH, Crofter's Son, Kinnamoine (30)—examined.

30224.—*Sir Kenneth Mackenzie*.—How long have you been working the croft for your mother?—Since I was able to do the work.

Farquhar
M'Beath.

30225. Were you elected a delegate by the people of Kinnamoine to come here to-day?—Yes.

30226. How many of the people of the township assembled to choose you?—Five.

30227. The five tenants of this township are all at home at this time?—Yes.

30228. Are they able to make a living off their crofts?—No.

30229. Do they find other employment within the country?—Some do get employment and others do not.

30230. At the present season they have found sufficient employment to save the necessity of their leaving home?—There is plenty of work for lowlanders, but not for natives.

30231. How does it happen that all the five tenants are at home?—We are fishing.

30232. Are you getting fishing at home?—Yes, a little. I want to explain that one of them is a mason.

30233. You have employment in the country?—Yes, I am working in the country with Mr M'Kay, who is a native man, otherwise likely I would not have got employment.

30234. How long is it since the township of Kinnamoine was first formed?—In the time of Sir Hugh Innes. I believe my grandfather was about the first to go there.

30235. Are there any old people in the township who can remember that time?—There is not an old man in the township to-day; they have all died out.

30236. Where did they come from originally, these ten inhabitants of

ROSS. Kinnamoine?—My own grandfather came from Balmacara; John M'Rae came from Camusluine, another came from Durinish, and Matheson came from Lochcarron.

BALMACARA. Farquhar M'Beath. 30237. Who occupied Kinnamoine at that time?—I cannot say.

30238. How long is it since the ten tenants became reduced to five?—I think it was at the time of Sir Alexander Matheson buying the estate, but I am not sure.

30239. Do you know what became of the other five?—Death carried off the bulk of them.

30240. Are the remaining five the better for having their holdings doubled in size?—I think they are a little better, but they are miserable enough. But of course the ten were more miserable.

30241. Has the proprietor done anything in the way of improving the land or helping you to get buildings?—Twenty-seven years ago the proprietor built a dyke, I don't know how many yards long, with stones taken off our land; and after that was completed 2s. per acre of extra rent was laid upon us—10s. per acre.

30242. The dyke must have been enclosing your own land?—It was between us and the public high road, so as to keep us from straggling beasts.

30243. You say you have applied to have advances for buildings, offering to pay interest, and that the proprietor refused. Who made the application?—John M'Rae and my mother.

30244. Were they absolutely refused?—I believe they were, in respect that they were offered wood and lime free, and then that the premises would belong to the proprietor after them.

30245. Do you feel that you are in danger of being removed at any moment?—Yes, we are, unless we obey all the behests of the factor; otherwise the law is, let us take the road.

30246. Have any of your acquaintances on this property been removed on that account?—I cannot mention any case, but our fathers were so slavish in spirit that they had no idea of going against anything that the factor could order, and therefore were quite facile in the factor's hands, and we want to be emancipated.

30247. It is mentioned in the paper that you have made improvements, and that they have not been paid for?—My father effected £20 worth of improvements. The improvements were measured, but when he went for payment which had been promised, he was threatened by the factor that he would be put out of the land if he dared to ask it.

30248. Was he asked to pay additional rent for his own improvements?—No.

30249. How long have you enjoyed the benefit of these improvements?—About twenty-five years.

30250. Would you expect to be paid for the improvements, and not be charged any rent?—We are quite willing to pay interest for a certain number of years, but we object to have it laid on as rent continuously all our lives.

30251. What rate of interest do you think would pay it off in a reasonable term of years?—A shilling in the pound for twenty years I consider fair.

30252. Do you think that in twenty years the debt should be extinguished?—We would be quite willing to pay it for a few years more in order not to defraud anybody of his just right, but we don't believe it should be kept up during all our lifetime. We have now been paying it twenty-seven years, and we believe the debt should now be extinguished.

30253. Do you know how much you pay for money from the bank if you get it?—I don't know.

ROSS.

30254. Have you never had occasion to get money from the bank?—Yes.

BALMACARA.

30255. Do you know if you ever had to pay less interest than a shilling in the pound for it?—I never drew money out of the bank for a year's time; only for a few months at a time.

Farquhar
M'Beath.

30256. Had you to pay at a less rate than a shilling in the pound per annum?—I think so.

30257. And hadn't you to pay the principal back again at the end?—Yes.

30258. When were the five acres of pasture given to this township?—Mr Livingstone's time, but I cannot say how many years ago.

30259. Have you long complained of the want of the fence between Conchra and Kinnamoine?—I have been in this neighbourhood for the last ten years, and never a stob was put up until the last few days, when we believe it was done owing to this Royal Commission coming round.

30260. Did you ever ask for it in the previous ten years?—Yes, every year, and complained of our loss at the same time.

30261. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Are you old enough to recollect when the people of Avernish were sent away to America?—They were away before I was born.

30262. Have you heard about it?—I have.

30263. Did you hear that a great number of the people who were sent away on that occasion died on the passage?—Yes, I have; that the most of them were lost, and that those who arrived over safe were badly used ever afterwards—were in a bad state.

30264. Were all the improvements that were made in this place entirely done by the tenants themselves from the time the township was formed out of barren moors?—Besides the dyke already referred to, the proprietor did a few drains, but beyond that nothing. The people themselves have drained almost every year, and turned out stones.

30265. And created the township, in fact?—Yes.

30266. Before then were there any people there at all?—No, it was not a suitable place for people to be in.

30267. *The Chairman.*—Both you and the previous witness have stated that natives of the place do not get employment, but that employment is given by preference to people from the outside; what do you mean by that?—As long as we had local or native factors, we got the preference; but since that has been changed, and since the factors have been low-country men, they have introduced natives of their own districts into all positions, such as grieves, and the natives have no chance of anything of that sort.

30268. You mean that you get no superior employment, or do you mean that natives are not even engaged as day labourers?—We get nothing above a day labourer's appointment or employment; and unless we are very plausible to these low-country officials, we will not get even that.

30269. Have the low-country people brought low-country labourers in?—I don't think they have.

30270. What class of people are employed in the great forests and woods which Sir Alexander Matheson has planted?—As far as the forests are concerned, I cannot say anything.

30271. I meant the great woods, not the forests?—In regard to the woods, the natives get employment as day labourers, but in the forest and all over it is low-countrymen.

ROSS. 30272. Do you think the factor and ground officer have a prejudice against natives?—I think they cannot have any good-will towards us, because my father was never in debt. He died nine years ago, and since then the rent has been regularly paid; and last spring I went for timber to Mr Watson, the local factor, but did not get from him any satisfactory answer.

BALMACARA. 30273. The proprietor himself is a Highlander; he can have no prejudice against his countrymen. Have you represented this grievance to him?—We never come in contact with the proprietor, and we don't know what his intentions towards us are; but it is quite apparent that those who are in favour have been prospering for years. We don't know whether it is directly through him or his agents; we cannot say.

Farquhar M'Beath. 30274. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Are there many of the same name as yourself here?—Very few.

30275. Have you been here a long time?—My grandfather and father were paying rents here at all events; I don't know before them.

DONALD MACKENZIE, Crofter, Alt-na-stu (40)—examined.

Donald Mackenzie. 30276. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Had you a meeting of the Alt-na-stu people when you were appointed?—Yes.

30277. Were they all at it?—They were not all at home, but all who were at home were present.

30278. When was it?—A fortnight on Tuesday.

30279. Where is Alt-na-stu situated?—Alongside of Loch Long.

30280. How far is it from this?—Five miles at least.

30281. What kind of place is it?—A steep place, difficult to work.

30282. How many years is it since the people were removed from Sallachy to this place?—More than fifty years.

30283. How is Sallachy occupied now?—By other tenants.

30284. It is not a sheep farm?—No.

30285. It adjoins Alt-na-stu, does it not?—Yes.

30286. Do you know how many tenants there were at Sallachy?—There were thirteen lots.

30287. And there are twelve at Alt-na-stu?—Yes.

30288. How long is it since Mr Lillingstone gave you some additional ground?—More than thirty years; I cannot say exactly.

30289. Has the rent been increased since then?—It has not.

30290. It has been reduced lately?—Yes, two years ago.

30291. Are you unable to raise sufficient food for your cows on your ground?—We have to buy food for them in winter, and to send them to Conchra in the summer.

30292. Where is Conchra?—Beside us.

30293. By whom is it occupied?—Dr Duncan.

30294. How long are you obliged to keep your cattle there?—As long as we can get them—about a month; we are not allowed to keep them longer there.

30295. Where do you buy the winter provender for them?—From neighbours round about the country,

30296. Are you all fishermen?—Some are fishermen, and others day labourers.

30297. Are none regularly engaged in fishing?—Pretty regularly; but when there is no fishing to be had they dig and do other work.

30298. Do any of you go to fish in other lochs besides this—lochs at a distance?—Yes.

30299. Do any of you go as far as the east coast to fish?—Very few; almost none now-a-days.

30300. Have any of you a boat of your own?—Only small boats for the local fishing.

30301. What kind of fishing do you engage in?—Herring fishing always.

30302. Has there been any fishing this season?—Very little as yet.

30303. You don't keep any horses?—No horses.

30304. Are you forbidden to keep horses?—No; but there is no place for us to keep them or to work them.

30305. You say no horse could work in the place?—No, it is that steep that it would be impossible.

30306. Therefore you consider it a grievance to carry your manure and other things up the hill?—Yes.

30307. But is there any other way of doing it?—No other way.

30308. Is it uncommon in the Highlands and Islands for people to carry that sort of thing on their backs?—It is getting less and less common.

30309. What you want is to get a better place, and to be out of Alt-na-stu altogether?—If we could get a better place, that is what we want.

30310. Is there such a place not far from you?—Not far from us.

30311. What place do you refer to?—There are some hill farms on the Conchra side.

30312. What farms?—Kinnamoine, and the deer forest beyond that.

30313. How is Kinnamoine occupied?—As a deer forest.

30314. Would you be able to take it?—We would not be able to take it all, but a small quantity we would.

30315. How many acres have you at present on an average?—It is stated to be nineteen acres.

30316. That is the arable land amongst you all?—Yes.

30317. How many acres of arable land would you think it good and right for yourself to have?—About ten acres.

30318. Ten acres each?—I should say eight each.

30319. Do you consider the pasture land also too limited?—Yes, it is worse still.

30320. There are just three of you who keep two cows at present, and the rest of you have only one cow. I suppose you would all like to have two cows?—Yes, or more.

30321. With ten acres and a fair amount of pasture, how many would you expect to keep?—Four cows and a horse.

30322. And of sheep?—Fifty, or about that.

30323. Can you estimate what you would consider would be a fair rent for that?—We have not considered that; probably they would not take the rent we would offer.

30324. Do you consider the present rent too high for the ground?—Yes; the ground we occupy is hardly worth any rent.

30325. Your rents are on an average £1, 13s. 6d. Is that what you pay?—No.

30326. Yours is £5, 7s.?—Yes.

30327. What do you think your rent ought to be?—It would be too dear at half what it is.

30328. Supposing there are several other townships which want to get a part of those farms you have mentioned, who is to have the first chance?—We are the first.

ROSS.

BALMACARA.

Donald
Mackenzie.

ROSS.

30329. Why?—Because it marches with us, and we are needful.

BALMACARA.

30330. Had your predecessors before you part of it?—Those at Salachy had.

Donald
Mackenzie.

30331. You mention that you send your cows to one place in summer and another place in winter?—We send them outside our own pasture in summer, but we keep them inside in winter. But we have to buy food in winter for them.

30332. How long do your cows remain on your own ground, and how long are they off it?—They are all the year round on our own land except one month. We would require more time for them to be off the land, but that won't be granted us.

30333. How much do you pay per cow for the one month during which it is sent away?—1s. 6d. a week.

30334. How much do you pay per cow for fodder which you are obliged to purchase for winter?—A pound or thirty shillings.

30335. Do you think you have to pay in money 31s. for each cow in the year?—Some of them have; it depends on how they work their land. Some keep more land in grass, and others cultivate more produce.

30336. Do you ever pay as much as 31s. in the year for your cow?—Not I, as I have two lots, and leave out more of the ground in grass; but those who have only one lot have to do so and have to buy.

30337. Do you know other people who have to pay 31s. in the year?—There is a man here from the township who can tell that.

30338. Is that for the cow that really belongs to the place and to the summing, or is it for an extra cow beyond your proper stock?—Sometimes we rear a young beast in order to replace an old cow, and in that case the expense is incurred.

30339. Do you always find it easy to buy additional fodder for the winter?—Some years we do, and others not.

30340. What class of persons do you buy fodder from—farmers or crofters?—From different parties just as we can get it.

30341. What is it you buy?—Straw and hay.

30342. *Professor Mackinnon.*—You are one of those that pay a high rent?—Yes.

30343. Can you tell me what stock you are allowed to keep?—A cow a stirk, and a few sheep, because the place is too rocky for cattle.

30344. The summing is a cow and a stirk for each croft?—Yes.

30345. And your actual stock is two cows and two starks?—No, I am not able to do that.

30346. Are there any sheep in the summing?—I believe not.

30347. But some keep sheep?—Quite so.

30348. How many do you keep yourself?—I smeared at Martinmas twelve sheep and two hoggs, but there are not so many alive to-day.

30349. Do all keep the same number?—No, some of us have none at all.

30350. How do you arrange amongst yourselves, those that have sheep, what do you do with those who have none?—We agree satisfactorily in regard to that amongst ourselves.

30351. Do those who have sheep pay anything to those who have none?—No, because an understanding was arrived at amongst ourselves, and those who don't have them cannot claim anything from those that have.

30352. I thought there were no sheep in the summing?—No.

30353. And don't the sheep spoil the pasture of those that have no sheep at all?—We keep them up to the rock at the back.

30354. Those that have no sheep have no cause to complain against those that have?—There are not so many sheep as to make any difference.

30355. You don't consider that the place is too highly rented?—There is no doubt but it is.

ROSS.

30356. How would you like to get your rent fixed if you got additional ground?—If we got it from the proprietor himself, we would be quite satisfied to get it reasonable.

BALMACARA.

30357. But you would like to be away out of this place and get arable land in another place?—Quite so.

Donald Mackenzie.

30358. In that place you were talking of, Conchra, is there good arable land, or a place that could be made into good arable land?—Very much better than where we are.

30359. Is it flat ground that horses could work upon?—Some of it.

30360. You would prefer to be there rather than where you are?—Undoubtedly.

30361. Those of you who have double crofts, I suppose, are much better off than those who have only one?—I don't think so, considering the nature of the place and the circumstances we are situated in.

DONALD MATHESON, Crofter (47)—examined.

30362. *The Chairman.*—Where is Kirkton?—Round about here.

Donald Matheson.

30363. Have you been elected a delegate?—Yes.

30364. Were there many people present when you were elected?—The whole, with the exception of one.

30365. How many crofters paying rent to the proprietor are there in Kirkton?—Six.

30366. Have you got a memorial for them to present?—Yes. *Statement by the Kirkton Tenants, parish of Lochalsh.* Between 1847-49 nine families emigrated from Kirkton, and at the latter date the township was divided into eight shares, of which Mr David Logan got five. The whole rent was £85, including hill pasture of Altan Bän, near Pait Monar, on which all our stock, with the exception of the milch cows, were grazed for the summer half-year. This arrangement subsisted till 1852, when Mr Logan left, and the eight shares were changed to four. At the same time Altan Bän was taken from Kirkton, and was given to the late Mr Mitchell of Attadale, who was gradually forming a large sheep farm out of the grazings belonging to other townships; but there was no reduction of rent. Besides this, a considerable portion—about the fifth part—of our home hill pasture was taken from us and added to the Balmacara Hotel farm, or Keraig, for which a reduction of £11, 11s. was allowed. This continued till 1859, when a new arrangement was made by joining Old Glebe to Kirkton, and dividing the whole anew into six shares. Old Glebe, whilst in occupation of Sergeant Macrae, paid a rent of £30, but when added to Kirkton charged £40. In the consideration of outlays by proprietor for building houses, byres, &c., the rent at the same time was increased to £20 each, or £120 for the whole township. Then afterwards, in 1862, £10 each additional rent was laid on us in the name of interest for improvements, rising the rent to £30 each, or £180 in all, besides road money and poor rates. It may be stated that, according to an entry in our rent books, the total amount certified to have been expended in these improvements is £1261, 12s. 10d. We continued paying at this rate till Martinmas 1881, when we got a reduction of £6 each, or £36 for the whole, which leaves us paying now £24 each, or £144 for the whole farm. Our present stock consists of 250 sheep of all kinds, 18 milk cows, and 6 horses. Any young cattle we keep or

ROSS.

' wish to rear, we have to send every year to summer to the Isle of Skye, As may be understood from the foregoing figures, we have experienced very great difficulty in making a living at all out of the place; in fact, many of us could not have held at all, if not assisted by friends, or having means otherwise; and as for those who had no such means or assistance, it has been an arduous and long-continued struggle for existence for years back. In order to make this clearer, we have only to mention the rent and stock of some of our neighbouring big farms by way of comparison. The farm of Balunacara pays a rent of £320, and is understood to carry a sheep stock between 1000 and 1500, besides cattle and horses. Auchtertyre pays £200, and carries between 700 and 800 sheep, with cattle and horses. Conchra pays £325, and has a stock of about 1500 sheep, with the usual accompaniments of cattle and horses. We wish to point out that these big farms support only one family each, whilst our small one, besides supporting six families as tenants, is also burdened with other four families of cottars and squatters. We also regard it as another great grievance, that at least three-fourths of the best land of our native parish is in the occupation of six large sheep farmers and one deer forest; and we believe it would be for the benefit of the people generally if the land was more equally divided. Having now stated our grievances, we beg respectfully to mention to the Royal Commission that the following are what we require in order to enable us to live in a fair state of comfort and contentment:—(1) That our rent be reduced to what it was before the improvements were made; (2) Fixity of tenure as long as we pay a fair rent; (3) Compensation for any improvements we might make in the event of removal. All the tenants concur in this statement, with one exception.—DONALD MATHERSON, DUNCAN MACRAE, delegates.'

30367. *Mr Cameron.*—You state your rent was reduced from £30 to £24, why was the reduction made?—I cannot say, but it was done by the proprietor.

30368. What year was that?—1881.

30369. Was it done after any statement made by the tenants?—Yes.

30370. You expressed a wish to have the rent reduced?—Yes, to the factor.

30371. Did you state by how much you wished the rent to be reduced?—No.

30372. You asked for a reduction of rent?—Yes.

30373. And you got to the extent of £6 out of £30?—Yes.

30374. Were you satisfied with that in 1881?—So far; it was a great help to us.

30375. Have things gone so much back since 1881 that you expect a still further reduction?—Yes, the price of wool is decreasing.

30376. Do you and your neighbours consider yourselves as crofters or farmers, with this amount of land and the rent you pay?—Crofters.

30377. But I suppose your crofts give as much work as occupies the whole of your time?—Most of the year.

30378. Do you keep one or two horses each?—One each.

30379. When were the improvements made on which you pay the interest, which you now want to have done away with?—It states in the paper.

30380. '£10 each additional rent was laid on in name of interest for 'improvements,' but I do not think it mentions the date. 'This continued 'till 1859, when a new arrangement was made by giving the Old Glebe into Kirkton, and dividing the whole anew into six shares. The Old Glebe, while in the occupation of Sergeant Macrae, paid a rent of £30, but

BALMACARA.

Donald
Matheson.

'when added to Kirkton paid £40. In consideration of outlays by proprietors for building houses, byres, &c., the rent was at the same time increased to £20 each.' Was all that done in 1859?—Yes.

ROSS.

30381. There is no date given—did all that take place together?—Of course it did; we commenced paying it in 1859.

BALMACARA.

Donald Matheson.

30382. Then the improvements were made in 1859?—Yes. The improvements were not made, but after the arrangement was made we agreed to pay £20 each for building new houses and byres and barns, and we commenced paying it at once.

30383. Was any land improved at that time?—Yes, they commenced shortly after that.

30384. Do you know what interest you paid on these improvements?—It was 5 per cent. we promised.

30385. On what grounds do you wish that 5 per cent. now taken off? Are the improvements not as available now?—Because we consider the amount is paid up, and the lots are too dear.

30386. But 5 per cent. cannot pay up the capital as well as the interest of money expended on improvements?—Of course, when the money is paid by proprietors.

30387. If the money is paid up you think the charge made on the tenant should cease?—Exactly.

30388. But have you ever heard it stated that when a proprietor borrows money from a company, or in old times from the Government, the charge made, which includes the paying up of capital as well as interest for twenty-five years, is £6, 14s. 6d. or something like that?—No.

30389. Perhaps you thought that if a proprietor borrowed money to cover capital as well as interest the rate would be 5 per cent.?—Yes.

30390. You are not aware it was more?—No.

30391. That 5 per cent. only represents the interest without paying the capital; and if you wish to pay the capital too it would require to be more—you are not aware of that?—No.

30392. In point of fact, you and your neighbours wish for a reduction on two grounds—first, because you were under the impression that the whole of the money spent on improvements has been paid off by the tenants; and secondly, owing to the low price of wool?—Yes; and more than that, we never got a reduction for the hill which was taken from us in 1852.

30393. But a new arrangement was made in 1859 was it not?—That was made because the proprietor told us the rent, and the factor charged more than the proprietor said it would be in 1852.

30394. But in 1859, when the arrangement was made, did the tenants express themselves as satisfied, or did they remonstrate?—It was all the same whether we would or not.

30395. But did you as a matter of fact say it was not a fair arrangement, and that you wanted something in respect of the hill pasture being taken?—Of course I had to do it, or leave the place.

30396. You thought you had to do it?—Yes, I was forced.

30397. In what way were you forced?—He told me I would lose what I had, unless I would make that arrangement.

30398. What did the other tenants say?—Some of them did not say anything with the exception of one, and he spoke to me, but at last he yielded.

30399. But in fact there was in 1859, when this arrangement was made, a feeling generally expressed amongst the tenants that it was an arrangement which was not fair towards them, and too favourable to the proprietors?—Yes.

ROSS. 30400. Did you speak to the factor about the place being still too dear in 1859?—Of course we did, but he said we would get this work done, and we agreed upon the point. But we never thought it would come

BALMACARA. Donald Matheson. more than that until he commenced improving the land; and he never asked what he should spend, but kept on all along until we were charged at that rate. It was all the same whether we would complain or not.

30401. How is the present stock of sheep divided amongst you? Is it all common?—Common, under one man.

30402. How much arable land have you got?—About ten acres each, I should think.

30403. How many cattle have you each?—Three, perhaps.

30404. Supposing that the proprietor was to reduce your rent on account of the low price of wool, would you be willing to pay an increased rent if the price of wool were to rise again?—For all the wool we have it would not benefit us so much; even £1 or £2 a year would be something.

30405. £1 or £2?—£1 or £2 of reduction.

30406. You would be satisfied with a small reduction now?—Yes.

30407. You do not think your rent is very much too high since this reduction was made?—Yes.

30408. By how much?—If it was the old rent.

30409. Without the money for the improvements?—Yes.

30410. Do you think you ought to have the improvements absolutely without paying for them?—If it could be done.

30411. Do you think that, provided you got the improvements now for nothing, after a certain number of years, that would be an encouragement to any proprietor to improve his land for other tenants, supposing they wanted it?—I should think it would.

30412. You think it would be an encouragement to a proprietor to improve his land if after a number of years the tenants expected to have the improvements for nothing, and to get the reduction of £6 in their rent besides?—I should think it would.

30413. You think the proprietor would like that, after expending money upon his property and getting no return?—Has he not got a return when it is paid up and getting his land made better?

30414. Is there any use making the land better if there is to be no more rent got for it?—If he makes the farms smaller and charges the same rent; and if a man on making improvements gets that part of the farm taken from him.

30415. How did you get at the stock which the various sheep farmers keep?—I got it on good authority.

30416. You are satisfied in your own mind it is accurate?—Yes.

30417. Do you know all the sheep farmers personally?—Yes.

30418. Have you heard that they also complain of the low price of wool?—I have not seen them of late.

30419. Have they got leases?—I think they have.

30420. You have no leases?—No.

30421. Would you like to have a lease?—Yes, if we got the place at a fair rent which would pay us.

30422. Was a lease offered you in 1859?—I do not know; I was not present.

30423. Did your neighbours ask a lease?—I do not know.

30424. You do not know whether there was one asked?—I was not present.

30425. In 1859, if a lease had been offered to you, would you and your neighbours have taken it on the terms on which you then engaged?—Yes.

ROSS.

BALMACARA.

Donald
Matheson.

30426. After the improvements were made?—No.

30427. If you had accepted the offer of a lease and got a lease, you probably would not have had this £6 of a reduction?—I cannot say.

30428. It never occurs to these large sheep farmers to ask reductions during their lease?—They got more reduction than we got.

30429. At the same time?—I don't know.

30430. Do you mean that the large sheep farmers got reduction during the currency of their lease?—I cannot say what time they got it, but I know they got it.

30431. Are you sure you had no lease in 1859?—I cannot say. I never knew of it. Perhaps there may have been some written agreement.

30432. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Who was the factor in 1859?—*Mr Finlayson.*

30433. What became of him?—He died.

30434. Was he a good factor?—Middling.

30435. He did not do much good to the people in Lochalsh?—No.

30436. Nor to the proprietor either?—No.

30437. The loss of part of your pasture which was given to the inn was a very serious loss, was it not?—Yes.

30438. In fact, unless you get it back, the township will never get over it?—I cannot go that length.

30439. How far will you go?—It is a great loss to us.

30440. What is the name of the tenant of Balmacarra Inn?—Robert Macleod.

30441. Where did he come from?—Sutherlandshire originally.

30442. If your figures are correct in your statement about the rent and the stock kept by the other farmers you have mentioned, your township is paying more than you ought by a good deal?—Yes, as far as I understand. I know the rent is right, because I had the valuation roll when writing that paper.

30443. And neither you nor your co-crofters understand why you should be charged more rent than the big men?—Exactly.

30444. In fact, I suppose you would think it would be more reasonable to give the poor men the cheaper rent?—I should think so.

30445. Whatever money you may earn or raise out of your croft I suppose you spend in the country?—Yes, and more if we could get it.

30446. And it is the same with the other crofters?—Yes, unless they have means otherwise.

30447. The fact of you and the other people staying in the district or locality like this all the year round, and spending in the district whatever you can afford to spend, is helping the district, is it not?—Yes.

30448. Supposing there is a big farm and the tenant is not resident, is he of any particular use to the district?—No, I do not think he is.

30449. He may be very useful to the landlord in paying a big rent?—Yes.

30450. What other use is he?—I do not know any other use he is.

30451. He helps, of course, to pay his share of the taxes?—Of course, he pays his own share.

30452. You have been sent here to-day?—Yes.

30453. You have heard some of the previous delegates tell that no natives of the district here are employed in offices of trust. Is that correct?—I do not know of any.

30454. Do you think it is true what the previous men have said?—As far as report goes, it is.

30455. The proprietor is a Highlander himself?—Yes.

ROSS.

30456. A good Highlander?—Yes.

BALMACARA.

30457. Does it surprise you and other people, therefore, that he does not do something more for his countrymen?—Many a time.

Donald
Matheson.

30458. You state that had you known the improvements would cost so much you would have hesitated about going into the arrangement?—Yes.

30459. *Had you or your co-crofters any control over the expenditure made by the factor at the time upon your place?*—Not the least.

30460. He did what he liked, in fact?—He did what he liked.

30461. *And whatever it was, you were obliged to pay interest on it?*—Yes.

30462. Was all the money laid out on your land necessary, or was it overdone?—I rather think it was overdone.

30463. You say if you have any cattle which you keep or wish to rear, you have to send them every year to summer in the Isle of Skye. Is that true?—It is.

30464. Are not the bounds of Lochalsh very extensive?—Yes.

30465. Would it not seem curious to a stranger that there was not enough pasture in Lochalsh for your beasts, and that you should have to go to the Isle of Skye?—Yes.

30466. But it is true?—Yes.

30467. How do you account for that?—Because most of the pasture here is occupied by large sheep farms and larger forests.

30468. Is the large sheep farmer not willing to give you the summer grazing?—Yes, for some time; but he won't give it for the whole year. He won't give it longer than the month of August.

30469. Only for such a short time as would not suit you?—Yes.

30470. You say the ground is occupied by deer. Is it true that people in the low ground used to send their beasts in former times to the high ground now occupied by deer?—Yes.

30471. And that is cut away from you?—Yes.

30472. What places can you get in Skye where you can summer the beasts?—On Lord Macdonald's place.

30473. Upon the large farmers?—No; the small tenants.

30474. You have written this paper, no doubt, with something particular in view. Would you mention the particular part of Skye?—Sleat, near Isle Ornsay.

30475. And to some extent you can get summer grazing there?—Yes.

30476. It is not far away, except that you have to cross the sea?—We have to cross Kyleakin.

30477. Who is the tenant of Auchtertyre?—David Logan.

30478. Is that the only farm he has got?—Yes.

30479. Where did he come from?—The low country.

30480. Who stays at Conchra?—Dr Duncan.

30481. Where does he come from?—The low country.

30482. Is there any native at all having a big farm?—Yes, one at Auchmore—Roderick Donaldson.

30483. What rent does he pay?—About £155.

30484. Do you pay poor's rates?—Yes.

30485. According to your paper, besides paying your share of poor's rates, you are burdened with four families of cottars and squatters?—Yes.

30486. Do they pay you any rent?—No, we never charge them anything.

30487. Have they got potato ground?—We give them potato ground.

30488. Do they not give you any labour?—They cannot afford to give much. They are obliged to labour for themselves.

30489. Do these four families belong to the town? Are they friends of crofters or people who squatted down?—Not as far as I know.

ROSS.
—

30490. Are they all outside people who have settled down upon you?—Yes.

BALMACARA.
—

30491. Are they relations of your own?—No, not as far as I know.
30492. How came they there?—Some of them were there before I remember.

Donald
Matheson.

30493. And they are there yet?—They are there yet.

30494. Always at the expense of the crofters?—Yes.

30495. You say there are six large sheep farms. You mentioned the names of four of them; what are the names of the other two?—Braen-trah, occupied by Mr Stewart; and Fearnag, of which Mr Macrae is tenant.

30496. He is a native?—Yes.

30497. And he is a Highlander?—No; he came from Australia here.

30498. But his name would denote that he came from some part of the Highlands?—I suppose his people belonged to Kintail.

30499. Did anybody help you to prepare the statement you have written?—My neighbours did.

30500. You and your neighbours met and talked it over?—Yes.

30501. Did anybody from the outside world prompt you?—No.

30502. You got no help from the outside; it is your own?—Yes.

30503. Is it written by yourself?—No, it was a schoolboy who did it.

30504. Where does he belong to?—Our own place.

30505. Who put it in this language?—No man did it for us.

30506. *The Chairman.*—You say that the croft consists of ten acres, and supports three cows and one horse. Are all these crofts of the same size or nearly?—All about the same; they are supposed to be the same.

30507. And the share in the sheep stock is also the same?—Yes.

30508. Is the shepherd for the sheep paid in common?—Yes.

30509. How many sheep belong to each share?—There are 250 sheep in all; between 40 and 50 sheep to each.

30510. Three cows, one horse, and between forty and fifty sheep?—Yes.

30511. Ten acres of arable land, and you pay at the present moment £24?—Yes.

30512. With a good house?—Yes.

30513. And sufficient offices?—Yes.

30514. Are you a married man?—Yes.

30515. Have you sons able to assist you?—One of fourteen years old.

30516. Do your wife and daughters assist you in the management of the farm?—My wife is absent from me.

30517. Are you and your family able to manage and labour the whole of this little farm?—No.

30518. Are you obliged to hire labour?—Yes.

30519. Besides what you pay to the shepherds?—Yes.

30520. For the purpose of working the farm?—Yes.

30521. You do not hire any horse labour?—No.

30522. You exchange horses with your neighbours?—Yes, we are working in company.

30523. When you hire any labour, do you take the labour generally from these cottars' families or persons outside?—I keep a servant myself.

30524. You mean a female servant?—Yes.

30525. Do you hire any labour from the cottars?—Yes.

30526. You never have any labour from these poor families?—No.

ROSS. 30527. Not even for harvest?—No.

BALMACARA. 30528. Do the other crofters on the ground never employ these poor people?—They will be working for them oftener than for me; but I do not know whether they would pay them or not.

Donald Matheson. 30529. What is the reason you do not employ these poor people?—I cannot afford to pay them.

30530. Then these cottars are in receipt of good wages?—Yes.

30531. In what sense are these four families of cottars a burden on the crofters if they are receiving good wages—do they cost you any money?—We give them potato land and the like of that.

30532. Do they not pay anything for the potato land?—No, I never charge.

30533. You say some of the crofters employ them, does the potato land count for part of their wages?—I cannot say.

30534. What do you think?—They pay them one way or another, I should say.

30535. But do you think that the enjoyment of the potato land counts for part of their wages?—I should think so.

30536. Who built the cottars' houses?—There were some of them built by some of the tenants who left the place long ago. When the proprietor built new houses for the present tenants the cottars got the old ones.

30537. Do they pay any rent for these old houses at all?—No.

30538. Are there any of the cottars who receive parochial relief?—No.

30539. Do they fish?—No.

30540. Generally speaking, are the other crofters or small farmers in your settlement obliged to hire any labour, or can they generally cultivate their little farms by their own labour?—By their own labour.

30541. What sort of living do they make out of it; are they able to support their families out of the produce and the stock of their little farms?—Oh no, working day's wage mostly throughout the country.

30542. They go and work?—Yes.

30543. At day's wages?—Yes.

30544. Then these £24 crofts do not support the families who live upon them?—No.

30545. What was the nature of the improvements made by the proprietor? Was it drains?—It was draining and building dykes.

30546. Stone drains or tile drains?—Some of them tile and some of them stone drains.

30547. Which answer the best?—The stone drains.

30548. Are they both working now?—Some of them.

30549. And did they produce a great improvement on the land when they were made?—Yes, when they were made.

30550. Was the land limed at the same time?—No.

30551. Has any lime ever been applied to the land?—No.

30552. Do they never use lime in this country?—Not with us.

30553. You say that it was also enclosed?—Yes.

30554. Was it quite open before that?—No.

30555. Were there enclosures upon the ground?—There were enclosures at the roadside and elsewhere.

30556. What sort of enclosures did the landlord make?—Wire fences and stone dykes.

30557. Were they very useful?—Yes.

30558. They did a great deal of good?—Yes.

30559. Did they enable you to improve the cultivation? Do you use improved grass?—Yes.

30560. If they had not put up these fences, could you have introduced the same improvements?—I think so, but we would have had more trouble; we would have had to herd the cattle.

ROSS.

30561. Therefore you think it is a decided improvement to have made the enclosures?—Yes.

BALMACARA.

Donald
Matheson.

30562. Do the enclosures divide each lot from the next?—No.

30563. How do they do?—Every park is divided into six equal shares.

30564. And these shares are not fenced?—No.

30565. There is no fence between the shares, but there is a fence between the parks?—Yes.

30566. Does that work well?—Yes.

30567. You have no complaint to make about the enclosures?—No.

30568. Have the drains fallen into a bad state?—Some of them.

30569. Have they been re-opened?—No.

30570. Have the tenants given themselves any trouble to keep them open?—A little now and then.

30571. Do you think they might give themselves more trouble?—Perhaps at times.

30572. There is some mention in the paper about deer forests. Who made the deer forest?—I suppose Sir Alexander Matheson.

30573. How long ago?—I cannot say.

30574. Is there much land in the deer forest which would be useful for sheep and cattle pasturing?—Yes.

30575. Is there much of it very high which would not be useful for sheep and cattle?—I do not think it.

30576. Was the land occupied as a deer forest formerly, occupied as summer shielings?—I do not think it, so far as I can remember.

30577. Were there always some deer there in former times?—Some.

30578. Is it not a real hardship sending the cattle across the sea? Are they ever injured by it?—Not any of mine.

30579. Are they sometimes delayed either in going or returning?—Yes.

30580. So that you cannot get them back when you want them?—Yes, if the wind is too high in the ferry.

30581. Is there any inconvenience in the markets? Are you sometimes unable to send the cattle at the right moment?—There is no inconvenience in that respect.

30582. You said that most of the large farms were let to south country people or strangers. Was that because strangers were preferred or the strangers have more capital than the natives?—I rather think they were preferred.

30583. You think they loved the south country people better?—That is my opinion.

30584. Were the large farms formed in Sir Alexander Matheson's time or in former times?—Most of them were formed before his time.

30585. Can it be said generally that Sir Alexander Matheson has shown an inclination to form big farms in contradistinction to small holdings? Has that been his policy on his estate, to form big farms and turn out the little people?—With the exception of that hill pasture I have mentioned.

30586. With the exception of that which belongs to the deer forest, that is the only case?—I think so.

30587. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Was that land for the deer forest taken from you?—Yes.

30588. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Is it in summer that you send the cattle to Skye?—Yes.

30589. And it is overstock?—Of course we have not a place for them.

ROSS.

30590. And you take them back in winter?—Yes.

PALMACARA.

30591. That means that your arable ground will winter more cattle than you have summer pasture for?—Yes.

Donald Matheson.

30592. Where do you get pasture for the cattle in Skye?—On Lord Macdonald's estate.

30593. Is it on the small crofts or on the big farms?—On the small crofts.

30594. Because they are too poor to keep cattle themselves?—I don't know; they are more liberal, I think.

30595. How many sheep does your pasture carry?—250.

30596. Is that what we call the summing?—Yes.

30597. Is that what you are allowed to keep on?—You can keep as many as you like, but that is the stock we have on.

30598. What stock is it estimated to carry?—I do not know.

30599. When was the stock counted at 250?—At last clipping.

30600. Two hundred and fifty large animals?—Yes, with the exception of four or five tups. I suppose if the hoggs could be sent to the low country, the pasture might carry 300.

30601. I suppose you can reduce the number of sheep and increase the number of cattle if you so please?—I suppose we might if we so pleased.

30602. And if you did that you would not have to send the cattle to Skye for summing?—Not if we had not sheep at all.

30603. How many sheep would the hill pasture which was taken from you carry?—Between sixty and seventy along with the other place. I cannot say that alone.

30604. And you think your rent is out of proportion to the rents round about?—Yes.

30605. Far too high?—Yes.

30606. If the rent was lower, that size of croft ought to be able to maintain a family?—Yes, in some years, if it is a good season; but in such a year as last it would not.

30607. Last year was exceptional, but in ordinary years it would keep a family?—Sometimes it would and sometimes not.

30608. You talk of having hired labour except for the house. Do you think that a man and a boy is not quite sufficient to work a croft of the size of yours?—They would have enough to do to keep it in good order.

30609. It is more for the house than the farm that you require to get the servant?—I require to get her for both.

30610. What time of the year do you require service on the croft most?—In the time of harvest.

30611. And a little in the spring?—Not so much in spring.

30612. Who were employed on the improvement of the crofts? It was not yourselves?—No.

30613. Outside people?—Yes.

30614. You think you would yourselves have improved them equally well at a less cost?—Yes.

30615. And that would have been the better way?—Yes.

30616. I suppose the reason for putting a fence round each park is that by that means you are enabled to leave out of crop the whole park at a time?—Yes.

30617. And is your own sixth share always the same bit of ground in the park?—Yes.

30618. How many parks are there?—Nine.

30619. How do you work them?—We work them in rotation. There is one of them that is in two parks; it is double.

30620. How do you work them?—In a five-shift rotation.

30621. One potato and turnip, one oats, one barley?—No, we do not sow here.

ROSS

30622. Two oats?—Yes.

BALMACARA

30623. Two grass?—We have two oats, two grass, potato, or turnip.

Donald

30624. Two oats?—Yes.

Matheson.

30625. Two grass?—Yes.

30626. And potato alternately with turnip?—Yes.

30627. And in a good year the croft could support the family if the rent was reasonable?—Some years.

30628. An ordinary average year?—No, it never supported the family.

30629. Instead of £24, what would you consider a reasonable rent for the croft just now?—£17 each.

30630. Would you be prepared to take the place upon lease at that rent?—Yes.

30631. But not more?—No.

30632. You must have considered it very highly rented when it was £30?—Of course.

30633. The return I have here gives thirteen acres as the size of the crofts, but you say ten?—That counts the patches. I know in some of the parks there is not six acres.

30634. And your own stock is just exactly the summing?—Yes.

30635. But there are some who have considerably more?—Yes.

30636. And it is these who have to send cattle to Skye?—
Yes.

DUNCAN MACKAY, Crofter and Sheriff-Officer, Duirnish (37)—examined.

30637. *The Chairman.*—Have you got a written statement?—Yes.

Duncan Mackay.

30638. Are you a delegate?—Yes.

30639. Were you elected by the people of Duirnish?—Yes.

30640. How many heads of families are there paying rent there?—Thirteen paying rent between lots and half-lots; and there are four besides that who have a lot between them.

30641. Did they all take part in the meeting?—Yes, or people representing them.

30642. Would you be kind enough to read your statement?—‘The rental of the township of Duirnish when first given to tenants was £120 at that time, in addition to the arable land and grazings for forty-eight cows. They had summer grazings in the neighbourhood of Loch Monar for eighty cows and four horses. The original number of tenants was four, and these subsequently took others in with them. They then sent to the fore-mentioned grazings sixty-eight cows and ten horses, that is two cows less for each horse over the stipulated number of horses. They were first deprived of Portmaneon, which was, and still is, let to tenants at a rental of £9 a year. In or about the year 1852 we were deprived of the fore-mentioned summer grazings, and in or about the year 1863 the township was divided into ten lots at a rental of £10 each, three of which were made into half-lots. In addition to the arable land each tenant could keep four cows, sixteen sheep, and one horse. (The horses to be sent to summer grazings). But as the land was being allotted, the factor said that he purposed dividing one lot of the arable land among four of the former tenants who had lost their holdings, with the privilege of keeping one cow each, at a rental of £2 each, leaving us under the impression that we were to have a reduction of our rent to the extent of

ROSS.

' £8, but instead, leaving only nine lots of the arable land to be made into ten lots, and adding £8 a year to the rent of the townships,—this making the rental £108 instead of £100, as first agreed upon. There were some improvements made on the place at the time, which we were given to understand we were not to be charged for, as the work was done, we were told, on account of the poverty of the people, and the work people were principally paid in meal from Balmacara, as it happened to be a bad year. About sixteen years ago we were deprived of a piece of the pasture land for a plantation, and about four years ago we were deprived of another piece for the same purpose, both pieces containing upwards of twenty acres, and for which there was no reduction of rent. About five years ago there was a fence made between us and the proprietors' home farm along the river which had always been the march between us. The fence was made on our side of the water, and encroaching into our land to an extent of an average of twenty yards in width in upwards of a mile in length in the best part of our pasture, for which we got neither compensation nor reduction of rent, unless a march fence made between our arable land and two other townships, for which we quarried and carted in stones, was meant as such. Twelve years ago, finding it a cause of contention that each tenant should have his particular share of sheep, we turned them into a common stock; but after the first-mentioned fence was made, as it locked us from all outlet and left us open to the encroachment of the sheep and cattle of the neighbouring townships, our sheep stock of 200 in a short time was reduced to 120, and three years ago we were obliged to sell them. Thirty-one years ago a large portion of the sea-weed which belonged to us was transferred to Achnadarrowch, and when the proprietor took the latter place into his own hands, instead of being restored to us, it was given to the Plockton people. We are obliged to get sea-ware wherever we can procure it, having in some cases to go as far as twenty miles by sea for it, as we have not enough of our own to manure a tenth share of our lots. We are obliged to send our horses and young cattle to summer grazings wherever we can get it. For our horses we pay £1 for each for four months in the poorest place, and from 2s. 6d. to 3s. a week in a good place. The returns from our crofts doth not exceed three bolls of meal and eight bolls of potatoes a year, that is for each £10 lot, and last year we had not enough of seed to sow the ground. Owing to the deterioration and narrow compass of our pasture land, our cows do not give above the half of the former quantity of milk. We desire that our crofts should be revalued, to get more land at a reasonable rent, and full compensation for all improvements. The difference between the original and the present rent as far as the oldest inhabitant of the place can remember, was caused as follows:—Some years after Portmaneon was taken from them there was a reduction of £7, and at the time of the potato failure there was a further reduction of £5 in the rental. We, the undersigned tenants of Duirnish, in the parish of Lochalsh, humbly beg to submit the foregoing statement to the favourable consideration of the gentlemen of the Royal Commission; and we beg to submit that it is a great hardship, and that it has a pauperising effect, that while we and other crofters and cottars are crowded on the poorest part of the land, that six large farmers should get the full benefit of the largest and best part of the parish.—Signed by ALEX. M'LENNAN, JOHN MATHESON, and eleven others.

30643. You had summer grazings in the neighbourhood of Loch Monar, how far from the township of Duirnish were these summer grazings?—More than twenty miles.

30644. Did the people drive their stock for the summer all that distance?—Yes.

ROSS.

30645. And lived upon the hills with them?—They kept a herd for them.

BALMACARA.

30646. When did they lose that privilege?—About 1852.

Duncan
Mackay.

30647. They continued to drive their stock as far as Loch Monar till then?—Yes.

30648. What has become of the grazings in Loch Monar?—They were made into a sheep farm.

30649. Whom does Loch Monar belong to?—Part of it is on Lord Lovat's estate; several properties meet there. It was on the west side the people had their grazings.

30650. To whom do these grazings now belong?—Part of them is in the deer forest.

30651. Sir Alexander Matheson's deer forest?—Yes.

30652. First they were deprived of Portnaneon?—Yes.

30653. That was before they were deprived of Loch Monar?—Yes.

30654. Portnaneon was not a very large place?—No.

30655. Is it now under sheep?—Yes, some people who got it when it was taken from the crofters have it still.

30656. These crofters' lots?—Yes.

30657. Before the division in 1852 how was the ground held,—in runrig?—There were different kinds of lots—there were £7, 10s. lots and £10; and there were others who had half lots, and some had less than half lots.

30658. It was not held in runrig?—Each had his share of arable land laid out for him in different places, so as to have good and bad together.

30659. Did that change?—No.

30660. Did they use to change in this part of the country?—I do not know of any who changed in this part of the country.

30661. When the ground was allotted was the holding consolidated or was it divided in the same way?—No, they had their arable land in different places, so as to have good and bad together.

30662. When it was allotted, one lot was taken away and divided among four, leaving nine complete lots; and then there was no reduction of rent to the remaining nine?—It was agreed upon between the factor and the tenants that the rent of the place was to be £100, and that there should be £10 lots; and afterwards one lot was taken away and the nine remaining were divided into ten.

30663. But there were some improvements made; what was the nature of these improvements?—There were a few drains made, and there was a dyke which had fallen down rebuilt—a stone dyke.

30664. Round the back of the arable land?—Yes, near it at least, on part of it between the houses and the arable land.

30665. Was it a good dyke built of stone?—Yes, it was well built.

30666. Is it still there?—Yes.

30667. How many years has it lasted?—About twenty years.

30668. Are the tenants bound to keep it up?—I believe they are, but it has not required mending.

30669. It has stood twenty years without any injury?—Yes.

30670. It has been useful to the tenants?—Very useful.

30671. But it does not go round the whole of the arable land?—No.

30672. Would you like it continued round?—We have a wire fence.

30673. Why didn't you continue the stone wall?—It was not suitable.

- ROSS. 30674. Soft ground?—The ground was soft.
- BALMACARA. 30675. Then you were deprived of a piece of the pasture for the plantation, and you did not get any compensation or reduction of rent?—No.
- Duncan Mackay. 30676. Was the plantation fenced with a wire fence?—It was.
30677. Who was employed to make it and plant the trees—was the labour of the people employed?—Principally, I believe.
30678. How old is the plantation now?—Perhaps fifteen or sixteen years.
30679. Have the people ever got any branches or wood out of it?—It has not grown to that size yet.
30680. It has not been thinned out yet?—No.
30681. And four years ago there was an additional piece taken from you, and no compensation given?—That is so.
30682. What sort of land was it—was it the worst of the hill pasture?—No, it was the best; it was along the river.
30683. What did you do? Did you write to the factor that it was unjust to take away your pasture and not give you compensation?—Yes.
30684. What did the factor say?—I do not know that he said very much about it.
30685. He did not add to the rent?—He did not take anything off the rent for it.
30686. Five years ago there was a fence made between you and the proprietor's home farm along the river. Although that was made between the home farm and you, was it useful to you?—No.
30687. Did it not prevent your cattle getting across the river?—Yes.
30688. Then it must have given you trouble to follow them and herd them?—But this fence took the land away.
30689. But you think it was of no use to you?—No.
30690. Did the factor make you do any of the work?—No, he did not.
30691. What did they do with the land between the river and the fence? Did they plant it?—No.
30692. Did they intend to plant it?—I am not certain.
30693. Then they turned the sheep farm into a common club farm, but after the fence was made you say it locked you from all outlet; do you mean the fence along the river?—Yes.
30694. What harm did that fence do your sheep?—It kept our cattle and sheep from trespassing.
30695. But it may have saved them sometime from being poinded?—Yes, but if they had got good grass it would not have done them much harm.
30696. In fact, you would rather be without the fence because your sheep would trespass upon your neighbour's ground?—Yes; it would be better for us and better for the sheep.
30697. Did the sheep from the opposite side of the river ever come and hurt you?—There were not many cattle on the proprietor's ground.
30698. They did not do you any injury?—No.
30699. You go on to say that while the fence locked you from that outlet it left you open to the encroachment of the sheep and cattle of the neighbouring townships?—Yes, on the other side.
30700. There was no fence between you and the neighbouring township?—No.
30701. Did you ask for one?—Yes.
30702. What did they say?—It would be too expensive.
30703. Did you offer to help to put it up?—Yes, or to pay interest.
30704. Did you offer to put down the stones and do part of the work?

—We offered to put down the stones if the other townships put down their share.

ROSS.

30705. And did the factor give himself any trouble to arrange that, seeing you and the other tenants might have helped, and that the factor might have helped too perhaps?—Not that I know of.

BALMACARA.

30706. And in fact you remained without a fence?—Yes.

Duncan Mackay.

30707. Why do their cattle and sheep hurt you more than yours hurt them?—Because they have less pasture ground than we have, and they have a heavier stock than we.

30708. Do you pay anything for sea-weed?—We do.

30709. To whom—to the proprietor?—No, to the parties who have it on their shores.

30710. Do you pay to the farmer—to the tacksman?—There is no tacksman near us who has sea-weed.

30711. How much do you pay?—3s. to 4s. a boat-load. There are about twelve of our cart-loads in a boat-load.

30712. Have you far to bring it?—In some cases.

30713. Is it sometimes rough and dangerous to bring it?—Yes.

30714. Was there ever any accident connected with it?—Yes, but not a serious accident.

30715. Can you get any sea-ware nearer or more convenient?—There is not any that we can claim except what we had ourselves, because all those who have it nearer have use for it themselves.

30716. Was the sea-weed which was transported from Archnadarroch sea-weed upon your own shore?—Yes.

30717. Upon each shore of your township?—Yes.

30718. Why was it given to another township?—I cannot say.

30719. Does the other township pay you anything for it?—That other township has not got it now. It was given to Plockton by the proprietor.

30720. Is that a long way off?—No, it adjoins.

30721. Are they quite close to you?—Yes, they border upon us.

30722. Would they have any sea-weed if they did not get it for you?—Yes, they had a considerable amount of their own, much more than we had.

30723. You are obliged to send your cattle to summer grazing, you pay £1 for each in a poor place?—Yes.

30724. You say you consider it very hard that the best ground in the country should be distributed in these large farms, which get the benefit of the largest and best part of the parish; is there any portion of these large farms which march with your township—that lies near to you?—There is the farm of Balmacarra, which lies partly along over borders, and there is also Achnadarroch.

30725. So that, if you could get a bit of these two farms at a reasonable rent, that would satisfy you?—Yes.

30726. Could a bit of each of these farms be given to you without destroying the farms entirely; would there be enough left to make a decent farm?—Yes.

30727. How much of the two farms would you be satisfied with—a third or a half?—Less than a third.

30728. Would a fourth satisfy you?—Yes.

30729. Could you get a portion of that without taking away from the farmers the low ground necessary for wintering their stock?—Yes.

30730. Would you leave them enough to winter their stock?—Yes.

30731. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—I understand from you that some of the sea-ware opposite your own township does not belong to you?—Yes.

ROSS. 30732. And the consequence is that you are obliged to buy elsewhere?—Yes.

BALMACARA. 30733. The part which was given away is now allocated to the town of Plockton?—Yes.

Duncan Mackay. 30734. That is a place with a large population?—Yes.

30735. To whom do you pay for the sea-ware?—Some of us buy it from people in Plockton who do not use it themselves, and some go to Kyle for it, and different places.

30736. Your mean Kyle on this side?—Yes.

30737. Who has got Kyle—two farmers?—Two farmers.

30738. Small farmers?—Yes, and they occasionally sell some sea-ware.

30739. Did your township ever represent to the factor or proprietor the hardship of any of his tenants being obliged to buy sea-ware?—Yes, we often spoke about it.

30740. Did you think it was rather hard that other tenants could sell it on the estate?—It might be hard enough for us, but still these tenants do it, and it would hardly do to take it from them.

30741. It was included in their rents?—Yes.

30742. Is the want of the sea-ware not rather a drawback; would you not take more out of the land if you had a better supply of sea-ware?—Yes, and if we had more we would not require to buy it, or go such a long distance for it.

30743. You have said, you think it rather hard that your town and others should have so little land with so much in big farms?—Yes.

30744. Is there a large population in Lochalsh?—Not very large.

30745. Is it growing or falling back?—It is falling back.

30746. Why is it falling back, do you know?—I cannot say; there are not so many people going away; want of marriages, perhaps.

30747. Is there any encouragement given to small crofters to improve themselves?—They do not get any valuation for their improvements, so far as I know.

30748. Supposing there is a young man connected with the parish who has gone away and earned a little money, who wants to settle down in his native parish, is there any opening for him in the way of getting a small piece of ground?—Not unless it was taken off a large farm.

30749. Are there such things done as pieces taken off large farms?—I do not know of any.

30750. Do you think that as much rent could be got by the proprietor by encouraging small people as he would get for the large farm?—I believe quite as much.

30751. And it would be more satisfactory to the people themselves?—It would be much more satisfactory to them, and I believe there would be less pauperism.

30752. Do you live entirely by the produce of your own land?—Oh no, I am a sheriff-officer.

30753. Is that the only other business you have?—I am default officer to the School Board.

30754. From your public position, you mix a good deal with the inhabitants of the parish, do you not?—Yes.

30755. Are you well acquainted with their views and feelings?—Yes.

30756. Is the desire for acquiring land strong in the parish as well as in other places?—Yes, very strong.

30757. That feeling has not arisen from what they have read of other places?—Not so much. Before this agitation commenced they had the same views and opinions, as far as I know.

30758. The village of Plockton was once an important place, wasn't it?—There were more people in it at one time.

ROSS.

30759. People owning ships?—There are people owning ships there still.

BALMACARA.

30760. Are there any ships trading abroad from Plockton?—Yes, two; but they don't go to Plockton. They are large vessels which are owned by Plockton people.

Duncan Mackay.

30761. Did not there use to be a great many more?—Not that I know of; I believe there are almost as many now as there have been for years. There are almost as many schooners now as any time I have known.

30762. Are you a native of the parish?—Yes.

30763. Was there any proprietor between the Seaforth people and Sir Hugh Innes?—I don't think there was.

30764. Was the management of Lochalsh under Sir Hugh Innes and the Lillingstones favourable to the small people?—I cannot say of my own knowledge.

30765. But you have heard people speaking about it?—I have heard them say the rule under Mr Lillingstone was pretty favourable,—very favourable to the poor people.

30766. He did not turn off any people?—I think he did; there were some turned off from Avernuish, but I am not certain.

30767. Did they use to lay out a good deal of money on the improvement of the estate?—I cannot say for my own knowledge; I do not remember that they did, and I do not remember hearing people say it.

30768. There has been a deal of money laid out by Sir Alexander Matheson on the estate since he bought it?—Yes.

30769. He must have spent a good deal of money in the way of wages?—Yes.

30770. Was there any part of the lands that belonged to Plockton or the small tenants taken away from them in the course of these improvements?—A good deal of land that the Plockton people had was taken away—the greater part of it, I believe.

30771. Was that to make a home farm, policies, and woods at Dunraig?—Yes.

30772. Was there any reason why the wire at the side of the river should not have been on the other side?—No reason that I know of.

30773. Would it have been as easy?—Quite as easy.

30774. Does it do you any harm in depriving you of access to the river for your beasts?—I don't know that it does, because there is always plenty of water; but it has taken the green places on the borders of the river away—on the other side of the river.

30775. The river perhaps winds?—Yes.

30776. And the line is straight?—Yes.

30777. So that a good deal of very good land for you may be struck off?—Yes.

30778. Was the river itself anything of a fence for your sheep?—There was an old fence along the river before this wire fence was made, which was kept up, when the people were living at Achnadarroch, in equal portions by them and us.

30779. Did it seem to you that in drawing the line for the fence they wanted to make it as short as possible, and that they did not mind although you lost something?—I believe it could have been as short on the other side.

30780. And all this green space would have been left to you?—Yes.

30781. This green space would be of money value to you?—Yes; it was the best grass.

- ROSS.** 30782. And of some money value?—Yes.
- BALMACARA.** 30783. Explain to us where the old fence was that was kept up between you and the Achnadarroch people?—Principally upon the Achnadarroch side, with the exception of a short piece about 200 yards on our side.
- Duncan Mackay. 30784. I suppose when the former fence was put up both people looked sharp that neither got the better of the other?—Yes.
30785. But on this occasion, when the proprietor put up the fence, poor Duirnish had to go to the wall?—Yes.
30786. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Are you much employed as a sheriff-officer? No.
30787. What kind of summonses have you chiefly to serve?—For debt and these things.
30788. None of removal?—It is very seldom that I have any of removal.
30789. When had you the last?—This year.
30790. What was that for?—It was in the village of Plockton. A man who had a house there was turning another man out.
30791. Have you great distances to go sometimes?—Yes.
30792. And you find no difficulty in discharging your duties?—Not the slightest.
30793. Is there much litigation amongst the people?—Not very much.
30794. They have to go to Dingwall?—Yes.
30795. How far is that from here?—Between fifty and sixty miles.
30796. Is there no Court held in any nearer place?—No. There was a Court held in Loch Carron last year, but it is very seldom that there is a Court nearer than Dingwall.
30797. Was the Court held by the Sheriff-depute or the Sheriff-substitute?—I am not sure. I was not there.
30798. Is it any disadvantage to the people that they are so far from the Court?—I do not know that it is.
30799. Have you much to do as compulsory officer for the School Board?—No; I have not very much to do, but still the children do not attend very well.
30800. How many schools have you to look after?—Five.
30801. That is within a large district?—Yes.
30802. How often do you visit and inspect the districts?—Once a month generally.
30803. Have you reported many cases of non-attendance?—Yes.
30804. Has anything been done to the parents?—No, nothing except advising them.
30805. None were taken to the Sheriff Court?—No.
30806. And has the advice been taken?—No, generally not.
30807. Of whom does the School Board consist?—The proprietor and two or three ministers, a merchant in Plockton, and the bank agent.
30808. Where are the meetings held?—In the estate office at Balmacarra.
30809. Do all the teachers speak Gaelic?—Yes.
30810. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—What extent is occupied by plantations which were taken off your land?—The two pieces were about twenty acres.
30811. What value do you think it would be?—I cannot say.
30812. Was it worth 7s. an acre?—No, it is not; it was not the best of the pasture land.
30813. It was on the higher ground?—Yes, partly, and partly not; but still not the best of the pasture land.

30814. Was this stretch of land on the river side say about a mile long?—Yes.

ROSS.

30815. Would it average twenty yards in width?—Yes, I believe it would in some places.

BALMACARA.

30816. And at other places the fence was at the very bank?—In no place quite close to the bank.

Duncan Mackay.

30817. Your common stock became reduced to 120?—Yes.

30818–19. And then it was sold off altogether?—I do not understand why it was sold off. We could not keep them; they were dying off. They were in bad condition.

30820. How did you replace them?—We have not replaced them.

30821. Have you put any cattle on?—We keep for each lot two one-year-olds in summer—two stirk; but still it would be better for us to send them away to another place and pay for them.

30822. Your hill ground is bad ground?—Yes.

30823. Where there were 120 sheep there should be room for something more than eighteen stirk?—It would hold twenty stirk.

30824. But what you have endeavoured to put on is two stirk a-piece?—Yes.

30825. And they are nine £10 lots?—There are ten lots; nine lots were made into ten.

30826. Is two stirk each all the ground would carry?—It is, to have them in good condition; and they are not in good condition.

30827. After all, they are not in good condition?—No.

30828. Is that because the ground is overstocked?—It is overstocked by other townships encroaching upon it.

30829. You want your lands valued; at present the town is paying £108?—Yes.

30830. If you were employed as a valuator and not otherwise interested, what would you think the place worth?—Not much more than the half of what we pay.

30831. £5 for each lot?—£5, or perhaps £6.

30832. The lots are not big enough for a man to make a living on?—Not the pasture land; they do not require arable land so much as pasture land.

30833. Have they sufficient arable land?—They could do with more, but more pasture land would suit them better.

30834. What do you think would be a sufficient amount of arable land and stock to keep a family all the year round?—I think eight acres of arable land, six cows, and fifty sheep.

30835. And what rent would that be worth?—It would be worth £10.

30836. Is that about the rent they pay at Conchra and those sheep farms?—I do not know the rent of any of the farms.

30837. *The Chairman.*—Is your common pasture fenced?—No, it is not fenced; there is no fence round the common pasture.

30838. Would it be advantageous to you to have it fenced?—Yes.

30839. Have you ever asked to have it fenced?—Yes.

30840. What do they say?—It would be too expensive.

30841. Suppose they would give you a fence all round the common pasture, would you help to make it?—Yes.

30842. You said you were a native of this place?—Yes.

30843. Some one told us nobody ever got any employment who was a native of this place—how did you manage to get nominated for your present place?—I do not know; they simply nominated me for it.

30844. Notwithstanding that you were a native?—Yes.

ROSS. 30845. Has there been any contested election for the School Board since you came here?—They have been mostly all contested.

BALMACARA. 30846. Has any representative of the crofter class or small tenants ever stood?—No.

Duncan Mackay. 30847. Would the people like to have a representative of their own class, or do they like people of a different class?—I never heard any of them say whether they would like any of their own class; they do not take very much interest in the administration of the School Board.

DUNCAN MACRAE, Crofter, Sallachy (87)—examined.

Duncan Macrae. 30848. *The Chairman.*—How many people are living in Sallachy?—Eighteen families paying rent.

30849. What rent are you paying?—We have recently got an addition of land, and we are paying between us about £200. We have not paid anything of the increase yet for the new land.

30850. Was it hill pasture or arable land you got, or both?—Both kinds.

30851. Do you expect to be a great deal better off now that you have got more land?—We expect to be a good deal better if we get it stocked. We got from the proprietor everything we wanted; we are not going to make any complaint; we are satisfied as we are.

30852. That is what the people of Sallachy asked you to say here to-day?—Every man of them; we got advice before we came here.

30853. So that all you want is just to be left as you are?—Yes.

30854. Have there been tenants in Sallachy since you remember?—There were tenants in Letter before we came to Sallachy, but it was the proprietor who had it in stock when we got it; we were not the means of removing anybody. It is nearly sixty years now since I came to Sallachy.

30855. And it is a very good place?—Yes. The place we had at first was pretty good, but the new addition we got is rather bleak land. But we expect for all that that it will benefit us, as we were too circumscribed in our former lots.

30856. From what place did you come before?—Kyle Rhea, in the parish of Kintail.

30857. We have been hearing all over the country that people sixty years ago were better off than they are now; what have you to say about that?—It is my opinion they would be better to-day were it not for their folly; money is more plentiful amongst the people than it was in my first recollection.

30858. If you compare the condition of the people in Kintail sixty years ago with the condition of the people in Sallachy now, which are the better off?—There are no people in Kintail to-day; it is only deer.

30859. The people who were in Kintail when you left sixty years ago?—Oh! yes, they were far better; they had ground, the mountains, which were keeping people alive, and now they are beside the shore.

30860. And although Sallachy is good, Kintail was better?—Oh! yes, Kintail was better; one man from Kintail was better than half a dozen; that is true.

30861. Have you a school in Sallachy?—Yes.

30862. Do the children all go to school?—I believe they do; since they got the last teacher they attend better.

30863. Can they all read and write?—They are coming on very well. He is an honest fellow the schoolmaster.

30864. I suppose they are better scholars than they were sixty years ago?—There were no scholars at all at that time.

ROSS.
—

30865. Are they better clothed now than they were when you were a young man?—They have too much pride to-day.

BALMACARA.
—

30866. They are finer clothed?—Yes.

Duncan
Macrae.

30867. Are they better fed?—Not so well. I was fed on milk and the produce of sheep, goats, cows, and cattle, and fish.

30868. And are not the people fed that way to-day?—No.

30869. How are they fed now?—Potatoes and herring, bread and tea; they have no butter and no cheese.

30870. But surely they have a little butter in Sallachy, where they have good stock?—We have not got the stock yet, but we expect to get it if we can get help to put the stock in. We are very glad that we have a wealthy proprietor, who can help us when we require it.

30871. Don't the people consume more meal now than they used to do in old times?—Oh! yes; six times more. One house will eat more meal than a town used to do.

30872. Is not that a good thing?—Meal is very good, but not so nourishing as what I was accustomed to.

30873. *Sheriff Nicolson*.—Do you think the people lived happier lives when you were young than they do now?—I believe they were more friendly than they are to-day. Many of them are becoming rascals to-day. The people formerly were more cheery.

30874. Is there more amusement than there used to be amongst them?—They do not know how to amuse themselves so well as the old people.

30875. But you used formerly to meet in each other's houses and tell stories?—They were spending a good deal of their time in that amusement.

30876. Was there a great deal of nonsense about it?—No, no.

30877. Do you think it was a nice way of spending time in the winter nights?—Yes.

30878. They used to be working at the same time as they were telling stories, did they not?—It is they that would. The old people spent a lot of their time in building up dykes on the hills.

30879. And when they met in the evenings what would they be working at?—Nothing, but come home and lie down.

30880. What would they be doing?—Stories.

30881. Would they not be twisting ropes, and would not the women be spinning in the evenings?—Yes; and there is no word of that to-day. No house would be without its spinning-wheel then.

30882. And do they not use them at all now?—Very little.

30883. They made all their own blankets?—Every stitch that they put on.

30884. And do they make any now at all?—Very little. I believe they will come on; they are coming on a little.

30885. How?—They get wool cheaper now. Wool was very dear until now. When wool was dear they could buy their clothes cheaper than they could buy the wool. The people were all going to nonsense.

30886. Did they use to make their own shoes?—Yes.

30887. Every man could make his own shoes?—Oh yes; there was no shoemaker at all when I first mind. I do not remember of a shoemaker; everyone just worked for himself and his family.

30888. Was there a good deal of playing on the pipes?—Plenty of that.

30889. Is there any now?—Very little, I believe.

30890. Do you think that an improvement?—Too much vanity is not desirable; moderation in everything is best.

ROSS. 30891. Did there use to be a good deal of folly in consequence of these pipings?—Sometimes, when they took too much whisky.

BALMACARA. 30892. But do you think they were worse people than they are now?

Duncan Macrae. —I cannot say; but they were more friendly disposed towards each other—there are more divisions now amongst them.

30893. Were they wilder in their behaviour?—They were more ignorant, I believe.

30894. Did there use to be fighting?—Oh, well, I saw that sometimes.

30895. Do you mean in the old time?—Yes.

30896. Is there less of that now?—Yes; when there was a fight then it was very severe, the men were so strong.

30897. I suppose they did not go to church so much then as now?—No, no.

30898. Was there a church at all?—Oh yes, of course.

30899. There was a parish church?—Yes.

30900. There would be no other church?—There was a Roman Catholic church always too in Kintail.

30901. But the people did not go so regularly as they do now?—No.

30902. Did they use to play at games on Sunday?—No; but they went among their cattle and wandered on the hills.

30903. Do they observe the Sabbath more attentively now?—They give more honour to the Sabbath now.

30904. Do you think on the whole that they behave themselves better now than when you were young?—Yes; they pay more regard to the Sabbath especially.

30905. *Mr Fraser Mackintosh.*—As you are an old man, I wish to ask you one or two questions about Kintail. Were you and your predecessors long in Kintail?—I was born in Kintail, and my forefathers belonged from original times to Kintail.

30906. Have you ever heard your predecessors speaking about the battle of Sheriffmuir?—I have.

30907. Did any of your people go out at that time?—My father's brother went to Sheriffmuir, and never came home; it was in Prince Charlie's time.

30908. By the population returns there appears a decrease in the parish of Kintail of nearly 500 people in ten years; do you know that?—It is well known it is so.

30909. Why is that?—There are more of the Kintail people in Australia and America than in Kintail. They expected to improve their circumstances there. It is the money of the Indies that spoiled these parts first—it increased the rents. When a man comes from the Indies with plenty of money, he does not care but to get plenty of land, and he tries to take it from the poor by increasing the rent—he outbids the poor man.

30910. Are you quite sure it was the brother of your father or the brother of your grandfather who was at Sheriffmuir?—My father's brother.

30911. How old was your father when he died?—About eighty.

30912. And how long is it since he died?—About fifteen years.

30913. Could the proprietor of Kintail, like Seaforth, muster up a great lot of Macraes to support him in the field now?—Not the half.

30914. *The Chairman.*—When you were a young man were there many old soldiers about the country who had been in the Highland regiments?—Yes; I knew several who had been at Waterloo.

30915. Were they contented or discontented?—One especially I remember was quite contented, and used always to be in our house, being a relative of my father.

ROSS.

BALMACARADuncan
Macrae.

30916. We heard in another part of the country that when the Highland regiments were raised and soldiers joined them, they were promised by the proprietors that their relations should never be disturbed in the possession of their lands, that they should keep their lands, and that notwithstanding that their lands were taken away from them, while their relations were at the wars. Did you ever have anything of that kind?—I believe there was a verbal promise to that effect, but no written promise.

30917. Do you say that from what you have heard recently, or did you hear it long ago?—I heard long ago that they had a verbal promise, but no written promise.

30918. You say you are eighty-seven years of age, how do you know that?—My parents knew it.

30919. Have you always had good health?—Always.

30920. And have you always been as happy as you are now?—Yes, and more so.

RODERICK MACRAE (69), Crofter, Port-a-chullin—examined.

30921. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Have you got a written statement?—Yes. ‘We, the tenants of Port-a-chullin, Lochalsh, beg to submit the following statement:—That we are so confined by the nature of the place and by fences and otherwise, that it is impossible for the small plots of land which we have to support the number of tenants (8). Our houses are of the most miserable description, and they are built so close to the sea that in tempestuous weather there is a considerable danger that the sea may enter them. We keep two cows each and their followers, but owing to the smallness of our allotments, we have to pay from £8 to £9 in the winter season for their keep. The land is also deteriorating in quality, owing to, we think, the sea-ware which we have to use as manure. We are not allowed to cut sea-ware on the rocks at the shore, but have to go out and fish for the coarse kind found lying at the bottom. Often we have to fish for it with an iron hook six or seven pounds in weight, and at a depth of five fathoms. We consider that this manure is of little or no use to the ground, and we can’t afford to buy any of the other expensive manures, as we have more than enough to do to keep ourselves and our cattle in food. We can’t make any meal from the oats growing on our ground, as it is barely sufficient to sow the ground next year. With the exception of potatoes, the produce of our grain crops is not much more than what we sowed. It is impossible to have a rotation of crops on account of the smallness of the patches which we have. Thirty-seven years ago the hill pasture of Altage, on which we could graze about eighty sheep, was taken from us and converted along with other tracts into a deer forest. We would consider ourselves very well off if we had land enough to support four horses between us all, in addition to the cattle which we have already. The caschrom which we have to use in turning the soil does the work but very imperfectly, and by the difficulty and slowness of the work we spend a great deal of valuable time, which would be greatly shortened if we had horses. With land enough to support sixteen cows and four horses, together with a reasonable tenure of holdings and better houses, we should be in very comfortable circumstances.’

30922. Where is Port-a-chullin?—On the north side of the parish, between Plockton and Strome Ferry.

30923. Do you build your houses yourselves?—I was building a house, and the proprietor helped me to do it.

Roderick
Macrae.

ROSS. 30924. Did he do so to the other tenants?—There was only one other man who improved his house, and the proprietor gave him wood and lime, and the man slated it at his own expense.

BALMACABA. Roderick Macrae. 30925. Why is it you are not allowed the sea-ware on the rocks?—We were for forty years compelled to raise tangle from the bottom in about five fathoms depth of water with long-pronged forks; but of late we have got the sea-ware restored to us.

30926. The long stuff spoiled your ground?—That is what spoiled the land altogether.

30927. Since you have got the proper sea-ware is the ground recovering?—Yes, but we sow it in grass in order to improve it.

30928. It is mentioned in this paper that you have to pay from £8 to £9 in the winter season for the keep of the cattle. Do you mean that each tenant has to pay £8 to £9 for two cows?—It is only for the last year, owing to the storm having swept away all our crops, that we had to buy so much. We would not have required to buy so much if it had not been for that.

30929. Did you get any abatement?—No abatement. We did not ask for any.

30930. What forest is it you spoke of that the hill pasture of Altage was put into?—It is the next place to Patt, on Loch Monar side.

30931. Did you get an abatement of rent at that time?—Yes, we got £1 each of a reduction and part of Alt-na-ban given to us.

30932. You say you would be well off if you had land enough to support four horses in addition to cattle. Where could the landlord give you land for four horses?—It is himself who knows he has; he has plenty of land on each side of us. We have a fence on each side of us forcing us into the sea, and we have no chance to go on either hand.

30933. Who is tenant of the land on either side of you?—There is Fearnag on one side, Auchmore on the other, and Breantragh too.

30934. This was done before your time. Have you applied to Sir Alexander Matheson or his factor to do anything to ameliorate your condition?—Oh! yes.

30935. What happened?—They said they had no place for us.

30936. But you have got something lately for Fearnag?—Yes; but it was in order to bring us in to pay poor rates and taxes, and schoolmasters and everything.

30937. So that it was not a very great advantage to you?—It was better for us than we were before. There is only 3s. of difference in the rent now, and when we had the land that was taken from us for grazing.

30938. How could the sea be prevented from coming in upon you?—How can we keep out the sea when it chooses to come? It could be done by raising up an embankment before us; but as the houses are bad, it would be better to rebuild them, and put them back from the sea. There is a great bank behind our house, about 400 feet high, which prevents us having our houses free from the sea.

30939. Were you born at Port-a-chullin?—No.

30940. How long have you been there?—Fifty-five years. I was born and brought up in Sallachy.

30941. Is Port-a-chullin an old place, or was it settled when you were put out of another place?—There were people in it before I came to it. The first people that went to it went in the year before I was born.

30942. Did you hear where they came from?—There were two when we came to it towards Kyle Inn, that is, at the end of Lochalsh; but I do not know the time they came.

30943. Do you fish at Port-a-chullin?—Yes, we must live somehow.

30944. Would you rather get this additional accommodation you want than to be removed to a better place?—We cannot be comfortable owing to the large number of us. There are seven families who pay no rent, and are burdens upon us. Four families might be comfortable enough in the place, and other four might be removed.

ROSS.

BALMACARA.

Roderick Macrae.

30945. Are the people who pay no rent relations and friends of the crofters, or are they strangers that were settled down upon you?—Not one of them is related to us. They were forced in upon us, taking the skin off the land.

30946. Who did so?—There they are, and we cannot put them out, and we do not believe the proprietor could.

30947. It was not the proprietor who put them in?—No; every one squats at his own freewill. I want to be as near the truth as I can, because I am getting old. It was bad justice we got when we were sent to the place. It was only for the year we were sent there, and they promised to bring us out of it afterwards; and when we went to make the factor to keep his promise, he said, ‘It was a good thing I did not promise you much.’

RODERICK MACLEAN, Factor to Sir Alexander Matheson of Lochalsh, residing at Ardross, Alness—examined.

30948. *The Chairman.*—Do you desire to make any general statement?—I do.—‘The system of division of Highland property which Sir Alexander Matheson advocates, and which he acts upon as opportunities occur, is to have crofts of £4 rent occupied by tradesmen, labourers, and fishermen, who would consider these holdings merely as homes for their families, and by outside labour paying rent and family requirements beyond the produce of their crofts. He would have no crofts at rents between £4 and £10, but from £10 to £15 for occupants who might occasionally hire themselves for labour when available, crofts from £15 to £30 self-supporting their occupants, middle-sized farms from £30 to £100, and large farms from £100 to £300 or £400 occupied by resident tenants, but not to exceed the latter, circumstances permitting. The following is a classification of the rents on Sir Alexander’s west coast estates:—

							£4
‘ 154 crofts under							4 to £6
‘ 72 ”							6 to 10
‘ 38 ”							10 to 20
‘ 43 ”							20 to 30
‘ 24 ”							30 to 100
‘ 9 farms							100 to 200
‘ 10 ”							200 to 325
‘ 7 ”							600
‘ 1 ”							900

Roderick Maclean.

‘ Sir Alexander came into possession of his property in the parish of Glenshiel in 1840, of Inverinate in Kintail in 1844, of the parish of Lochalsh and the estate of Ellandouan in Kintail in 1851, of his property in the parish of Contin in 1856, and in the parish of Lochcarron in 1861 and 1867. Since he became proprietor in Ross-shire he expended upon his estates all the income derived from them annually (including his east coast estates), amounting now to £23,000, and which

ROSS. ‘has on several occasions been supplemented from other sources, thus affording employment to all of his people who were able and willing to work. Of the above outlays £86,867 were expended for the benefit of the tenants in buildings, draining, reclaiming land, fences, and roads. ‘From 1870 till 1882 he wrote off £1326, 17s. 3d. of arrears. In 1880 ‘he reduced the rents by £180, and since then made a further reduction ‘of £290.’

BALMACARA.
Rodrick
Maclean.

30949. Are there any remarks you wish to make upon particular statements?—Yes, I would like to make some remarks. The first delegates that came before you were, I think, those from Avernish. In regard to them, I have to say that the people left Avernish in Mr Livingstone's time, and the reason was that they would not submit to his regulations for cultivating the farm by spade labour. They preferred to go abroad rather than submit to the rules he put forward, of which we have a copy. The lands were in the proprietor's hands under sheep when Sir Alexander bought the property. He let them to Mr Brown, Kilellan, who still keeps them under lease at a rent of £60. With regard to the improvements upon Avernish, made by the proprietor without charging interest, one house was built by him last year, and timber and lime were given to another, the brother of one of the delegates. The land was enclosed with a wire fence for the benefit of the tenants two years ago, at a cost of about £80. With regard to Kinnamoine, I was sorry to hear Mr Sinclair, who was spokesman for them, and who knows the internal management of the property, state that it was only a few weeks ago, when it was known the Royal Commissioners were to come, that the fence was thought of. The erection of the fence was under consideration for three years, and it was at the urgent request of the Ardelve crofters that it was erected. But owing to the large amount of money always spent upon the estate we thought it better, instead of trenching upon Sir Alexander Matheson's other resources, to wait until the proceeds of the property would enable us to erect the fence. Besides that £110 have been expended upon the tenants' lands in improvements. At Alt-na-stu there are twelve tenants. There was £31, 9s. 4d. of arrears when Sir Alexander Matheson came to the property, the rent being £44, 9s. 4d. He reduced the rent to £40, 2s. 6d. a few months ago. He gave them, in addition to their rent taken off, the grazings of Sallachy to endeavour to assist them, and there has been no rent charged for that yet. He would give them more land if he could. They spoke about getting land from Conchra, but you will see that the boundaries of the farm are such that it would spoil the amenity of the estate if that were done. With regard to Duirnish, in 1851, the rent was £114 or £115; it is now £108. There was £8 put upon Port-na-naou, but no rent taken off. £108 and £8 make £116, so that there has been £1 of a rise since 1851; while £164, 18s. were spent on improvements previous to October last, and about £20 during the current year. In Port-a-chullin there are eight tenants. They got an addition of land in 1878, and the rent, which at the time of the purchase of the property amounted to £36, 8s. 10d., besides an addition to the land, has been reduced to £32. One man built a new house, and the proprietor gave him timber and lime. They got as much land as they could without destroying the amenity of the surrounding farms. A wire fence has been erected to protect them from the sheep of the neighbouring farm, and a good piece of hill grazing has been added which they had not before. I think that is all I have to say with regard to what was stated by the witnesses. There was mention made about deer forests; and with regard to that I should say that—‘In 1878 Mr Brown, Kilellan, declined to renew his lease of the upper portion of his grazing, a place called Platt ‘and Mealvoy.’

30950. About 15,000 acres?—Yes, about that, extending from the bridie-path crossing Mealvoe to Loch Monar. It was then let to Lord Lovat as a deer forest. In 1881 Messrs Weir and Kellie were, at their urgent request, relieved of the farm of Nonach, Ben-Droneg, &c., and as no grazing tenant could be got at the time to take the farm, Sir Alexander made a forest of the upper portion, allowing Weir and Kellie a year rent free to clear the ground. He has added the low portion of this farm to the grazing of the seventeen neighbouring crofters of Salachy.'

ROSS.

BALMACARA.Roderick
Maclean.

30951. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—What is the extent of this last forest?—12,606 acres. In 1881, Mr MacLennan, Lienassie, voluntarily gave up the higher portion of his farm, retaining the lower portion. Sir Alexander had no other means of disposing of the portion given up than adding it to the neighbouring forest.'

30952. What is the extent of the last?—7150 acres.

30953. *The Chairman.*—What does it make altogether?—34,000 acres. As is seen by the accompanying map, the ground forested is lying far inland from the inhabited portions of the property. There are within the bounds only about ten acres of arable land, which had been occupied by shepherds as potato plots. The hills are high, six of them ranging from 2900 feet to 3771 feet, and the average elevation is over 2400 feet. The increase of rental derived from these forests has lightened the parochial burdens on Sir Alexander's property by about 25 per cent.'

30954. Do we correctly understand now that it is the practice, and has been the practice of Sir Alexander Matheson, to spend the whole net rental on these Highland estates on this property?—It has been his practice since he became proprietor to spend every penny derived both from the east and west coast estates somewhere on the estates, and that largely supplemented from other resources.

30955. Putting aside the expenditure upon his dwelling-house and plantations and gardens, and all that contributes to the amenity of the place, could you give us any idea of the gross expenditure on the whole estate during his time?—On the whole of the west coast estates £205,000, and of that there was for improvements for tenants' benefit, £86,867; mansion-house, pleasure grounds, &c., £74,367, 17s. 3d.; shooting lodges, £6718, 15s. 1d.; hotels, £10,733, 1s. 3d.; roads, £11,300, 18s. 7d.; plantations, £14,097, 12s. 1d.; Commercial Bank office, £806, 8s. 9d.

30956. Can you give us any general impression of what proportion of the £86,867 has been expended upon holdings of above £30 a year of value, and how much upon the smaller class of occupiers below £30?—£5397 have been expended on tenants under £30, say £5400 upon the crofters and small tenants.

30957. In regard to the large expenditure upon the mansion-house and plantations of the proprietor, was local labour extensively employed on these works?—Yes, all the labour in forming the plantations was local labour.

30958. And was the unskilled labour connected with the house and grounds also local?—I am not very sure. There must have been some natives employed; but I was not present at the erection of the houses. At the garden and other works local labour was employed.

30959. How many thousand acres have been planted?—I am not able to tell you.

30960. In round numbers?—There are about 2500 acres under wood at the present moment.

30961. Including all the plantations?—Yes. The plantations were all, with a very few exceptions, made by Sir Alexander Matheson.

ROSS. 30962. Was the land now occupied by wood taken for the most part off sheep farms, or was there any land of the small tenants absorbed?—There was some rocky ground along the shores of Loch Long taken off one of the holdings in the parish of Kintail, and I believe it has been a benefit to the people to take the land from them, and prevent their sheep from falling off the rocks.

BALMACARA. 30963. In the case of small portions of hill pasture being taken from the occupant of a farm, has some compensation or consideration in rental or otherwise always been made to the people?—No land has been taken from any of the crofters except this portion I mentioned at Camusluinie.

Roderick Maclean. 30964. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—None from Plockton?—I am speaking of the property in this direction; Kintail is in the proprietor's hands. The land in Glenshill is now used as grazing; at Camusluinie I cannot say what the arrangements are.

30965. *The Chairman.*—There was one small piece of twenty acres alleged to have been taken off the crofters?—I am coming to that. At Nonach there was a large piece taken off a large farm, about fifty acres. At Avernish there was a reduction made on the rent when the land was taken. At Duirnish there were twenty acres of rocky land, worth from fourpence to sixpence an acre, taken. I am not aware of any compensation being given for that.

30966. Would the land where the wood grows be of any use to crofters in the way of shelter?—Of great use.

30967. Why was the plantation made?—To occupy the place, and with the view of getting some benefit from the ground where none was got before, and also with the ultimate view of affording shelter for the cattle of the crofters. Without the wood there can be no shelter.

30968. With reference to the strip of land which was enclosed by a fence along the river side, what was the reason that the fence was put on the crofters' side and not on the other?—To get a walk along the burn as part of the pleasure grounds. To get a walk inside the fence, and a belting of wood between the walk and the fence.

30969. The intention was to plant the margin of the stream?—It was planted last year.

30970. Was any little allowance made to the crofters for that land being taken away?—Not yet.

30971. Do you think they are prejudiced at all in their interests by the land being taken?—I don't think so; but I think the reason of the statement made by the witnesses is, that they are continually quarrelling among themselves—they cannot agree among themselves. They are now coming to an agreement on account of regulations made about two months ago.

30972. Will the trees when they grow up be of any use to the crofters' holdings as shelter, or will they be merely ornamental?—They will be of use for shelter.

30973. Would you generally state that it is the principle of your estate management, and your proprietor's desire, when any small portions of land for general purposes are taken from the crofters, to offer them indemnity or some compensating benefit?—In general they always get that.

30974. There was a statement made that in one township the people had been deprived of the natural sea-ware of their own shore, and that it had been granted to an adjacent place; was that done?—I may say shortly, that in the management of the west coast estates I am not well up in these details, but Mr Watson will be able to explain that.

30975. We are to understand in general that since Sir Alexander Matheson's proprietorship of the estate there has been no consolidation of small holdings in the form of a large sheep farm?—No such thing at all.

30976. And has there been any case of the addition of crofters' ground to deer forest?—No; no such thing at all.

ROSS.

BALMACARA.

Roderick Maclean.

30977. One delegate said that a portion of the hill pasture of the township had been taken and been put on to a deer forest?—He goes back to the time of Mr Lillingstone and Sir Hugh Innes.

30978. You have stated the different categories of holdings into which Sir Alexander Matheson desires to divide his estate in an ascending scale to farms of a maximum rental of from £300 to £400. He has not yet been able to arrive at his ideal; there are exceptional farms still?—Yes; and these cannot, without a great deal of expense, be reduced; and indeed they ought not to be reduced, on account of their natural position. On one of them there is a farm-house, and the land extends in a narrow strip about ten or twelve miles inland. It would be too narrow to make two farms at the one end, and it would be exceedingly expensive to make a road to the upper end and to build a steading.

30979. Is there any portion of ground on that farm or others which in your mind might be granted for the purpose of making an addition to the crofters' common grazing?—I don't think there is.

30980. You don't think there is a single case on the whole estate by which the crofters could be benefited by the addition of ground?—No. The estate is quite compact, and it is impossible to do that without disorganising the system of management.

30981. We heard of a small farm held by an absentee tenant which the crofters said could be added?—That is Avernish, and the tenant is resident; but it is an outlying place which, Sir Alexander having had in his own hands, the crofters were not able to take, and he let it to Mr Brown. That could be reduced to make four crofts of £15 each.

30982. Could it not be given to a township in the form of common grazing?—It would not do.

30983. Why?—Because it would be destroying the system Sir Alexander has in view of making crofters self-supporting from £15 to £30 of rent; and by giving it to townships they could not be able to stock it. It would be rather too expensive for them to put up steadings, and Sir Alexander's view is to have three or four crofters, if such could be arranged, and he would not wish to go outside his own people to get them.

30984. Are we to understand from you that you don't think on the whole estate, in any part of it, there is any prospect of Sir Alexander being able to restore or grant any larger amount of common pasture to any crofters?—No, there is not.

30985. In fact, the system is closed?—It is closed.

30986. With reference to the deer forests which have been formed recently by the cession of sheep farms, is any portion of these deer forests handy for crofters in the form of common pasture?—No. The furthest off end is eighteen miles from here.

30987. Are these deer forests all under tenancy, or does Sir Alexander retain one in his own hands?—Lord Lovat has a portion taken from Kilellan, Major Crosswell has a portion of Lochalsh, and Mr Winans has the part which Mr MacLennan gave up.

30988. What is the system on which the improvement of houses is conducted? Are there any estate regulations with reference to the improvement of houses?—The proprietor offers timber and lime to any of the poor people who will build houses for themselves, but in general he is allowed to do the whole of it.

30989. Can you give me any idea how many new or improved houses are erected in the course of the year, or in any period?—I cannot tell. I know that at one place which will come before you to-morrow—

ROSS. Camusulinie—he offered slates, timber, and lime to every one of the tenants who would build houses. Two have taken advantage of that offer, and Sir Alexander gave them £20 in money along with the timber and lime and slates.

BALMACARA. Roderick Maclean. 30990. What is the cost of building an improved crofter's house on a croft of say £4 or £5 rent?—It is difficult to answer that question, because, whatever way it happens, what we get for £100 in the low country costs £150 here. We cannot get labour done cheaply here.

30991. But I suppose the people are contented with less: they don't expect such good houses as they would get in the low country?—They would like to have them if they could get them without costing themselves much.

30992. They do appreciate an improved dwelling?—Yes, when they get it for nothing.

30993. Are they not inclined to spend something themselves in the way of building as well as of carrying stones and that sort of thing?—Not very much.

30994. You find it is necessary that the proprietor should undertake almost all the outlay?—Almost; that is what has been done hitherto. But I believe the tenants now are beginning to see that it is necessary for themselves to do something, and the proprietor encourages them to make themselves self supporting. In previous years they have been depending very much on the proprietor.

30995. Do you know any example of houses built by co-operation between the tenant and proprietor?—Yes; those two I have made allusion to at Camusulinie.

30996. What share of the expense has the tenant borne, and what has fallen to the proprietor?—The tenant would expend about £20 in money and about the same in the value of his labour, and the proprietor contributed about £100.

30997. In the case of a house of that sort, is there any understanding, in the case of the death or departure of a tenant, under which his expenditure or unexhausted improvements would be reimbursed to himself or his heirs?—That question has never been raised, because they know that Sir Alexander is not in the habit of ejecting any one.

30998. But they might be ejected by death?—There is no written understanding.

30999. The case has never arisen?—No; there is mutual confidence. The people are confident the proprietor will never do any harsh thing to them.

31000. I have the same confidence, but I would like to know what your idea is. Suppose a man had expended £40 on building a house upon Sir Alexander Matheson's property, and that his sons were abroad and did not take up the place, and that it was let to another; would there be any compensation for the £40, and, if there was, would it be paid by the landlord or by the in-coming tenant?—The question has never been raised, but I am certain no injustice would be done the heirs of the person who died.

31001. Has there been any case of eviction on this property since Sir Alexander acquired it?—Not one.

31002. Not even in the case of non-payment of rent?—No, when the case becomes extreme, Sir Alexander Matheson writes off the arrears.

31003. *Mr Cameron.*—With regard to the farm which the people of Avernish wanted to get which was valued at £60, the delegate stated that he thought the people would be able to stock the farm with their own resources. Is that your belief?—I don't think they could, because

the stock would cost a good deal of money. It is possible they have more money than I am aware of, and if so the better for themselves.

ROSS.

31004. But you have never had an application from them for the farm, and you never made them an offer of it?—No.

BALMACARA.

31005. So that you have not considered the question?—No; I don't think they could stock it from their own means, but they might get help.

Roderick Maclean.

31006. Would some of them be able to stock it?—It is possible; but I don't know.

31007. Can you explain exactly about the difference between the summing and the stock which they actually keep?—According to the return which was furnished to the Commissioners, instead of one cow there were three cows kept, and the delegate said they took these on for wintering. The summing is, we will suppose, constantly upon the farm, then they have an idea of making a little profit by buying a young beast, and keeping it all the winter through. Possibly it may be a loss to them, but in general it is a profit, because they get the manure to manure the soil.

31008. Then was a return which you furnished to the Commissioners taken from the stock in possession of the crofters at the end of winter, or was it what they had during summer and winter?—On the 1st of January.

31009. You took what you found on the 1st of January?—Yes.

31010. With regard to the case of the Kirkton tenants, was there any misunderstanding about the lease?—The delegate said that to the best of his belief no lease was offered to the tenants, and that none existed. They had leases of ten or twelve years, but they expired in 1872, and they have had no leases since then.

31011. What was the arrangement made when the leases came to an end?—There was no arrangement made.

31012. They went on at the same rent?—Yes.

31013. Did they ask for a renewal of the lease?—I don't know. But allow me to state that the expenditure on Kirkton in 1858, when it was held by four tenants, was £68. In 1859 the old glebe was added, at a rent of £30, making the whole rent divisible amongst the tenants £98. The sum of £802, 2s. 4d. was expended on buildings for them, and £2252, 11s. 6d. on improving their lands,—together £3054, 13s. 10d. In 1862, after the completion of the improvements, the rent, which was rising gradually, reached £180 = £2, 13s. per cent. on the outlay. In 1881, the rent was reduced by £36, so that it is now £144, leaving only £1, 10s. per cent. on the outlay.

31014. So that in fact the rent which the tenants pay is not equal to interest at 5 per cent. on the money expended?—No, it is not.

31015. In your opinion, was that money all profitably expended?—I did not see the improvements going on. It is from the books I have taken these figures.

31016. But can it be fairly said that any of that money was wastefully spent, or spent in an unscientific or improper manner?—No, it was not.

31017. You believe it was all required?—Yes; but it was very expensively done, and the reason of that was that it was mostly done by home labour.

31018. Were the materials used all good of their kind?—Yes.

31019. Were the drains properly laid?—I have not seen them, but I know they are very much neglected. They say they are out of order, but it is their own fault. There was one portion, going down by the side of the churchyard here, and the burn was causewayed for carrying the water into the sea, and some of the tenants put stones into the bed of the burn,

ROSS. charging its channel and cutting up the roads. Sir Alexander, this last spring, at his own expense, cleared out the damaged burn, and repaired the road, to see if that would stimulate the people to take better care. They are allowing their houses and dykes to go to wreck. Their houses are dirty, although a few hours a day in one week about their houses, and two or three days' labour each during the year would keep the drains and ditches right and their houses clean and tidy.

BALMACARA. 31020. How much of the sum of money you mentioned do the tenants pay interest on?—One and a-half per cent. on the whole.

31021. Do you find there is any disinclination on the part of the crofters to have improvements made for them by the landlords, the landlord charging interest?—They wish to have it done for them, and when they find the interest is rising up they want the interest taken off; and some say they would rather not have the improvements.

31022. In point of fact, the tenants, instead of paying, as I thought when the witness was being examined, 5 per cent., are only paying 1½ per cent?—One and a-half.

31023. Are any of the tenants paying 5 per cent.?—None that I am aware of. The Plockton tenants are charged 5 per cent. upon the drainage and fences.

31024. Have they complained of it at all?—No, there is no delegate from Plockton here.

31025. I understand you to say that the grazings which Mr Brown declined to renew his lease of, would not be suitable for crofters?—No, when Mr Brown would not take them for sheep.

31026. And the same thing would apply to the grazings abandoned by Messrs Weir and Kellie?—Yes.

31027. And the same to Mr MacLennan's?—Yes.

31028. These farms were all given up voluntarily?—They were. Mr Weir not only gave up his voluntarily, but he was endeavouring for two years to get Sir Alexander to relieve him, because he was constantly losing money.

31029. They all consist of high ground?—An average height of 2400 feet.

31030. And you found it impossible to let them as sheep farms?—We did.

31031. And they are all unsuitable for crofters?—Yes.

31032. Supposing there had been no such thing as deer forests, what would have been done with these farms?—They would have lain on the proprietor's hands, or he might have taken any small rent he could get. Mr Brown was paying £1050 of rent for the whole farm, including those parts. But in 1878 he offered £900 for the portion he now has, and the forested part he was only valuing at £150. Sir Alexander Matheson made a general reduction of rents two or three years ago, and took off the rent £60, leaving it at £840; and £60 for trenches makes £900, £160 remains for the grazings and the portion forested, and the valuation roll will show that Lord Lovat is paying £1600, and that is what helps to reduce the rates of the parish.

31033. We have heard from several delegates that they consider, if portions of the sheep farms were given to crofters, the proprietor would not be a loser, because he would obtain the same rate per acre for those lands as is now paid by the sheep farmer?—I believe he would.

31034. Therefore, if there were suitable lands in the district which might be added to the crofts, you would not hesitate to recommend Sir Alexander on the score of rental to do that?—Oh no; and Sir Alexander has done that when he had the land to give them. As the old man from

Sallachy stated, Sir Alexander Matheson has given him a portion of ground; and at Loch Carron, on the estate of Attadale, a farm which was occupied by one tenant is now subdivided, and occupied by three respectable tenants and a few small crofts. Sir Alexander is not in favour of large farms, but the contrary; and he is not in favour of non-resident tenants.

ROSS

BALMACARA.Roderick
MacLean.

31035. But you still adhere to the answer you gave to the Chairman, that in your opinion there is, at the present moment, after what Sir Alexander has done, no suitable ground now in the occupation of sheep farmers, whose leases might shortly be out, and which might be added to the crofts?—There is none except this portion of Avernish, which Sir Alexander would give to crofters who would be self-supporting. I may further state that a year ago last spring, Sir Alexander sent Mr Watson and myself along the crofts on the west side of the estate to see if it was possible to get an acre of land to give to the people; and after going for days over the place we could not see one acre of land to improve.

31036. You saw no place which you could turn into grazing for the crofters?—No, none.

31037. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You state that £6400 was expended upon improvements on the small tenants. That includes Kirkton; there were £2500 spent upon other small holdings. I took down from you that there were 154 crofters under £4, 72 from £4 to £6, 38 from £6 to £10, 45 from £10 to £20, and 24 from £20 to £30. In that way the number of crofters under £30 is close upon 350?—Yes.

31038. The expenditure of £6400 goes from the period from 1852 to 1882?—Yes.

31039. And you make out that the average is £18 a year spent on the crofters?—It was not annually spent, it was done all at once.

31040. But it is an average of £18 a year?—Very probably it is.

31041. And if you reduce that a little more, you will find all you spend on each crofter per annum is something between 10s. and 15s.?—There are some to whom nothing at all has been given.

31042. But I want the average of the whole?—That average won't work.

31043. I want you to make your own calculation. Take your £6400 and divide it among the 335, and I think you will find the average is not quite £20?—No.

31044. Divide that £20 over thirty years. I want to ascertain what has been expended per head per annum over the crofters?—I cannot work the question out, because I don't see the force of it. Some years there was no expenditure at all.

31045. You have come forward to make a statement showing there is a large sum laid out on the crofters in thirty years; I want to show what it comes to—that it is 15s. per crofter per annum, and I want to know if that is right?—Just about that.

31046. I want to ask you how long have you been principal factor for Sir Alexander Matheson?—A year last February.

31047. But you have been long connected with the estate?—I have been thirty-six years in his service.

31048. But not on this part?—No.

31049. So that you don't know much about this estate from personal observation?—I know a great deal for the last fifteen years, but it is only during the last year that I have taken so much interest in it.

31050. You have a copy of the census returns. I think you will find that there is a decrease during the last ten years in the parish of Lochalsh of 547?—Yes, and an increase of 400 in the century.

ROSS. 31051. Is Sir Alexander Matheson sole heritor in the parish?—Yes.

BALMACARA. 31052. Are you quite content with the present state of matters in the whole parish generally?—Yes, the people and we are agreeing very well.

Roderick Maclean. 31053. That being so, how can you explain that such a large decrease in the population has taken place in ten years as 547?—You are mistaken, it is in the last forty years that the decrease has taken place.

31054. It is not shown from 1851?—No, but there is a deduction of somewhere about 200. Say we take 1861, being the first period after Sir Alexander Matheson became proprietor, the population then was 2413, and it is now 2050.

31055. There is a considerable decrease even in that time?—363.

31056. Will you explain how that decrease has arisen?—I cannot tell; natural causes, I suppose. You always see when things go to an excess, they remedy themselves by going perhaps to the opposite extreme. I believe, considering the whole, Lochalsh is not under-populated.

31057. What is the acreage of the parish altogether?—51,000 odd acres.

31058. How many of the population of 2050 is in the town of Plockton?—About 440 at last census; so that there are 1500 throughout the rest of the parish.

31059. You said with regard to Avernish, that you understood the people went away to America in the time of the Lillingstones, because they would not submit to certain rules?—That is what I have been told.

31060. Did you ever see the rules?—Yes.

31061. Will you send us a copy?—Yes.

31062. Was it, or was it not, the fact that Mr Lillingstone had almost the whole of the property in his own hands when Sir Alexander Matheson got it?—He had a good deal of it. I believe Kilellan and Avernish and Balmacara and some other parts were in his own hands.

31063. A great part of the estate was in the proprietor's own hand in consequence of the rules?—No, not in consequence of the rules.

31064. But it is a fact that it was in his own hands?—Yes.

31065. Was there a great deal of dissatisfaction expressed on the property?—I cannot say.

31066. Can you tell me whether it is true that a number of the people who were sent off to America died on the passage?—I have heard so. They caught an infectious fever in Glasgow before sailing, and the fever broke out in the ship, and since then the people in the district there have an antipathy to emigration.

31067. You think it is owing to that that the antipathy to emigration has arisen?—The Highlander, I believe, particularly has stuck to the soil, and has an antipathy to emigration.

31068. You used an expression which I wish you would explain; you said that if there was any interference with the larger farms, and they were broken up, it would 'spoil the amenity' of the estate; what do you mean?—I mean the manner in which Sir Alexander has the whole estate so well arranged—large farms and small farms mixed together.

31069. But you said he did not like the large farms?—I told you the size of them.

31070. There are two over £400?—They cannot be broken down.

31071. You said there was a general reduction of rent some time ago, but the delegate from Port-a-chullin had not got any advantage. Why did he not get a reduction?—His arable land had to be drained, and that was done.

31072. And that is the allowance?—Yes.

31073. The rent was so small it was not worth giving a reduction in money?—It was considered that it was cheap enough.

ROSS.
—

31074. What was the rent of Roderick Macrae £4, but the arable land had to be drained where required, and that was done.

BALMACARA.
—

31075. You stated that Sir Alexander was good enough to give a general abatement of rent?—Not to all the crofters; he gave it to the Alt-na-stu crofters and others.

Roderick
Maclean.

31076. It is very convenient is it not for a proprietor, when he cannot get his large sheep farms let, to get a sporting tenant to take it in the form of a deer forest?—No, it is not very convenient in this quarter.

31077. Is it remunerative?—Undoubtedly it is.

31078. What would happen under your new system, supposing that anything be done by Act of Parliament or otherwise, which would diminish the powers and rights of letting game?—That is too wide a question to answer off-hand; it requires consideration.

31079. You are not disposed to offer any solution of what you would do in the circumstances?—Not without thinking.

31080. Would it be wiser and safer in the circumstances to revert to things as of old?—I don't think it would, because things as they were of old were very badly managed. The people were dissatisfied, and quarrelling among themselves, as far as I can hear from old reminiscences, and they were not so well off. They might be better off than they are now if they were prudent; there is a great deal of imprudence amongst them. But things as they were before were not at all consolidated, and I don't think it would be a benefit to the people to go back to the old system.

31081. But the old man whom we had to-day stated that in his younger days a Kintail man was worth half a dozen of those of the present day?—Yes.

31082. Don't you think he was in earnest?—Yes, and telling the truth.

31083. Would not you like to see that state of matters restored?—Yes.

31084. What better way can you do that than by giving them the glens?—By continuing to take the fine solid food the old people used to take, and throwing away slushes of tea. They are destroying their nervous system, and that causes the complete degeneration of the present race. Unless they go back to the old system of food, the race of the Gael will soon become extinct as the Gael.

31085. Are they not becoming extinct very rapidly?—No; but it is one good thing that the bloods are mixing up.

31086. Taking the population of the different parishes in 1841, the decrease of the population has been very serious. Gairloch has decreased 386, GlenShield 381, Loch Carron 574; where is it to end?—It will soon come to the minimum, and then it will end, according to the gradation. I think in ten years more it ought to come to a minimum, and it will probably remain so.

31087. You think at the end of ten years there will be a proportionate diminution such as has occurred before. There will not be too many people then in the country?—I think not.

31088. You would not go so far as a brother factor of yours, who said that in his districts—namely, three great parishes—only half of the population would still require to go?—That is a mistake. It would not be the case in my district.

31089. Still you think it will require a little thinning yet?—I think so, because there are some poor people who cannot make a living, and there are no representatives here from them.

31090. Why?—I don't know.

ROSS.

31091. There is no one to represent them?—No one.

BALMACARA.

31092. Have you any particular township in view?—Drumbuill and Ebersaig. There are twenty-one crofters on the former and nineteen on the latter. When Sir Alexander Matheson bought the property there were twenty-two crofters in Ebersaig and now there are nineteen, and he can do nothing to better them, though he made a good deal of work for them too. There is one park he enclosed for them some years ago, but I am very sorry to say they don't take care of it; they have allowed the fence to go to the ground.

Roderick Maclean.

31093. You would not like to see your countrymen obliged to leave their own land against their own wish if they could make anything of it?—No; but I know it would benefit them very much to go.

31094. Would it benefit the country generally that they should go?—In many cases it would.

31095. Is it not the fact that Strathbraan was once very populous?—I believe it was.

31096. Why should not people be sent back there?—It is too high.

31097. The railway runs through it?—Yes; but that is not a place I would like to see broken up again, because the people would not be comfortable there.

31098. Is it not the fact that these people were removed under circumstances of harshness against their own will?—I believe they were.

31099. Has a book not been written on the subject?—I have not seen it.

31100. Do you not know that the Rev. Dr Kennedy of Dingwall has made very special reference to the clearance of Strathbraan?—I have not seen it.

31101. Is your only objection to Strathbraan that it is too high?—The people would not be comfortable in it.

31102. Were they comfortable before?—No, they were not; and one of them is now on Sir Alexander Matheson's property, a man of about seventy, and he told me that he and his mother were in Strathbraan. He was one of sixty people, and he said the place was very cold in winter, and very wet; and that the produce of the soil, sheep, and grain crop, were very dear, and the potatoes very wet.

31103. Is it not within reach of where we are at present sitting; what is the watershed there between the two seas?—620 feet.

31104. Do you consider that high?—It is not the elevation so much as the place being so stormy. The nearest station is Auchnasheen, which means Field of Storms. It is very cold and very wet, and just suitable for grazing purposes.

31105. It would plant well?—Yes.

31106. Would not that shelter the people?—Yes.

31107. And would help to ameliorate the climate?—Yes. But you must not make a pet of a man, or you will destroy his independence.

31108. Are the whole of Sir Alexander's deer forests, extending to 34,000 acres in this district, in possession of one person?—No.

31109. Who is the second tenant?—Major Cresswell of Attadale has 12,000.

31110. And the other is occupied by Mr Winans?—Yes.

31111. How much has he got?—21,700 acres.

31112. Does all that is in the possession of Mr Winans lie in the county of Ross?—Yes.

31113. What forest has that gentleman got immediately adjoining you?—He has the lands of Mr Mackenzie of Kintail and the land of the Chisholms—Sir Alexander Matheson. He has 200,000 acres altogether.

31114. You made use of this expression as a reason why they would not be suitable for small tenants that they were very high hills; are these places not on the borders?—*Mr Maclean.* No, there are some of them inland; two of them are on the borders.

ROSS.

BALMACARA.

Roderick
Maclean.

31115. What is the highest inland?—2950 feet.

31116. What is the name of that one?—Mealvoy, that is the part that is forested.

31117. You have been present all day, and have heard the delegates?—Yes.

31118. Do you think they have any grievance whatever?—They expressed them.

31119. But you don't concur in them?—No. There were some statements brought forward that were imaginary. For example, Mr Sinclair did not know what we knew, and he took his information from the parties who gave it, and they did not know. People don't know what money has been expended for them.

31120. But I am afraid it is not very much?—But you go over the whole people for whom nothing has been done, and people for whom something would be done if it could. There are many for whom nothing has been done.

31121. When you stated that the sum of £6400 has been laid out in thirty years for crofters under £30 a-year, do you take credit for that to show that some people have taken a great deal and others nothing; you must take a fair average?—But something would be done for those people if there was a way of doing it, but there is no possibility of doing it. If these crofters were reduced about one-fourth, they would be all comfortable, and something could be done for them.

31122. You say, after full consideration, that the idea of replacing them is imaginary, and that they must emigrate?—That is so, or remain as they are. The proprietor won't put out one of them.

31123. But they are not comfortable, and the next thing is to see what is the best way of making them comfortable—*Sir Alexander Matheson.* I want to end this discussion by making a statement.

31124. *The Chairman.*—Excuse me. Will you have the great kindness then to come and sit down here?—I only wish to say a few words.

31124*. Then I would wish you would rather do it as any other witness.

Sir ALEXANDER MATHESON, Bart., Proprietor of Lochalsh (78)—
examined.

31125. *The Chairman.*—I believe you wish to make a statement?—Sir Alexander Matheson. I want to make a short statement. When I bought this property it was not for the value of profit or making money by it; it was entirely from the love I had to the country of my birth, and to the country which formerly belonged to my ancestors. I was anxious to get it back when I had the means, and the moment I got the property I laid down a plan which I have been carrying out ever since, that is, to have tenants of all descriptions upon the estate. I don't wish to have any over £400 or £500 a year, and I wish to have the land occupied by resident tenants. I am very much in favour of small tenants paying £50 to £100 a year, and I encourage them as much as I can. Club farms also I encourage, and men paying £20 of rent each; but I don't think it is desirable to have a number of small crofts where the people can only subsist, and where there is not sufficient labour for them to make a living by. At

ROSS. this moment I consider we have rather too many of that class on Lochalsh, and I would be glad if some of them would leave and better themselves elsewhere. I have made up my mind on no account to break up a farm to make crofts. I won't make a single small croft in addition to what is here; at the same time, I won't evict a single tenant I have so long as they pay their rents.

BALMACARA. 31125*. Perhaps there may be some member of the Commission who may wish to put a question to you?—I merely wanted to make this statement because talking about breaking up farms is utterly useless as far as I am concerned, for I won't consent to it.

Sir Alexander Matheson. 31126. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You know I wish to put some questions about the state of the Highlands, but I think it would be better if you could come at a later period?—Yes, I would prefer not to do it just now. I merely want to state my firm determination to follow out the plan I laid down when I bought the property. I want to make all my tenants comfortable. I do not wish any of them to pay more than the land is worth. At the same time, I don't encourage small crofters where there is no employment for them. I think it is cruelty to make small crofters of two and three pounds rent, when you don't see a prospect of being able to employ them and give them a living by giving them work. My work is decreasing every year now, and by-and-bye there will be comparatively none, and the crofters will have nothing to do. I would be glad if one half of them would go to America or somewhere. I see it reported in the *Inverness Courier* that, at a meeting at Dingwall the other evening, Dr Kennedy stated that he understood I was to turn off the estate all the men who were engaged in the riots at Strom Ferry. I want to state distinctly that that is an utter falsehood. I never thought of such a thing, and I don't intend to do it. There was no foundation whatever for that statement.

31127. *The Chairman.*—I don't suppose anybody would give any credit to it?—It is in print, and I want to contradict it.

**DUNCAN MACRAE, Cottar and Contractor, Upper Ardelve (67) —
examined.**

Duncan Macrae. 31128. *The Chairman.*—Have you any written statement to make?—Yes.—‘Statement by three Cottars residing in Upper Ardelve. The land which our forefather's had was taken from them, and was added to the crofts of the other crofters to make their holdings larger. This happened about thirty years ago, and we could not get any land since except small bits (for potatoes) which some of the crofters are pleased to give. We wish to have as much land as would keep us comfortable, a few acres, and pasture for two cows.—DUNCAN MACRAE, delegate.’

31129. There are three cottars in your place?—Yes.

31130. What township are they living in?—Ardelve.

31131. How did they get there?—I was born in Kirkton, and was only a year old when I was taken to Ardelve.

31132. How did your father get right to settle in Ardelve?—Lots were made in Ardelve, and my father got a share there.

31133. How did he come to lose his lot?—When lots were enlarged, so many were deprived of those they had.

31134. Do the other two families belong to the place, or did they come in from the outside?—One of them had land at one time, and was deprived

of it when the crofts were enlarged. The other one had no land himself, but his mother-in-law had.

31135. How do they gain their living now?—One by working and the other by fishing.

31136. Do you gain your living, by work or fishing?—I am a road contractor myself and my brother.

31137. Do you make good wages?—No.

31138. Have you not made a pretty good living?—No; we have not a good living. I have been accustomed to work hard for forty-eight years, first on railways, and since at every hard shovel and spade work.

31139. Did you get good wages when you were young?—I was getting the best pay going.

31140. Were you able to make a little saving?—I married young, and my family was increasing.

31141. Do your sons not assist you now?—The best one for assisting me died.

31142. How do you expect to get land? The crofters would not like to give up the land to you in the place?—There is plenty of land near us.

31143. Where?—The next farm of Kirkton.

31144. Do you pay any rent for your house?—Nothing. I have nothing to say against the proprietor or factor on that account.

31145. And you don't pay rent to the crofters?—No, because I keep no beast.

31146. Do they make you work a little to them sometimes?—They are not heavy on me in that way.

ROSS.

BALMACARA.

Duncan
Macrae.

CHRISTOPHER MACKENZIE, Crofter, Lower Ardelve (63)—examined.

31147. *The Chairman.*—Have you a statement which you wish to make?—I have:—‘*Statement by the Tenants of Lower Ardelve.*’ We are greatly pleased that the Royal Commission has come to visit us and to hear our grievances. We may safely say that the lot occupied by Christopher Mackenzie is more highly rented than any other lot of an equal size in the county of Ross. For this lot he (Christopher Mackenzie) pays £7, 10s., besides rates; and the extent of the arable land in his possession goes under the name of five acres, and is nothing but black peat-moss. He possesses no pasture, and the one cow he has must therefore be kept on the tether. The lot is supposed to support two cows, but will not do so; and when he does keep two cows, as it is sometimes necessary for him to do so, he has then to buy food for them. About twenty-four years ago the proprietor made some improvements on our lands; but after some drains were opened and tiles laid down, they were afterwards removed and taken to Killelan farm, and we have ever since been paying interest for these improvements, which were never finished. All our rents vary, but we each got a reduction of 2s. 6d. in the pound two years ago. There are six of us, and between us we pay £36, 10s.—from £9, 5s. to £5. We require the rent reduced to the value of the land, and security of tenure, so that we might be encouraged to improve it. Some of us made considerable improvements, for which we never got any compensation. And the delegate may state that he has not got twelve bolls of meal out of his holding for the last fifteen years. He nearly killed himself working and trying to improve his holding, and is now an old man, and unable to bear up against his mis-

Christopher
Mackenzie.

ROSS. 'he has so long laboured under. We had each a pasture at one time; but about eighteen years ago it was taken from us and added to the large sheep farm of Conchra, and the rent was not reduced to compensate us for our loss.—**CHRISTOPHER MACKENZIE.**'

BALMACARA. —
Christopher Mackenzie. 31148.—You say that about eighteen years ago you had each a pasture. What do you mean? Was it hill pasture, or that each of you had a particular piece of low ground?—It was one piece in common between all the tenants, and it was added to Conchra.

31149. Was it in the hill or on the low ground?—Near the land we have.

31150. But how large was it?—Between six and seven acres.

31151. And when it was taken away and given to the large farm of Conchra, had you any reduction of rent?—Nothing; no reduction. We were paying the same rent when the proprietor reduced it two years ago.

31152. What sort of improvements have you made?—Draining and taking in the land, trenching the land, and doing the best which we could.

31153. What sort of drains have you put in—stone or tile drains?—Stone drains mostly.

31154. You say that the proprietor began to make some improvements upon the ground, but that the tiles were taken away and carried to another place. Why was the improvement given up and the tiles taken away?—Improvements were being done on Conchra, Balmacara, and Kilellan, and our tiles were taken away, but not all.

31155. The whole improvement was not destroyed; some of it remained behind?—The most of it was done.

31156. And did the improvement which was made do good to your ground?—Very little. It was peat-moss in which they were laid, and they did not continue to run clear for three years.

31157. Is there any vestige of them left now?—Nothing which is of any use whatever. We are always opening these drains; they are continually stopping.

31158. You say you are an old man, and unable to bear up against your misfortunes any longer. Have you been able to pay your rent up to the present time?—They have not much against me, and I have been paying rent since I was eighteen years of age.

31159. Have you got anybody to help you—any family?—One son.

31160. Does he labour your ground with you?—Yes, when he can afford to remain at home.

31161. Does he fish sometimes?—I fish often myself.

DONALD MACRAE, Crofter, Camuslongart (56)—examined.

Donald Macrae. 31162. *The Chairman.*—Were you elected a delegate?—Yes.

31163. Have you any statement to make on behalf of your township?—Yes.—*Statement by the Crofters of Camuslongart, in the Parish of Lochalsh.* In this place there are eight crofters and two cottars, occupying each from three and a half to four and a half English acres or thereabouts of land of very inferior quality. Before our fathers were removed to it, it formed a part of a township occupied by small tenants. It is composed partly of moss and partly of gravelly soil and rock, and was mostly covered with heather. When Lettre, Conchra, and Braigh-an-tratha were, in the time of Sir Hugh Innes, given to one man, some of the people were removed to this poor place. *Our Complaints.*—The smallness of our holdings, and, considering the poor quality of the soil,

ROSS.

BALMACARA.Donald
Macrae.

' and the improvement made was by ourselves, and also that we have no claim for compensation, the rent is too high. We have no outside grazing for cows or any other beast. We keep a cow each on the crofts; but during the summer and autumn seasons they must be tethered or herded, each his own cow, which requires eight individuals. No followers can be kept. We pay 7s. 6d. for peats either in money or labour, and 9s. to neighbours for sea-ware for planting potatoes. All burdens must be carried on our backs—doing horses' work. The remedy for this is to grant more land, especially more pasture, where we could keep cows with their followers, and a few sheep, which would be of great benefit to families. Emigration has not, in any case we know, improved the condition of the remanent population or those who remained in the country. The reverse was the result. In many they were reduced to poverty, their lands being added to large sheep farms.'

31164. Who was this letter written by?—The minister.

31165. Your own minister?—Yes.

31166. Was it read over to the people?—It was written by instructions of the people.

31167. After the minister had written the paper did he read it over?—The people could not understand it in English; but they believe it is according to what they wished him to put in Gaelic.

31168. Did the minister translate it into Gaelic to you?—He had no time to re-translate back to the Gaelic what he put in.

31169. But you have faith that the minister has written what you said?—Yes.—*Rev. Mr McCull*, Free Church minister, Lochalsh. That statement was dictated by the people, and I explained to them in Gaelic, and asked if that was all they wanted.

31170. Your demand is for more land?—where can you get more land?—*Donald Macrae*. There is plenty of land in Conchra.

31171. Could it be given near your own place, or would you have to be transported with your family to another place?—We are near enough it already.

31172. Do you mean adjacent to it?—Adjacent.

31173. Is it to be taken off the farm?—Yes, off the big farm. There is no other place.

31174. But the factor said it would spoil the big farm to give it off?—It is certain it would make a change upon it.

31175. But do you think that some of the farm would still be left?—Yes, plenty would be left for the man.

31176. You say that emigration has not, in any case that you know of, improved the people's condition; when the people emigrate and go away, what becomes of the land they leave behind them?—The bulk of it has been given to one man, and put under sheep.

31177. Did you ever know any case in which the land of an emigrant was added to the land of somebody who remained behind?—Yes, some in Ardcloe.

31178. Then emigration sometimes does some good to those who remain behind?—Very little good it has done to us as yet.

31179. Do the emigrants not sometimes do well in the new country?—Very few have come back to help the country of those who have left.

31180. But perhaps they don't come back because they are so well off in the other country?—Although they would return they would get not a turf of land for a site for a house.

31181. If you were a young man again, and had a good chance, would not you go to Australia or America?—I think there is plenty of good land in this country to keep people living without going so far from home.

ROSS.

DUNCAN SINCLAIR—recalled.

BALMACARA.

31182. *The Chairman.*—Do you wish to make any explanation?—Mr Maclean referred to me as if I were simply stating my own views, and I wish to explain that what is in the papers I read are the identical views of the people. I was appointed a delegate to put down good or bad as they told me. I am ready enough to express my views and ideas; but when I act for others I express their views and ideas.

[ADJOURNED.]

GLEN SHIEL

LETTERFEARN, GLEN SHIEL, FRIDAY, AUGUST 3. 1883.

LETTERFEARN

Present:—

Sir KENNETH S. MACKENZIE, Bart., *in the Chair.*
 DONALD CAMERON, Esq. of Lochiel, M.P.
 C. FRASER-MACKINTOSH, Esq., M.P.
 Sheriff NICOLSON, LL.D.
 Professor MACKINNON, M.A.

MURDO MACRAE, Cottar, Morvich (58)—examined.

Murdo
Macrae.

31183. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Have you been elected by the cottars of Morvich?—I was.

31184. How many of them were at the meeting?—Twenty, but they were not all there. I have a statement which I wish to read.

31185. Is that statement on behalf of the whole of the cottars?—Yes, from the whole of them included in the forest—‘*Purish of Glen Shiel, Estate of Kintail.*’ The following delegates have been appointed to lay before the Royal Commission the case of the cottars on what was the farm of Morvich, and is now included in the deer forest of Mr Winans, viz., Murdoch Macrae, Alexander MacLennan, and Duncan Macrae. They beg to submit the following statement, and are prepared to answer any questions bearing thereon or on any matters relating to their position, on which information may be desired. On this land there are nineteen houses, in seven of which there is only one inmate in each. In the remaining twelve there are families of from two to eight persons. Among all these there are less than four acres of land available for growing potatoes or other crop. For the use of such portions as they had of this land such as were able gave work to the value of £1 per annum to the tenants and latterly to the proprietor. Five have cows, for which £3 per annum each was paid for liberty to graze on the farm. All the lands of Morvich and Inchewe have been let to Mr Winans, who has endeavoured to compel the proprietor to turn all the cottars out of house and home. The history of the “Kintail Crofters” case is so well known that it need not be further referred to. The proprietor does not seem to have made any stipulation in his agreement with Mr Winans for their being allowed to remain on the ground, which he might easily have done. While the cottars can scarcely get a bit of land in which to grow a little food, there are many acres of excellent arable

' land at Morvich, which are admirably adapted for the use of crofters, GLENSHIEL
' and which might have been given to them without any damage to the
' deer forest. Of this land no use whatever is being made at present.
' Some of it is covered with weeds, and many acres (about 30) are under
' a most luxuriant crop of clover and grasses, which has been allowed to rot
' on the ground, and is actually offensive to the senses of people who pass
' along the road. Since the farm has been turned into a desert no employ-
' ment of any kind is given to the cottars. Not one of them is even
' employed to walk over the ground and turn deer, every person
' employed being brought from a distance. The cottars are in great
' poverty, and are most anxious to have a reasonable amount of land—and
' some security against being turned out of the houses they have erected
' for themselves.'

LETTERFEARN

Murdo
Macrae.

31186. Was this paper read at any meeting of the cottars at Morvich?—No.

31187. Was the substance of the paper agreed upon at the meeting of the cottars of Morvich?—Yes.

31188. Have the other delegates read the paper?—They have.

31189. And you are competent to speak for the whole?—Yes.

31190. How long have you been in the position of cottars holding this small piece of land of four acres?—For twenty years.

31191. In what position were you before that time?—The farmer at that time sub-let £50 worth of land to ten tenants, which enabled them to keep one cow each, but when he saw fit he took this land from them.

31192. Who was this farmer?—One Alexander Macrae, Torloisich.

31193. Was it owing to a change of tenants in the farm that the people lost these fifty acres of land?—No, the same man who gave the land took it away.

31194. For how long had they held it?—I cannot tell that; they had it before I remember.

31195. What was the cause of its being taken away?—I cannot give any reason for that either, only that he preferred to have it in his own hands.

31196. Was there ever a time when these cottars were themselves tenants of the farm of Morvich?—I should think not, but our fathers were paying direct to the proprietor.

31197. Had your fathers the whole of the farm of Morvich?—The whole lot of it.

31198. Was there no big tenant in those days?—There was not one.

31199. How have you been making a living these last twenty years?—We have been making a very poor living. Others were going to the fishing, and some going here and there for work, and doing as best they could.

31200. They were not able to make their living at anything in this country?—No, they were not.

31201. At the present moment what you are afraid of is eviction, is it not?—Yes, it is.

31202. Your desire also is to get more land?—Our desire is to get more land.

31203. *Mr Cameron.*—Is there any change in your relations with your proprietor or Mr Winans since all those things were put in the newspapers?—I am not aware that any change has come between us.

31204. Has any representation been made to either of these two gentlemen as to the wish of the tenants to get a few acres of land to grow crops upon?—We have expressed a wish to that effect to the proprietor, Mr Mackenzie.

GLEN SHIEL 31205. Of course I am talking of what has since occurred, to which you alluded?—I think nothing has come between us.

LETTERFEARN 31206. Has any proposal been made to Mr Winans?—No, we have not made any proposal.

Murdo Macrae. 31207. Is there any idea of making any proposal to him?—No; no intention of asking him.

31208. Did you get any work from the sheep farmer during the twenty years you were there?—Yes, shearing, smearing, and wintering hogs in the low country.

31209. And since that farm has been changed into a forest you get no work at all?—No.

31210. Do you know why you don't get a share of the employment which is going generally in the forest?—I don't know unless he wishes to send us all off, and therefore does not wish to have any dealings with us.

31211. Does Mr Winans employ many people during the season?—Not on this estate—a gamekeeper here and there.

31212. Would you be willing to pay rent for any land which might be given you at your own doors to cultivate?—Yes, at a reasonable rent.

31213. How many acres would you like to have?—Six acres arable each.

31214. With right of grazing cows on the hill?—Yes, with the right to outrun for cattle.

31215. Don't you think it might possibly have a great effect, and could at any rate do no harm, if you were to write to Mr Winans stating that you are now in a position you never were in before, and were anxious to get a little pasture for a cow—make a written application to Mr Winans to give you these advantages?—It would be of no use; he does not allow his own gamekeepers to keep a cow; I don't believe he would give grazing for a hogg to any one.

31216. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—How many people are there in this township?—I believe about one hundred.

31217. Going back a little to the history of this matter, when the people heard that the farm was to be given up, did they make a formal application to their proprietor to get some privilege in the way of land?—We did, but it seems we were too late, the land was let before we made the application.

31218. Did you get an answer from the proprietor?—Yes.

31219. Was it a long letter?—Yes.

31220. Did it give a great deal of advice as to what would be a wise course for you to follow?—Yes, and he did not put us off, but he might help us still.

31221. Was there an expression in it that he would consult his eldest son, and come to the country in the month of August and see what he could do for you?—That was in it too.

31222. Did he come to the country in consequence?—He did.

31223. What did he do for you?—We did not know but we might still get the land we desired; he gave us some nets and a little money and a boat.

31224. Was the next stage of the proceedings that you learned the place had been let for a forest?—Quite so.

31225. Did you know at the time the first application for that land was made whether it was let for a forest or not?—We did not know until we heard it was to be let as a forest.

31226. Are you aware, or have you heard, that the proprietor entered

into a lease with Mr Winans?—We did not know it at the time, but we GLENSHIEL have ascertained since.

31227. Was the lease signed after the people made application to the proprietor?—It seems it was settled before we thought; the lease was signed before we thought.

31228. Was there any reservation of the rights of the people in that lease?—I don't know as to that.

31229. Are you aware that Mr Winans has claimed the right to turn the people all out?—I know that.

31230. What right can Mr Winans have to turn you out unless he derives that right from the proprietor?—I don't think he can expel us unless he gets the proprietor's authority.

31231. Would it be any damage or loss to the proprietor or to the sporting tenant to let these people have what they originally ask?—I don't think it would harm either of them to the value of half a penny.

31232. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Do the deer come down and feed on the pasture and arable land where you used to have your cattle and cultivate your ground?—Not one; I have never seen one there.

31233. How far down do they come?—Down to the middle of the glen.

31234. Then, in point of fact, they are making no use of the grass, which is going to nought?—It is rotting on the ground there.

31235. Is there any fence between the farm and any part of the deer forest?—Only a piece at the end of Loch Duich.

31236. Was there ever a fence separating the farm from what is now a forest?—No.

31237. If you were getting the land, there would need to be a fence between you and the deer forest?—Of course we would require to have a fence.

31238. What would the extent of it need to be?—About half a mile.

31239. Do you mean for the arable ground or the pasture?—The arable ground.

31240. And for the pasture how much fencing would be required, supposing you got as much as would keep a cow or two each?—They would require a mile in extent.

31241. *Professor Mackinnon.*—How long is it since the people themselves had this place from the proprietor?—I believe about seventy years.

31242. It was about that time it was let to a large tenant?—Quite so.

31243. What extent of ground had the people at that time—pasture land?—I cannot tell how many acres; it is miles in extent.

31244. At that time was there deer upon the upper ground?—Yes, there was deer.

31245. And then it was let to a large tenant, and you were allowed to remain as sub-tenants of his?—Yes.

31246. It is good ground?—Very good indeed.

31247. The arable ground or the pasture ground?—As good as in any part of Kintail or the county.

31248. Were your own ancestors there when the people had the land?—They were; they have ever been there.

31249. And did you hear your own people tell about their condition at that time?—Yes, I did.

31250. What was their condition?—They had a good living.

31251. Suppose they had these lands back, would they be well off again?—I suppose they would be; if not it would be their own fault.

31252. But still the deer could be upon the upper ground as before?—They might without any harm.

LETTERFEARN
Murdo
Macrae.

GLENSHIEL 31253. I suppose the people in the country would not in the least object to that?—They would not, I believe.

LETTERFEARN 31254. I suppose even although you got these lands you could not put the necessary stock upon them?—I believe it would be very difficult for some of us.

31255. There are some about who could put the necessary stock upon the lands yet?—I believe some of them could.

31256. And supposing you get all the ground you want to get, there would be sufficient room for the deer forest?—Yes, it would not in the least spoil the deer forest.

31257. You would be glad to take the place at a reasonable rent either from the proprietor or tenant?—Exceedingly glad.

31258. Is there any fish coming into this loch now?—Very few. A few hundreds are caught occasionally.

31259. You don't make much money that way?—Very little.

* 31260. Do you go to the east coast fishing?—Very few out of this country go.

ALEXANDER M'LELLAN (60), assisted by DUNCAN MACRAE (33),
Crofters, Morvich—examined.

Alexander M'Leelan, and Duncan Macrae. 31261. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Have you heard what Murdo Macrae said just now?—We did.

31262. Are you satisfied with what he then said?—Yes.

31263. Have you anything more you wish to tell?—Nothing further.

Rev. RODERICK MORRISON, Minister of the Parish of Kintail—examined.

Rev. Rodrick Morrison. 31264. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Have you any statement which you wish to make?—I wish to submit, at the request of the people, a copy of the petition which was sent by them in March last to Sir Alexander Matheson. I think, although it may take up a little time to read, it may economise your time that it should be heard now. If you will permit me I will read it, and also the answer which was received.

31265. Please to read it.—To Sir Alexander Matheson, Bart., of Ardross and Lochalsh, M.P., the petition of the undersigned householders in the villages of Carndubh and Bundaloch, in the parish of Kintail,— humbly sheweth (1) That your petitioners are and have long been reduced to great poverty and hardship by the want of any land sufficient to grow potatoes for the use of their families, or to enable them to keep cattle for supplying them with milk, which may be regarded as one of the necessities of life. (2) That in the year 1852 your petitioners or their predecessors were deprived of the lands which they then possessed on the ground that they were in arrears. These arrears, however, arose during a period of exceptional pressure and destitution, consequent on the failure of the potato crop, and were owing by only a portion, believed to have been a minority of the tenants, while they were incurred chiefly, if not wholly to the previous owner of the lands, who does not appear to have used any strenuous efforts to recover the same. (3) That in the villages above mentioned there are at present twenty heads of families who have no lands whatever, except certain strips or "stances" adjoining their

' houses, the yearly value of which is only about 5s. each. There are five GLENSHIEL
' others who have small lots which are not sufficient for the keep of a cow.
(4) That in consequence of their being so deprived of the lands they LETTERFEARN
' formerly possessed, they have been under the necessity of begging for bits Rev. Roderick
' of potato land wherever such could be obtained—some going to Camus- Morrison.
' Iuinie, which is six miles off—others to Letter, in the parish of Lochalsh,
' and elsewhere—and there by favour of the tenants planting a few
' potatoes in what would naturally be the least valuable portions of their
' crofts. (5) That whereas under the former system there were about forty-
' five milk cows kept at Bundaloch, there are now none except a very few,
' for which rent is paid to the tenants of Bundaloch farm. (6) That while
' your petitioners are extremely desirous of possessing enough of land to
' enable them to keep one or two cows each and to plant a sufficient
' quantity of potatoes for their own consumption, they do not wish or expect
' to depend upon crofts for their living, as they look for their livelihood
' chiefly to fishing and labour away from the crofts, and merely want land
' as a means of procuring certain supplementary necessaries or comforts
' which can not otherwise be obtained. (7) That your petitioners are
' confident that you are desirous of seeing them as comfortable and
' prosperous as is consistent with their position in life, and disposed to meet
' their reasonable wishes, when respectfully and peaceably expressed, and
' that they therefore hope that by arrangements with the present occupiers
' of the land in the vicinity, or in such ways as may be most expedient, you
' will provide for their having an amount of land sufficient to enable them
' to live with a degree of comfort to which they have long been strangers,
' —and your petitioners will ever pray.' Letter sent by Rev. Messrs
Morison, McColl, and Cameron to Sir A. Matheson, Bart., M.P., along
with petition from the householders in Carndubh and Bundaloch.—'Sir
' Alexander Matheson, Bart., M.P.—Sir, we beg to forward herewith a
' petition from the inhabitants of Bundaloch and Carndubh for some land
' to enable them to live with reasonable comfort. The movement has not
' been in any way originated by us. It has been entirely spontaneous on the
' part of the people, who held meetings among themselves, and appointed
' deputations to call upon each of us and ask us to meet with them and
' advise them to their best course of procedure. With this invitation we
' considered it our duty to comply, as we feel for the people in the
' miserable state to which they have been reduced, and sympathise with
' the desires expressed in their petition. We are also of opinion that the
' people are more likely to act in a reasonable and becoming way by
' accepting our guidance than by seeking that of outside agitators, and
' acting on it—and we consider it an evidence of their desire to approach
' you in the most respectful manner possible that they have asked their
' respective pastors to become the channels of communication with you.
' We believe that while there may be certain practical difficulties in the
' way of acceding to the wishes of the petitioners, these will not be found
' insuperable, or even to prove a very serious obstacle.—We are, sir, your
' obedient servants, (signed) R. MORISON, Minister of Kintail;
' ALEXANDER MACCOLL, F.C., Lochalsh; JOHN CAMERON, Priest, Dornie.
' —Dornie, Kintail, March 9, 1883.' These letters were intended to go
direct to the factor. The people wished to send the petition direct to Sir
Alexander Matheson, but we pointed out that that would scarcely be
courteous to his agents, and the letter was accordingly sent to the factor.
Letter sent by Mr Maclean, factor of Sir A. Matheson, in reply to above.
' To Mr Archibald Macrae, Bundaloch.—Dear Sir, I this day received your
' letter of the 9th inst., enclosing two petitions which you request me to
' forward to Sir Alexander. I am pleased to see both the documents

GLENSHIEL 'couched in such sensible and courteous terms, but you place Sir Alexander
 LETTERFEARN 'in a difficult position. Bundaloch is possessed by Mr John Macrae under
 Rev. Rodrick 'lease, and he cannot break a stamped contract. The Carr tenants have
 Morrison. 'no lease, yet it is not his policy to oust tenants against whom he finds no
 fault. The subject requires careful consideration, and I do not think it
 prudent to send the petitions to him till I see the practicability of acceding
 to them. I shall, D.V., endeavour to go to Dornie first week, and have
 a quiet conversation with a few of the people, when I may see my way
 to present the petitions to Sir Alexander, when he comes north about
 the end of this month. Meantime I remain yours truly, (signed)
 RODERICK MACLEAN.—*Ardross, Alness, March 12, 1883.*' *Bundaloch*
and Carndubh.—The grievances of which the people of Bundaloch and
 Carndubh complain are pretty fully set forth in the above petition, and
 there is not very much to be added to it. They, however, complain that
 when compelled to sell their sheep, they were valued at amounts much
 less than they were worth, the price allowed for each ewe and lamb being
 about 7s. 6d., whereas the current value at the time was from 18s. to 20s.
 Further, that even this miserable price was not properly paid. Having
 no lease they could not compel the proprietor to see them paid, as he was
 not bound to take over their stock, and the incoming tenants paid only
 in instalments, and not at all in full. They further complain that they
 have been refused employment when there was work for them, and that
 people from other places have been preferred to them for the doing of
 work they were competent to execute properly. They also complain of
 the heavy charges made for permission to cut sea-ware for manure, amounting
 to as much as 4s. per boat-load. *Inverinet.*—The township of
 Inverinet contains twenty houses, with families of two or more individuals.
 Seven of these families have cows and sheep, and are sharers in
 the club-farm, two having only half shares therein. These shares carry
 the right to three cows and about forty sheep each, the rents varying from
 £12, 15s. to £16, according to the value of the arable land held by each.
 The rents were reduced from 10 to 15 per cent. at Martinmas 1881, the
 reduction not being the same to all the tenants. The rents are still con-
 sidered too high, considering the fall in the value of wool. Last year the
 share of the gross drawings of the farm received by each partner was much
 less than the rent, which had to be made up from other sources. The
 tenants complain that the best of their pasture was taken from them in
 1860 to form a lot for one of their present number, and that since then
 they have had very little benefit from their cows. The value of the crofts
 has also been deteriorated by the proprietor having broken up and
 removed the parish mill, in consequence of which any corn grown cannot
 be turned to proper account. They also complain that their rents have
 been raised in consequence of improvements made by themselves in the
 way of draining, &c. There are six families which have small lots, for
 which they pay from £2 to £4, 15s. Scarcely any of these will support
 a cow along with growing any crop. The crofters have in consequence
 to purchase fodder to the amount of £3 to £4 every year, and also to pay
 for part grazing elsewhere, each cow thus costing them £7 per annum,
 exclusive of their labour. There are seven householders (having no land),
 two of whom have large families of young children. One (the delegate
 Finlayson) was evicted from his land sixteen years ago, in consequence of
 arrears which arose in consequence of his having to support his grand-
 mother, who was refused parochial relief. He has since been in great
 poverty. Others of the persons mentioned are the descendants of persons
 who have been deprived of their lands. Two are incomers from other
 parishes who have never had land, but have been long resident in the

'township, being employed as labourers (one being a mason). These GLENSHIEL,
'people without land have to beg for potato land in all directions, and LETTERFEARN
'scarcely ever get enough to serve their families, and are consequently in great poverty. The above statements are those of the crofters themselves, Rev. Roderick
'and I cannot speak to the accuracy of all of them from my own knowledge, but from the unanimity of the people in making them, and my general knowledge of their character and circumstances, I have no doubt they are in the main correct.—R. MORISON, Minister of Kintail.' That is all I have to preface to the statements which may be made by the delegates.

31266. May I ask about these letters ; the petition of the crofters is to Sir Alexander Matheson ?—Yes.

31267. The letter of the ministers is also to Sir Alexander Matheson ?—Yes.

31268-69. But these were enclosed to the factor by one of the crofters ?—Yes. They came into his possession to get the signature of Mr Cameron, and he thought the factor did not know us, and that he would introduce us to him. I never knew about the reply until I learned it had been sent to him. Mr M'Coll and myself were both ignorant of it.

31270. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You have brought this forward on behalf of the delegates of Bundaloch ?—Yes.

31271. That is like their statement ?—Yes, I might have made it in a statement, but I thought it better to let it appear in the form of a petition.

JOHN MACRAE, Cottar (64), assisted by FARQUHAR MACRAE, Shepherd (38), Bundaloch—examined.

31272. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—How many cottars are there in Bur- John Macrae
daloch ?—Thirty-four families. and Farquhar
Macrae.

31273. Does that include Carndhu ?—Yes.

31274. [To John Macrae]. Are you one of these thirty-four ?—I am.

31275. But Farquhar Macrae is not ?—No.

31276. What have you to say on behalf of these people ?—I have not much to say, but I have been left destitute as well as my father, who was paying rent before my day. I was the head of the family after my father died. My sheep were taken from me for a trifling sum, and the whole of the people were treated in the same way. We have been robbed. The proprietor did not wait to see what we might be able to do. We are told that the proprietor declares we were largely in arrears of rent ; but the arrears were not so large as represented. Many of these arrears were two hundred years old, lying always in the book, handed over from one proprietor to another. Another thing is, they wished to get hold of our receipts, and when they did they were burned and rent books given instead. Then they renewed the arrears against us for which they had receipts, after the receipts had been destroyed.

31277. I hope you will be cautious to say nothing you are not sure about ?—We have also been hearing that it was reported in the newspapers that the proprietor stated that he gave work to all his people, and that they were in no want whatever, and the destitution money which was being distributed here and there was in consequence of that statement kept from us. Some of us got a little timber, say to the value of 5s., and some to the value of 10s., to make up our boats. Another statement we complain of is, that they have been declaring we are no workers, and in con-

GLEN SHIEL sequence they have refused us work, even to myself for one. All my potatoes were lost through the severe frost of last winter. I went to the **LETTERFEARN** authorities for assistance and wanted work on the road, which is in a disgraceful state between Bundaloch and Dornie, but I was refused. The reply I got from the factor was that, although myself and all I had should die of starvation I would get no work. This is our grievance. What we want is a little land to help us to live. After that we met with the factor at the schoolhouse, Dornie, but all he did was to make fun of us, telling us to take crops out of the rocks, and to imitate the earth worms who were splendid drainers. And further he told us that the blood went from the heart to the top of the head, and then went downwards to the soles of our feet. This signified that men now-a-days were asking too much, but that they would be checked. A vessel was sent to the country loaded with potatoes by the proprietor, but the factor went amongst the better class of people to give them a supply, and kept from the poorer classes all knowledge of it; and had it not been for the parish minister, who through charity and kindness got a supply for us, we should have been in a very bad state indeed. Had it not been for the minister of Dornie, many of the poor people here would have been in danger of dying of want during the spring. The nuns provided them with work.

31278. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Who is the factor you are referring to all along, is it Mr Watson?—I have been referring to Mr Watson and Mr Maclean.

31279. Who was the factor that had the meeting with you when he laughed at you?—They were both there, but it was Mr Maclean who was speaking.

31280. Is Mr Maclean the principal factor?—Yes, he is.

31281. When you were deprived of your sheep, who got the land?—Some Macmillans.

31282. Have they got it yet?—No, not now.

31283. Who has it now?—One John Macrae.¹

31284. Could you not have sold your own sheep at a public market instead, since the proprietor or incoming tenant was not bound to take the stock?—No, we could not do that, because two of them sent their sheep to another grazing farm, and the factor threatened them unless they brought them back.

31285. Who got the benefit of the inadequate price of the sheep,—the factor or the incoming tenant?—I suppose it was the two incoming tenants.

31286. What was the price you got for the stock?—That is, sad to tell, only from 7s. to 8s. per head.

31287. What stock of sheep do you suppose you had? Had you some 500?—Something like 450 sheep.

31288. Had you your full summing?—We had about that number, and in addition some of the poorer cottars among us had also extra beasts included.

31289. Who was the factor at the time the sheep were taken from you?—Mr Finlayson.

31290. And have the people been in poor condition ever since?—Exceedingly poor.

31291. During this last year did your state become so serious that you were obliged to apply to the clergymen of the three denominations to write a letter on your behalf?—Some of us were as poor as we could possibly be.

31292. Did the three clergymen agree to do so?—They agreed most willingly, and we took their advice and conducted ourselves most peacefully and respectfully.

John Macrae
and Farquhar
Macrae,

31293. Did these clergymen do so from their own knowledge of the GLENSHIEL circumstances?—They knew from their own experience, and anybody might, passing the way, from their own knowledge. LETTERFEARN

31294. Can you give any reason why you were refused work when there was work going?—I don't know, as I never since then have gone to seek work. I have been in the habit of going to the fishing and to the south country for work.

31295. Do you recollect the time of Sir Hugh Innes?—Very well.

31296. Was it the fact that he crowded in a great number of people into Bundaloch, Cairndhu, and Dornie, and only gave them a few acres of land?—It is quite true he so gathered them in.

31297. You stated the arrears were two hundred years old, and were handed over from one proprietor to another. Is it not rather that the arrears were held over against the crofters and their possessions?—I am quite certain that they were kept up for a space of two hundred years against the crofter or his representatives.

31298. *Mr Cameron.*—When you say you were refused work on the road, did anybody else get work on that road?—No; it is a disgrace yet for anybody to see that road, passing along.

31299. At the time you asked for employment on the road you were refused, and nobody else got any work on the road?—No.

31300. What year was that?—It is a good while since.

31301. What road was it?—The road between Dornie and Bundaloch.

31302. Is it a road which was much used?—It was very much injured by the great storm.

31303. Is there at the two points any population which use the road?—Of course Bundaloch at the one end and Dornie at the other.

31304. What is the population?—I am sure there are about 300 souls.

31305. Was the road a cart road or a carriage road?—If kept in proper repair carriages could go on it quite well.

31306. Is it kept up by the road trustees or the proprietor as a private road?—I believe it is kept up by the proprietor himself.

31307. Do the people who use the road help to maintain it?—No.

31308. When was the last repair effected on the road by anybody?—Several years ago.

31309. You state that on one occasion the factor told you when you asked for employment that you and your family might die of starvation, but that you would get no work?—I could swear to that.

31310. Was any one present when the factor made use of these words? Yes, plenty, but some of them are dead. The tenant of Liernessie was present and heard the words. He is still alive. Alexander M'Lennan was also present.

31311. How many years ago was it?—It was in the time of Mr Finlayson's factorship. I stated to him that there was plenty of sheep on the hills, and that rather than starve I would be justified in taking one of the sheep.

31312. But this about the road occurred at that time, and not in recent times?—No, not recently; in the time of Mr Finlayson being factor.

31313. When was he factor?—Previous to 1869.

31314. And this was previous to 1869?—Yes, certainly; Mr Finlayson was factor at the time.

31315. Was it Mr Finlayson who made fun of you and advised you to take an example of the earth worm?—It was Mr Maclean.

31316. Are you sure the factor intended to make fun of you?—It

GLENSHIEL looked very like it. Can we take crops out of the rocks, or imitate the earth worm as a drainer?

LETTERPEARN 31317. Do you as a matter of fact know that the earth worm is a good drainer?—He may be a good drainer for those who have land, but what John Macrae and Farquhar Macrae. is that to us who have no land. We paid 2s. 6d. for land to plant half a barrel of splits in.

31318. Have you any children?—Yes.

31319. Have you ever advised your children to follow the example of the busy bee?—They would be diligent enough if they had an opportunity.

31320. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Had you land yourself in 1852?—Yes. I was the head of the family after my father's death. When my father died my mother's brother, who was postman in Lochalsh, paid the rent for her until I became of age to do it myself, and when the land was taken from us there were only £3 of arrears against me, which I paid into the hands of Mr Finlayson, and I expected that I might be allowed to retain the house stones.

31321. Are you still occupying the same house since?—I am still there.

31322. And your people occupied that land before your time?—My people were there for five generations.

31323. As tenants?—My great grandfather preached in the parish church of Lochalsh.

31324. And your ancestors always held land at the same place?—They were in several places.

31325. Backward and forward throughout this country?—Quite so.

31326. Are you old enough to remember the time before the potato disease?—I am old enough, if I had proper recollection of these things.

31327. Was your father alive at that time?—He was not.

31328. What was the condition of the people of the township before the potato disease?—They were fairly well off. They hadn't much land, but what they had they made good use of, and they did not require to go eighteen miles from home to plant potatoes, as we have to do.

31329. They lived upon the croft and fishing?—Yes, they lived on both.

31330. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—When you were dispossessed, had you 450 sheep; or had you part of your summing in cows?—We had one cow and a follower at the time.

31331. And how many were there of you?—There were forty-three families of us and forty-five cows.

31332. Had you ten sheep besides the cows?—Yes, we had.

31333. What were the sheep valued at?—The factor, Mr Finlayson, appointed valuators and made them drunk, and when the thirdsman saw this he did not go near them.

31334. Hadn't the tenant anything to do with the appointment of the valuators?—I don't know as to that. If he had such a right he was not aware of it. Finlayson frightened the people so much that they dared not do anything.

31335. Do you know that their right was not exercised by any one of them?—It may have been, but I don't know. I am not aware that they had any representative there.

31336. Who was the thirdsman who refused to act?—The son of Captain Cameron, who was in Lienessie at the time.

31337. He is not alive now is he?—He is in Australia.

31338. Who asked for your rent receipts and gave you rent books back in exchange for them?—Mr Black, and a clerk of the name of Mr Dunbar.

31339. For whom was Mr Black acting?—For the factor, Mr Finlayson, GLENSHIEL I think.

31340. Do you remember that occurrence?—I don't remember that altogether, but there is a man here who remembers it and can testify to it. LETTERFEARN John Macrae

31341. Can you say that your receipts were taken from you and books and Farquhar given in exchange, and that debts were marked against you for which you formerly held receipts?—Yes; and one of the receipts was found amissing, and was given by the party who found it to the policeman to see what kind of document it was. The policeman said it was as good as money in the bank to him. ‘Show me your book,’ he said; and when the man did so what appeared upon the receipt to have been paid was against him as arrears in the book.

31342. Did he show that receipt to the factor?—I don't think he did.

31343. He allowed the arrears to stand against him in the pass book?—I believe he did.

31344. Although he had proof in his hand that it was not an arrear?—Yes.

31345. [To Farquhar Macrae]. You have heard what John Macrae has said?—Yes.

31346. I suppose you agree with all he has stated?—Well, he said plenty that I don't know anything about, but so far as I know it is true.

31347. Do you know about this petition which Mr Morison wrote out?—Yes.

31348. Have you any relations living among the cottars at Bundaloch?—Yes, my mother is there and has a croft, but not the grazing of a cow.

31349. Was any other answer received to this petition but the answer which is given here?—Not to my knowledge.

31350. Was the petition presented to Sir Alexander Matheson?—It was presented to the factor.

31351. And did he afterwards deliver it?—I don't know.

31352. Was any further communication made to the cottars at Bundaloch about this letter?—We received no reply so far as I know; but about a month afterwards both factors visited us at Bundaloch, and took all our names and occupations and our circumstances.

31353. Did the factor not mention whether he had forwarded the petition to Sir Alexander Matheson?—He said that he did not forward the petition, but that he sent a letter to Sir Alexander Matheson.

31354. That is not the letter from the ministers, but a letter of his own?—A letter of his own.

31355. Have you anything you wish to say further on behalf of Bundaloch?—There is one special grievance that has not been yet referred to, but which applies to other townships besides Bundaloch. If I want to make up my roof, I require to buy timber and make it up; but supposing I close the door and have to go from home on any business, the factor has the power to come and force the door in with his foot, if he sees proper, and dispossess me of any stones, and he may dispossess me before I am aware. I don't wish to add anything further to the statement. I have been in delicate health since last month, and could not write any statement, but coming across to-day I wrote a small statement upon the deer forest, and would like to read it.

31356. We presume the petition asks what you want?—Of course the petition to the proprietor of that time did.

31357. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh*.—The petition is part of our business, and we will look into it, and you must not think although we do not put a question to you that we won't consider them.—Statement by FARQUHAR MACRAE.—‘The Linassie forest, which would cast 800 wedders annually, and before

GLEN SHIEL ' slaughtered by butchers would average 72 lbs. per head, equal to 57,600 lbs.
 LETTERFEARN ' of mutton ; the Kilellan forest, which would cast 1000 wedders annually,
 John Macrae ' and would average 70 lbs., per head, equal to 70,000 lbs. of mutton ; also
 and Farquhar ' the Lochalsh Moor Forest, which would cast 800 wedders averaging 72 lbs.,
 Macrae. ' equal to 57,600 lbs ; also 200 ewes, which would average 60 lbs., equal
 12,000,—making a total of 197,200 lbs. of mutton. I only point out these
 because Sir Alexander Matheson says that there is no harm in converting
 sheep walks into deer forests. But how do deer forests affect large centres,
 such as Glasgow, when a single estate could produce so much mutton ? and
 how do deer forests affect the Government when all our kingdom's money
 will arrive at America for inferior flesh, instead of pure Highland mutton ?
 Now the wool that would grow on every one of the forests—Liuassie
 forest, 16,200 lbs. of wool ; Kilellan forest, 19,800 lbs. ; Lochalsh forest,
 48,000 ;—making a total 84,000 lbs. of wool. How do deer forests affect
 the low country farmer when upwards of £2000 sterling was left for
 wintering these forests' hoggs ? How do deer forests affect the traveller
 when he must not go his way through the forest ? And how do deer
 forests affect the working class when they must pay 1s. per lbs. for
 mutton instead of 6d. per lbs. ? I hope reporters will bring this with
 them, as it will be found valuable if the inhabitants of towns and villages
 would understand it. I am able to prove that the Lochalsh forest is
 laboured by one gamekeeper, and when under sheep there were four
 shepherds, three wintering shepherds, and several helpers, besides clip-
 ping and smearing. And then how can any man tell me that there is as
 much labour attached to deer forests as sheep walks ? Now, if the people
 get the land, they will serve towns with beef and mutton, and supply
 themselves with the fat of the grass as in other days. But landlords to-
 day want nothing but a pursefull of money, and that makes them let
 their hill and glens under deer instead of brave and powerful men, who
 would rise shoulder to shoulder to serve their queen and country if
 required. Oh, the deer ! oh, the deer ! Very backward regulations when
 the deer would be the ruler, and the sons of men starving without land
 to cultivate.'

MURDO MACRAE, Crofter and Shoemaker, Inverinet (55)—examined.

Murdo
Macrae.

31358. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Do you hold land direct from the proprietor ?—Yes.

31359. To what extent ?—About two acres.

31360. How many families are there in Inverinet ?—About twenty.

31361. Did they meet and choose you to represent them here ?—Yes.

31362. How many families were represented at that meeting ?—The great majority of them were there.

31363. Did they choose others besides you ?—The two others who are with me.—*Rev. Mr Morison.* There is a statement in the paper which I handed in referring to this place ; I should say, however, that there is at least one of the tenants who dissents from the statement, and says he is satisfied with the state of matters as they are. He wished me to say that on his behalf. He is referred to in the statement.

31364. Who is the exceptional man who does not agree to the paper ?—Roderick Macrae, who is stated in the petition got a cow's pasture which was taken from the others.

31365. [To Murdo Macrae]. There are complaints in the paper of the position of the people at Inverinet, have these complaints been made before.

ROSS.
SHIRE.

LETTERFEARN.

Murdo
Macrae.

to the proprietor?—We have complained to the factor in regard to these grievances.

31366. Which grievances do you specially refer to?—Last year about this time the factors went round asking us by authority of the proprietor if we had any grievances. We said that our chief grievance was that we were paying rent to the proprietor for pasture that would not keep a cow. The reason we could not do that is that, when the township was first formed, ten sheep were sent out for each cow; we lost this, and the tenants then got the sheep—those who have still the sheep. When these got the sheep there was no special land reserved for cattle ever since, and the proprietor allotted cow's grass to each of those whom he deprived of the sheep. When the upper tenants got chief control of the sheep they did not reserve any land for the smaller crofters for pasturing their cattle on, and therefore they cannot keep cows at all, because if they take them into their lots then they would have no winter keep for them, or potatoes either.

31367. Did you have to give away your sheep stock, or did the proprietor insist on taking them from you?—I was not in the place at the time; my father had the lot; but the people were all anxious to keep the sheep.

31368. Was your father a tradesman, or had he any means of living besides his croft?—No other means.

31369. Were any of those who were deprived of their sheep tradesmen or labourers about the township?—One was a crofter, and the rest were at work which they got from the proprietor at the time.

31370. Were they employed on the policies of Inverinet?—Yes, they were engaged there improving about the proprietor's residence at Inverinet.

31371. And the sheep were taken from you with the intention of classifying the holders there into farmers and labourers?—Quite so; they were taken from those who were reduced from the condition of crofters, and allowed to those who had the status of tenants.

31372. And you would now be satisfied if there was sufficient grazing for the cows?—That is the one thing we complain of here.

31373. How many are there now of the larger tenants?—There are several; there are six shares, but one of them is halved.

31374. Are there not seven also of the labouring class?—Six in all, but one of the lots is in possession of the local schoolmaster.

31375. How many are there on the land?—Six, I believe.

ALEXANDER MACRAE, Crofter's Son and Shoemaker, Inverinet (34)—
examined.

31376. Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.—Do you live at Inverinet?—Yes.

Alexander
Macrae.

31377. What have you to say which the other man did not say for you?—What we chiefly complain of is that in 1860 a share of our land was taken from us and given to the man who says he is satisfied. In consequence of this we lost the benefit of our cattle. Fifteen years ago the place was divided into lots. Rent was laid upon our sheep, upon our lots, and upon our cattle, amounting in all to £13, 10s. Some lots, however, amounted to £17. Three years ago one of the tenants gave up his lot, and the others took his share between them, which brought our average rent to £15 and the highest over £18. In 1881 the rent was reduced, so that now the lowest pays £13, 10s. and the highest £16. The place won't keep the summing here without a good deal of extra expense. Last year the village was out of pocket in this way £5, 12s., which brought the rent

ROSS-SHIRE. up to over £19 for the stock I am allowed to keep. We have also further to pay for the wintering of our hoggs, which amounted last year to the sum of £33 for the township, or £5, 10s. per lot.

LETTERPEARN. 31378. You think the place too dear?—Yes.

Alexander Macrae. 31379. That the net profits will not pay the rent?—Yes.

Rev. Roderick Morison, Minister of the Parish of Kintail—examined.

Rev. Roderick Morison. 31380. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Have you a statement which you wish to read?—Yes. ‘I am a native of the parish of Kintail, and have resided in it all my life, except for about fourteen years, during which I was settled in other parishes. During that time, however, I was in constant communication with the parish, and visited it frequently. I am therefore intimately acquainted with the condition of the people, with almost every individual of whom I am personally acquainted. The population at the last census was 688—of these about fifty are paupers; there being, including lunatics in the asylum and paupers resident in other parishes, about sixty persons on the poor’s roll—of these twenty-three are resident in the villages of Bundaloch and Carndubh. I attribute the excessive pauperism of the parish to the large number of people who have no land worth speaking of. The population has decreased in round numbers about one hundred in each decade during my time, except in the last, when the decrease was sixty-five. The parish is said to contain 213 square miles, which gives an average population of a little over one family to two square miles. I consider that the condition of the people has materially improved in respect of comforts since the earliest times I can remember. My recollections, however, date from a period of exceptional severity, which followed on the failure of the potato crop. The causes of this increased comfort and prosperity are not easy to define, but the fact is beyond question. The people are better clad, fed, and educated than they were a generation ago. They have learned to do more for themselves, have more intercourse with the south, and more friends and relatives there, have better fishing gear, and get better prices for anything they can produce. Some of them are, however, in great poverty still, and how they manage to support themselves it is very difficult to see. There is an almost entire absence of crime among them. During the five years I have been minister here, there has not been a single case before the courts unless one or two trifling breaches of the peace—the most serious of which was, I believe, punished by a fine of 10s. There have been no evictions from houses within my time; but besides the general eviction at Bundaloch, of which evidence is to-day before the Commission, there have been several evictions from lands for non-payment of rent and for keeping shebeens. I think that the management of the estate of Sir Alexander Matheson has been, apart from the Bundaloch case, on the whole judicious and kindly, and does not at present afford much ground for complaint. The tenants have been assisted to build better houses; in many cases feus or building leases have been granted to suitable persons, at the village of Dornie substantial reductions of rent have been granted, and generally it appears to me that all that could reasonably be expected has been done for those who are tenants. The whole of the inhabited portion of the parish belongs to Sir Alexander Matheson—the portion belonging to Chisholm of Chisholm being entirely deer forest and a sheep farm. A large portion

of the grazing land in the heights of the parish has been turned into deer forests. £1905 is paid for forest land in the parish by one person, who in this and the two adjoining parishes pays £3395 for forest land, besides a large sum for the shooting of land farmed by tenants. I entertain very strong opinions as to the injurious effects of deer forests on the country and the people, and if the time at the disposal of the Commissioners admits (or if they will receive a written statement from me on the subject hereafter) should much desire an opportunity of stating my views on that subject.—R. MORISON.

ROSS-SHIRE.

LETTERFEARN.
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Morison.

31381. You state that the management of Sir Alexander Matheson's property has been in the main good, with the exception of the eviction of Bundaloch?—Yes.

31382. And you say there were other evictions for shebeening and non-payment of rent?—Yes.

31383. Did these evictions at Bundaloch not take place for non-payment of rent?—I don't know; they were before my time.

31384. And you make these statements without knowing the circumstances?—I know the people were in great poverty, and likely to be in arrears.

31385. That time followed upon the destitution of 1847–48?—Yes.

31386. Were arrears common throughout the country at the time?—I presume so, but that is rather previous to my recollection.

31387. *Mr Cameron.*—With regard to the subdivision of the crofts, I suppose you would like to see the cottars enjoy a certain portion of the land?—Certainly.

31388. Do you think the land near where they reside is suitable for their occupation?—Yes, but there is not enough for them in the neighbourhood.

31389. How many cottars without land are there altogether in the parish?—I should think about forty; but that is only a guess.

31390. In what portion of the parish could these cottars find land suitable for their occupation?—Some of them about Bundaloch.

31391. Could any of these cottars obtain land without subdividing the farms?—No, I think not; all the land is let to somebody.

31392. Are the farms which require to be subdivided large farms or moderate sized ones?—We have only one farm which can be called large—Kilellan—which pays £840 I think.

31393. Could any portion of that be suitably given to form crofts?—I think so.

31394. Are there any cottars resident on that farm?—Yes; I think three or four.

31395. Is the land in the immediate vicinity of where these cottars reside suitable for cultivation—the land on the large farm?—Yes.

31396. What is the size of the other farms on which the cottars reside?—Most of them reside on Bundaloch, which pays a rent of, I think, £130.

31397. Would Bundaloch farm be suitable on which to establish a township of crofters?—I think so.

31398. Do you think these crofters could profitably occupy the arable land belonging to this farm without the grazing?—Yes, but not without some of the grazing.

31399. Grazing for what stock would you suggest?—One cow each.

31400. Do you think that might be done and leave Bundaloch farm a suitable holding for the tenant?—I cannot offer any opinion as to that.

31401. Are these people of whom you speak likely, supposing they get crofts, to subdivide them?—Yes, unless they were prevented.

ROSS-SHIRE. 31402. Do you think these people here have any great inclination to subdivide?—No, I think not; they have not had the chance.

LETTERFEARN. 31403. Do you think that by proper estate management the subdivision of crofts, which we have found to be one of the greatest evils in the Rev. Roderick Western Highlands, might be prevented?—I think so, but I don't think it would be difficult to prevent. We have not many marriages going on or many new families springing up. I think most people consider their crofts small enough.

31404. You say the cottars to whom you refer are in tolerably good circumstances—that is better circumstances than they were in twenty or thirty years ago?—I think so.

31405. You say it is difficult to account for that. In what way do they earn wages, or do they earn wages?—Well, there is very little employment going in the parish; fishing is the chief source of income.

31406. Do many of the people go south to get work, and come back in spring?—No, none I think.

31407. They all reside here the whole year round?—Yes, very much.

31408. How do they live?—Really it is hard to say.

31409. Have they any land?—They are very frugal in their habits, and make a little off the fishing; and sometimes they get an occasional chance of labour.

31410. But they have no land except potato ground?—That is so.

31411. They have all got a bit of potato ground?—They have all a patch.

31412. Do many of them have a cow's grass?—Nearly all of them.

31413. And they don't go south to get labour?—Not much.

31414. Must not labour in the district be very scarce?—There is a little sometimes in Lochalsh parish, but very little in the district; but then the number of able-bodied men is not large.

31415. How many able-bodied men are there out of this number of cottars?—Perhaps twenty-five able-bodied cottars.

31416. Do they sometimes do work for the better class of crofters?—Sometimes.

31417. Do they do any work for the big farmers?—Some of them do, and a good many of them go to wintering hoggs.

31418. So that they do get in point of fact employment?—They get the means of living somehow.

31419. And they eke out what they get by labour of this character by fishing?—Yes.

31420. Herring or deep sea fishing?—Exclusively the herring fishing.

31421. Do the herrings come to Loch Dulch now?—Not for some years; but they went to Loch Hourn.

31422. There was a good season there last year?—There was, but our people didn't get much advantage of it, and they were run off the ground by the big boats. The heavy boats and large crews were too many for them, and many of our people had to give it up.

31423. Are they not good fishermen?—There are better fishermen than they are.

31424. Do you think if they had better boats they would perhaps be encouraged to fish more and better?—No doubt they would, and they are improving; they are getting better boats.

31425. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You were good enough to say you would send in a paper at a later period, but I wish to ask you a few questions. You have stated that there are 213 square miles in the parish of Kintail, that would make 130,000 or 140,000 acres. Can you tell me how much of that in your parish is under forest?—I cannot give the

acreage, but I should think something like one-fourth of this parish. We are at this moment in the parish of Glenshiel, but I mean my own parish of Kintail.

ROSS-SHIRE
—
LETTERFEARN.

31426. Betwixt where we are now sitting and the head of the loch there is the farm of Rattagan?—Yes.

Rev. Roderick Morison.

31427. There is the appearance of a considerable population having been there at one time?—Yes, there are some traces of cultivation.

31428. Do you know anything about the time the people were removed from Glenshiel?—No, I don't.

31429. Was it before your time?—Yes, long before.

31430. Have you heard there were great evictions?—Yes, the people were removed somehow by eviction.

31431. Who was the person that removed them?—I think some of them were removed by Mr Dick, who held the property at one time. I know he removed some from Rattagan, but I don't know how many. These things were long before my time.

31432. Your family have been ministers of Kintail three or four generations?—Three generations.

31433. Is it not the fact that this man Dick was threatened to be shot for his cruelty to the people?—Yes.

31434. I believe you have taken a good deal of interest in connection with deer. Is it not a fact that from within about a mile of the Beauly Railway Station you can walk without putting a foot on anything but deer forest land till you reach the Cro of Kintail?—Yes.

31435. Practically from sea to sea?—Yes.

31436. Do you know it to be the case that there are also some fourteen miles of continuous deer forest land in Glen Cannich alone?—Yes, I have ridden all over it.

31437. Is it not the fact that the whole of the north side of Glen Affrie is one vast deer forest extending also to the Cro of Kintail?—The farm of Lienessie comes into it.

31438. Are not the whole of Guisachan and its glens, except the mains or home farm on the estate, under deer?—I believe so.

31439. And it reaches also to the Cro of Kintail?—No, I think not.

31440. What is between?—Inchancrow and the farm of Knockfin, occupied by Mr Winans as a sheep farm.

31441. Is it the case that from Inver Moriston, the south side of Glen Moriston, is one unbroken deer forest, reaching to Kintail?—It does not reach to Kintail, but to the parish of Glenshiel.

31442. Is it not a fact that from within about a mile of Balmacaan in Glen Urquhart you can walk on forest ground till you reach Kintail?—I believe so.

31443. Is it not also the case that from Inver Garry House you can walk on forest land all the way down to the sea at Knoydart?—I think so. I may add that I have been told that from a short distance of Loch Broom you can walk on deer forest land until within a short distance of Perth.

31444. Do you consider that the extension of afforestation at the rate at which it is going on, is for the public weal?—Certainly not—not for the ultimate welfare of anybody.

31445. Since your family have been so long resident in the same place, and must necessarily have handed down traditions from father to son, I wish you to state what your own opinion is of the condition of the people in Kintail, and the adjoining places hereabout, prior to the introduction of sheep farms?—I think there would be a much larger number of people in

' ROSS-
SHIRE.

LETTERFEARN.

Rev. Roderick
Morison.

circumstances of comparative comfort than there are now, but I think there were perhaps some people poorer than any that now exist.

31446. How would you distribute the proportion of those that were in better circumstances and those who were worse off than they are now?—

That must be a mere guess. I should say half the people were better off and half worse.

31447. There is a deal of poverty about here just now?—Too great.

31448. Did you hear what the people of Morvich said to-day?—I did.

31449. It seems rather a pitiable case, is it not?—Very much so indeed.

31450. Is it not the case, at all events, with regard to them that so far as the soil they possess is concerned, if they were dependent upon it they could not exist?—Certainly.

31451. Taken all in all, is not Loch Duich with its mountain surroundings, perhaps the most beautiful in the West Highlands, or any part of Scotland?—I think so.

31452. And along with that there is unfortunately a deal of poverty?—Yes.

31453. In the finest scenery in the Highlands?—Yes.

31454. How would you reconcile the two things, insuring in this beautiful place a happy and prosperous people?—By giving a moderate holding of land to a certain number of them; those who are able to work.

31455. And the land is there?—And the land is there.

WILLIAM GRANT, Crofter's Brother (42), assisted by ALEXANDER MACLENNAN, Crofter's Son (38), Letterfearn—examined.

William
Grant and
Alexander
Maclellan.

31456. Sheriff Nicolson.—Have you any statement to make?—We have.—' Statement of William Grant, a delegate from Letterfearn.—My father was a tenant in Easter Achanataird, and paid rent to four successive proprietors. His summing was two cows with their followers, sixteen sheep, and five hoggs, and paid £6, 12s. 6d. as rent. When all the tenants were removed from the said township, in order that the same should be added to the farm of Leackachan, my father was not one penny in arrears with his rent, as his receipts can yet show. He was removed to our present abode, getting only an acre of land. At present in Letterfearn one crofter has three acres two others have two acres each, thirteen have one acre apiece, seven others have the eighth part of an acre each, fifteen families are without any lands whatever, and there are seven paupers two of whom have one-eighth each. The reason why our part of the parish is so crowded is due to the evictions that took place in the other parts of it, in order to make room for large sheep farms even as far back as the times when the Earls of Seaforth were proprietors. Some of those evicted families were sent in among the Letterfearn people. Our lots being so small, many of us have had to use the same land entirely for potato crops, without change for thirty years. We have to pay a rent of £1, 10s. for the old Scotch acre for our lands,—also 5s. a year for sea-ware, which we can only use every second year. As the sea-ware allotted to us is not sufficient for our needs, we must buy more of it from the neighbouring farmers. In the parish of Glenshiel no crofter, either on Sir Alexander's estate or on any other landlord's, has one cow's grazing rented from them. We get the summer quarter's grazing from the farmers at the rate of £1 per cow. The rest of the year our cows have to be tethered on our own small lots or fed in

ROSS-
SHIRE.

LETTERFEARN.

William
Grant and
Alexander
MacLennan

'our byres. This spring our worthy proprietor has kindly advanced seed potatoes at 9s. per barrel, which we would be glad to receive almost at any price.' *Statement of Alexander MacLennan, delegate from Letterfearn.*—My grandfather and father were paying rent to four proprietors in Wester Achanataird. My father was removed from the grazing lands without being in arrears with his rent. All the other tenants were removed at the same time in order that their grazing lands might increase the late Mr Finlayson's farm, who was at that time the proprietor's factor. Our houses, which were then situated on the high ground, were broken down, and our present ones built almost on the sea-beach, so that when an unusual high tide happens to come many of them are flooded. Ordinarily there is very little work going on on our side of Loch. Occasionally we may get some day's employment in the woods from the forester. We crofters sent a petition to Sir Alexander sixteen months ago, praying that whenever the lands we formerly occupied would be again at his disposal, that he would kindly direct his factor to reinstate us in them at their present rent. The factor visited us, and promised to increase our holdings. If what we learn from other sources be true, the land proposed to be given to us is entirely inadequate to our wants.'

31457. How many families are there altogether at Letterfearn?—Sixteen having land, and fifteen having no land.

31458. How long have those who have no land been there?—Those in the township in which I live were deprived of their land thirty-one years ago, when it was added to Leackachan.

31459. When was the land allotted as it is at present at Letterfearn?—They were deprived of Druidaig about thirty-six years ago, and of West Achanataird about thirty-four years ago. Achanataird was added to Druidaig.

31460. Is Druidaig a sheep farm?—Yes.

31461. When did the division of the land as it is at present take place? Was it done at once or by degrees?—It was done gradually. First Druidaig, which the factor took into his own hands, then West Achanataird, which the factor also took into his own hands; and then East Achanataird was also added to Leackachan.

31462. Was the land redistributed on each of these occasions after some had been taken from them?—Yes.

31463. Were the crofts subdivided and re-allotted, or left as they were?—It was allotted or subdivided into small lots.

31464. Were the rents going down also?—When the grazings were taken away the rents were reduced, of course.

31465. How does it happen that one crofter has three acres, another two, and thirteen only one acre apiece?—Because that was the factor's way.

31466. How many of these have cows?—Ten.

31467. None of those who have only one-eighth part of an acre can keep a cow?—No.

31468. How do those seven people who have only one-eighth part of an acre, and the other fifteen who have no land at all, live?—They go about here and there often to offer assistance for potato land to help them to live.

31469. Have some to go far away for that purpose?—Some of them go three or four miles, and some cross the loch to plant potatoes.

31470. Where do they get work?—There is very little work on this estate except some wood work, especially after gales.

31471. Do you not go to the south or to the east coast for work?—Hardly any of us go there, but we fish about the place.

31472. How do you make money enough to pay for the place on which

ROSS-SHIRE.

LETTERFEARN

William
Grant and
Alexander
MacLennan.

you live?—Some years we do pretty well by the fishing, and other years not, and in that case the merchant gives credit till such time as we are able to pay him.

31473. Is there a man in every family of the place?—Yes, usually.

31474. You chiefly depend for your living upon fishing?—We have no other source of living but that.

31475. Is that herring fishing?—Yes.

31476. Where do you fish?—For two years chiefly in Loch Hourn, very little being got in Loch Duich.

31477. Are you well provided with boats and nets?—Some are and some are not, but they are improving in that respect.

31478. Are they getting a larger class of boats?—Yes, they have been getting larger within the last few years.

31479. Where do you get them from?—They are built at Dornie. The people buy timber and employ a local carpenter.

31480. If the quality of your boats has been improving, it would seem that your own condition also is improving; is that so?—The chief reason is that we have to go to Loch Hourn, and big boats are more suitable; and several of us usually join and go in company.

31481. Are the people of Letterfearn very much in debt?—They are so generally before the fishing begins.

31482. Are they much in debt to merchants for food?—Some of them for meal and other provisions.

31483. But on the whole you are not so sunk in debt but you will be able to get over it before the year's end?—If there is a good fishing, but if not our debts will be heavier.

31484. How are you off for a harbour?—We don't complain at all of it.

31485. Your houses are not good?—They are not.

31486. Who built them?—At first they were scattered, but when the people were huddled together the houses were all within the water mark, and in consequence they were sometimes flooded, and some of our gear was injured.

31487. Did your fathers get any compensation for the houses from which they were removed?—They got no compensation, only they built these houses for them, and usually two or three families were put under the same roof.

31488. Are they so still?—In the same way.

31489. But are the families not separated by walls?—There is a wall erected between them.

31490. How many rooms are there in those houses?—In some one and others two.

31491. Does the tide come into them sometimes?—Yes, very often.

31492. To what depth?—In three houses it was calculated that it rose to the height of three feet.

31493. When did that happen?—Three years ago during the great tide.

31494. Does it ever happen with an ordinary high spring tide?—Occasionally, generally in the spring.

31495. Why were the houses built so close to the sea?—Because it was the proprietor's order, or his factor's.

31496. Was it done for the convenience of the people, or to save the land?—I think it was to save the land that they built them so near the sea.

31497. You say you sent a petition to the laird about sixteen months ago and that you were visited by the factor, who promised to increase your

holding; have you had any communication with him on the subject since then?—The factors came to see us when we were assembled in the school-house.

ROSS-SHIRE

LETTERFEARN.

William
Grant and
Alexander
MacLennan.

31498. When?—The first time they came, and said they would send now to the proprietor and see whether he would grant the request or assist us in any way. They came to us again, and they were promising a piece of ground; and then they came a third time, and said the land was given to us. They showed no boundaries and pointed out no land, but told us it was in the upper part of the township, and when the Whitsunday term passed they spoke to us and asked why we did not put out our cattle on the land. But at that time the cattle had been sent as usual to pasture on the farmer's land. Since then, within the last two or three days, they have been seeing us again, when they said they would give us land to support fifteen cows, but those who know what stock land will carry say that it won't carry more than seven, and others who are judges of the value of land declare the value to be, say £1 per cow of rent. But the factor's rent was to be £15. Those who have the land already, because of its deterioration by the steepness of the slope and floods and the continuous cropping, say they would be entitled to get the whole of this new land along with their crop.

31499. What is the rent that the thirteen pay for the one acre?—30s. for the land and 5s. for sea-ware, although they cannot cut it but every second year.

31500. To whom do they pay for the sea-ware?—To the proprietor.

31501. Has that always been the custom?—Yes, it was more than that at one time.

31502. How is it you can only have it every second year?—Because it takes two years to grow.

31503. *Professor Mackinnon.*—This pasture which has been promised to you, the factor says is sufficient for fifteen cows, and you say only for seven?—Yes.

31504. Is there plenty of ground round about to support a cow for each of you?—Plenty.

31505. Suitable ground?—Quite suitable for cattle.

31506. Since you got this very small croft how do you expect to make your living? Is it by crofting and fishing?—During those years in which the fishing would not do so well the land would be a great help to keep us out of debt.

31507. Might not there be a danger, that people would spend too much time upon the croft and too little upon the fishing?—Fishing has a time for itself.

31508. Do you think you could work a good croft and still attend to the fishing in its own time?—Yes.

31509. What is the fishing time here?—During autumn.

31510. How much land was it you asked the proprietor to give you?—We wanted to get all we had formerly.

31511. And that is now added to the farm of Druidaig?—It was added partly to Druidaig and partly to Leackachan.

31512. And if you got that, you would put up houses as they were before?—We would try to do so with help.

31513. Have you any idea of the stock you had in old times when you had these places?—Two had one cow, some of them had also sheep; the rent ranged from £3, 10s. to £5.

31514. Supposing you were to get the land you had before, do you think you would be able yourselves to stock it again?—If the price of sheep were as formerly we could easily do it, but the price of sheep is

ROSS-SHIRE
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LETTERFEARN.

William
Grant and
Alexander
MacLennan.

now so high that we might have considerable difficulty in doing it. But still we would try.

31515. You don't think the proprietor would lose anything by giving you back these lands?—It was a loss to the proprietor when our land was taken from us.

31516. Do you think that your people were paying more rent for that land than the proprietor is getting now?—Yes, they were paying more. When it was given to the farmer he got a reduction of £10.

31517. And you would be willing to pay for it now what the present tenant is paying for it if you got it back?—We would do so rather than want, but if we could get it cheaper we would prefer it.

31518. Can you give any reason why the proprietor took that from you and gave it to another man for £10 less of rent?—I cannot say whether the proprietor wished it or not, but probably the factor did it, wishing to add to his own farm of Druidaig; and meanwhile he gave it at a lower rent to another man Macrae, finally meaning at the same time to add it to his own farm.

31519. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Do you know the estate of Glenshiel pretty well?—Yes, I was a shepherd a long time.

31520. Are there any crofters upon Baillie's estate of Glenshiel?—Not one.

31521. Is it a pretty considerable estate?—Yes, very large.

31522. Were there small people upon it once?—Yes, up in the glens here and there.

31523. And some alongside the loch?—Two. You see the foundations of the houses still.

31524. Have you heard any of your predecessors mention how many people were removed from Glenshiel?—I cannot say as to that.

31525. Must there have been a considerable number, judging from the remains?—That is quite apparent from the appearances of habitations. They were numerous in the glens in former times.

31526. What became of these people? Were they put out of the country altogether or sent to adjoining proprietors?—Some of them left the kingdom, and others were sent down to the sea-shore.

31527. Upon other proprietors, I presume?—Most of them settled upon other proprietors.

31528. Had the person who was the proprietor of Glenshiel at that time any other land than what now belongs to Baillie?—We cannot say; it was one Dick, an Englishman, who was proprietor.

31529. Was he long proprietor?—Yes, he was some years.

31530. What became of him?—He died in Rattagan.

31531. Is the farm of Rattagan a very suitable place for cultivation by crofters? Is there a good deal of land?—It was in small crofts at one time, and is the most suitable land of any—excellent land for the purpose.

31532. Did you hear that the people who have removed were well off in their circumstances?—They were comfortable enough as long as they had the land.

ALEXANDER MACRAE, Cottar and Fisherman, Letterfearn—examined.

Alexander
Macrae.

31533. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Are you a crofter?—I have an acre of land.

31534. Are you a delegate?—Yes.

31535. Who are those who sent you here?—All the township.

31536. The same as sent William Grant and Alexander MacLennan?—
Yes.

31537. Have you anything more to say than they had?—Not very much.

ROSS-SHIRE

LETTEREARN

31538. Do you concur with all they said?—Yes.

31539. What is it they complain mostly about?—Poverty and want of land.

Alexander
Macrae.

31540. What you ask for is more land?—Land! land!

31541. How much land?—Eight acres; and we want four cows and a horse and from forty to fifty sheep.

31542. Would you be able to stock a piece of ground of that size?—I would try it.

31543. Is the fishing good here?—One year it is and another it is not.

31544. Taking one farm with another, would they all be able to do as you would do?—I think the greater part of them would.

31545. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Where would you all get the land?—The glens on each side of us.

31546. *Professor Mackinnon.*—This loch was famous for fishing in the old times, was it not?—Yes, but it is falling off now.

31547. Is that because the silver-herring has been lost?—I don't know.

31548. Which would the people prefer to get back, the land or the silver-herring?—They would prefer the land.

31549. They have more faith in the land than in the herring?—Herring are uncertain, but the land is sure if we had it.

31550. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Have you been fishing yourself this season?—Yes.

31551. Where?—In Loch Duich.

31552. Has the fishing been good?—There has not been anything yet.

31553. What is the greatest number of crans you have got?—Four barrels that other two and I have got this season yet.

31554. Among three of you?—Yes.

31555. What did you get for that?—We sent them by steamer to Glasgow, and we don't know yet what price they will be.

31556. The best fishing here begins later, does it not?—One season it will be and another not.

31557. Have any of the other boats here done any better than you this season?—Yes, some of them have got their ten and twelve barrels—those who have fished best.

31558. If you had bigger boats would you go and try the fishing at Barra and Stornoway?—Yes, if we had them we would try it, of course.

31559. But there is no boat here big enough to do that?—There is one boat; the people brought her from the south two years ago.

31560. Has it been at Stornoway or the east coast this season?—Not this summer.

CHRISTOPHER MACRAE, Crofter (54), assisted by DAVID MACRAE,
Crofter (37), Camusluinie—examined.

31561. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Have you any statement to make?— Christopher Macrae and We have.—To the Royal Commissioners, Highlands and Islands,—We David Macrae.
‘the undersigned, on behalf of the tenants of Camusluinie, the property of Sir Alexander Matheson, Bart., Lochalsh, humbly beg to submit the following statement, which is a true representation of our grievances:—
‘When Sir Alexander Matheson bought the property in 1851 our rent was

ROSS-SHIRE

LETTERFEARN.

Christopher Macrae and David Macrae.

' £140. The glen of Frauchcorry was then taken from us. In this glen we used to summer our horses, young cattle, and sheep for five months in the year. We consider this our greatest grievance, as in consequence of having been deprived of this glen we had to sell most of our stock, as we had no place to keep them and no means of supporting them. We got a reduction in the rent of only £15 for the loss of this glen. In 1860 our rent was raised from £125 to £160, because of some improvements which the proprietor began to make on our land, and at the same time two large pieces of land were taken from us for plantations. The improvements promised when our rent was raised to £160 have not been completed yet. In 1882 we sent a petition to our proprietor, stating that it was impossible for us any longer to pay the rent charged, and requested him to reduce the rent to £120, and make the improvements promised. The rent was then reduced to £132, on condition that we would pay up all arrears. We consider this rent too high; it would be easier for us to pay a rent of £140, if we had Frauchcorry, than £100 without it, under present circumstances. We also got notice from the factor by letter and by telegram that other parties were wanting Camusluinie, and we were asked to send "an immediate reply, as he could not be hanging on in this way for us, keeping other people in suspense." Our land lies very low at the foot of high hills, and the heavy rains in winter carry away the substance of the soil into the river Elchaig in front, and the river when flooded carries off even the soil itself. There is no bridge across this river, which is very broad, and there is no way by which we can go from Camusluinie with a cart except by crossing this river. We consider, when we pay road money, we should have a road across the river, and we would be most willing to assist in the construction of a bridge, if materials were provided for it. The want of a bridge is also a great disadvantage in regard to the children attending school, as in the winter time the river is often impassable for days. We earnestly trust that the Royal Commission will consider our case favourably, and do for us what is just and reasonable.—DAVID MACRAE, CHRISTOPHER MACRAE, delegates.'

31562. Who got the glen which was taken from you?—*David Macrae.*
It was added to Liernessie.

31563. Was Liernessie so small before that it required this glen?—They had more for the one man than we had all between us.

31564. How many heads of families are there altogether in Camusluinie? Eighty to-day.

31565. Are there any cottars or squatters on the ground?—One family.

31566. Did you ever ask the proprietor to do something in the way of putting a bridge across the river?—We were always in the habit of speaking to the factor about the matter, but got no encouragement to expect that it would be done.

31567. Is there any convenient place for a bridge there; are there any rocks?—I think there are at the end of the present road.

31568. Would a wooden bridge be sufficient for your present purposes?—I think it would.

31569. You complain that certain improvements were promised to you when the rent was raised to £160; what were the improvements which were promised? There were drains to be made round about some of it, in order that it might be trenched and brought under cultivation, which was never done.

31570. Was any reason assigned for it not being done?—No reasons were given, so far as I know.

31571. You say you would be willing to contribute towards the erection

of the bridge—in what form—in the way of carting or giving labour?—We mean that we would help with our horses to cart materials to it.

ROSS-SHIRE.

31572. Your rent now is £132, but you still think it is too dear?—Yes, LETTERFEARN we do.

31573. If you got the rent reduced to £120 and got a bridge, you would be so far satisfied?—In addition to that, we would like the improvements to be finished before we would be in a fair position to pay even that rent.

Christopher Macrae and David Macrae.

31574. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Is Frauchorry attached to the farm, or is it a shieling in the hill?—It was detached.

31575. How far is it from you?—I think about ten miles.

31576. Are there any farms in the county that retain these detached portions which were common in old times?—I am not aware of any.

31577. *Professor Mackinnon* [to Christopher Macrae].—I suppose you agree with everything your neighbour has said?—Yes.

31578. You have nothing particular to add to what is in the paper and to what he said?—Some of us have very bad houses; they are getting old like ourselves.

31579. Don't you get encouragement to build new houses if you wish?—The factor holds out from time to time that we would get this, but he has not come near us for some time back. When he came to see us about a year ago, he was willing to promise anything we wanted.

31580. You don't know, of any one in the place, who wanted to build a house and was refused the usual assistance which is given on the estate?—They built two or three houses in the township on that system.

31581. You have therefore no cause to complain against the factor about the houses more than against yourselves?—No, but it is delaying too long from time to time.

31582. Are you not delaying too long to ask him?—I live too far away, and never see the factor except at the rent time, unless he comes to see me.

31583. But does not the factor live just as far away from you?—The factor was promising he would come and see me, and he has not come.

Rev. JOHN CAMERON, Roman Catholic Priest, Dornie (41)—examined.

31584. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—How long have you been in Dornie? Rev. John Cameron.—Ten years.

31585. Have you any general statement to make?—Not particularly.

31586. You heard what Mr Morison said?—I did. With regard to the general management of the estate, I can confirm what Mr Morison said. I believe that the proprietor means well to all, but as regards the people of Bundaloch really the poverty is very great. I am living in the immediate neighbourhood of that place, and I suppose I can see how they are getting on better than any other person in the parish, and I don't know how they can manage to live at all.

31587. Why should the people of Bundaloch be worse off than those at Letterfearn?—They are really worse.

31588. What is the reason?—I believe the Letterfearn people are better fishermen than the Bundaloch people, and they are nearer to the fishing ground.

31589. Is Bundaloch far from Letterfearn?—No, about half a mile.

31590. Is there difficulty in taking the boats up?—There is a strong current passing Dornie, and if the current is not going with them it is very hard to work against it. I may also say that, as far as the proprietor is

ROSS-
SHIRE.

LETTERFEARN.

Rev. John
Cameron.

concerned with us Roman Catholics in the district, we have always experienced from him perfect impartiality of treatment. He gives no favours. We have no more trouble than any one else, and no one is afraid on account of his religion of being disturbed by the proprietor or the factor.

31591. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Do you know anything of the ancient history of Bundaloch?—I cannot say that I do.

31592. Are you aware that a number of people were crowded upon the neighbourhood?—Yes, I believe they were a long time back.

31593. And have they been struggling ever since?—Yes.

31594. May I ask how many people belong to your church?—I suppose in Kintail and Lochalsh district nearly eighty persons.

31595. How many souls?—Over 140; but they are so scattered that many a time I may not have forty in the church.

31596. Are these all old Catholics?—Old Catholics of the district. Formerly the congregation was much larger, but gradually, by emigration and other causes, they have left the district.

31597. Were a number of the Macraes who used to inhabit the glens not Roman Catholics?—Some of them were; at one time there were a good number of the Macraes Catholics.

31598. Have you any privileges yourself? Have you any land from the proprietor in connection with your residence?—I have no land, and I really want no land.

31599. There is nothing attached to your office there?—No.

31600. Are your people growing or rather the opposite?—I cannot say they are; they are rather decreasing, and the population of the district is decreasing at the same time.

31601. Are there any Catholics, are you aware, further north and west, upon the west coast within Lochalsh?—No, unless perhaps an Irish hawker may settle down.

31602. Were there ever any Roman Catholics in Glenelg?—Before the Reformation, I believe there were.

31603. No doubt, but my question specially refers to this, that there are some in your district, and that you must jump over Glenelg to Arisaig and Morar before you come to any others?—Yes.

31604. Can you explain why there are none in Glenelg in recent times?—I believe it depended most on the proprietors; if the laird was Protestant the people were Protestant, and if the laird was Catholic the people Catholic.

31605. Have you ever heard it stated that the Macleods, who were once proprietors of Glenelg, discouraged Roman Catholics especially?—I never did.

31606. But there are none at this moment in Glenelg, properly speaking—No, not of the natives.

31607. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Where were you born and brought up yourself, Mr Cameron?—On Lord Lovat's estate.

31608. Comparing that country with this, what would you say of the condition of the people?—I believe they are far better off where I was brought up than they are here. On Lord Lovat's estate the farms and crofts are so divided that the crofters can get a great deal of work by labouring on the farms.

31609. There is a regular gradation?—There is, and there are also forests in which the people are employed.

31610. I suppose there is more good arable land there?—Yes, it is all arable land, very little grazing.

31611. With regard to the education of the people hereabout, has it been improving during the last ten years?—Rapidly.

31612. Are the children of your communion educated in the board school?—No, there is a school attached to our communion.

ROSS-SHIRE.

31613. But others find their way to the board schools?—Yes.

LETTERFEARN

31614. Under the conscience clause?—Yes.

Rev. John Cameron.

31615. Are you a member of the School Board?—No.

31616. But I suppose you are quite satisfied with the administration of the Board?—Certainly, as far as the paupers in the district are concerned. I can say there is no distinction made in the way of religion.

31617. In the School Board or Poor Board or anywhere else?—So far as I know. I don't know about the School Board; but we are not troubled.

31618. Is the school that educates your own people under inspection?—Yes.

31619. And is regularly examined the same as the other schools in the district?—Yes.

31620. And is efficiently taught?—Yes.

31621. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Have you anything more to state?—Nothing except the poverty of Bundaloch. I was sent as a delegate for them, and if anything can be done for them it will be a great boon. They will never improve as they are, because they can't.

31622. You think they cannot take to fishing like their neighbours?—They do fish, but they are not so successful fishermen as the Letterfearn men; and the fishing is a very precarious occupation. In many ways they would not earn what they would earn in the same time by days' wages.

31623. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Before you signed the petition which has been referred to were you thoroughly satisfied that the statements in it were well founded?—Well, we heard the people making these statements, and we had no reason to suppose they were not true.

31624. And as far as your personal knowledge goes, they were true?—Many of the statements refer to events before my time.

31625. But with regard to the present condition?—It is perfectly true.

31626. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—You never got any acknowledgment of that letter?—No, no acknowledgment at all.

31627. Did you ever speak to the factor about it?—I don't think I have met him since.

31628. Or Sir Alexander Matheson either?—No.

RODERICK MACLEAN, Factor to Sir Alexander Matheson, Lochalsh—
examined.

31629. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—You wish to make some remarks upon the evidence which has been given to-day?—I do. 'With reference to 'Dornie and Bundaloch, in 1852 part of the grazings was occupied by 'Duncan and John Macmillan at a rent of £60. In 1862, as no rent 'could be got from the stance-holders, the grazings some of them held 'were taken from them and added to those held by the Macmillans, at an 'additional rent of £40, making the rent of Bundaloch £100, at which 'rent it is at present let on lease to John Macrae. When Sir Alexander 'came into possession of the estate in 1851, the rent of the whole arable 'and grazings of Dornie and Bundaloch was £271. It is now £219. In 'March last a petition was presented to Sir Alexander by twenty-one of 'the Bundaloch stance-holders for land. This he cannot give without 'breaking a lease. Inquiry has been made into the circumstances of the

Roderick Maclean.

**ROSS.
SHIRE.**

' petitioners, which brought out that only one (the Bundaloch shepherd) could stock a lot, another partially, seventeen have no means, and two are in receipt of parochial relief. In 1844, previous to the potato disease, the arrears against the Dornie and Bundaloch crofters and stancetholders was £2170, 18s. 5d.'

LETTERFEARN.
Roderick
Maclean.

31630. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Over 200 years?—I don't know how long. 'All of them were in arrears except two. At Whitsunday 1852, 'the first year of Sir Alexander's possession, only eighteen paid in full, 'twenty partially, and eighty-six were in arrears amounting to '119, 14s. 8d.' The statement was made that the arrears were handed down from one proprietor to another, but Sir Alexander Matheson began with a clean sheet. I met the people last spring and collected them into Dornie school, and endeavoured to give them a little knowledge of agriculture, because, I am sorry to say, they are bad farmers. Nobody taught the poor people, and I thought I would begin by giving them an elementary lesson, showing how the soil is formed by atmospheric action. I also told them that the earth-worm was a far better drainer than the Dornie people, and the man thought I was making an earth-worm of himself. I found it was a mistake to speak to them, for they could not follow me out; but the fault is that they are not taught. I hope there is no person more lenient than I am, and I would wish to see them educated. If they were educated they would be as able and as willing workers as any other people, but until they are taught we cannot expect so much of them as of those who are taught. With regard to the statements which have been made about deer rents, I referred to them yesterday. The proprietor expended on Inverinet £486, 5s. 11d. on buildings; £73, 18s. on lands; £137, 4s. 10d. enclosures; together £697, 8s. 9d. In 1851 the rent was £99, 8s. 6d.; in 1881 it was reduced by £17, and it is now £104, 5s., leaving only a total sum of £4, 17s. 6d. as the income of the proprietor on the £697 spent by him. I now come to Letterfearn, and the proprietor has given me permission to read part of the private report of this township sent to him. When he gave me charge of the estates in the end of February 1882, he instructed me to go over the whole of the west coast estates along with Mr Watson and visit the crofters, and see the native condition of every one of them. I got these instructions in April 1882, and in May Mr Watson and myself went over the estates, and spent about three weeks in visiting the different crofts and examining into the state of the people. I have here a copy of the report of the condition of the place which I sent to the proprietor, of which I shall read a part to show that I am not the enemy of the poor man any more than the proprietor is, and it was stated yesterday and to-day that there is no better friend of a poor man than he. I began my letter to Sir Alexander by saying—'As stated in my note of Saturday last, I beg leave to lay before you a report of my survey accompanied by Watson over your Lochalsh, Kintail, and Glenshiel estates. We desired the people to tell freely any complaints they had to make both relative to their possessions and to any disputes among themselves, that if the former were reasonable everything possible would be made to remove their cause, and in the latter amicable settlements would be endeavoured. Of this freedom of approach invited, I am happy to say not a shade of advantage was taken by them. They treated ourselves and our position most respectfully. Letterfearn.—There are thirteen crofters paying from 30s. to £4, eight paying a few shillings for potato land, and eight squatters who have no lands. Their complaint was the small extent of land at their disposal for potato planting, and no outrun for grazing cows. The squatters can get potato land very seldom, only from the tenants of Drudaig and Leackachan, so that they are

' obliged to go to the neighbouring property for it. They complained also of being charged for sea-ware from Glass Island an amount of £4, 5s. among all the crofters. It was shown to them how impossible it is to give them lands for grazing or more land for planting potatoes, as the whole is either under lease, or on the same footing as under lease. A few of them have a sufficiency of money to take middle-sized crofts, savings from labour and fishing. Ruarach was offered among four of them, but they had not means enough to stock it, and Nonach and Blackwater among six; these places are too far from the sea. Six of the squatters are able and active men with families, and it is a pity there is no place for them. They were all very civil, hoped something would be done for them, and that the sea-ware money would be taken off their rents. No promises were made.' The rent of Mr Macdonald, the tenant of Drudaig, was till Whitsunday last £130. Sir Alexander gave me instructions to try and do the best I could, and at the end of April last we were able to make arrangements for Mr Macdonald to give up the best portion of the farm for the crofters by reducing his rent to £70, and the portion set apart for the crofters contiguous to their land formerly occupied by them were valued at £15, at which sum the returns were made to the assessor this year, thus causing a decrease of £45 to the proprietor on the whole rent, consequent on the breaking up of this portion for the crofters. With reference to Camusluinic I am sorry to say that the delegates, although they told the truth, did not tell the whole truth. When Sir Alexander Matheson bought the property the rent was £143; they said £140. *Camusluinic.*—When Sir Alexander bought the property the rent of Camusluinic was £143, payable by fifteen crofters. In 1852, so as to get the boundaries of the grazings adjusted, he took from them the shieling of Frauchcorry, for which he made a reduction of £28, making the rent £125, selecting eight of the sitting crofters as occupants, and providing for the rest elsewhere on the property. Between 1852 and 1859 he expended £960 in improvements upon the lands, and in 1860 he increased the rent to £160, equal to £3, 13s. per cent. upon the outlay. This rent they paid without a grudge while the old managers lived, and till two years ago, when the present agitation commenced. With a view of satisfying them Sir Alexander, in December last, reduced their rent to £132; thus leaving only £7 of income for the £960 of outlay on their improvements. A few years ago he offered timber, lime, slates, and £20 to each of them who would build new houses. Of this offer only two took advantage, which cost the proprietor £100 each.'

31631. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—You said, with reference to Bundaloch, that there has been a reduction of rent from £271 to £219 at the present time; who got the benefit of that arrangement?—The whole of them.

31632. How many small people and how many farms?—I cannot say; it is only a year and a half since I came in; and I do not know the names of the people.

31633. With regard to the Letterfearn tenants, you say Nonach, Blackwater, and Ruarach were offered them?—Yes, and the cottars of Letterfearn.

31634. What size of farms are these?—Ruarach is now let in one farm.

31635. And you offered it to how many cottars?—Four.

31636. That would be £27, 10s. a piece?—Yes, there were only buildings for two, and there would have been large expenses for putting up two erections, which would have cost about £300 each.

31637. And how large are Nonach and Blackwater?—They are now given to the people of Sallachy. The people of Letterfearn refused to take them, because they were so far away from the sea.

31638. There was a complaint by the Letterfearn people, I believe,

ROSS.
SHIRE.
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LETTERFEARN
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Roderick
Maclean.

ROSS-SHIRE
LETTERFEARN that you had given them some extra grazing land at £15, which they say was only worth £7. You say you have given a reduction of £50 to Mr Macdonald to get possession of that land?—£60.

31639. For that land?—That included the reduction to himself.

31640. His rent was £130?—Yes.

31641. What reduction have you given him—20 or 30 per cent.?—Twenty pounds of reduction over the whole.

31642. That would still leave this land worth £30 or £40?—Yes.

31643. And it is not worth more than £7, the people say?—They think they should get it for nothing.

31644. With regard to Camsluinie, they think the rent is too high, can you state that you could let it for a greater rent?—I know I could.

31645. Were you offered a higher rent?—I was offered £150 by one man.

31646. A good man?—Yes, but the proprietor would not give it to one man; it is divided already amongst eight.

31647. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You told us that in 1844 there were upon Bundaloch and Dornie these enormous arrears of £2170; bring the thing down to a few years later, and tell me what these were after Sir Alexander Matheson bought the property?—It must have been all cancelled under the late Mr Lillingstone, for Sir Alexander got a clean sheet, and we have not got the old rent roll.

31648. No arrears were brought down?—Not, so far as we were concerned.

31649. Would you be surprised if I told you that the arrears upon that place in 1851, when Sir Alexander Matheson got the property, were only £153?—I know that too.

31650. Why didn't you say it?—The explanation of that is, that this was cancelled as the new arrears began.

31651. *Professor Mackinnon.*—I have no doubt that if an account of these arrears is properly made out you would be able to tell how far back these arrears go?—This is the only document I could get.

31652. So that if the evidence is true that these £2000 of arrears were handed down from one proprietor to another, the arrears may not be so big as they look?—They cannot be that, because at the beginning of this century Dornie was laid out as a village.

31653. It was leased before that?—Yes, I have here the rental of Dornie in 1830.

31654. Did you hear the statement of the man that the receipts were taken back from the people and a pass book given; have you any evidence about that?—No, I never heard that before.

31655. But there is no evidence to show that it may not be true?—I cannot say.

31656. I find in some accounts there are £70 of arrears on a rent of £3?—That has been a case of the people paying no rent at all; that is quite a common thing.

31657. Is it a common thing?—Not now, it is cancelled when it goes beyond a certain sum.

31658. So that the arrear might have been going back any length of time?—It could not have been going back very far, because it was in the beginning of this century that the place was made a village. In 1801 it came into the possession of Sir Hugh Innes, and in 1802 the village was made. I think a good many of the statements of the people were imaginary.

31659. But you have no evidence to the contrary?—No.

31660. Are you quite prepared yourself to put a valuation of £40 upon

ROSS-SHIRE

LETTERFEARN

Roderick Maclean.

the piece of ground which was given for £15 to the Letterfearn people?—It is not that I value the land itself at so much, as what it is worth to the whole farm; it is low ground, and on a Highland farm.

31661. As a valuator, what grazing valuation do you put upon that bit of ground?—The value to them is the value put on, and not the value to the farm.

31662. What is the value of the grazing in your opinion?—£15. There is some arable land which they may get divided into lots afterwards, and it is worth £1 an acre. The valuation of the others will be taken off the whole of the grazing, and some of the grazing may not be £10.

31663. We thought they were getting what you consider £50 worth of land for £15?—Well, it can be explained. Mr Macdonald's farm was reduced from £130 to £70.

31664. But all the same the bit taken from him and given to these people is only worth £15?—It is worth £15 to them as grazing and arable altogether.

31665. Would it be worth more to Mr Macdonald?—Certainly, because a Highland farm is quite different from a low country farm.

31666. Would it be worth £40 to him?—I cannot say.

31667. Can you not give the value to him as well as to them?—No, I cannot; I would not like.

31668. If you consider that the value of this piece of ground to the crofters is £15, surely acting for the proprietor does not interfere with your answering what would be the value to Mr Macdonald?—It would be worth £30 at least.

31669. As a matter of fact, although that would be worth only £30 to him, you have reduced his rent £60?—Yes.

31670. Turning back to the general question of what you told us yesterday about the parish, and the management of the estate, I understood you were working gradually up to having a class of crofters of £10 and upwards all over?—Yes.

31671. And you wish to work gradually up to that, and you expect to be able to do it in course of time, in two ways—first by not taking any people from the outside into the property, and second by making new crofts?—Yes.

31672. And the other class of people you would have paying rents under £4?—Yes, tradesmen, labourers, and fishermen.

31673. In which class would you put the Bundaloch people; in the £4 class?—Yes.

31674. Is there any opportunity for them to live as labourers or fishermen where they are?—Yes, as fishermen.

31675. Is Bundaloch a suitable place for fishermen?—Quite suitable.

31676. Their own complaint is that it is far from the fishing ground, and the Rev. Mr Cameron corroborated that?—Well, you pass by the castle which is at the lower end of the village, and the whole length of the place is about three quarters of a mile.

31677. And the fishing ground would be this loch?—It is as easy for them to come down the narrow stream to Bundaloch as from other parts; it is not so far.

31678. But you don't think they are such good fishermen as the people of Letterfearn?—I am not well acquainted with them. The Letterfearn people are clever fellows at fishing, and energetic, and they make a living at the fishing, and the Bundaloch people don't.

31679. Do you think they would be better farmers and crofters?—They would be worse.

31680. They would require to be educated?—They would.

ROSS-SHIRE. 31681. Certainly all the people about here look able strong-bodied men?—They are; and they are very orderly too. We have none poor but squatters, and we have 123 people who pay no rent.

LETTERFEARN 31682. You reduced the rent of the people of Kirkton from £30 to £24. Do you consider the rent they pay just now is quite moderate enough?—Yes.

31683. It was rather excessive when it was £30?—I don't hear them complain about the general reduction.

31684. Do you know their means well enough to be able to say they are quite comfortable?—I believe they are. There was one man who said he could not come forward, because he could scarcely get a shirt upon his back until he got a farm from Sir Alexander Matheson. He would not come forward with the other five.

31685. You stated that the amount of interest got from improvements was very low?—One and a half per cent.

31686. Might not these improvements have been rather extravagantly done?—I don't say that, but I say that they were very expensively done.

31687. Do you think the same result might have been brought about by a very much less expenditure of money?—Yes, by a thousand pounds less.

31688. And these other crofters you have all over the estate at £15 and upwards to £25, are in a fairly comfortable condition in an average year?—I believe so.

31689. And that is why you would like to work up all the crofts?—Yes.

31690. There are four or five of the Camusluinie people who are not giving satisfaction?—They are old bachelors, and the reason of their going back is that they have no person to take an interest in them, and their tacks are going to the wall.

31691. Would you expect in future, when your plans will be more or less realised, that the great bulk of the population will consist of such people as these, rather than the people at £4 and under?—Certainly; because, in a short time there would not be much labour for the poorer classes.

31692. And also rather than people having large farms?—Yes, Sir Alexander's wish is not to have large farms—not higher than £300 or £400 of rent.

31693. And these few in number?—Yes.

31694. You wish to put the bulk of the people in crofts of from £15 upwards?—From £15 to £50 for the bulk of the people.

31695. And you are working up to that as fast as you can without removing any person from the estate?—Yes, and Sir Alexander would not remove any of them.

31696. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—You mentioned that the Bundaloch people were removed because they would not pay rent?—Yes.

31697. You don't know what amount of arrears there was of rent?—No.

31698. I daresay you heard of the petition which was presented to Sir Alexander by the people?—Yes.

31699. And your reply to it?—Yes.

31700. Your reply mentioned that you would consider whether you would send the petition on, and no further intimation seems to have been given whether you sent it on or not?—I told Mr M'Coll and some of the people that I would send it on; and Sir Alexander got the petition, and then it was that Sir Alexander sent me to inquire into the condition of the people, and the result of that inquiry I have mentioned, that one shepherd was leader in the matter. He wanted to disorganise the state

of the property, and to break up the farm of his employer, and to get a part of it himself. He got other nineteen to follow him in his movement, one of whom I had great difficulty about, and at last I found that another person had adhibited his name. I have got the original of the petition here.

31701. I was merely asking whether you intimated to the people that the petition was presented to Sir Alexander Matheson.—I told Mr M'Coll and some others.

31702. You have heard Mr Cameron, the priest of Dornie, state, in confirmation of Mr Morison, that the people were in abject poverty?—Yes; they are.

31703. Have you considered what can be done for them, if they are not in a position to take more land?—I don't know.

31704. Did the people of Letterfearn ask you to provide them with a pier or harbour?—No.

31705. Have they never spoken to you about that?—I don't remember of them speaking about it.

ROSS
SHIRE
LETTERFEARN
Roderick
Maclean.

JAMES WATSON, Local Manager for Sir Alexander Matheson (42).
examined.

31706. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Do you wish to make any statement? James Watson—There was a statement made by the Avernish delegate yesterday, that none of the natives would be employed on the estate, and I beg to say that there are no other parties employed on the estate but natives, except a few who are employed at skilled labour. These we were obliged to import, to carry on the works. Those people we imported at the time when we commenced the heavy works, and we have still kept them on to do our work; but we have not imported any labour from any place. We have always employed native labour to do the unskilled work; we never have any occasion to employ foreign labour when we can get natives to do our work. At present some of our best artisans are natives—carpenters and others—it is only the foreman that is foreign to the place. The tenants and cottars of Avernish made overtures to me to get a portion of the ground at present leased to Mr Brown. They are cottars as able as most of the present tenants to pay for a share of this land, and the cottars came as well as the tenants. I represented this particularly to Sir Alexander Matheson, but he did not feel disposed to divide the place into so many small lots, and the matter was left over without anything particular being done. The tenants did not say what rent they were prepared to pay; but a resident on the place, who made overtures for about three-fifths, would not give more than £25, and the Messrs Brown pay £60, so that would have reduced the rent to a trifle over £40. The Kinnamoine delegate made a statement personal to myself, which, I beg to say, was a most unfounded fabrication, because such conduct as he attributed to me I would not use to the lowest creature. I know this country, and I don't know any person I would be inclined to do such a thing to. There is no people that I respect more than the crofters, and I think the statement which was made was a downright fabrication. Again, he said that they improved all their crofts. Sir Alexander Matheson expended £100 on their crofts for enclosures, draining, and trenching, and to this delegate's father the late Mr Mackenzie gave £10 to improve his house; and all the others are offered wood and lime to build their houses and barns if they wish it. Again, he said they made overtures to me to get barns built; but on these small

ROSS- holdings Sir Alexander does not wish to build barns on interest, because it would raise the rent so much that the people could not by any means pay it. We offered them wood and lime free to do these works. Again, there was a question put by Lord Napier to Mr M'Lean which he did not answer satisfactorily, I think, in the interest of the proprietor. Lord Napier tried to say—

31707. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You must not use these words 'Lord Napier tried to say.'—*Mr Watson.* That there were ameliorations paid to the tenants in several cases where the tenants had been removed to another place. It has always been usual to give ameliorations for the houses.

31708. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Lord Napier asked whether ameliorations were given?—Yes, and Mr M'Lean did not say.

31708.* *Professor Mackinnon.*—He said no cases had ever arisen?—In my experience cases have arisen.

31709. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—And ameliorations have been given?—Yes, I think that is all I have to say. With regard to the bridge at Camusluinie, I may say that a bridge to suit the people would cost the proprietor at least £500, because the stream is very considerable—nearly 700 yards wide.

31709.* *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Why did you not contradict the statement of the delegate from Kinnamoine yesterday in his presence?—I did not observe it until it was pointed out to me afterwards.

[ADJOURNED.]

INVER-
NESS.

GLENELG, INVERNESS-SHIRE, AUGUST 4, 1883.

Present:—

Lord NAPIER and ETTRICK, K.T., *Chairman.*
Sir KENNETH S. MACKENZIE, Bart.
DONALD CAMERON, Esq. of Lochiel, M.P.
C. FRASER-MACKINTOSH, Esq., M.P.
Sheriff NICOLSON, LL.D.
Professor MACKINNON, M.A.

JOHN M'CUAIG, Crofter and Fisherman (54), assisted by JOHN M'PHEE, Crofter, Corran, Arnisdale (60)—examined.

John M'Cuaig 31710. *The Chairman.*—Have you been elected a delegate?—
and
John M'Phee. *M'Cuaig.* I believe I was.

31711. Are you sure?—I am.

31712. Have you any written statement to produce?—No.

31713. Then what have you to say on behalf of your people?—They are wanting more land. None of those in the township in which I live have more than one acre of land each, and that is too little for them to bring up their families on. We would be indebted to our proprietor or any person who would give us more, because there is land that might be given to us. There is plenty of low land in Arnisdale that might be given to poor people. The acre of land which we have we consider too dear at £2 of rent. We have no hill pasture or anything beyond that one acre of land. Three or four keep a cow, but neither I nor my neighbours are able to keep one. Those who do keep a cow pasture it

upon the land of the farm and pay for it. We pay £3 for the grazing for the whole year. INVERNESS.

31714. Where did the people of your township come from; have they been long there, or did they come from another place?—I believe they are all people belonging to the place without any admixture of strangers. GLENELG.

31715. In old times what was the condition of the people—your fathers and grandfathers?—They were in a hard enough condition; but they were in a better condition, so far as I know, than the people are to-day. John M'Cuaig and John M'Phee.

31716. Had they in those times any hill pasture?—They had the hill; but there is an older man than I can tell about that.

31717. Do you know when the hill was taken away?—It was taken away, I think, in the time of a proprietor called Bruce.

31718. Who is the older man?—John M'Phee.

31719. Had the people any hill pasture in this place in former times?—M'Phee. They had hill pasture in the time when Lord Glenelg was proprietor.

31720. Was it large?—Yes; it pastured eighty cattle and sheep—I cannot tell how many sheep. It was then taken from them in the time of Lord Glenelg, before the property was sold to Mr Baillie.

31721. By whom is the land occupied now?—Mr Milligan, farmer. Our rent remained the same as it was after the hill was taken from us.

31722. When the hill was taken away did you then remain with one acre each of arable land?—Yes.

31723. And did you pay the same rent for the one acre that you did for the one acre and the common pasture?—Yes, till this day—£2 for the acre of land and £3 for the grazing of a cow.

31724. Do you all keep cows to graze out at £3?—No; there are only three milk cows in our district, and we think the rent very high for them, the ground which they pasture being very bad.

31725. What do you grow on the arable ground?—Very little; floods come upon one half of it, and make it incapable of bearing crop. Two bolls of potatoes were all that I took out of mine last year.

31726. Do you grow any winter fodder on the arable ground for the cattle, or do you use the arable ground entirely for your own food?—It is out of the ocean that I take my own food. I cannot get a living out of the ground. Potatoes have grown on the same land for the last sixty years.

31727. When you pay £3 for the cow does that include the food of the cow for the whole year, or have you to buy fodder for the cow besides?—It does not include the hay which we have to buy for them in the winter.

31728. How much will it cost a man to buy hay for winter besides the £3?—From Whitsunday of last year to Whitsunday of this year it cost me between that £3 for what I had to pay for food for her in addition, £12, 5s. 4d.

31729. Is that the cost generally, or was it an extra year?—My cow was more expensive to me than those of the rest; some cows require more food than others.

31730. You say you want more land; is the hill pasture which was taken away from you adjacent to your arable ground?—M'Cuaig. Yes, just above us.

31731. And does it contain arable ground as well as hill pasture?—Plenty.

31732. Could a portion of it be taken from the farm and given to the township without altogether spoiling the farm?—Yes; the farm would

INVERNESS. still be a good farm without it. The hill pasture which was ours before was taken away from the farm and given to us.

GLENELG. 31733. Has the rent of your acre of arable land been raised?—No; it has neither been raised nor lowered from what it was when we had the

John McCuaig hill pasture.

and John M'Phee. 31734. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie*—How many tenants are there in Corran now?—There are fifteen tenants, with $13\frac{1}{2}$ acres amongst them; they are penned there like sheep in a fold. There are upwards of fifty-three souls existing upon that bit of land.

31735. How many families were there in the time of Lord Glenelg?—There were many more in that time; some of them went away to America. The factor at that time, James Stavert, took their land to himself. He kept to himself all the lands of these people who went away to America, and it has been attached to the farm since that time.

31736. Had your predecessors in Corran in Lord Glenelg's time more arable land individually than the people there have now?—Some had two acres; most of them had only one acre, but they had the hill besides.

31737. How many crofters were there among whom the eighty cows were divided?—I cannot say how many. There were only one or two had two acres, the rest had one acre, and some had no land at all. These latter had a cow, and they got grazing from others who had the hill.

31738. Would the tenants of those days have more than one cow apiece?—Some had two milk cows and three and four young beasts on the hill besides.

31739. Had those who had an acre of land in those days more than one cow?—No, they had only one cow; but they had other beasts besides on the hill.

31740. How did they winter these beasts if they had more than one cow?—They were Highland cattle, and they stood out the whole winter, except when the snow came, and then they gave them a bite of something. There was more pasture on the hill then; it was very good compared with what it is now—dirtied by sheep.

31741. *Professor Mackinnon.*—I understand the factor took into his own hands the arable land of those who went away and the hill pasture of the whole township?—He had the hill pasture before that; but he took the arable land of the people who went to America.

31742. And afterwards both the hill pasture and that arable land were added to the farm as it now is?—Yes.

31743. When did these people go away?—Upwards of thirty-four years ago.

31744. To America?—Yes.

31745. To Canada, I suppose?—Yes.

31746. What part?—The county of Glengarry.

31747. Have you heard from them since?—Not many are alive now of those who went there.

31748. What is the condition of those who are alive, and of the children of those that are dead?—There were some of them for whom it would have been as well had they remained at home, but those who had strong families got on well.

31749. Did they go of their own accord, or were they sent away?—They went voluntarily. Some of them after getting on board the ship went ashore again, not wishing to go; but they were not allowed to remain, and their houses were pulled down over their heads, and they were forced to embark again.

31750. Were they assisted to go away?—They got their passage; Mr Baillie paid for their passage. INVERNESS.

31751. The present proprietor?—The predecessor of the present proprietor. GLENELG.

31752. If that ground which your neighbours had, instead of being taken by the factor, had been given to you, would that have very much improved your condition?—Yes, if we got the hill pasture as the boundaries were before, we would be quite satisfied. John M'Cuaig and John M'Phee.

31753. You were not benefited in the least by your neighbours going away to America?—It did us no good, it injured us rather; it tightened us more than we were.

31754. How did it make you worse?—It took no land from us, but it did us no good; we got none of what our friends had.

31755. But your circumstances would be very much improved if you still got what they had along with the hill pasture that you had before?—There can be no doubt of that.

31756. And you would be willing to pay a reasonable rent if you got it?—We would.

31757. [To M'Phee].—Do you consider also, along with your neighbour, that the rent you pay for the acre is too high?—There is no doubt of it; it is only £1 per acre on the rest of the estate.

31758. You pay £2, and the rest of the estate only pay £1 per acre; is that what you mean?—Yes, it is only £1 per acre on the tenantry, except us, on this side of Glenelg.

31759. Is your ground better, or have you better fishing ground beside you?—Nothing did it but the will of Stavert, the factor. As he had the farm himself, he thought he could get the place depopulated altogether.

31760. Was that the reason why, when he took the hill pasture from you, he did not reduce the rent?—Yes; the part that he took to himself which the tenants had before, he got a man to value, and he valued it at 7s. 6d. an acre, and it is at that rate that he paid for it himself.

31761. And was that piece as good as the piece for which you now are paying £2?—It was quite the same, except that it was more convenient to him.

31762. Have you a school in the place?—Yes.

31763. A good school?—M'Cuaig. It is better this year than last year.

31764. Do your children all go to school?—Yes; it was a female teacher we had before, and we have a male teacher now, whom we consider better.

31765. You prefer a male teacher?—Yes, undoubtedly.

31766. All along, since you remember, have you been paying rent direct to the proprietor, or did you hold your land from the farmer?—It is to the proprietor we have always paid the £2, but to the farmer the £3 for the grazing since the hill was taken from us.

31767. Was that always the case before Stavert's time?—Yes. We never paid to the farmer until the hill pasture was taken from us—we always paid to the laird.

31768. Which do you consider the highest rent, £2 for an acre of arable ground or £3 for as much as a cow can gather on the hill side?—M'Phee. The ground is the more useful to me; the cow is dear, dear; if she were feeding on good ground I should not think it so bad.

31769. You don't think she can take £3 worth off the ground upon which she is allowed to feed?—Not £1 worth; it is not there for her; the sheep don't leave that to her.

INVERNESS. 31770. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Is there a great scarcity of milk in the township?—It cannot be otherwise, when there are only three milk cows in the place.

GLENELG. 31771. How many children may there be in the township?—*M'Cuaig.* John M'Cuaig I should say twenty-four or twenty-five.

and 31772. Has any proprietor lived on this estate during the last fifty years?—*M'Phee.* No, not to our recollection.

31773. Have you any idea how many times the late proprietor, Evan Baillie, visited the estate during the time he was in possession?—I am not aware that he ever came to our side. He may have come to this side.

31774. Was the predecessor of Evan Baillie long proprietor of the estate?—I cannot be certain.

31775. Was he the one who bought it from the Grants?—Yes.

31776. Did you ever see him?—I saw him once.

31777. How long have you been paying rent?—About thirty years.

31778. Did you ever receive any benefit directly or indirectly from the proprietor?—I got some benefit from him the year before last, when the great tide came. I got a reduction of about £2 of arrears.

31779. Did you ever get any assistance in your buildings?—No; I am well acquainted with the sea coming into the place where I live.

31780. Did any of the crofters in Corran ever receive any advantage from the proprietor in the shape of buildings or otherwise?—Never, so far as I am aware.

31781. Are you aware that the estate of Glenelg is very large?—Yes.

31782. How many big farmers are there on the place?—Four or five.

31783. Are there any of them resident on their farms?—I am not so well acquainted with this side, but on our side there is one who lives occasionally, but only for a short time, on his farm.

31784. Has he any other place besides the farm?—Yes.

31785. What is his name?—Milligan.

31786. Are any of these tenant farmers Highlanders?—No.

31787. Were the late local factor or the present local factor people from the district or Highlanders?—The present one is not, at anyrate.

31788. Was Mr France?—I cannot tell from what place he came.

31789. Has the administration of the estate for many years back been satisfactory to you and the crofters in your position?—It has not indeed.

31790. Have you any idea what rent Mr Milligan is paying?—I am not sure; he is present himself.

31791. Do you think he is paying £2 an acre?—No, nor the fourth of it; he could not give anything like that if he paid for the high and low ground together.

31792. Can you give us any idea how many acres of land once cultivated are now uncultivated upon his farm?—There is a great deal, but I cannot give the figures.

31793. Is there a great deal more than 13½ acres?—There is a great deal of arable land.

31794. Is there a great deal more than the 13½ acres you and the other people have?—Sixty times as much. There are hundreds of acres of arable land in the farm.

31795. You were asked to explain an expression you made use of, that when the people went to America you were tightened. Since they were not benefited by getting the land of the people who went to America, was it not rather a loss to them to be deprived of the society of their neighbours?—We did not like their going.

31796. Is it not an advantage to a country and a district to have a

considerable population?—It is; there is no pleasure in its being otherwise and under sheep.

INVER-
NESS.

31797. Do you know if there were any evictions or people sent away from the country in the time it belonged to M'Leod of M'Leod?—I know nothing about that.

GLENELG.

31798. Did you ever hear of it?—I have never heard of it.

John M'Craig
and

31799. That evictions began as far back as M'Leod's time?—No. The John M'Phee people had good times in the days of the M'Leods; the land was not so dear then.

31800. Have you travelled over a good deal of the property in your day?—Yes, I have walked over a good part of it.

31801. Is it or is it not a fact that there was once a very large population on the estate, and that there are appearances of that in the remains on the estate?—Yes, it was to be seen within my own recollection.

ARCHIBALD FLETCHER M'GILLIVRAY, Crofter and Fisherman (30), assisted by JOHN M'INTYRE, Crofter's Son and Fisherman, Camusbain, Arnisdale (37)—examined.

Archibald
Fletcher
M'Gillivray
and John
M'Intyre.

31802. *Mr Cameron.*—Have you any written statement?—No.

31803. Have you heard the evidence given by the last witness?—Yes.

31804. Do you generally agree with the statements he made?—I do.

31805. Were they, in your opinion, all quite accurate statements?—Yes.

31806. Is there anything you wish to add to those statements?—Yes.

31807. What?—We are ruled in every respect in the same way as they have described; but, as regards cattle, we have none at all. There is only one cow in our township. There were two a fortnight ago, now there is only one.

31808. How many heads of families are there in your township?—Twenty-two who pay rent and four cottars; and there are two other houses inhabited, I believe, by paupers.

31809. To whom do the twenty-two crofters pay rent?—Mr Baillie.

31810. To whom are the four cottars paying rent?—Two pay to Mr Baillie, and the other two don't pay at all for their houses.

31811. You say there is only one cow among the twenty-two crofters, have they no hill pasture at all?—No.

31812. How were these two cows of whom you spoke supported?—Before, this farmer was giving us grazing for the cows, and charging £3 for each.

31813. Was that the same farmer of whom we have heard?—That was Mr Mundell of Eilanreoch.

31814. Used Mr Mundell to allow a cow's grass at the rate of £3 per cow to each of the twenty-two crofters, or only to a certain number?—No, when he came first there were four cows, and he sent them all away and would not allow any to be kept.

31815. So you have had no cows except these two during the whole of Mr Mundell's tenancy?—It was on the acres which they have among themselves that they grazed these two cows.

31816. Then the farm of Eilanreoch came into the proprietor's hands at Whitsunday last?—Yes.

31817. Was there any change made about the grazing arrangements when Mr Baillie took it into his own hands?—The people to whom the two cows belonged went to the factor and spoke to him on the subject,

INVERNESS. and he allowed them to send the cows to graze ; but they don't know yet what the rent will be for that.

GLENELG. — 31818. [To M'Intyre].—Have you anything to add to the statement made by your co-delegate on the subject of these cows ?—Nothing more about the cattle.

Archibald Fletcher M'Gillivray and John M'Intyre. — 31819. [To M'Gillivray].—What became of the one cow that was pastured this year ?—She died.

31820. What rent do you pay ?—£2 for an acre of land.

31821. [To M'Intyre].—And what rent do you pay ?—The same ; but on this side of the country they only pay £1 an acre.

31822. How do you and the other crofters support yourselves ?—We support ourselves by fishing, and not by the land.

31823. Do you mean herring fishing or white fishing ?—The herring fishing alone.

31824. Do you get any employment at all in this district other than that of fishing ?—Not at all.

31825. Is there any land adjacent to your crofts which would be suitable for you if you could get it ?—Plenty, if the farmers would give it to us.

31826. Are the people very poor ?—We are not so very ill off ; but no thanks for that to either the proprietor or farmer.

31827. Would the people be able to buy a cow apiece if they had the grazing for it ?—Some of them could, and many of them could not.

31828. If you got grazing for a cow apiece at a moderate rent, so as to give milk for your families, would you be satisfied with your acre of land, and continue to devote yourselves entirely to fishing ?—We would not.

31829. What would you like ?—We would desire five acres per croft.

31830. In order that you might be wholly independent of the fishing ?—No, I could do with the fishing besides that.

31831. If you were occupied in fishing could you manage five acres of land and do justice to it ?—We could.

31832. What stock would be required to go along with that five acres of arable land ?—Five cows.

31833. Would the people to whom you alluded just now as being partly able to purchase one cow be in a position to purchase five, or how many of the crofters would be able to buy five ?—Those of them who, I said, could buy one cow could not buy five.

31834. How many do you think could buy five ?—There is not one of them could buy five.

31835. [To M'Gillivray].—Do you agree with your brother delegate that you would not be satisfied with an acre of ground, a cow's grass, and to continue to prosecute the fishing ?—I agree with the answer he gave to that question.

31836-37. You both wish to become farmers in the sense that the chief portion of your time should be devoted to farming rather than to be fishermen with a home and a cow's grass ?—M'Intyre. We would prefer that. There are some years when we can make no fishing, and if it were not for the merchants that help us we would not be alive. We would get no work from the proprietor.—M'Gillivray. I have something to say about our houses. They are built on the shore. We built them ourselves, for the proprietor gave us no assistance. We had to pay for the wood which we got from him for the purpose. We spoke to the factor about a change of site for the houses, and as an answer he asked us whether the sea was coming over the roofs of them. We said it sometimes did ; and he told us then that we should put back doors upon them, and when the sea came in that we

could run away. I should like to see himself flopping in the midst of them. I have something else to say about some assistance that he was going to give us. About eight or nine years ago a storehouse was erected by him for the sale of barrels for our fishing. He did this in order that we might get these things cheaper from him than they could be got elsewhere. When the salt came he charged 2s. 6d. a cwt., and two cwt. and a half go to make a barrel of salt. That was 6s. 3d. a barrel; and we can get the same quantity from the vessels which brought the salt into the loch for 3s. 6d. or 4s. Then second-hand barrels came to the store, and he charged 5s. for them. A bundle of hoops came with them, and they were lost. To prevent that loss falling upon the laird, there was 2d. added to the price of each barrel, and they were charged 5s. 2d. Now it is for you to judge whether the benefit was on his side or on ours; I think it was for himself.

31838. Did the people get any assistance from the proprietor when they lost their boats in the storm two years ago?—We got wood; and it would have been better for us to have bought it, such as it was; it would have been as cheap for us.

31839. Explain that?—The wood came from Loch Duich. It was cut by the proprietor's people there, and the people who did the work were paid out of the money which was contributed for the assistance of the fishermen. When we went to get that wood there were some who required only one tree, and they spent two days and a night in going for it. If they had got the money which was subscribed for the purpose from the committee who had charge of it, it would have been cheaper for them to have bought the estate wood than to have gone for the wood to Loch Duich.

31840. *The Chairman.*—Are you obliged to buy salt from the factor?—We are not obliged to buy our salt out of the store.

31841. Does the factor still sell salt?—He does; he has given the store to a man from the east country. He would not give it to any of us.

31842. Is the factor now quite separate from the store?—Yes, as long as it is rented to the other man. He lost the trade of the salt, and was making no profit by it, and therefore he gave it up.

31843. Have you perfect liberty to buy all your commodities where you like?—We have.

31844. Have you perfect liberty to sell your fish anywhere you like?—Yes.

31845. You state that you pay £2 for one acre of land. That includes the stane of the house, I suppose?—The proprietor says it is, but I say it is the Government land—that it is on the shore where the houses are built.

31846. Do I understand you right when you say the proprietor has never given you any sort of assistance either in building or repairing your houses?—We never did get any assistance; we had to pay for the wood which we put on the roof.

31847. Has the proprietor done anything to erect a pier or build a sea-wall for the protection of your houses, or has he ever done anything to encourage your industry of fishing?—He never did anything of the kind. On the contrary, I think they would like that we should be put in wooden houses, and set out upon the sea.

31848. Has the proprietor ever shown you any kindness, or assisted you in sickness, or done anything for your families in any respect?—He has not; he has never come our way.

31849. In consequence of the scarcity last year, was there any distribution of seed or food to the poor in your place?—I think we got about

INVERNESS.

—
GLENELG.

Archibald
Fletcher
McGillivray
and John
M'Intyre

INVERNESS.

GLENELG.

Archibald Fletcher
M'Gillivray
and John M'Intyre.

one peck of potatoes in our family ; and if it grows well he will get the peck back.

31850. Are you expected to pay for these seed potatoes, or were they given to you as a gift ?—We got them as a gift, but the greater part of them were not worth planting. They had gone to nought before we got them.

31851. How much land will a peck of potatoes plant ?—I cannot say. A peck is the fourth part of a barrel.

31852. But would it plant half an acre ?—I think twenty yards square is about the most that it would plant.

31853. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Has there been any work of any consequence going on on the estate for some years past ?—The sub-factor had some works going on, for which he employed people of his own choosing ; but none of us got any of the work.

31854. What kind of works were they ?—Fencing and cutting trees and that kind of work.—*M'Intyre.* It is from Mr Bass we get work.

31855. May we say that all the rental that can be drained from the estate, is spent elsewhere ?—He does not spend a shilling of it upon us, at any rate.

31856. Are the people in your township of Camusbain able to purchase milk for the use of the children ?—Some can and some cannot.

31857. From whom do you purchase it ?—Mr Milligan's manager.

31858. How many cows does he keep ?—I cannot tell.

31859. Does he keep so many that he can afford to sell you the milk ?—No.

31860. So that, practically, even if the tenant were willing to sell them milk, they could not get it ?—No.

31861. That is to say, if every one of the people were able to buy milk ?—Yes. Four years ago they wished to put a tax of 9s. of road money upon every member of our population of eighteen years and upwards, whether the person had land or not, or whether there were twenty members in a family or one ; and, what is more curious, I have the receipt for that, in which there is no name of any person to whom the money is paid. This is the receipt :—‘ Mr Archibald M'Gillivray, Camusbain, Glenelg District Road Trust, 1879, March 25.—To road assessment for the year ending Whitsunday 1879, 9s.’ I did not pay it.—*M'Intyre.* That notice was sent to every person of eighteen years and upwards in Arnisdale.—*M'Gillivray.* That notice came from Mr France, the sub-factor, who was also postmaster, and sent these notices by the post.

31862. How long was Mr France factor ?—*M'Intyre.* He was factor all along in our opinion.

31863. Was he postmaster all the time ?—No.

31864. How long was he postmaster ?—*M'Gillivray.* I am not sure.

31865. Was he in that office for a year or two ?—More than that.—*M'Intyre.* Four or five years.

31866. Would every letter that was sent away and every letter that came be seen by him ?—Yes.

31867. Did the people like such a thing as that ?—They didn't.

31868. Was there any competent person belonging to Glenelg who could do the business except the factor ?—*M'Intyre.* There were plenty ; but he wanted that and more for himself if he could have got it.

31869. *Professor Mackinnon.*—What is your rent ?—*M'Gillivray.* We are to pay £2, the same as at Corran.

31870. And each one at Camusbain paying rent got this notice to pay road money ?—It was sent to every person of eighteen and upwards.

31871. Was it sent to every one, whether he paid rent or not ?—It was

31872. Your boats were much injured by the high tide of two years ago, were they not?—Yes.

INVERNESS.

31873. And some were injured less than others?—Yes.

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GLENELG.

31874. That is what you meant when you said that some of the people required only one stick?—That is so.

Archibald
Fletcher
McGillivray
and John
M'Intyre.

31875. That some of the boats required less mending than others?—Yes.

31876. Who had the distribution of the money which was contributed for meeting this disaster?—The committee included Mr Macdonald, parish minister; Mr Fraser, teacher; Mr M'Intosh, of the hotel; the doctor; and somebody else whom I don't remember; Mr M'Leod, Free Church minister.

31877. It was not the School Board who had the distribution of it?—I think the members of the School Board were on that committee.

31878. The schoolmaster was not on the School Board?—No.

31879. Was any one connected with the administration of the estate on the committee? — No. — *M'Intyre*. France was. — *McGillivray*. Latterly, but not at first.

31880. Then it was this committee that agreed to supply your loss by getting wood out of Loch Duich, and paying the people who were to cut it down?—Yes, it was the committee that paid the expense of cutting the wood.

31881. I suppose they thought that would be a better and a cheaper arrangement, because the proprietor would give the wood for nothing, than to go and buy the timber elsewhere?—It seems that was their opinion.

31882. But you think because you had to go so far away for it, that it would have perhaps been cheaper to have bought prepared timber for you, than to have sent you to Loch Duich for the felled tree?—Yes, it was dearer for those who wanted only a little wood.—*M'Intyre*. France refused it to me although it was cut at Loch Duich, and I had applied to the committee to get it there. I had to go and buy it at Sleat, on the estate of Lord Macdonald at Armadale.

31883. If you required a great deal of timber it would have been cheaper to have got it at Loch Duich, than to go and buy it in the market?—It would.

31884. What do you mean by saying that the site of your house is upon Government land, and not upon Mr Baillie's land?—Because it is under high-water mark, and the sea goes over it when there are high tides sometimes.

31885. It is because there is a belief among you that a fisherman is entitled to build upon the sea-shore to enable him to prosecute the fishing; is that the explanation?—*McGillivray*. No; but we think when he charges us £2 for the house when it is upon the sea-shore, and liable to be over-run by the sea, that these houses ought to have been built by himself for which he so charges.

31886. Do your houses front the sea?—Yes.

31887. The doors are to the sea?—Yes.

31888. And when the factor advised you to open the back door it was to enable you to escape by the back because there could be no escape by the front?—Yes; we were not so foolish but that we knew that without his telling us.

31889. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie*.—Did the estate management ask you to perform any labour for repairing or making the roads?—Yes, we were doing three days' work per annum.

31890. And was this payment of 9s. in place of that labour?—No, we are now paying 6d. in the pound.

INVER-
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GLENELG.

Archibald
Fletcher
M'Gillivray
and John
M'Intyre.

31891. But did this payment come in place of the three days' labour?—Yes, it was after the three days' work ceased that this notice came.

31892. And was that three days' labour given by every male over eighteen years in the place?—No, it was not in France's time at all. The three days were only upon each croft, and for one person to do the work.

31893. And when did that cease?—I think about seven years ago.

31894. And have you paid anything in place of it since?—Two years ago we paid 6d. in the pound, and last year we paid 1s.

31895. Do you know in whose handwriting the notice is that you showed?—I don't know.

31896. How was it delivered to you?—By the postman.

- 31897. Who is the tenant of Astour?—James Thin, from Macduff.

31898. Is he a curer?—Yes.

31899. Do you sell fish to him?—Yes; he buys the herring in autumn.

31900. Did you want the store for yourselves?—A man belonging to the place wanted it to live in, but he could not get it.

31901. Is it not more advantageous to you to have a curer there?—There were plenty other curers at that time.

31902. You stated that you had grazing for your cows on Eilanreoch, and that you purchased your meal from Mr Milligan in Arnisdale—are you situated on the march between these farms?—We just lie between the two.

31903. And the addition to the land, you presume, might be taken from either farm?—It would be most convenient for us to get it from Mr Milligan's farm; that is the pasture which we had before.

31904. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Are you aware that compulsory labour on the roads has been entirely done away with, and an assessment now laid on of so much in the pound of rent?—We think so, because we have been paying that assessment for the last two years.

31905. *The Chairman.*—Were the roads upon which the people gave this obligatory labour public roads, or branch roads for the service of your own township?—It was the high road over the country side.

31906. And was it a road which was maintained by the assessment or a road maintained by the proprietor and yourselves?—It was a road maintained by the assessments paid by the proprietor and occupiers.

31907. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Is there a bridle path to Arnisdale?—It is a high road.

31908. How long is it since it was made?—It was made before I was born.

DONALD MACPHERSON, Crofter and Joiner, Kirkton, Glenelg (49)—
examined.

Donald
Macpherson. 31909. *Mr. Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Have you a statement to make?—I was working at Skye, or I daresay I would have been better prepared, but I lost the boat at Broadford yesterday, and I had to travel all night.

31910. This is Kirkton where we are now sitting?—Yes.

31911. Is there a very considerable population about here?—Not many; it is very thinly populated.

31912. How many cottars may there be?—Very few; I may say two or three or four at most.

31913. Was a meeting held to elect you to come here to-day?—Yes.

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GLENELG.

Donald
Macpherson.

31914. How many were present?—Most of the people in the district—that is not many—I would say about forty.

31915. What did the people tell you to say to-day?—They told me their greatest grievance was want of land. There is a great number of people here who have no land at all; they have not even ground on which to plant potatoes. Although the proprietor has good intentions towards his subjects, he trusts too much to his factors. They are not pleased with his factor; and there was too much tyranny in general.

31916. Upon whose farm is Kirkton situated—what is the name of the big farm nearest here?—Eilanreoch.

31917. Is it a large place?—Yes, it extends about twelve miles.

31918. Is it in the possession of one person?—In the possession of one person; but it is now in the hands of the proprietor. The tenant's lease was out at Whitsunday last.

31919. Have you heard whether it has been let to any person?—It has been let to no person.

31920. And I suppose the people consider this a good time to press their demand on the proprietor to do something for them?—Yes, they were thinking that, now that it is in his own hands.

31921. Is there much of the land which was once under cultivation close to Kirkton which might be given back to the people?—A great deal; there is not a district in the Highlands that is more fit for cultivation than Glenelg here.

31922. And close by Kirkton?—Yes, and all now under rushes and sheep and wild grass. It might all be under cultivation, or a great deal of it.

31923. I suppose you have heard some of the delegates say they were paying £2 an acre; that seems a big price?—It is very correct.

31924. But here you are only paying £1 an acre?—Well, I have been reading the reports of the Commission at the different places you have visited, and I consider Glenelg has more grievances than any place you have visited yet in regard to the rents, for they are paying the double of what people are paying in other places.

31925. Even £1 is too much?—Oh, indeed; yes.

31926. Do you think the tenant of Eilanreoch is paying £1 an acre for all he has got?—No. I think Mr Mitchell has about 33,000 acres (and he is present), and I was making a calculation of the rent—and it is mostly arable which he has got, indeed the one-fifth of it could be cultivated—and for the 33,000 acres he is only paying about 10½d. an acre.

31927. I dare say you consider that it would not only be a wise thing for the proprietor, but would benefit you if you could get a moderate extension of your land?—I think the proprietor is a big fool to be trusting so much to his factor.

31928. *The Chairman.*—It would be more respectful to the Commission and the proprietor not to use language of an abusive character.

31929. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You were going to say he trusted too much to local people and factors?—Yes.

31930. But would it not be a wise thing for the proprietor to give the people more land in their vicinity?—Yes.

31931. They would be willing to pay a good rent for all they want?—Yes.

31932. And it would not break up the big farm of Eilanreoch much if they got all they want?—It would spoil it very little if they got all they want.

31933. You said something about the people here being troubled by

INVER-
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GLENELG.
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Donald
Macpherson.

the local administration ; instead of making a general charge of that kind, I think it would be better if you would specify some particular case you have had to complain of in past times ; can you do so ?—Yes. I may refer to myself. I hold a croft down close to this place, and my house was broken up by the tide storm two years ago, when the house and barn were broken up entirely. We lost our blankets, shoes, and clothes, and I could not get a house from the factor in which I might live for one night ; they would not make any provision for me, and I had to go to my neighbour's house. I was very willing to put up a comfortable house myself if I would get the stones for it, but he refused even that, unless I would rebuild the old house in which I was before, and of course we would not venture to live in it another time. Now, since the new laird has come in, he had promised me a new house, and we expect to live better under him.

31934. Has the new laird been here ?—Yes, once.

31935. How long did he stay ?—About two or three days.

31936. And did he go about among the people and speak to them ?—Yes, and they thought very much of him ; but our old laird never was here but once, and that was twenty years ago.

31937. Can you mention any other case except your own ?—Yes.

31938. Take one more ?—They are so numerous that I cannot go over them. There is a neighbour of mine—I believe he is present—and he had a piece of land for which he was paying ; but he is a delegate here, and can speak himself. There have been a great number of evictions in this parish.

31939. In your own time ?—Yes, it is not very long since, under this present factor too. I may mention two cases, although I could mention more. There is one Mrs Cameron, whose husband died. She had a croft beside me, and was paying £12 for it, and she was evicted out of it.

31940. Why ?—Just because, I suppose, the factor wanted a part of the land for himself.

31941. Did the factor occupy the land himself ?—The local factor did, and he evicted other people for that purpose, that he might get their land himself. It seems so at any rate.

31942. At all events, he took the places ?—Yes.

31943. What became of Mrs Cameron ?—She built barns and byres at her own expense, and she got no compensation for them. Then this France was local factor.

31944. Did Mr France take possession of these barns and byres which Mrs Cameron left ?—Yes.

31945. He went into them ?—He took possession of the barn, and gave the byres to other people.

31946. What more ?—Her rent was £12, and he has let it to four people for cows grazing, and they are paying £17 between them for it just now, and he had the third part of it himself for nothing.

31947. Do I understand you to say that the widow was evicted, and a rise of £5 upon her rent got from the crofters, and that a considerable portion of the land went to himself ?—A piece of it. I may mention her neighbour, Jane Fraser. The same thing was done to her ; indeed, she was used far worse.

31948. What happened to her ?—Her croft was taken from her. Her rent was £6.

31949. What became of the croft ?—It was made into three lots ; I believe my brother has one part of it. He has about an acre, and pays £1 ; the doctor was paying £3 for the other bit in the middle ; but the factor kept the most of it for himself.

31950. Jane Fraser's lot was originally £6 ; she was turned out, and it was divided, and Dr Macnaughton got a part ?—Not Dr Macnaughton, the one who was here before him.

INVERNESS.

31951. And some people got a small share ?—Yes.

GLENELG.

31952. And Mr France himself took his own share ?—Aye, the best of it.

Donald

31953. What became of this gentleman who so acted, how long is it Macpherson since he left Glenelg ?—He left it last Whitsunday term.

31954. How long was he here ?—Fourteen years.

31955. Was the administration of the estate during that period satisfactory or the reverse to the people ?—It was the reverse to poor people in general.

31956. You had no particular complaint against the proprietor, except that he did not come near you or visit you ?—The greatest complaint we had was against the factor; we all blamed the factor. We thought the proprietor was very kind and considerate if our cause had been represented to him. He was an old man, over 85, I believe, when he died, and we could not expect him to be so active in coming among us. But I believe he was kind enough ; it was the factor we always blamed.

31957. Do you and the people generally upon the estate intend to make representation to your proprietor to better your condition ?—Yes. We have no hill pasture in the place in which I live here, and there is no work of any kind. We have to go to other countries to earn our livelihood. I am a joiner, and it is a number of years since I got one shilling from the proprietor ; and the worst of it is that he takes inferior workmen from other quarters, and does not give the work to the people in the district.

31958. And are the people in the district quite willing to do whatever work is required ?—Yes. I have been engaged by the same gentleman for the last twenty-three years in Skye—Mr Bower. He sends for me, and that shows that he is quite pleased with me.

31959. Is the population about this fine estate getting less ?—Yes, it is.

31960. There were a number of people turned off and sent to America some years ago ?—Yes.

31961. Were those who were left behind anything the better of that ?—No ; I believe they were the worse.

31962. Glenelg is a fine rich country ?—I don't believe there is another country of its size in the Highlands so well adapted for cultivation. It is a pity to see it under wild grass and rushes.

31963. Have you heard your people before you speaking of Glenelg as having been thickly peopled, and by people in a comfortable position ?—Yes, and I mind myself when it was far more populous than it is now.

31964. Were the people comfortably off ?—Yes, but the land has been added to these big sheep farms.

31965. Have these big sheep farms been of any benefit to the smaller people or the reverse ?—Quite the reverse.

31966. Do you think that it would be a wise thing to revert to that old system and give encouragement to crofters ranging from £10 to £20 and £30, who would again be sent back to their former places ?—That is my opinion, and I believe the opinion of most people.

31967. Have you any fault to find with, or do you make any statement with regard to the Parochial Board or School Board, as they are administered here ?—I have no fault whatever ; I think they are doing very well.

31968. Is there any representative of the crofter class upon the School Board ?—There are five members.

31969. Is there any one who pays less than £30 on the board ?—No.

INVERNESS. 31970. Are the people complaining of the education rate?—No, they are not; it is satisfactory, and the school is well kept. I have three children going to school myself, and I am well pleased.

GLENELG. 31971. What school do you refer to?—Mr Fraser's; he is doing very well.

DONALD MACPHERSON. 31972. Are there children from Glenelg who have made progress in scholarship?—Yes, some of them; but the pity is that the people are so poor and cannot send their children to a secondary school.

31973. Have Mr Fraser's own children not begun to distinguish themselves already?—Yes; but the people are so poor that they cannot send their children to a secondary school. The nearest secondary school is at Inverness, and it costs a great deal to send them there. They cannot afford it. The children in this place are generally clever.

31974. Is there an inn at all at Glenelg?—Yes, there is a hotel in the vicinity.

31975. Is that the only one?—There is another one at Kyle Rhea ferry.

31976. Were there not others?—There were not so many; but it is doing no good to have a country hotel here.

31977. Are you a blue ribbon man yourself; a total abstainer?—No.

31978. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—How many persons are there without land in Kirkton?—A great number.

31979. Twenty families?—Not quite so many, but about twenty.

31980. Do they pay any rent at all?—Five shillings for their house.

31981. Had they ever land?—Yes.

31982. And they were dispossessed when these crofts were made into sheep farms?—Yes.

31983. How long ago?—About fifty years, and it is even later since some were made; some within twenty or even ten years.

31984. Are the widows Cameron and Jane Fraser living here still?—Yes.

31985. Are they paying five shillings?—Yes, and I may mention another. There is a widow Campbell living at Cosag, whose rent was paid by the Rev. Alexander McColl of Lochalsh, who was a brother or near relative of hers, and the factor just took the ground from her and gave it to another person, and she was not allowed to stay. She had a nephew living with her, who was her whole support. Of course, when the ground was taken from her, her nephew had to leave, and she had nothing to subsist upon. I believe that old woman died almost destitute. Of course, she was getting relief from her friends.

31986. Who got the ground?—Another favourite of the factor.

31987. Why was he a favourite?—I cannot say.

31988. What was his name?—Hector M'Intyre.

31989. Had he no ground before?—No.

31990. He was a man fit to work the croft?—Yes, both of them were that.

31991. You mentioned, in answer to Mr Fraser-Mackintosh, that the people were turned off and sent to America?—Yes.

31992. The previous witness said they were not turned off, but that they voluntarily emigrated, and that their passage was paid?—I daresay he is partly right in that too. They were very poor at that time when the disease came on the potatoes.

31993. There was a great amount of poverty at that time?—Yes. I believe the proprietor would oblige the people about here yet if they were representing things rightly to him.

31994. He would give them more land?—Yes.

31995. You mentioned a Mr Mitchell; is that Mr Mitchell of the farm Rattagan?—Yes.

31996. And do you think there is 6000 acres of arable land upon his farm?—Yes, I think that.

31997. Do you mean land that could be cultivated by the plough?—He has not that in Glenelg—part of the 33,000 acres is in Glenshiel; but I should say one-third of that would be in Glenshiel and two-thirds here; and I should say about one-fourth or one-fifth of what is here could be cultivated.

31998. Then you think it would be about 4000 acres?—Yes.

31999. What would that be worth per acre if cultivated?—I did not make any calculation.

32000. You know the nature of the soil?—It is good soil; there is no better soil about the Highlands.

32001. £1 an acre is not a high rent for good arable land?—No.

32002. Do you think it would be worth £1 an acre for 4000 acres?—No, I don't believe it would. The general grievance of the people here is that they want more land, and they are willing to pay the same rent for it as these big farmers are doing at present. They want a piece of hill pasture, and some of them who have got no land at all were wishing to have some land for potatoes and a cow's grass.

32003. You put 10*l*d. on that land, but that is taking both bad and good land?—Yes.

32004. And if people got bits of land they would need to take a share of the bad with the good?—Yes.

32005. And they would be willing to do so?—Yes.

32006. *Mr Cameron*.—Did I understand you to say that the people had already approached the proprietor with a view to obtaining a portion of the farm of Eilanreoch, which is now in his own hands?—They approached the factor, but not the proprietor.

32007. How did they approach him; did they write to him?—I think they spoke to him personally, and I for one did speak to him for myself. I complained of having no pasture. I am paying about £10, 10s. of rent—near about £12—and I can only keep two cows and a horse, and I was wishing for hill pasture, for which I would be very willing to give a fair rent, but he said I would not get it. I got a summons of eviction last Whitsunday, but I was not compelled to leave. Of course, the old proprietor died. He told me he wanted to turn my croft into common ground as grazing for sheep or cattle.

32008. To whom did he propose to give it?—I don't know. It is likely he would have some favourite.

32009. Like your brother?—I could not say.

32010. He got a share of Mrs Fraser's croft, did he not?—Yes.

32011. Is he a favourite?—I cannot say he is, but he needed it. I believe the local factor was coveting it himself.

32012. Of course it was to Mr Molleson you made the representation about more land?—Yes.

32013. It was not an organised representation by the people—only yourself and one or two persons?—No. The whole of the people of the country were gathered, and there was a committee formed.

32014. A regular application made for part of the farm of Eilanreoch?—Yes, there was a petition prepared, but it was not presented. We did not think it satisfactory.

32015. But you have such clever people here, could you not prepare a petition satisfactorily?—Yes, but it didn't happen to please every one.

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32016. You did not agree about it?—No, but we spoke personally to the factor.

32017. Have you had any answer to that representation you made verbally?—He said, by word of mouth, we would not get it.

32018. Did he say why?—No, he did not say. He said he wanted to have as few crofters in the county as possible, for the fewer crofters the easier a place was managed—the cultivation was easier managed.

32019. *Professor Mackinnon*.—Did he say that?—Yes; he wanted to have as few crofters as possible.

32020. *Mr Cameron*.—What do you consider a fair rent per acre for arable ground?—I am not a good judge.

32021. I mean, of course, in this district?—I pay just now about £12, and I just keep two cows and a horse. You would think when I pay that rent that it should keep me, but it will not. I require to go to work in other countries, and the money I earn elsewhere I have to come and spend here.

32022. You cannot state what you consider a fair rent per acre for arable ground?—I could tell you what a fair rent would be for a number of stock; say a person had four cows, a horse, and fifty sheep, for these I would account £10 a fair rent.

32023. But that does not give me any information about the arable ground, because that refers to the grazing of these animals. What I want to know is how much you consider fair for arable ground, the stock being proportioned to the quantity of wintering you have?—I would say about 15s. per acre.

32024. Have you ever made any calculation as to the cost of improving the farm of Eilanreoch, to put it into such a shape as to make it fit for working?—Yes.

32025. What would it cost to trench, drain, or lime it to the extent necessary?—I would say about £5. Of course you would require to class the ground.

32026. You are taking the best of it?—No; it is the middle; some of it would require nothing but to put the plough into it.

32027. No draining?—No; but other parts would require to be drained.

32028. But 6000 acres is a large portion of a farm. Don't you think the larger portion would require a higher scale of expenditure?—Yes; but I think it would be £5 on an average.

32029. *Professor Mackinnon*.—You said the local manager got the place which Mrs Cameron had to herself?—Yes, the best part.

32030. He took it all, and let it out again?—Yes.

32031. How much did she pay?—£12.

32032. And for the piece he got he was getting from others £17?—Yes.

32033. Was that last year?—It is ten years since she was evicted.

32034. But he continued to get that up till last year?—Yes, up to the time when he left last Whitsunday.

32035. He also got a bit of Mrs Fraser's?—Yes; the most of it.

32036. And was that all he had?—No, he had another big park of about twelve acres besides that, and he wanted more. I believe it was all on account of that that I got the summons, because he coveted mine. Our lands were adjacent.

32037. Had these people who paid the £17 any part of the land which he took from Mrs Cameron?—Yes; one of them was evicted out of a nice croft which he had, and it was given to Mackintosh, the hotel proprietor.

32038. What rent would you put upon the land in Mr France's hands?

altogether, according to the rent you are paying yourself?—Do you take in what the other tenants are paying?

32039. Yes; all that was down in his name in the rent book?—That was not all in his name. I don't believe his name was in the rent book at all. It was not in the valuation roll at anyrate. He didn't care if he got the rent for the proprietor; he wanted to have the rent for himself.

32040. Then it is not to Mr France these people were paying the £17, but to the proprietor?—Yes, but he was getting it for himself, the best of it.

32041. What were the names of these people?—Duncan McCrimmon, Roderick Macpherson, Hector M'Intyre, and Malcolm M'Intyre.

32042. And these paid the rent to the proprietor, and not to Mr France?—Yes.

32043. I understood you to say he got £17 for the portion which he let to others?—No.

32044. Then it was no personal gain to him?—Oh! yes, it was; he got the best of the ground to himself. May I be allowed to make a statement?—I said 6000 acres of the farm were fit for cultivation; I think it would be safer to say 1000 acres.

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JAMES MILLIGAN, Farmer, Arnisdale (46)—examined.

32045. *The Chairman.*—You are the tenant of a farm in this vicinity?—Yes.

James
Milligan.

32046. How long have you been in it?—Since 1874.

32047. Are you a tenant in any other farm of the Highlands?—Yes; Glenhuirich and Drimnalarom, both in Argyleshire.

32048. I think you have also some interest in land in the south?—Yes.

32049. In Dumfriesshire and Lanarkshire?—I have.

32050. Are these farms principally sheep farms?—The Dumfriesshire farm is arable, but the others are mainly pasture.

32051. Having all these large concerns on your hands, you are not able, I suppose, to be a permanent resident in this district?—Not quite.

32052. But is this your principal dwelling place?—No, I live for the most part in Dumfriesshire.

32053. Do you come here at stated periods of the year?—Yes, and my wife and family come and reside here for two or three months in the year.

32054. Do you keep a manager here, or simply shepherds?—Principally shepherds; a manager and other shepherds.

32055. You have been here during the examination to-day, and you have heard it stated that a portion of the farm which you occupy here was formerly occupied as common pasture for small tenants?—Yes, I heard that.

32056. Was it in that condition when you took the farm, or had it already been given to a farmer before you came?—It had been for a long time in the state in which I got it.

32057. There has been no change since you got it?—No, with the exception of ten acres that my predecessor Mr Mitchell got, which belonged to some of the crofters. I don't know whether it was rented as one whole field or in different crofts, but I know he had it separately from the rest of the farm.

32058. Is that now consolidated with the farm?—It is.

**INVER-
NESS.**

GLENELG.

**James
Milligan.**

32059. Do you find that the small tenants are very anxious to get pasture from you for their cows ?—They don't appear very anxious. I may state that the arrangement with the factor when I took the land was that it was to be enclosed for the crofters' cows ; and when I wished that part of my lease fulfilled, I said they were bound to do so ; and the factor said they were not bound to continue the crofters' cows, but would rather do away with the cows than enclose the land ; so that the cows remain as they were, and the prices fixed for the grazing also, and all is just as it was before I got it. I was unwilling that people's cows should be done away with. It is a great advantage to the crofters, or to any person with a family, to have milk, and they just remained as they had been previously under the former tenant.

32060. There was a condition in the lease that a piece of ground should be enclosed for a specified number of crofters' cows : how many ?—There was no number specified ; it was to be enclosed, if it were required—a piece of the hill—for the crofters' cows. I could not give the exact words, but that is the sense of them.

32061. How were you to be indemnified for the loss of a piece of the hill ?—On the valuation the people appointed could not agree.

32062. But there was no site pointed out ?—No.

32063. Did you understand it was to be a large piece for many cows, or a small piece for three or four cows ?—I understood it was just to be for the cows there were. I think they had rather more then than now. They were done away with at the wish of the people ; at least they did not put them on.

32064. And the terms—the £3 charged—were they contemplated in the lease, or was there any specification of what the people ought to pay ?—No, it was just the custom which had prevailed.

32065. The price of the grazing has not been raised during your time ?—No.

32066. The land was taken before ?—Yes.

32067. Is it the common custom in this part of the Highlands that the grazing for a cow is £3 ?—I am not aware of any in this immediate district. At Strontian I have some, but it is only for summer grazing, and it is stipulated in the lease that the price is to be £2, 10s.

32068. Can these cows graze out during all the winter ?—No, only for the summer months ; and the £3 is for summer and winter.

32069. And must the cows be taken in in winter at short intervals or for long periods ?—They can almost always graze out. They require some assistance, but I believe Highland cows would live out almost without anything in an ordinary season. They are on the tether, and there is plenty of heather.

32070. One witness said that his aggregate payments to the account of keeping a cow for the year had been £12, that would leave £9 for the purchase of fodder. That must have been a very uncommon case ?—I have no doubt but that he stated the facts of the case. He has a very good Highland cow, and he keeps it very well, and, I believe, gives it artificial food both summer and winter. The stirk is included along with the cow in that calculation, I should say—included in the grazing—indeed, I should imagine he includes the feeding he gives to the stirk, as well as that for the cow.

32071. When they speak of grazing a cow, does that mean that the calf remains along with the cow until it is a stirk ?—Until it is twelve months old.

32072. So that it is grazing for a cow and stirk ?—Yes.

32073. And then they sell the stirk when it is about fourteen months old ?—Yes ; about that.

32074. There has been no alteration in terms for grazing?—None, so far as I am concerned.

32075. Do you think the people desire to have more cows? Do you ever receive an application which you are not able to comply with?—Never. I don't remember ever refusing an application.

32076. You have heard a very general expression of opinion that your farm should be reduced for the benefit of the small tenants—that a portion should be taken off and given to them for grazing sheep or cows; could your farm support a considerable diminution of that sort without being spoiled?—It would depend on what part they took. Some parts of it might be spared; but the kind of arable land which would be of most advantage to the crofters would entail a change of the present sheep stock from Cheviots to blackfaced. We could not keep Cheviots on the hills without assistance of the arable land.

32077. Could the diminution not take place in a discriminating manner so as to give them a small portion of arable ground and a larger portion of the high ground?—It might be done; but it would be a disadvantage to the farm. It is a matter of money, so far as I am concerned—a question of rent. Only, one part of it is very near the dwelling house, and a resident tenant would not like very well to have the fields in front of his house taken away from him.

32078. Is that part of the enclosed ground near the dwelling house and offices also near the arable ground of the crofters?—It adjoins the Cambusbain lands.

32079. Could they not get the hill grazing without taking any portion of that?—Not of Arnisdale. The Cambusbain people would require to get it at Eilanreoch as they had it before; and I don't suppose it would entail anything more than the loss of the land there. It lies more advantageously for an operation of that sort. At Arnisdale you would require to take it off the arable land; and most farmers like a piece of arable land to grow potatoes for themselves.

32080. How long has your lease to run?—Ten years still to run.

32081. You keep Cheviot stock?—I have changed the outer part to blackfaced sheep.

32082. I suppose none of the crofters in this neighbourhood keep any sheep stock?—Only a few.

32083. What class of cows are they keeping now?—They were all crosses between shorthorn and Ayrshire at one time, but they are changed now; there are more Ayrshire's than there used to be.

32084. Speaking generally, what do you think are the prospects of the large store farmers in this part of the country? Are they unfavourable, owing to the fall in the prices of wool, or does the rise in the price of stock compensate you?—The rise in the price of stock won't compensate us, and we are afraid that the rise in the price of stock will not continue; the great scarcity of stock in England has had a great deal to do with it.

32085. Supposing your farm were out of lease at this moment, would it probably be re-let at a great reduction, if re-let at all?—I have no doubt of it.

32086. What percentage of reduction do you think would be made—20 per cent.?—Not my immediate predecessor, but the one before him—Mr Stavert—paid £525, and my rent is £825, and I think it would very likely go back to something like Mr Stavert's rent.

32087. Was that about 1860?—1863.

32088. It would revert to the rent of 1863?—Yes. I am subject to correction in the date, but I think it was 1863.

32089. With this probably considerable fall in the rental of large farms,

INVERNESS.

GLENELG.

James
Milligan.

INVERNESS.

GLENELG.

James
Milligan.

do you think the time would be rather a favourable one for appropriating portions of the large farms to the small tenants?—I have no doubt of it.

32090. The loss to the proprietor would not be so great as it would have been at a previous period?—Not so great as it would have been some years ago.

32091. Do you think the people, from what you know of them, are great sufferers by the want of grazing?—Well, if they would cultivate it well they would not be sufferers.

32092. I rather speak of the land for grazing than of that for cultivation?—It would require to be let in club farms. In a small way, I should be afraid it would not pay. If one man had only fifty or a hundred sheep enclosed by themselves, I am afraid it would not pay. I have no doubt small farms grazed with black cattle and blackfaced sheep, as used to be, would pay better than our large farms at present.

32093. Do you find upon the soil of your farm many remains of ancient occupancy and cultivation?—Not on Arnisdale. There are a few, but not many. There is not much arable land on Arnisdale.

32094. Two or three hundred acres that might be cultivated?—Not much over one hundred that could be worked at all. What is arable land in Arnisdale is very good land, but all the remainder is bleak, rocky land, not adapted for cultivation.

32095. Why have you not broken up more if there is this good arable land?—I break it all up in rotation, except one portion which lies in—a Cheviot hirsell, which, if I were to break it up, would necessitate a change from Cheviot to blackfaced stock, and at present would entail a loss of £1 a head in changing from Cheviot to blackfaced.

32096. We have heard a great deal about the deterioration of the quality of the pasture on the ground?—That is a subject on which, I think, a great deal of misapprehension exists. My father had the Strontian land in 1836, and I think I am able to keep as many sheep on it as he did, and a few more; and I think they are of as good quality—at least, I get as much for them, considering my neighbours' sheep, as my father did. I don't think there is any deterioration in the hill grazings. Any deterioration that may be is where game abounds—rabbits and deer—or, what is more generally the case, where people have stocked Highland hill land with sheep which were not suited for it, and which should have been reared in parks. What are called high-class Cheviot sheep, with open skins and arched noses, are not able to live on the west coast, or on almost any hill land; but where you get them close in the coat, and with good chests, and able to protect themselves against the weather, the land will keep as many of those sheep as ever it did, excepting where it is overrun with game, or is injured for some other reason easily accounted for.

32097. You don't think the pasturing of sheep for any length of time deteriorates the pasture?—Most decidedly not.

32098. We have often heard it alleged in the Highlands?—I hold a good many acres of land, and all the land I have keeps as many sheep as ever I have heard of its keeping during this century, as far as I can trace it back.

32099. *Mr Cameron.*—Do you not think that many portions of hill land in the Highlands is more covered with 'fog' than it used to be?—No, I don't think so.

32100. Do you think that grass grows as abundantly and as sweet?—Yes.

32101. Have you not heard contrary opinions expressed by any of your brother farmers?—Yes, very often.

INVER-
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GLENELG.
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James
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32102. Do you think those who think otherwise are in the majority or the reverse?—I would not like to answer the question.

32103. In speaking of taking land from the big farms and giving it to the crofters, you stated that under present conditions you thought the land might profitably be turned to the purposes to which it was formerly devoted, namely, black cattle and blackfaced sheep?—I have no doubt of it.

32104. What would be the requirements, in order to carry out that system, with regard to the subdivision of land, houses, or stock?—There would not be so much in houses, because most of the old farmhouses are remaining; but I think the principal want would be the getting the class of tenants that formerly existed.

32105. But do you think that the system could be profitably adopted with the crofters as they are found in the vicinity? Do you think they would have the means to stock the farms with black cattle and blackfaced sheep?—I am afraid not.

32106. What size of a farm do you think might be provided which would be most suitable?—From 500 to 1000 sheep, and perhaps a score of cows.

32107. That would be a large farm, would it not?—I would not consider it large.

32108. But taking in view the point to which your attention was directed, namely, the provision of land for the class of people called crofters, that would be a large farm, would it not?—I don't think, for a district farm, 500 sheep would be very great.

32109. You mean that should be a club farm?—Yes.

32110. And that each crofter should have twenty head of cattle?—No; altogether, and their followers.

32111. But don't you think it would be better that a club farm should be confined to sheep, &c., and that each crofter should individually have his own cow?—Yes, that is my meaning—to restrict every one to a certain number.

32112. What would each crofter have as his share of the cattle and sheep, according to your view?—Perhaps four or five cows.

32113. And 200 sheep?—Yes; from 100 to 200.

32114. Would not that process entail very considerable expense on the part of some one—the proprietor or the crofters themselves—in carrying it out?—It would entail a certain expense at first.

32115. How much arable land would be required to winter these twenty cattle—the sheep would find their own wintering?—The sheep would find their own wintering. They would get the advantage in winter of the arable land which was cultivated.

32116. How much arable land would be required?—Fifty acres.

32117. According to your view, that would take away half the arable land of your farm?—If it were done on my farm it would.

32118. I suppose you consider that where crofters keep sheep they should keep a ewe stock, and not a wether stock; or do you consider a wether stock might be kept?—It would depend altogether on the class of land.

32119. But supposing there was a farm where part was under ewes and part under wethers, if the crofters took away the portion which was devoted to ewes, would it be difficult to get rid of the land which was grazed by the wethers?—I don't think so. Most of the land grazed by wethers would be under blackfaced ewe stock, or mixed stock, or black-faced stock.

32120. Has Arnisdale wether stock?—Mostly wethers, or, at least, a good proportion of it.

INVER-
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GLENELG.
James
Milligan.

32121. Could the crofters keep ewes on this wether land?—The wether land is out of the reach of the crofters. Arnisdale is not a farm—at least, not much of it—fit for the purposes of a club farm.

32122. You think Arnisdale would not be suitable to make the experiment upon?—Part of it would.

32123. Could the remaining part be let?—There might be a difficulty in that.

32124. Could it not be divided in such a way that the crofters might take part of the high ground and part of the low ground?—It might be; but you would take all the shore land, and leave the high land for an outrun—for wether ground altogether.

32125. How many cows were grazed by the crofters on your farm when you first went there?—I could not say. I do not think there were above five or six.

32126. And how many are there now?—I think three.

32127–28. Would you find any disadvantage to the farm in grazing cows to the extent, say, of one cow for each crofter marching with Arnisdale, provided you were paid for it?—I would rather not have them, if I am to take a mere money view of it.

32129. But do you think grazing twenty cows at the rate of £3 a head would do your sheep farm any substantial damage?—It would.

32130. Do you think you would make as much as that out of the extra sheep you might keep?—I have no doubt I could; for this reason, that it is the wintering part of it that the cows graze on.

32131. Do the cows not, although they eat the grass, to some extent improve pasture by manure?—Cattle of any kind do—cows less than young cattle, but the mixture of cattle amongst the sheep improves the land.

32132. And do you think twenty cows would be too much for your farm?—Oh no; if they could be properly distributed over the land.

32133. But don't you think you might manage to graze these twenty cows at a fair rent and not be a loser by it?—I might not be a loser, but I would rather not have them. I am speaking from my own point of view entirely.

32134. Would you require to winter away any more young sheep in consequence?—Yes.

32135. How many do you think you would require to winter away in consequence of the twenty cows?—Perhaps 200.

32136. A couple of hundred; and what do you winter them at, 7s. or 8s.?—Not many of them come home at 8s. I always count them at 10s.; but young sheep are not so bad as hoggs. I might mention that this district is very much in want of telegraphic communication. Excuse my taking up the time of the delegates, but they did not seem to bring out that fact. Last year we had, perhaps, a couple of thousand fishermen here from all parts of Scotland, and there was no telegraphic communication; and the postal communication is the worst you can conceive. It is not so bad this year; but last year letters from Arnisdale lay two nights at Glenelg before they were sent away, and they lay, I believe, another night at Strome. Now fish is a very perishable article, and yet that was the communication the people had, unless they went to Isle Ornsay. I think that is a great want in this district—the want of proper postal and telegraphic communication.

32137. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You have been present to-day and have heard what the people have been saying?—Yes.

32138. Do you think they have any grievances at all worth speaking about?—I have no doubt they have.

32139. Do you think that a lot of people with only one acre of land and with no cows among them worth speaking of, is a satisfactory state of matters for their comfort?—Possibly it is not; it depends very much upon what they wish to be at. If they are fishermen, I think they should turn their attention as much as possible to fishing; although, of course, they require land to grow potatoes and to keep cows for milk. As a rule, the two don't go together to any extent.

32140. You admit that it is necessary for them to have potatoes and milk?—Yes.

32141. Will one acre of ground such as they have enable them to have milk?—No.

32142. And therefore to that extent they have a grievance?—Yes; and I think £2 an acre is a very high rent.

32143. Do you consider it right in any proprietor to keep people on his property unless he gives them facilities in the way of potato ground and of milk, even if these are fishermen?—Am I bound to answer that question?

32144. *The Chairman.*—No; it is a question of general opinion. I think you may say, if you like, you are not able to answer the question, or that you don't wish to do so. At the same time, if you can do so, it will be desirable that you should, because it is a question which any gentleman of intelligence and independent opinion can answer perhaps?—I don't think it right; but I would rather not enter into my views upon that.

32145. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Do you consider it unreasonable of many people who are on this estate to complain of only having an acre of land, paying over £1 or £2 of rent, considering the magnitude of land belonging to the same proprietor?—No, I don't.

32146. Lochiel put a question to you about the crofters having club farms in the manner you suggested. Supposing this club farm were started and in operation, do you think that the crofters in that club farm would be able to compete with large farmers like yourself in the quality of their stock, whether of cattle or sheep, and so far as getting good prices for them is concerned?—I have no doubt they would if they paid the same attention.

32147. You have stated that if your place were out of lease at this moment the rent would revert to about £300 less than you are paying at present?—That is my opinion.

32148. And evidently at that rent you are not making much of it?—That is a different question.

32149. I am not to come to the conclusion that you are not making anything of it?—No.

32150. As a proprietor and tenant of land, having therefore double capacity to form a correct opinion, do you not think it would be a wise thing if you had a number of people on your property who were circumscribed in their holdings, to improve their position by enlarging their holdings?—Yes, I would.

32151. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Where do you think the telegraphic station ought to be erected?—If we had such fishing at Arnisdale as we have had for the last two years, I should say Arnisdale is the best place. The advantage would not be alone to the immediate neighbourhood, but to all the fishermen on the west coast. If it had not been for the Loch Hourn fishing last year we would have had semi-starvation over the whole district.

32152. Would the telegraph be required during any other part of the year?—Not except during the fishing.

INVERNESS.

GLENELG.

James Milligan.

INVER-
NESS.
GLENELG.

James
Milligan.

32153. Where is the nearest telegraphic station?—Isle Ornsay, and it is very rough crossing over to it. I crossed it one day last year in extremity, and I would not like to do it again under the circumstances.

32154. If a telegraphic station were established here at Glenelg, would it be sufficient?—It would be a great advantage.

32155. Has any representation been made to the post-office?—Not that I am aware of.

32156. I suppose you have no idea what the cost of it would be?—None.

32157. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—You said you thought the great difficulty in establishing a club farm would be finding tenants of a suitable class?—Yes.

32158. Of such tenants as formerly existed in the Highlands?—Yes.

32159. I suppose you mean tenants with a capital of from £300 to £500?—Yes, or £1000; of course, more capital is required now-a-days.

32160. The club tenants you thought of establishing are not at all of the crofter class, but capitalists more or less?—Some of them would be of the present crofter class. A man must creep before he can walk, and people with comparatively little capital must go from less to more.

32161. You mean, if a man had £100 or £200 he would get help?—Yes.

32162. But you think his stock should be a stock of £400 or £500 at least?—Yes. I have no doubt smaller places might be advantageously put in.

Rev. JAMES M'DONALD, Minister of Glenelg (55)—examined.

Rev. James M'Donald. 32163. *The Chairman.*—How long have you been in your present charge?—Seven and a half years.

32164. From what part of the country do you come?—My native place is the Highlands—Perthshire.

32165. You have been present here during the examination to-day?—I have.

32166. Have you any general statement respecting what you have heard on the condition of the parish which you would like to make?—I may state generally that, so far as I understand the wishes of the crofters and cottars, they wish a little more land, especially hill grazing, to enable them to keep cows; and they complain generally of want of employment. I may say that I believe myself it would be a benefit to the proprietor to give more land, so as to make the people more contented before a spirit of socialism gets possession of the Highlanders. At present the proprietors could easily satisfy the people with some little concession if he came to visit them and gave them free access to state their wants. There is a strong attachment between the Highlanders and the proprietors; but there is less cringing, perhaps I may say more manliness, and they would like the proprietor to converse with them himself without the intervention of any other person at the time. I believe this spirit is manifested in the Highlanders just now, and if they had more access to the proprietors, and the proprietors met with them more freely, it would tend greatly to allay the spirit which has arisen. I mention this as my own opinion. I may also mention that the people of Glenelg were very much pleased lately from the visit from their young proprietor; and they were especially pleased with his accessibility and the kindly way in which

he spoke ; and they are strong in their belief that matters will improve under him. I may mention that the people consider it a grievance that all the large tenants are non-resident. Their money is spent in other parts of the country where they reside, and we want their assistance for supporting the schools ; I don't mean support from the assessment, but if there were tenants of credit they would support these schools very materially, and perhaps some of them would send their children to school, and would take an interest in and visit the school. That would tend very much to improve the condition of the poorer classes. It would also tend to make them more attached to the things that exist if the large tenants were resident. They would assist very much likewise in supporting a doctor. The doctor here has to be supported very largely from the rates, and, as there is no resident proprietor, and no resident tenants, he cannot be called in to their families, and any support he gets by way of fees comes principally from the poor people, besides what he gets from the assessment. The witness last examined by you—Mr Milligan—has, with his family, resided here for some years back, for a month or two on his farm of Arnisdale, and he is, I consider, a great benefit to the district, because he takes a kindly interest in the people here. I wish to corroborate what he stated with regard to the great want of the telegraph here. We are seven miles from Lochalsh telegraph office, and the ferry is between us ; and the road for the most part is over a hill—a sheep-track, and in some places not even that. The post-runner who runs at present, told me that on one occasion, in winter, he sank into a pit so deep that the bag he was carrying was in the water ; and we think the road should be so made that such accidents would not occur. With regard to the want of the telegraph, we have steam communication here, but sometimes, in the months of August and September, the steamers come into the lochs twenty-four or thirty hours behind time, and sometimes people have to wait on the quay where there is no accommodation further than the hotel. Many cannot afford to go there, and others would not wish to be there ; and I have known families having to wait about for twenty-four or thirty hours for the steamer, because there was no telegraphic communication from other places to let them know when she might be expected. We also feel the want of a quay. There was one which served the purpose for a time, but it is not sufficient now ; indeed, it has been almost a wreck since the storms of nearly two years ago, as the Commissioners can judge for themselves. If you will permit me I should like to say a word or two in regard to some questions and statements respecting the destitution money and the timber. There was a sum of nearly £200 collected from friends, some of them at a distance and some near at hand, to aid the people during that time. There was also some timber at Loch Duich which had been blown down by the storm, and which was offered by the proprietor to the people of Arnisdale and Glenelg whose boats were destroyed. They were told that they would get the timber if they would themselves take it and convey it to their different localities. That timber was about thirty miles from the people of Arnisdale, and from twelve to fifteen miles from those of Glenelg. Some of those who wished for some of the timber came and asked for it, and, I believe, they were refused at that time, because they would not come in a body and get it themselves. It was difficult in Arnisdale and Glenelg to get the people to come in a body for it at one suitable time. Considering the difficulty of getting the people to come and take it themselves, the committee who had charge of the destitution money thought it would be advisable to pay out of that fund for the sawing of the timber into proper lengths, and rafting it. Some of the people of Arnisdale

INVERNESS.
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GLENELG.
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Rev. James M'Donald.

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GLENELG.

Rev. James
McDonald.

went and some of the people of this place gave their services to raft the timber from the head of Loch Duich to Glenelg, the committee making some provision for them out of the destitution money. Then, after it was brought here, the committee held a meeting to try and ascertain the damage sustained by the people's boats, and what they required, and they allocated so much of that wood to the different parties, and it was left to Mr France, the local factor, to give that to the parties who came for it. I may mention that among the contributions to the destitution fund was £10 from the proprietor, the total sum being something like £200. The committee who had charge of it consisted of the inspector of poor, the Free Church minister, Mr Mundell, the farmer of Eilanreoch, Mr Macintosh, the doctor, and myself. I think the policeman who was here at the time was also one of them, as also was the local factor. The local factor was asked first if he would become one of our committee, but he did not seem willing, and when Mr Morrison came, he thought he should be on, and he was asked again and appointed as one of the committee.

32167. *Professor Mackinnon.*—You agree generally with the description given by the people as to their condition?—I believe generally the people have need of increase of grazing, and they would also be the better of some additional land.

32168. And you believe that they do not exaggerate their own condition with respect to their being in comparatively poor circumstances?—I believe the people are poor.

32169. With respect to other places in the country with which you are acquainted, how would you compare their condition here? Are they better than some and worse than others?—I know a little about Lewis, and as far as I can give a fair estimate, I believe the people of Lewis are better off than the crofters here, in this respect, that they have more outlet for hill grazing and more land, and have access to sea-manure, at least in the greater part of the Lewis.

32170. There are not very many of the same class of crofters in Lewis which you also know?—No.

32171. They are larger crofters there?—Yes, and the holdings are better graded; there is very little gradation here.

32172. Here it is either a small croft or a very big farm?—Yes.

32173. And in Lewis it is a big croft and a small farm?—Yes, and sometimes a larger farm too.

32174. Which of the two systems do you think preferable?—I think, speaking generally for the interest of the country, I would consider the system in Lewis far preferable.

32175. Could it be carried out as a practicable measure here?—I believe it could easily be carried out as practicable, but whether or not at some loss to the proprietor, I would leave more practical men to judge.

32176. One of the delegates here said that the land about the place where we are sitting is very good, and that there is a good deal of it capable of profitable cultivation?—I believe that is a fact.

32177. There should be no difficulty then, excepting the will of the proprietor, in giving the people what they wish in this neighbourhood?—The will of the large tenant also, as long as he has a lease.

32178. So that the glen and the parish generally could maintain a far larger population in comfort than at present exists in it?—I believe it might.

32179. In this parish you have not only an absentee proprietor, but also an absentee tenantry?—Yes, and we feel that even more than the absence of the proprietor.

32180. That is a very great disadvantage?—I consider it so for the reasons I have stated.

INVERNESS.

32181. The fact is there are scarcely any people living permanently in the country but poor people?—I may say so.

GLENELG.

32182. What about the education of the parish? I know the school here is efficient, but what about the education of the parish generally?—There are six schools and two itinerant schools.

Rev. James M Donald.

32183. Are you a member of the School Board?—Yes.

32184. And of course all the schools are under the board?—All.

32185. And therefore under inspection?—Yes.

32186. Efficiently taught?—I believe so.

32187. Is there a great advance in the elementary education of the people for the last ten years?—I have only been seven and a half years in the parish.

32188. Within that time has there been an advance?—I believe there has.

32189. People are every year taking more advantage of the improved school system?—I am not sure that they are taking the advantage of it that we should like to see.

32190. But are they improving in that respect?—I am not sure that they are. There are some parts where one would like more facilities for getting them to attend—more compulsory power than the Act might be carried out. I may mention with regard to getting them to attend, that we feel a difficulty in taking people to Inverness if we were to prosecute, and we applied to the lord-lieutenant to appoint more justices, that we might have a justice of the peace court. We have not a resident J. P. to hold a court.

32191. There is not a resident justice of the peace in the parish, who is not a member of the School Board, before whom you can go?—Mr Baird is resident for the most part of the year, and Mr Milligan is resident for a few weeks just now.

32192. But there is no resident justice of the peace all through the year?—No.

32193. You could not bring children before a justice of the peace if he were a member of the School Board?—No.

32194. And you would grudge the expense of taking them to Inverness?—Yes; we would rather allow things to continue as they are than do that. Elementary education, no doubt, is improving all over the country.

32195. Is the higher education of boys from thirteen to fourteen years of age affected? Do they remain at school as long as they used to do?—Not so long as they did in my recollection.

32196. But that was in a different part of the country?—Yes.

32197. Is it your impression that there are not so many of what one would call good scholars in the country schools about the age of fourteen as there used to be?—I am at this disadvantage that I compare this place with places that have had greater facilities.

32198. You are not able to compare this with similar places in the past?—No, not as I know this place in the present, and know other places in the past.

32199. The fund which was gathered for the replacing of the boats which were destroyed by the great tide of two years ago, was in this place a local fund?—We applied to right and left. I wrote scores of letters myself begging for assistance, and we got some aid from the Glasgow Society; we got considerable aid from the society.

32200. Do you think the delegate who brought it up to-day had any reasonable ground for complaint in the matter?—There was ground for com-

INVER-
NESS.

GLENELG.

Rev. James
M'Donald.

plaint in this respect that he came over from Loch Hourn for timber, and could not get it at the time, nor until they came as a body; and this timber was promised in the month of December, and they did not get it until the month of May following. There was not time for them, in consequence, to get their boats built for the succeeding fishing season.

32201. Of course, the distance was very long for them?—Yes.

32202. And it was in the winter season of the year?—Yes.

32203. The distance by sea in winter would be very long?—Yes.

32204. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—You said the crofters were in a worse position here than in the Lews, in respect of the want of outrun for the crofts; do you think they are in more destitute circumstances than the Lewis crofters?—I think a number of them are poorer; I think the crofters in Arnisdale are poorer than those in Lewis.

32205. Notwithstanding the fishing in Loch Hourn?—Yes, the fishing in Loch Hourn is very uncertain. There have only been two good years since I came here. Some years the fishing was almost *nil*, and it is not good fishing ground for anything else but herring, and along the coast of Lewis they have good general fishing for the rest of the year, and herring at the season.

32206. But they have very poor harbours?—In many places they have ground in the directions north-east from Stornoway—Bayble and Gress, they have access to the sea.

32207. You referred to absentee proprietors—was there ever a resident proprietor in this parish?—Not so far as I am aware.

32208. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Do you know the acreage of Glenelg?—No.

32209. It is very large, the whole parish?—I should think the whole parish is twenty or thirty miles long—from this to Loch Morar.

32210. Have you any deer forests in the parish?—Yes, I believe there is a deer forest at the head of Loch Hourn, and I believe there is one being formed in Knoydart.

32211. Loch Hourn, is that part of Glenquoich?—No, in this parish.

32212. To whom does this one belong at Loch Hourn?—Mr Baillie; it is occupied by Mr Borwick.

32213. That is a forest of recent formation?—It has been there a considerable time, but I believe there is grazing on it also. It is more a shooting, with the privilege of deer shooting.

32214. Who has the sheep stock?—Mr Milligan.

32215. There is also a deer forest is there not in Glenquoich?—I am not acquainted with it; it is not in this parish.

32216. Are you sure?—There is a very small part of it in Glenelg, I think. ‘Lands of Wester Glenquoich and house, Loch Hourn Head, Sir Michael A. Bass, Bart., M.P. £300.’

32217. Has he anything of a forest, did you ever hear?—I am not aware; but I would rather not speak about that, because I am not conversant with it.

32218. Have you the whole of the parish of Glenelg under your charge?—There is the *quoad sacra* parish of Knoydart and North Morar.

32219. And you are not acquainted with them?—I am acquainted with the Poor Law management and School Board management; I am only acquainted with the parish to that extent.

32220. But, altogether, I am correct in saying there are three deer forests in the whole of Glenelg?—There may be a small part of a deer forest—*Mr Bass's.*

INVER-
NESS.
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GLENELG.
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Rev. James
McDonald.

32221. Is there any one here who can give information as to the extent of the deer forest?—I think the inspector of poor may be able to give you that—Mr Fraser.

32222. Since you have been parish minister here has the local estate management among the people been of a satisfactory character?—I don't think it has been satisfactory of late—the local management.

32223. During your time here have you found that the proprietor or those under him took any benevolent interest in the estate in the way of contributing to the charities or anything else?—As I said already, there was a contribution to the destitution fund, and some timber was given, and I believe there was a good deal of rent remitted to the poor people at that time; I heard Mr Morrison stating that.

32224. But that does not exactly meet my question, what I mean't was—?—But this was not properly an abatement, but arrears; arrears wiped off in consequence of the loss from the high tide.

32225. What I mean is, whether from your knowledge there is any interest taken by the proprietor or any one here in the general welfare of the people beyond what you have stated? Can you point to any particular act of charity or otherwise?—The proprietor gave £10 to put furniture into the schoolhouse at Arnisdale. We wanted furniture, so as to induce young teachers to come; I believe Mr Baird put good furniture into the two houses in Knoydart.

32226. Can you refer to anything else?—I think I made a request to the factors, and I believe they gave a little towards getting sewing material for the school.

32227. Anything else?—I am not aware of anything else.

32228. And these different items are spread over the whole period of your incumbency here?—Yes, but other things might have been done not through me, or without my knowledge.

32229. *The Chairman.*—You referred to the pier here which we saw as we landed; by whom was that pier originally constructed?—I understand part of it was made at the time of the destitution. The destitution money was partly expended in that way; people got employment, and we paid them.

32230. And was its future maintenance entrusted to anybody in particular?—There was no person who could do so, unless the proprietor did it. There was no money.

32231. There is no committee or corporation entrusted with the duty of keeping it up?—Not unless it would come in under the management of those who had charge of the roads.

32232. Has any application been made to the proprietor for the restoration of the pier?—I believe his factor was often spoken to about it.

32233. He did not offer to do anything?—I don't think he was instructed to do anything.

32234. Do you think now, in a case of that sort, if the proprietor came forward, would he find any of the people willing to co-operate with him by giving labour for the maintenance of a work of that kind?—I am afraid the people could not afford to give much labour. I cannot speak certainly in regard to it, but I understand the farmers offered to do so much and Mr McBrayne, the steamer proprietor, offered to give so much money if a new pier were built.

32235. You spoke of the comparative poverty of the people in the Lews and Glenelg. We were very much struck by the deplorable condition of the houses in the Lews, especially with reference to the want of separation between the cattle and the family; do you think the houses are as bad here as they are there?—The same arrangement does not pre-

**INVER-
NESS.**

GLENELG.

Rev. James
M'Donald.

vail. I am not aware of any houses where the cattle and the people enter by the same door or are without a division.

32236. We saw many houses in Skye, and elsewhere, where the people entered by the same door as the cattle, but it was only in the Lews that we saw the absence of a partition between the byre and the house. You say you have no houses here in which there is not a partition between the two?—Yes, and I don't remember any houses where the cattle and people enter by the same door even.

32237. In that case the dwellings here would be rather of a superior kind to those of the Lews?—I think they are, upon the whole.

32238. Is there any movement in this parish at present for improved dwellings?—I am not aware of any.

32239. Have you heard of any encouragement being given in any case of rebuilding and amelioration of the dwellings of the poor?—I have not heard of that; but I may mention that the people all expect that the young proprietor will give encouragement.

32240. Did you ever hear of any regulation on the estate by which the proprietor bound himself to co-operate in any way with the people in building houses?—I have not heard of such a regulation, if there is one.

32241. Was the timber for the repair of the boats, or for the houses also?—Simply for the repair of the boats—for repairing them and building new ones.

32242. You stated that the timber was promised in December and not given till May. Do you think if the people who were to be the recipients had been active and had bestirred themselves they could have brought it forward before that?—If they had all combined as one and come in a body they might; but still, a great number of these could not saw the wood themselves. It had to be sawn in lengths in order that they might lift it.

32243. Sawn at Loch Duich?—Yes.

32244. But they are not very large trees; it does not require skilled labour. Don't you think if the people had really combined and set to work with a good will they could have fetched it much sooner than they did?—It was the committee who sawed it. I believe if the people could have been got to combine they would have had it much earlier.

32245. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Do you think there is any crofter in the Lews paying £2 of rent for one acre of land?—I don't know the rents there.

DONALD MACRAE, Crofter, Cosaig (73)—examined.

**Donald
Macrae.**

32246. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Who is there at Cosaig besides yourself?—Six families.

32247. Did they agree to send you here?—Yes.

32248. All of them?—Yes.

32249. What did they wish you to say?—They all wish for more arable land and more hill pasture than they have—room for a reasonable stock of cattle. Most of them have not but one acre of land and one cow; and the half of them have not an acre itself nor cow itself.

32250. There are six of them, and three have not half an acre of land, and two of them have an acre each?—Yes.

32251. And you have five acres?—No.

32252. You pay £7 of rent?—No; that is another Donald Macrae who pays that.

32253. Is there land to be got near you?—Plenty.

32254. On Eilanreoch?—Yes; the hill. The hill belongs to Eilanreoch. But I have seen the whole of Cosaig belong to the crofters who were in Kirkton and Cosaig.

32255. When did they lose it?—It is a long time since they lost the first part of it—more than forty years ago.

32256. Do you remember that?—I do; it was old Currie who was factor at that time.

32257. And when did they lose the lease of it?—They took the first portion off that was right opposite the house of Eilanreoch, and Currie said every person would be asking that portion. Then they shut up the fence there. What was down the other side of the fence they had for a good while afterwards. Then a man of the name of Stewart came, and the fence by this time began to break down, so that the stock upon either side crossed. To make a short story of it, the march was afterwards changed to the back of our house.

32258. Was any alteration made in the rent when the march was changed?—Yes; the people came to poverty, and the proprietor was obliged to send them to America. Four hundred went away in one day. The land became desolate—no person there. A few did not go away. The land was charged at £2 an acre, and that rent was put on the few who remained.

32259. Are they paying £2 an acre at Cosaig?—No.

32260. I was asking about Cosaig. When the march was changed at Cosaig, was the rent changed?—Yes, rent was paid.

32261. What reduction did they get?—It came down to 25s. per acre the dearest of it.

32262. Have you any place for your cow outside your croft?—No, not an inch.

32263. You have nothing but arable land?—No.

32264. And you are paying 25s. an acre for the best of it?—Yes.

32265. Are they paying less than that for some of it?—I heard that some had it for £1, but I am not certain.

32266. And you now want more pasture land?—Yes, we want both pasture land for stock and arable land to support our families.

32267. Who has the arable land now which you desire to get possession of?—The land has remained unchanged, but some have a good deal of it and others very little.

32268. And you have not got enough yourself?—I could do with what I have of arable land if I had the hill pasture, and if I had seen the arable ground fairly distributed amongst those who had none at all. I judge that the poor people have about thirty-two acres of arable land just now, and there is only one horse among them to turn the whole of it.

32269. Do you mean that the six tenants in Cosaig have thirty-two acres?—No; but round about between this and Cosaig. I am making one place of it.

32270. How many tenants are there in the place between Kirkton and Cosaig?—Cosaig is just an angle or corner of this place.

32271. How many families are in the enjoyment of these thirty-two acres? Do you think the thirty-two would be sufficient for them if divided between them in pasture?—No, that would not suit, because there are a good number of them who have only one acre. They would be better off than they are, but it would not support them.

32272. Who is in possession of the arable land you desire in addition to the thirty-two acres?—There is an innkeeper in our neighbourhood who has forty or fifty acres; but probably he requires more than a

INVERNESS.
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GLENELG.
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Donald
Macrae.

INVER-
NESS.

GLENELG.

Donald
Macrae.

ordinary tenant, because he has to support horses and that; but still less than he has might suffice.

32273. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—How long have you been living in Cosaig?

—About ten years.

32274. Where were you before?—In Kirkton.

32275. Why did you remove?—That would be a long story to tell.

32276. Tell it as shortly as you can!—They deprived me of my lot which I had here.

32277. Who did?—I don't mean to blame the proprietor or the factor for it. There happened to be a lawyer of the name of Horne, manager of the property for Mr Baillie of Bristol. There were a lot of us gathered together, and we were discussing the proprietors and managers and that; and I happened to say there was no better stock of landed proprietors in the country side than the Baillies, only they had very bad horns. Mr Horne heard this in Edinburgh, and resolved to put me out of the house and land. It was a very good lot which I had.

32278. Did you use that expression in Gaelic or English?—In Gaelic. Mr Stavert was local factor at the time, and Mr Stavert would execute any commission you would entrust him with. A printed paper was set before us that we were paying rent, and containing a considerable number of articles which we were obliged to sign, otherwise we would have to go out of our lots. One of the articles was that if a son of mine married, he would not be allowed to bring his wife into my house; and if a daughter married, she would not be allowed to bring her husband. I was not to be allowed to cut sea-ware or peat without the consent of the factor, nor to keep a dog, and lots of other rules of the same kind. I went away without signing the paper, and the ground officer came next day and asked why I ran away without signing that paper the previous evening; and he said that unless I signed it I would have to go out of my lot. Through fear I went and signed it. It was about that time that I was discussing proprietors and factors, and it was then I made use of the expression regarding Mr Horne.

32279. How long was it after that that you were put out of your croft?

—Two years after that.

32280. What was the reason given for removing you?—He gave no reason except that he would not suffer me to remain upon the estate.

32281. Did he say that to you or to any other body?—I never saw the man, but I knew what was coming.

32282. How long had you been here before you were removed?

Thirty-two years whatever.

32283. Had you always paid your rent?—Yes; I never slept one night in arrears.

32284. Did any one ever complain of you to the factor or anybody else for anything wrong you had done?—I never heard.

32285. What condition were you in when you were removed here? Were you well off?—I had a house and three cows.

32286. How many sheep?—I was twenty years in the service of Mr Baillie—old Baillie—in charge of the people working at the district roads, bringing in their time and getting money to pay the men.

32287. How many cows do you keep now?—Only one.

32288. And no horse?—No horse. We are at the mercy of the gentle folks in spring, if they will be good enough to give us a horse; and if not, in the case of an old man like myself, the land will have to lie waste.

32289. Were your father and grandfather here before you?—Yes.

32290. Have you seen many people removed in your time?—Yes, I have. I have seen that great big glen, from top to bottom, full of people.

32291. How long ago was it?—Considerably over sixty years ago.

32292. How many families were there?—I could not say.

INVER-
NESS.

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GLENELG.

Donald
Macrae.

32293. But it was full of people?—I could give you a number of the townships. The townships there were only small, but they were bigger than they looked, for behind them in the hills there were shielings—a shieling for every township—and these stood them well, for they had a place for their stock. And, if this Commission is to raise the people from the low condition into which they have come, it will be by restoring the land to them.

32294. Were these people making their living upon the land?—
Yes.

32295. Were they living independently of fishing and other work?—They depended upon their stock; there was no fishing, and a stranger throughout the whole district could get food and drink when he came.

32296. Were there not times, after a bad year, when they would be very ill off?—I don't know of such times; no doubt, when the price of stock was low, they would be straitened a bit; but when the prices rose again their stock would restore them into their former condition.

32297. Was there ever a time, that you remember, when they had to appeal to the public for assistance, until the time of the potato failure?—No, I never heard of it.

32298. Then, where were these people all removed to?—America, a great many of them; and some to Australia.

32299. What was done with the land that they lived upon—who got it?—It was made into bigger lands, and given to the few who remained at home. We petitioned Mr Baillie; we complained that the land was too dear at £2 an acre, and asked that he would give us it at £1 an acre, and he granted our request; and of all the lands that were fixed all that time there is none remaining now without change but one, and that is the only lot upon which there is now a horse in the place; and there might quite as well have been a horse upon all the other lots.

32300. When these people were removed to America and Australia were there some left?—Yes; I am here—one that was left.

32301. I am speaking of the 'great glen,'—was some of the ground taken from them made into sheep farms?—The glen is filled with sheep.

32302. Was that done when the people were removed?—It was done before that. The clearing began at the time of which I spoke, and they were being gradually cleared down and down, township after township, until they reached the glebe. I can give you the names of nine of them, and each of them with its shieling. It was then that the people could live well, and there were heroes in the land. One man was stronger than three of these men here. They have neither the flesh nor bone nor sinews that they had then. The names of the townships were Maolmore, Maol-uachdarach, Bolanalin, Cnocfhuin, Ardaun, Abathalhith, Achadahocuircn, Airithcheachan, Toamchuiadain, Gallatar, and Achdain.

32303. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Are these uninhabited now?—Yes, with the exception of shepherds.

32304. What farm do they belong to?—They are included in Mr Mitchell's farm now; they are included in Rattagan farm.

32305. Did these clearances begin in the time of the M'Leods?—No, in Bruce's time; it was Mr Bruce's factor who commenced the business.

32306. Did Bruce buy the estate from the M'Leods?—Yes. I have seen Bruce myself.

32307. Where did he belong to?—England; and a good proprietor he was, but he had bad servants.

32308. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Was it the policy of the estate here

INVER-
NESS.

GLENELG.

Donald
Macrae.

first to deprive the people of their beasts and to reduce them to poverty afterwards?—Undoubtedly.

32309. And after reducing them to poverty, that was an excuse for sending them away to America?—Those who could were obliged, of their own accord, to go away; and those who were not able to go were only able to creep into such small corners as they might until their means failed, and then they had to go away.

32310. Was it through any fault of the people themselves or their actions that they were reduced to poverty and compelled to be expatriated?—No; if the land had been left with the people there would have been no appearance of poverty. They had horses and cattle and sheep, and they had the fishing of loch and river salmon.

32311. Are the circumstances of the people to-day—as represented to us, being that of considerable poverty—the result of these evictions and clearances?—I am convinced of it. They have not food as they had; they have not the fleece of the sheep; and their children have no milk. They are fed like skeletons in comparison with those who went before them. I speak nothing but the truth, but it is truth that should be told.

32312. *Mr Cameron.*—Do you remember what amount of stock was kept by each of these people?—It would depend upon the size of the township. They had their milk cows and followers, and they kept a horse and young cattle upon the hill. In the last township whose neck was broken, each tenant had ten milk cows and a horse. The number of sheep would be few; I cannot tell the number.

32313. How did these people get reduced to poverty? Were they sent away at once, or were they first reduced to poverty and then sent away?—I remember four—the last of these people. They were first removed to a township across there, opposite the shore—a poor place. One of them is a next door neighbour of my own, a poor crofter. There were two of them sent over to that poor place. The representative of the fourth family is the family now occupying the house upon Mr Macdonald's glebe.

32314. Were the people who went to America so far reduced to poverty that they had no stock when they went, or did they sell their stock before they went?—The first number that went away were those from the upper portion of the glen. They had their stock, which they sold, and they paid their own passage away.

32315. Did they go of their own will?—They thought it was a wise thing for them to go away. Six of my own brothers went.

32316. Were they removed out of their places, or did they go of their own accord?—Some of them had no land. They were shepherds, and they understood from the policy of the estate that it was wiser for them to go away, and so away they went. The last two who went away were only poor crofters.

32317. When you say that the glen was cleared of its people, do you mean that the people were deprived of the land, or that they voluntarily gave it up?—I mean that they were deprived of it.

32318. Were they in poor circumstances, or were they in possession of cattle when they were deprived of it?—They were in poor circumstances when they were deprived of their land.

32319. At what period were they well off, and how did their condition change to one of poverty?—Two of them got a bit of a township (and they are in here to-day), where they have two or three head of cattle, and a few sheep and a horse.

32320. But how did the mass of the people in the big glen change their position from that of prosperity which you described to that of

poverty, in which you say they were when they were removed? How did the change come about?—The reason for their falling from prosperity to poverty is that they lost their land. They did not like being removed; they were for remaining there living upon the produce of their stock, and they became poor and latterly went away.

32321. So that, in point of fact, the people who were in this glen lost first their land, and remained some years on the land without stock and without land?—That is the way.

32322. How long did they remain in that condition as cottars on the land but not occupying the land, and having no stock?—I cannot tell very well the number of years. The tacksman who came in let them all remain as cottars upon the farm.

32323. Do you know how long ago it was when the land was taken from them?—It commenced at the head of the glen nearly sixty years ago.

32324. And when did the emigration take place?—In the time of the famine in 1846, I saw 400 go away on the same day.

32325-9. And they lost their land twenty-five years before that?—Yes, some of them.

DONALD STEWART, Crofter and Blacksmith (53), assisted by DONALD M'LEOD, Crofter and Mason, Galder (54)—examined.

32330. *The Chairman*.—Have you a statement to make?—Yes. ‘My name is Donald Stewart, blacksmith and crofter, Little Galder. About sixty-five years ago all this glen was inhabited, there being twelve or thirteen townships. All these were deprived of their holdings. The most of them emigrated to America. The rest of them were put close together near the sea-shore, namely Galder. There were about twenty crofters in Galder, having an acre or two acres each of arable land, with hill pasture for one or two cows and their followers, but no sheep. At the time of the famine thirty-four years ago, these crofters petitioned the proprietor for assistance, who gave them their choice of a free passage to America, or to have their crofts free of rent till the famine ended; but the then factor concealed from them the fact that they might have the land free for a time, and thus they had no choice but to emigrate. Those that remained were in possession of Galder. About two years after the emigration, Mr Mitchell, the large sheep farmer, who was very intimate with the factor, and wishing to enlarge his farm, asked the whole of Galder, which the factor at once granted him, much against the will of the people, and of my father who had a large share in it, and who reasoned with the factor about the loss the people suffered by taking the land from them, and their rent paid. The factor gave no hearing to this, but gave it to Mitchell; and we believe all this was done quite unknown to the proprietor. Since then, a person cannot get pasture for any beast in Glenelg, unless he can get it in Skye. But still my father was left in possession of Little Galder, for which he paid £14 of rent, until he died twenty-two years ago. Then I succeeded him, and paid the same rent. Sixteen years ago I reclaimed two and a half acres of land; since then I built a barn, byre, and stable, and built an addition to our dwelling house which my father built. I spent more money on the property than any other crofter in it. Five years ago the present factor Mr Mollison, in June 1878, took from me the largest half of my croft, and charged me £10, 10s. for the remaining

INVERNESS.
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GLENELG.
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Donald Macrae.

Donald
Stewart and
Donald
M'Leod.

INVER- ' half, saying Mr Mitchell, the farmer, who had already twenty miles
 NESS. ' stretch of land, by in some part adding townships together, was offering
 GLENELG. ' £12 for it. I wrote to Mr Mitchell, and reminded him of how his father
 Donald ' took from us Big Galder, and that I thought it a hard matter if he was
 Stewart and ' again coveting the small piece left me, by which I supported a large
 Donald ' family and aged mother. He replied stating that he never asked any
 M'Leod. ' of my land. I showed Mr Molison unwillingness to the alteration, at
 ' which he became haughty, saying he was commissioner of the estate,
 ' and if I would say a single word, he would take the whole from me,
 ' and drew out a form in writing and made me sign it to that effect,
 ' and promised me more land in a short time. Likely he was afraid the
 ' proprietor would hear of it, of whom we had never any reason to com-
 plain, for if the factors had acted according to his orders, the crofters here
 ' would have been as well off as any in Scotland, for it was a rule on the
 ' estate that the land was not to be taken from any man as long as he
 ' paid the rent. But as he was not coming to the place, the factors did as
 ' they liked. The half taken from me would keep four cows, from which
 ' I took a profit of between £15 and £20 a year. Next Whitsunday the
 ' factor mentioned that he would require to raise my rent again, for he
 ' said the half given to Mitchell was worth only £4, 10s. to him, but he did
 ' not follow his demand. I calculated on Mr Mitchell's large farm, which
 ' should contain upwards of 5000 sheep, at £800 rent, the pasture of
 ' fifteen sheep which the half taken from me should keep, would come
 ' to £2, 8s. which it is worth to Mitchell, and now of less value, for it is
 ' already overgrown with rashes and coarse grass, where I had good crops
 ' of corn, potatoes, and ryegrass. Many of my neighbours who have no
 ' land would thankfully give £6 for it. Being thus deprived of the best
 ' half of my croft, I was unable to keep my family and mother in the
 ' same circumstances as formerly, and became under the necessity of break-
 ' ing an agreement made with my mother at my father's death that I would
 ' support and give her a cow's grazing as long as I could. This change
 ' made a great injury on my mother. I am not afraid of the factor this
 ' year. If I was as little afraid of him five years ago, I would have my
 ' croft yet. We got a new proprietor, who is very kind to the people, and
 ' seeming to have a great interest in them, and who will not, we trust,
 ' allow the same as the foregoing usages. My circumstances was now so
 ' much reduced that I had to begin the herring fishing. This is only one
 ' instance of many others of a far worse kind done to my neighbours, and
 ' some of these carried on yet by Mr Mitchell. I have no pleasure in
 ' running down any person, but merely to show how we are treated as
 ' slaves, misrepresented and befooled continually, that suffering under
 ' these grievances. We want as much land as will keep us comfortable,
 ' which is our inheritance, at a fair rent; that the Government would
 ' buy good slices of these sheep runs, going into waste for want of
 ' cultivation and stock; that we pay the rent to Government, so as to
 ' enable us to look upon ourselves as free men, for we are tired of this
 ' tyranny. Another of my neighbours, who has a large family, and aged
 ' father and mother dependent on him, has a cow's pasture on Mr
 ' Mitchell's sheep pasture, for which he charges £3, 10s. The man asked
 ' to be allowed to keep the calf, for which he offered 10s. more, to enable
 ' him to pay the pasture. This was refused; the man complained, and said
 ' he was afraid he would require to sell the cow, for the wintering with
 ' the pasture was too heavy on him. Mr Mitchell replied that was what
 ' he liked. So there is no sympathy with the aged or infant; sheep and
 ' the love of money is the whole go, and so on with every other person.'
 32331. This memorial says that the proprietor desired that the people

should have a free passage to America, or to have the crofts free of rent until the famine ended; but that the factor concealed from them the fact that the land might be free for that time. Do you remember that?—I do.

32332. How did you find out that the proprietor wished to give the people this alternative?—One man got an acre or two free, and he was telling that he had been paying no rent for years.

32333. ‘It is difficult to get pasture for any beasts in Glenelg, unless we get it in Skye.’ What do you mean by that?—We go to Skye with any beasts we like to keep. We don’t get pasture in Glenelg; we have to go to Skye.

32334. When you get a calf or a stirk you must take it to Skye to pasture it?—Yes.

32335. What do you pay in Skye?—About 6s. for a one-year-old and 10s. for a two-year-old.

32336. Who gives you the land to pasture it on? Why are the people there kinder?—There are a good many of them who cannot stock their land fully, and are happy to get beasts to pasture.

32337. For how long do they remain in Skye?—Half a year.

32338. At what age do you sell the young beasts?—Two years old.

32339. How much would you get this year for a beast?—£8 to £9.

32340. Have you a calf every year?—Yes.

32341. How many cows have you got now?—Two.

32342. A horse?—One.

32343. How many sheep?—None.

32344. How many acres of arable land?—About twelve acres, between arable and pasture.

32345. How much do you pay?—£10, 10s.; about £12, between taxes and everything else.

32346. And you built the house for yourself and your father?—Yes.

32347. What sort of a house?—Slated.

32348. Can you tell me how much your family have spent upon the house in money?—The proprietor helped us with the slates, the lime, and the timber, and we had the workmanship to do—masonry, carpentry, and slater work.

32349. How much, in money, have you spent upon the house?—I believe I spent more than £40 upon it.

32350. And how much do you think your father spent?—He would have spent as much more upon the dwelling house.

32351. You think your family have spent £80?—Yes.

32352. And, supposing you left it, have you any agreement with the proprietor for compensation?—No.

32353. So that if you went away, you would leave it all behind you?—Yes.

32354. Would the proprietor allow you to sell it to the incoming tenant?—I don’t believe he would; but I am not sure.

32355. Why has your family laid out so much money on the house without any agreement?—Well, the proprietor was a kind man, and we had confidence in him.

32356. You work as a blacksmith?—Yes.

32357. Do you depend more upon your labour as a blacksmith or more upon the croft?—More on the croft; there is only a very little blacksmith work going on in the place.

32358. Do the large farmers not go to you?—Yes, but they are doing very little work requiring a blacksmith.

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GLENELG.
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Donald
Stewart and
Donald
M’Leod.

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Donald
M'Leod.
32359. What do you want for yourself?—I want the part of my croft which was taken from me back again.
32360. Is Mr Mitchell still living?—Yes.
32361. Where does he stay?—Rattagan and Bealary farm.
32362. Is his lease nearly finished?—I suppose it is; but I am not very certain.
32363. Do you think he wishes to take it on again?—I am not sure.
32364. Is he supposed to have had it at a high rent?—I have not heard that said.
32365. *Mr Cameron (to Donald M'Leod).*—What statement have you to make?—*Statement in behalf of the Township of Galder, Glenelg.* ‘The inhabitants of the district of Galder, Glenelg, wish to say to the Royal Commissioners, that in their district there are seventeen families consisting of eighty souls, ten of whom are paupers. Seven families of these have not an inch of ground except what their houses stand on. Their houses were erected by themselves, and they pay a ground rent of five shillings a year for their stances. Six families have from one to four acres each. The fences surrounding their land have been put up by themselves, but as they cannot afford to lay out money on wire fences to the extent required, their crops are much injured by the sheep of the farmers whose land surrounds them. Two of the crofters kept dogs for a short time, to help to keep off the trespassing sheep; but the farmer sent them word that unless they sent away their dogs, he would get them turned out of their crofts. These have to say, however, that the farmer has given them wire this summer, with which they intend, as soon as it can be done, to improve their fences. The district of Galder, over thirty years ago, was wholly occupied by crofters, when they had the whole of the hill pasture, and so were able to keep a sufficient number of cattle to provide milk for their families. Now, only three of the seventeen families are able to feed their cow on their own croft. Three others have a cow each, for which they have to pay £3 to the farmer for hill pasture. Owing to the unnecessary shutting up of an old road, which existed from time immemorial, these three cows have to be driven over two miles before they get to their pasture. If they come to the gate on this old road they are hunted by the farmer's dogs, to their great injury. This gate is not 200 yards from the crofters' houses, and they consider it a great hardship, especially when it does not interfere with any crop, to have to drive their cattle such a round. One of the crofters said to the manager that he would lay this grievance before the Royal Commission. The reply was that neither he nor his master cared for the Royal Commission. These crofters trust that the Royal Commission will be the means of their getting their crofts added to, so that they may be enabled to support themselves and their families decently. There is a good deal of land in the parish at present available for their purpose, and they are willing to give a fair rent for any portion assigned to them. Another grievance which affects the whole parish is, that there is no money order office, and no telegraph office, nearer than Lochalsh. The post road to Lochalsh is merely a sheep track over the hill, and in wet weather it is absolutely dangerous, owing to the boggy nature of the ground. The want of proper postal and telegraph communication is most felt during the herring fishing season, when messages often cannot be sent in time to command a proper market for the herring, thereby entailing great loss on the poor people, many of whom go to Lochourn for the fishing.’ In addition to the foregoing, we have to state the following facts:—That we went peaceably to Mr Mitchell, and asked him to be kind enough to open the gate for our cows. He answered, the

' argument is not at an end, it will be the case that you will not get a cow's grass at all, and he swore not to anger him. This was for making an opening for the cows to come home at a very late hour. Having got no satisfaction from Mr Mitchell, we went to Mr Mollison the factor, to consult with him about our trouble. He replied it was tormentable to drive the cattle up the hill and that round; "but you must keep quiet, or else I will put the snatches on you." Then we gave up getting any justice. Twenty-nine years ago we were put out of our houses, and every article we had put out on the main road, until we acknowledged to give up our land for another man, being three days and three nights outside until we consented to give up the land. Ever since that time we had no land until last Whitsunday, we got one acre each from the present factor. We believe all the hardships we suffered, was never known to the proprietor.'

32366. Do you represent the people of Galder?—Yes.

32367. Who wrote this paper?—Mrs Macdonald, the minister's wife, wrote the first part.

32368. And who wrote the last part?—One of the scholars.

32369. The same person did not compose both parts?—Upon the first occasion I told Mrs Macdonald what to put down, and she put it down in her own language; and I dictated some to the boy, and the boy put it down in his own language too.

32370. Is it the boy's composition or your own?—It is my own language.

32371. You dictated it to a boy, who wrote it down?—Yes.

32372. You say that the farmer has given some of them wire this summer, with which they intend, as soon as it can be done, to improve their fences. Does that mean all, or only some?—That is some of them who have more land than I and my neighbour have. We have only a small portion, and our cows graze upon Mr Mitchell's place; and I had to sell my own, because of the way it was being used by the shepherds, and I have only a quey now.

32373. Is the whole township enclosed with a wire fence, or is each croft separated from the other by a wire fence?—There are only two crofts that are fenced round; the others have no fence to separate them from Mr Mitchell's farm.

32374. And these two are the crofters who have got the wire with which they intend to repair the fence?—Yes; and they have got it in order to prevent the farmer's sheep trespassing upon their arable ground, with which they had been very much bothered.

32375. What common grazing have these crofters got?—We have no common grazing at all. My neighbour and I have nothing except the grazing upon the farm, and the other two have only the grazing within the fence.

32376. Then the pasture to which these three cows have to be driven is the pasture belonging to the farm?—Yes.

32377. Can Mr Mitchell not give them pasture a little nearer than two miles?—The pasture is near enough, if he would only let us through that gate; it would only be 200 yards from the houses, but he compels us to make a circuit of two miles to get to it.

32378. Did the manager give any reason, when he was asked to allow the crofters' cattle to go through the gate, why he would not do it?—No, he would not.

32379. Have you any idea what the reason is?—I cannot tell; no reason in the world, unless that he would have better pasture for his sheep.

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Stewart and
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M'Leod.

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32380. But, as I understand, the cows get the pasture once they are on the other side of the fence, only you have to drive them round to the end of the fence. They would not eat any more grass although they went through the gate?—We have to take them round a circuit of two miles, morning and afternoon. He has reserve pasture within the fence which he does not like us to go over, and so he compels us to make the circuit. The public road is on one side, and there is a gate, but there is a rock, and the cattle have to go round this; the wire fence ends at the rock, and the cattle have to go round.

32381. But there is no pasture along the road that they could injure or destroy?—No; the fence is quite close to the road.

32382. ‘Mr Mitchell said the argument was not at an end,’ what did you understand by that?—We got a chance one night of the gate being open, and we brought the cattle through it, and that was the reason why he commenced to talk.

32383. You talk about the telegraph and post, and you say the post road to Lochalsh is merely a sheep track over the hill. Is the post sent by a foot messenger?—By a foot messenger.

32384. How many days a week?—Three days a week.

32385. Are you aware that a new parcel post opened yesterday or the day before?—Oh yes, I know of it; and the man is carrying parcels.

32386. Have you received any parcels at Galder since it was opened?—No.

32387. Have you sent any away?—No. It would be very necessary to have improved communication during the fishing season to Loch Hourn.

32388. Do you suppose that a foot messenger will be able to carry parcels by this road?—He is not obliged to carry above 30 lbs. weight or so.

32389. How many miles does this man go?—Six or seven.

32390. Do you think the post-office would make a man go with 35 lbs. on his back?—I don't know; but he told me last night he had about 30 lbs. on his back, or near about it.

32391. So that if the parcels increase the post-office will be obliged to find some other road?—I heard that they would require to provide him with an assistant in such a case.

32392. I suppose the fishermen in Loch Hourn feel the want of telegraphic communication?—Very much.

32393. Do you or any of the people fish at Galder?—Very little.

32394. And the want of telegraphic communication is a general complaint?—Yes.

32395. Had you a good fishing in Loch Hourn last year?—There has been none as yet this season.

ANDREW MITCHELL, Rattagan (31)—examined.

Andrew
Mitchell.

32396. *The Chairman.*—You heard the complaint made by one of the witnesses about the fences, and of your refusing to allow the cattle to go by the short road on to the pasture?—Off the pasture.

32397. Explain that to us?—In the first place, Donald Stewart said that I offered £12 for his pasture. The meaning of that is, that I got a bit that was planted added to the farm, and, there being no fence, the sheep came down to his crops and destroyed them, and I applied to the estate management. Going round his bounds would have made a pretty long.

fence. I did not want his land, and refused it. I said I would almost rather leave things as they were than put up a fence in that way, and be charged rent for it. I put up a fence on my own lands to keep the sheep off his crops, and put a gate upon it. These people whose cows were pastured there, instead of taking them round below the rock, broke down the gate at times, and the shepherd told them they must keep them below the rock, and, I believe, once went round that way to show them. With regard to the case he refers to, his brother came over to say he had broken the gate the night before with his cows, and that he had come over to apologise, and I believe he had spoken a good deal to the shepherd's wife. I said it was all right, that there would be no more about it; but on his way home, I understand, he took his coat off to the shepherd, and told him to 'come on, and he would do for him.'

32398. First, with reference to the piece of ground which it was stated you and your family had taken off the original area of his croft?—Yes, there was a piece taken off to straighten the fence, by the estate.

32399. In whose hands is that now?—It is thrown into our farm.

32400. Are you paying an additional rent for it?—£8 a year.

32401. You said something about a piece being planted?—When I arranged for my lease ten years ago, I had not this bit that was planted; Mr Mackintosh of the hotel had it, and he and I exchanged it.

32402. But this bit planted had nothing to do with the bit taken off the crofters' holding?—Nothing, but that it bounded the blacksmith's holding.

32403. You say you did not want to have any land taken off this man's holding?—No, certainly not; but I wanted a piece of a fence put up.

32404. But still, by necessity, you find yourself actually in possession of his land against your will?—Yes.

32405. Against your will?—Yes; I did not want it.

32406. Supposing you had said positively to the factor, 'I won't take it,' what would he have done?—There would have been the old fighting every day, because the sheep would be eating the blacksmith's crops, there being no fence to keep them out. I offered to do half the fence, but he would not because he had no lease.

32407. Would the proprietor have compelled him to do it?—I do not think so, but I don't know. The other statement made by Donald Stewart was that my father took the land from the crofters. That, as I understand it, is not the case. The ground officer had the farm for some years, and sheep also, but did not succeed, and then my father got the ground. He got it in 1852, and in 1860 he got the other. One of them said I refused to give them a calf; that is a mistake. I think they have all calves at present. They are very irregular in their payments, and I may have made some sharp remark to them. One of them pays very regularly, but he is not here.

32408. How many are there of them who have cows upon your ground?—In that spot only three at present. There have been five or six, but they sometimes take them away.

32409. Are you not under any obligation in your lease to allow them to pasture?—Yes, at 50s. a year.

32410. And, on the whole, it is a benefit to them?—I think so.

32411. And it is one you would not like to deprive them of?—Not at all, so long as they pay with reasonable punctuality.

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Andrew
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William
M'Crimmon.

WILLIAM M'Crimmon, Crofter, Bernera (42)—examined.

32412. *The Chairman.*—Are you a delegate?—Yes.
32413. Have you a written statement?—No.
32414. Where is Bernera?—It is a township over on the other side, between here and Kyle Rhea ferry.
32415. What is your complaint?—We wish to get more land.
32416. How much land have you got at present?—We keep four cows, one horse, and thirty sheep each; some have forty sheep.
32417. What property are you on?—Mr Baillie's.
32418. What is your rent?—£16 each.
32419. How many acres of arable land have you?—Between six and seven acres.
32420. You have very good hill pasture, I suppose?—Pretty bad; broken ground.
32421. Is it fenced?—No.
32422. Who is on the other side of the march?—Mr Mitchell.
32423. Do you live on good terms with his shepherds?—Pretty fair.
32424. They don't do you any harm?—They pound our horses occasionally.
32425. Do your horses go on Mr Mitchell's land?—Sometimes.
32426. Would you like to have a fence between the farm and your pasture?—We would be quite as well with a fence.
32427. How many crofters are there in the township?—Four.
32428. Have you any cottars living on them?—Only one.
32429. Does he belong to any family of the crofters, or is he a stranger who has come in?—He belongs to the place.
32430. How long has your rent been £16? Has it been raised in your lifetime?—Yes.
32431. When was it raised?—Ten or twelve years ago, in Mr Stavert's time.
32432. What was the rent before?—£14; it was raised by £2.
32433. Had it been long standing at £14?—Yes, all my time it was at £14 until then.
32434. Considering the increased price of cattle, is it dearer now at £16 than when you began at £14?—No, I rather think not; I think it is about as cheap now as it was at £14. But it was very much cheaper than £14 long before that.
32435. Have the rents of the large farms in this neighbourhood been reduced?—Yes.
32436. You know that?—Yes, I know that quite well.
32437. Have the rents of any of the small holdings been reduced?—No.
32438. What have you done for the improvement of this little farm? I have reclaimed about an acre and a half.
32439. Have you done any draining?—Yes, I did.
32440. Stone or tile drains?—Stone drains, with turf over them.
32441. Any lime?—No, never.
32442. Any fence?—Some wire fencing.
32443. What have you done to your house? Have you improved it?—No; I have done nothing to the house since I got possession of the land.
32444. Is it slated?—No; we built it ourselves.
32445. Is it a thatched house?—Yes, a thatched house.
32446. You have a better croft than is common in this country; do

you make a living out of it for your family, or do you work for wages?—I could not make a living off my croft; I buy and sell.

32447. You don't fish?—No; I was brought up in one of the townships named already as having been in the back glen which was cleared; my father was one of the last that was dispossessed.

32448. Do you consider yourself much better off with this croft than those who have got one acre of land and who live by fishing?—Yes, I consider myself better off than they are.

32449. And if there were more crofts of the same kind as yours would the people be happier and better off?—Yes, if they only got them a little cheaper. There is no place in the whole country dearer than our place. I show an old receipt, of date 1838, for £16 on account of rent.

32450. Had your father a croft on the big glen worth £16 a year at that time?—Yes, my father paid £16 of rent for his croft, and it was well worth that. There were four of them, and they each had ten milk cows and near about one hundred sheep each. They left it twenty years ago.

32451. When these crofters went away did they go of their own free will or were they forced away?—They were forced out.

32452. Did any of them go to America?—No, the old man explained what became of them; they removed here and there.

32453. Do you want more land?—Yes, we want more land; and now that the proprietor has plenty of land in his own hands, and is wishing to let it, we do not see very well why he should not give it out to those of us who could afford to take it, when we would be willing to pay at the same rate of rent as the large farms.

32454. What land has the proprietor in his own hands?—Eilanreoch.

32455. *Professor Mackinnon.*—What amount of land would you yourself be able or willing to take?—I would take about 300 or 400 acres.

32456. What would be about the rent of the place you would wish to take?—Between £30 and £40.

32457. That would be about the size of the place your father had long ago?—Yes.

32458. And you think the place for which he paid £16 would now-a-days be worth £30 or £40?—Thereabout.

32459. *The Chairman.*—You would require to leave your present place if you got such a place as that?—I would be quite willing to do that. Three were ejected from this place in order to make room for us when we went there, and some would be only too glad to get back even at the present day.

32460. Can you say how those in your father's position were able to stand the shock of the potato famine?—He never got any assistance at that time, although, no doubt, it gave them a heavy blow. Still, they had sufficient means to be able to do without assistance, and if they had been left in the land they would have been able to hold it. They were not a penny in arrears.

32461. *Professor Mackinnon.*—And did he always consider it a loss to have had to leave that place and go where he went to?—Yes.

32462. He would have preferred to remain where he was?—Yes.

32463. Do you remember what amount of stock he would have when he left it?—About twelve milk cows, and one hundred sheep, and horses.

32464. And he was not in arrears of rent nor in debt in any way?—No.

32465. That was thirty years ago?—Yes.

32466. And his neighbours were in the same way?—Yes, one of them; the other two were not so good. My father was born in Swordlan, and he was removed to this place; but his two grandfathers were in this same township to which he himself was afterwards removed.

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GLENELG.

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William
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INVER- 32467. So that your people have been living on this land for a long time?—Yes.

NESS. 32468. You don't come from Skye?—No.

GLENELG. 32469. You are no relations of the pipers of Dunvegan?—I cannot say.

William M'Crimmon. 32470. Is the name M'Crimmon common in this country?—No.

32471. Have you any knowledge of how your family came to this place?—No.

32472. But you have been here for a long time?—We have been here for at least five or six generations.

32473. Do you, who were in the big glen with your father, believe that that glen could be repeopled with such substantial tenants as your own father was, if the proprietor would give it back to you again?—Yes; but the delegate didn't mention the other side of the glen. There is a river coming down through the glen, and the other side is mostly the same as the big side. The other side of the glen could be peopled quite as well. I remember myself of a few tenants who were there at one time. I have a chair in my house which was made out of a portion of the timber of a house which was burned at the time Prince Charles went through the country. That shows that my people have been in the country for a long time.

32474. *The Chairman.*—Was that the old house of your grandfather?—It was the same house, but we rebuilt it just before we were removed finally out of it.

32475. When you removed did you receive any compensation for the new house you built?—No, not a penny. We were only a year or two in the place, when we saw that they thought to remove us again. By that time we had the dwelling-house and offices built.

32476. But you were not removed?—No, we were not. They tried to remove me again last year.

32477. Why?—[Exhibits summons of ejectment.] This decree was not executed. I went to the factor and saw him, and he told me to go away home, and I would get leave to stay as long as I paid my rent. Last Whitsunday he went and took down the very fence I put up myself, saying that I had more land than my neighbours. This was about the land I reclaimed myself. His manager measured it out three times, and upon each occasion he found a different measurement. When the proprietor died last year, I got an invitation to the funeral along with many others, and I and one or two of the smaller tenants went to the funeral, and very shortly afterwards the factor gave me this paper, and attempted to eject me.

32478. Do you know what they meant or intended by this summons of ejectment?—They wanted us to make a club stock of the sheep.

32479. They did not really want to turn you out?—He wished to eject me, evidently, because I was of the old stock of the land.

**DONALD FRASER, Schoolmaster and Inspector of the Poor (50)—
examined.**

Donald Fraser. 32480. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—How long have you been resident here?—Twenty-two years.

32481. As a teacher and inspector of poor?—Yes.

32482. I suppose you are registrar also?—I am.

32483. You are well acquainted with the people and their way of

living?—Yes, I go occasionally through the parish in the discharge of my duties.

32484. Have you any particulars to tell us in addition to what has been already stated?—No, I think you have got pretty full statements.

32485. You have heard all that has been said to-day?—Yes.

32486. So far as you know, have the statements been correct?—I think they have been pretty correct, on the whole.

32487. Without exaggeration?—Yes, I think so.

32488. Has the condition of the people improved since you came here?—I think it is rather the reverse. I find that we require to give a larger allowance to our paupers than when I came here. They live very largely upon their neighbours—the crofters—who are not in a position to assist them.

32489. What is the expense of keeping a pauper now compared with what it was at first?—When I came here first the aliment for an old woman was about 6s. a month, but I find that we pay about double that sum now, besides clothing and shoes and that sort of thing.

32490. Is there a large number of paupers in the parish?—We have just about 5 per cent. of the population; about 75 paupers to the population of the parish, which is a little more than 1600.

32491. *The Chairman.*—What is the rental of the parish?—£9700, gross rental.

32492. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Has the average number of paupers increased in accordance with the population?—No, I think not.

32493. Has the population of this parish decreased considerably?—It decreased about 200 between 1871 and 1881. I had the charge of the taking of the census on both occasions, and before 1871 it was 1843, whereas at present it is a little over 1600.

32494. Did it decrease in the decade before that?—Yes, it was going on decreasing.

32495. What has been the cause of the decrease?—You have heard to-day that a good many were put out of their holdings, and that they left the country; and I suppose that has been going on.

32496. Has there been any voluntary emigration to the south of Scotland?—Not very much in my time.

32497. And notwithstanding the decrease of the population, the condition of those who remained has not improved?—I don't think so.

32498. What is the reason of that?—Well, in a part of the parish they are very dependent upon the fishing of Loch Hourn; and, as they have no land, when the fishing fails them they must necessarily be very poor.

32499. How do you maintain the paupers here; you have no poorhouse?—We have some accommodation in the Oban Poorhouse as a test. We don't send paupers there, but we use it as a test. We just give them cash; that is the pauper relief.

32500. You don't make much use of that test?—We use it in some doubtful cases, not in the parish, but principally for applicants chargeable in the south. We use the poorhouse as a test for them; but we don't send any out of the parish.

32501. Are you satisfied with the educational administration of the parish?—Oh, yes.

32502. Who are the members of the School Board?—Mr Macdonald, who was examined to-day, Mr Mundell, Mr Miller, Mr Mackintosh, the hotelkeeper, and Mr Walker, the priest in Morar.

32503. Who are the members of the Parochial Board?—Much the same. Of course we have all the proprietors as members, and some

INVERNESS.

GLENELG.

Donald
Fraser.

INVER-
NESS.

GLENELG.

Donald
Fraser.

elected members. Mr Mitchell, who was here, is an elected member, and Mr Moffat, another large farmer.

32504. Do they hold regular meetings?—We have just the two statutory meetings, and other meetings as there is cause for them.

32505. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—I believe you are an evicted crofter?—Yes, I got a croft when I came to Glenelg.

32506. Apart from your own personal matters, can you say that the local administration of the estate for many years has been unsatisfactory to the people of the district?—I think the local administration has been very unsatisfactory for the last fourteen years or so.

32507. May I say that nothing has been done, directly or indirectly, for the amelioration or benefit of the poorer class of the people, but rather the reverse?—I am not aware.

32508. There is nothing in the position of Glenelg, so far as the quality of the soil is concerned, or the habits of the people, to prevent them from being very comfortable if the administration were different?—Quite the reverse, for the soil is very good.

32509. And the people?—They are very industrious, but there is no work in the district, and that is a drawback too.

32510. It may be said, then, that not only has nothing been done for them, but the local administration has been against them?—Very much.

32511. Supposing that the administration had continued, what would the result have been?—It is hard to say.

32512. Still greater poverty?—No doubt of it.

32513. And still greater discontent?—Certainly.

32514. From what we have heard to-day, and what you yourself know, does there appear to be a prospect, in the altered circumstances, of a more pleasant state of matters in the future?—The people hope so, as the young proprietor is likely to come a good deal amongst the people. The late proprietor was only here once, and that was twenty years ago.

32515. Among other things in connection with the local administration, had it not a tendency to encourage litigation?—Greatly.

32516. Into which the people were drawn unnecessarily?—Yes.

32517. Did you yourself converse with the new proprietor when he was here?—I did, a little.

32518. Had you any opportunity of representing matters to him?—I made no representation whatever to him. I only saw him for a few minutes. He was going away when I happened to meet him at the hotel.

32519. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—You mentioned that the poverty of the people had increased since you came here twenty-two years ago?—Yes.

32520. And you said you thought it was partly due to the administration of the estate?—Yes, because the people get no work to do.

32521. Was there any alteration generally in the size of the holdings?—No, no great alteration; only some people were deprived of their lands, which were taken possession of by the local factor.

32522. That has not been to any great extent?—Not to any great extent.

32523. It is only rated at £10 a-year?—But he had the value of £30.

32524. In a large estate that is not much. You said you partly attributed the poverty of the people to the bad fishings, has the fishing in Loch Hourn been bad?—It has been remarkably good for the last two years, but for a series of years prior to that it was very poor.

32525. Do you remember its being better when you first came to the country?—It was pretty good for some years.

32526. How many years did it remain so?—They always got a few herring, but for several years only a very small quantity.

INVER-
NESS.

32527. And you think it is principally owing to that that the poverty of the place has increased?—I think so.

GLENELG.

32528. And you think also that the want of the rental of the estate being spent on the property has had much to do with it?—Yes.

Donald
Fraser.

32529. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Is this local factor, of whom we have heard so much, in the country now?—No; he has, fortunately, gone.

32530. Where is he?—I don't know.

WILLIAM GRANT and ALEXANDER M'LENNAN, Letterfearn, Glenshiel—
examined.

32531. *The Chairman.*—I understand you have some request to make regarding the proceedings at yesterday's meeting at Letterfearn?—We wish your Lordship and the Commission to receive a short statement in supplement of the evidence which we gave yesterday.

William
Grant and
Alexander
M'Lennan

32531*. Please to show it to me?—It is as follows:—‘ We, the Letterfearn delegates, beg to make known to the Royal Commission that it is ‘ not alone for the small piece of land which was offered to some of the ‘ Letterfearn people for £15, that the farm of Druidaig was reduced £60, ‘ but on account also of the shooting and lodge, which was attached to the ‘ said farm, being taken away from it last term. It was reduced £60, on ‘ which the farmer got more than £100 every year. The statement by ‘ Mr M'Lean, the factor, may have led the Royal Commission to believe ‘ that £60 was taken off Druidaig for the small piece of land which was ‘ offered to the Letterfearn people for £15. But if the fourth delegate ‘ was called he would have explained this matter, and as he was not called ‘ we have thought it best to give this note to the Royal Commission. ‘ Regarding Ruarach, which was offered to some of the Letterfearn people, ‘ the tenant, who had it previous to that time, was obliged to give it up ‘ by losing a great deal of money on it. Therefore, we thought it better ‘ not to go under a burden which would be impossible to carry. We ‘ thought Nonach the same.—WILLIAM GRANT, ALEXANDER M'LENNAN, ‘ delegates.’

Your statement will be added to the evidence, and considered along with the rest.

[ADJOURNED].

INVER-
NESS.

ARISAIG.

ARISAIG, INVERNESS, MONDAY, AUGUST 6, 1883.

Present:—

Lord NAPIER and ETTRICK, K.T., *Chairman.*
 Sir KENNETH S. MACKENZIE, Bart.
 DONALD CAMERON, Esq. of Lochiel, M.P.
 C. FRASER-MACKINTOSH, Esq., M.P.
 Sheriff NICOLSON, LL.D.
 Professor MACKINNON, M.A.

Eneas R. Macdonell of Camusdarroch.—Would you allow me to state on behalf of the crofters that they have requested me to seek protection, in speaking formally before the Commission to-day, from the proprietor and factor and ground officer, and all other people in authority who may harass them for speaking the truth.

Mr N. B. Mackenzie, factor for the proprietrix of Arisaig.—I am authorised to say, on behalf of the proprietors, that persons may speak freely and perfectly whatever grievances they may have, and that anything they may say to-day will not be used against them.

COLIN MACDONALD, Crofter's Son, Bunacaimb (35,) assisted by **RANALD MACDONALD**, Crofter, Bunacaimb (30)—examined.

Colin
Macdonald
and Ranald
Macdonald.

32532. *The Chairman.*—Have you been elected by the people?—Yes.
 32533. Have you any written statement to make?—Yes. ‘Grievances.—(1) Rent.—The rent of Bunacaimb in 1857 was £57, and remained so for three years, when it was increased fully 70 per cent., namely to £100, and at which date we received “tiles” for drainage purposes. Then in 1861 land to the value of £11 per annum was taken from us, and in two years after (1863) the greatest part of, and the most valuable of our hill pasture was retained by the proprietor, and has remained in the estate hands since then, namely twenty years, valued at £22, 10s. yearly in proportion to our rents. Again in 1865 land to the value of £15 per annum belonging to the township was let to an incomer, and the rent put into the landlord's pocket, without any reduction in the rent of the rest. In the course of four years a promise of substantial slated houses was given, and on that basis the rent was raised from £100 to £144, but fourteen years have elapsed and the substantial houses have not been built yet. So that our rental for the past twenty-six years has increased fully 150 per cent., and the heart of the hill pasture kept from us during the past twenty years. (2) Land—The average rental is £12, 10s. Stock, four cows and followers. The ground is a sandy loam in one part, which is greatly impoverished by the tenants being obliged to plant an incessant potato crop for more than twenty years past on the same ground. Again, the ground raises an inferior corn crop, and after the cattle has received the full produce of hay, corn, and part produce of potatoes, wintering has to be provided. Draining, fencing, trenching, and other works of reclamation have been pushed on in the face of trying obstacles, without any assistance from

the proprietor. The land requires an extraordinary amount of sea-ware. (3) Houses—They are in general huts with two apartments, and a few slated houses. The huts and outhouses were built in most cases by the tenants, only in three instances aid to the amount of £4 was given. The oldest rent payer has built two houses, and was obliged to repair a third one, the walls of which are now rent, and the house itself very uncomfortable, as well as being at the mercy of the high tides, which have played havoc at different times. (4) Cattle—Our stirks on an average return annually about £5, 10s. Yet it must be understood that the purchasing of wintering materially reduces the average gain from cattle, even to fully £1 per crofter. Again, an old practice of paying £1, 5s. by the neighbour who had one cow in excess to the neighbour who had a deficiency of one cow, was prohibited by the factor. The tenant with one cow extra pays the estate £3 for the extra cow; and the tenant whose grass is eaten by the other man's cow is without cow and money. The stirks on an average do not pay our rents, and if our main dependence, namely the herring fishing, proves a failure, we must have recourse to whelk gathering to aid us in paying our rents, as for the last eight years we have had no work provided by the proprietor. The new regulations of 1883 have several rules unbearable, and unless they are modified and in some instances curtailed, we cannot bind ourselves to them. A copy of the rules are on hand, and the objections underlined. Requirements.—(1) Reduction of rent of present holding as may be made by a duly qualified and appointed Government valuator. (2) Increase of land—in the first place enough to enable us to keep horses, so as to save men, and especially women, from carrying peats, sea-weed, and dung itself. Land enough we want to save our wives and sisters from serving as beasts of burden. (3) In the next instance, we want room enough for a certain number of sheep, if only for home consumption. (4) Again, we desire room to prevent incessant planting of potato crop on the same ground. Next we seek for substantial and commodious houses, as well as a common fence between the hill pasturage and arable land. And last, we claim compensation for the deprivation of our hill pasturage since 1863.—COLIN M'DONALD and RANALD M'DONALD, Bunacalmb.'

INVERNESS.

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ARISAIG.Colin
Macdonald
and Ranald
Macdonald.*Summary of the aforesaid Grievances reduced in figures:—*

1. Deprivations.

(a) Loss of land from 1861 to 1883, valued at £11 per year,	£242 10 0
(b) " " 1863 to 1883, " £22, 10s. per year,	450 0 0
(c) " " 1865 to 1883, " £15 per year,	270 0 0
(d) Increase of rent from 1869 to 1883, valued at £21 per year,	294 0 0
(e) Improvements by crofters since 1860 on land and fencing, &c.,	400 0 0

£1696 10 0

Concessions, 172 0 0

Balance in favour of crofters, £1524 10 0

Concessions given since 1860 were—

1. Three houses, valued at about £120,	£120 0 0
2. One house repaired, valued at £20,	20 0 0
3. Money aid for erecting three huts,	12 0 0
4. Fences, tiles, doors, windows, and lime, valued at	20 0 0

£172 0 0

32534. You have drawn up a sort of balance account here. Since 1861 the rent of the land has been once increased, and there have been three subtractions of various portions of land; and you have calculated these,

INVERNESS.

ARISAIG.

Colin
Macdonald
and Ranald
Macdonald.

added to the amounts executed by the crofters, at a total value of £1696, and you have calculated the concessions of the proprietor at £172, and brought out a balance in favour of the crofters of £1524, what do you mean by that? Do you mean that you claim the repayment of £1524?—I mean that the land we lost was taken off us unjustly, and that we had to pay it.

32535. I understand that; but I ask you whether you merely present this as a picture of what was lost of your own, or whether you claim repayment of it?—We put it that way to show what we have lost. I mean it to show the way we suffer.

32536. The first increase of rent was in the year 1860?—Yes.

32537. Who was the proprietor at that time?—Mr Macdonnell, who is present here to-day.

32538. Do you remember that time?—Very well.

32539. Were you engaged in the cultivation of the croft at that time?—My father was.

32540. Your father experienced this rise of rental?—Yes, and I remember it.

32541. Was this first increase of rental in the way of payment of interest for the tiles supplied and the drainage executed, or was it a simple rise of rental having no reference to those things?—I think it was just for a lift of money; the money was wanted on the proprietor's side.

32542. You say you received tiles for drainage purposes?—Yes.

32543. Were drains made?—Yes, by us crofters.

32544. Were you paid for the work at the drains?—No.

32545. You merely received the tiles?—Received the tiles.

32546. And the rise of rental was more than the interest on the value of the tiles?—I would think so.

32547. Was the land really improved by this operation of drainage?—Certainly it was, by the crofters themselves.

32548. With the assistance of the tiles furnished by the proprietor?—Exactly.

32549. In 1861 land to the value of £11 was taken—what was the nature of that?—Some more people coming in got some of our land, and they had to pay rent to that extent to the factor.

32550. People were brought in and placed upon land to the extent of £11?—Yes.

32551. Where were those people brought from?—Not very far distant.

32552. Were they strangers, or the natural increase of the people of the township?—They came from some other places.

32553. What was done with the land which they left?—It is in the hands of one man principally at present.

32554. Was it all given to one man?—Yes.

32555. Was he a sheep farmer?—A sheep farmer.

32556. You say that the most valuable portion of the hill pasture was retained by the proprietor, and has remained in the hands of the estate ever since then?—Yes.

32557. What sort of land was that; was it heather land?—Yes, but it was the best of our pasturage.

32558. What is done with it now that it is turned into a farm?—It is let to another tenant who keeps sheep; it is also added to the sheep farm.

32559. In 1865 land of the value of £15 per annum was let to an incomer; where did that incomer come from?—From this place which is occupied by the sheep farm at present.

32560. He was turned out of the sheep farm to be put into your place?—Yes; and he is paying rent to the proprietor.

32561. A promise of slated houses was given, and on that basis the rent was raised from £100 to £144. How was that promise given—was it made in writing?—No.

INVER-
NESS.

32562. What evidence have you got that any such promise was made?—We have different witnesses.

—

32563. Did the factor or the proprietor make the promise in person?—Yes, the proprietor.

ARISAIG.

32564. Who was the proprietor at that time?—Mr Macdonnell, South Morar.

Colin

32565. Have you ever complained that this promise has not been fulfilled?—Yes, it never was fulfilled.

Macdonald

32566. What is the answer of the proprietor when the complaint was made?—We don't put that question to them.

and Ranald

32567. You said they made a complaint that it was not fulfilled?—We are making the complaint.

Macdonald

32568. What reply did the proprietor make?—They gave no reply whatever.

32569. The estate has changed hands?—Yes.

32570. Does the present proprietor admit that any such promise was made by his predecessor?—He does not know whether that was the case or not.

32571. Have you given him evidence?—We petitioned him telling him the state we were in at present, and the low rent we were paying in 1857, and the manner in which the rent had been increased. We asked him to do something for us, and he said nothing to that.

32572. Is any portion of the land which has been taken from your township during the last twenty years now occupied by the proprietor, or has it been let off to the farmers?—It is given to other tenants, and paid for to the proprietor.

32573. There is none of it in the proprietor's hands?—No, it is given to the tenants.

32574. Have these tenants, to whom it has been given, leases of it?—With the exception of one, I believe not.

32575. Passing over the former increases of rent and diminution of area, you state that your present rental is £12, 10s.; and you can keep four cows with followers, no horse, and no sheep?—That is so.

32576. And how many acres of arable land may there be?—There will be about three or four acres, so far as I can calculate.

32577. What rental do you at present pay?—Ranald Macdonald. £12, 10s.

32578. And do you keep four cows?—Yes.

32579. Your memorial says that your land requires a great deal of sea-ware, where do you get it?—We go two or three miles in a boat for it.

32580. Do you pay anything for it when you get it?—No.

32581. Upon whose coast is the sea-ware?—Does it belong to the same proprietor?—Yes.

32582. Does it belong to the same township, this piece of coast?—Not exactly.

32583. Is there plenty of sea-ware?—Yes.

32584. And you pay nothing for it?—Yes.

32585. But you cannot bring it by land?—No.

32586. Could a road be made through your place to the shore, or is it impossible to make a road?—It is impossible; we have to carry it by boats.

32587. You say that the oldest rent payer has built two houses, and was obliged to repair a third one. Where has he built two houses?—We

INVERNESS. shifted about on account of the crowd that was coming in. He shifted back and forward, and had to build two houses for himself.

ARISAIG. 32588. He left his first house and went into a second?—Yes.

Colin Macdonald and Ranald Macdonald. 32589. When he left the first house did he get any compensation?—No.

32590. Did he carry the roof of it away?—No, it was not worth carrying.

32591. Then he built a second house?—Yes.

32592. Did he get any assistance from the proprietor to build it?—No.

32593. No wood or lime?—No.

32594. Why did he repair the third house?—*Colin Macdonald.* He got something for the third one.

32595. Why was he turned out of the second one?—On account of the people increasing and overcrowders coming in, he was, as it were, put on the one side.

32596. He was removed twice?—Three times.

32597. And the house, you say, is at the mercy of the high tides?—Yes.

32598. Has the high tide ever come into the house?—At different times.

32599. Has he represented that to the proprietor?—Yes.

32600. He has got older and the house has got worse?—Yes.

32601. And the complaint is that when a man has one cow too much, he is not allowed to pay the rent for the cow to the other man who has one cow too little. Why has the proprietor prohibited that?—The factor is here, and can explain that.

32602. Perhaps it was in order to prevent some having too many cattle and others too few?—If they have too little, they have to pay six month's rent beforehand.

32603. You state that you have recourse to gathering whelks, to whom do you sell them?—They go to London.

32604. How much do you get for them?—8s. or 10s. per bag.

32605. Who gathers them?—The women, and the men if the herring fishing fails them. We have no other work.

32606. How much can you make in a week in that way if you are gathering whelks?—A woman would gather about a bag in a week. She could save say 8s. in the week.

32607. For how long a period in the year can she do that; is it in a particular season?—It is, and they can only gather them when the tide is out. There may only be five days in a fortnight when they can gather them.

32608. At spring tides?—Yes.

32609. From whom do you get the winter keep which you purchase for your cattle?—We get it from the large farmers who have sheep and so on.

32610. What is it—straw and hay?—Yes.

32611. Have you ever any difficulty in getting it?—No, in the majority of cases we can; that is, if we have the money to pay for it.

32612. You still have some common pasture?—Yes, but the best of it was taken from us.

32613. Does what you have lie conveniently to the arable land?—Yes, pretty convenient, although it is very inferior.

32614. You want a fence upon the hill pasture and the arable land?—Yes, we got that from the first proprietor, Mr Macdonnell, and we asked our present proprietor to do some of it, but he would not do it.

32615. Is that fence not generally made by the crofters themselves?—No; our first proprietor, Mr Macdonnell, was keeping up the fence for us.

32616. But what is the common custom of the country? Is it not that the crofters put up the fence?—No, it is not.

INVERNESS.

32617. Does the proprietor do it, or do they do it altogether?—Well, the proprietor did it for the township I am here representing.

ARISATG.

32618. If the proprietor offered to do part of the fence, would you assist him?—Well, I would, perhaps, conditionally.

Colin

Macdonald
and Ranald
Macdonald.

32619. The township would assist him?—I believe we would.

32620. What sort of fence do you want?—Any kind, to keep out sheep and deer and our own cattle from our crops.

32621. But we have generally found that the crofters put up that fence themselves?—But I say the reverse; it was kept up by our former proprietors.

32622. Why has it fallen into disrepair?—It gave way, after having stood for twenty years.

32623. What was it made of?—Wood.

32624. And when it was put up was there any understanding between you and the proprietor as to who was to repair it or replace it?—No, we never came to any understanding.

32625. Why was it made of wood; is it not generally made of turf?—No, it was made of wood.

32626. Have you any stones?—Stones can be got too; but it would cost far too much to bring stones to the place.

32627. Are there no stones taken out of the arable ground which could be used to make the fence?—No; there would be very few anyhow.

32628. Do you expect the proprietor to be at the whole expense of making the fence?—Yes, on account of the rent being so heavy, I think he should do this.

32629. Is there any fence between your hill pasture and the adjoining farm?—No.

32630. Was there ever a fence?—Not unless ourselves were doing it.

32631. Do you require a fence?—Some of us do.

32632. Do the deer do you any harm?—They don't do us any harm in the township I am here representing.

32633. [To Ranald Macdonald.] Have you understood what he has said, generally?—I understood part of it.

32634. Is there anything you would like to say?—I think my friend has said all that we had to say.

32635. *Mr Cameron.*—Do you not get any work about here?—There has been no work on the land on which we are for the last eight years.

32636. What sort of work did you get eight years ago?—The proprietor we had at that time was keeping us in work.

32637. Who was the proprietor?—Mr Macdonnell. He gave all the work he had on the lands.

32638. How many crofters are there upon his lands?—*Colin Macdonald.*
Fourteen.

32639. Do they all complain of want of work?—Yes.

32640. Is there no work on the roads?—No.

32641. No work in the woods?—No.

32642. Is it near Lord Lovat's estate?—Connected with it.

32643. Do you get any work on that estate?—No.

32644. So that you have to live entirely by the profits of your own crofts?—We could not live by that; we are dependent upon the herring fishing, and if it fails we have recourse to the whelk gathering.

32645. Do you go to Loch Hourn to the herring fishing?—Yes.

32646. Do you all go?—Yes, we all follow that; it is the only thing we have had to depend upon for the last eight years.

INVER-
NESS.

ARISAIG.

Colin
Macdonald
and Ranald
Macdonald.

32647. The herring fishing has been good for the last two years?—It has been.

32648. But it was not so good before that?—No.

32649. Then your worst time must have been eight years ago when work stopped, and two years ago when the fishing was not good?—I think our worst time is just now. Formerly we got work from the proprietor, and the fences were kept up, and wood was given to us.

32650. What was the wood given for?—Fences between the arable land and pasture.

32651. Did you suffer much from the bad season last year?—We did. We lost almost all we had; and we got no assistance from anybody.

32652. Did you ask for any assistance?—We spoke of it to those who were relieving the country to see if they could do anything for us, but nothing was done.

32653. Did you plant your crofts with potatoes?—Yes.

32654. You saved enough of your crop for that?—We did manage to do it, although we had to suffer on some other side by doing that.

32655. You had to buy the seed?—We had.

32656. You bought fresh seed?—Yes; but we sold some of what we had ourselves to better ourselves by getting a change of seed. I believe our factor is prepared to answer that. There was a shop here which bought and sold potatoes. Although we sold some, we bought twice as much.

32657. Is that the first time you adopted a change of seed?—No. We shift it as often as we think it is to do us good.

32658. Do oats grow here?—They require a great deal of manure and sea-ware, for the ground is poor, sandy, and mossy—part of it.

32659. Do you put any manure upon it except sea-ware?—Yes, we do.

32660. Byre manure?—Yes.

32661. With what do you litter your cattle—do you get ferns?—No; because they are so far away from us, and we would have great difficulty in taking them to our byres, because our ground is so small that we cannot keep horses or anything.

32662. What do you use for bedding?—Sand and sea-ware.

32663. Do you not fish for cod and ling?—Sometimes we do, when we think that fishing is going to benefit us.

32664. How do you find out when it is to benefit you?—Well, every fisherman has a good idea of how the fishing is, as it were, going to come on.

32665. You do fish for cod and ling?—We do.

32666. Do you make much by that?—Very little in cod and ling, but some years we are very successful in the herring fishing, particularly the last two years. We were very successful—pretty successful.

32667. Do you often go out fishing for cod and ling?—Just sometimes; we don't go very often.

32668. You don't care much about it?—We do if we think we can make any money by it.

32669. Is the cod and ling fishing very good here?—Just middling, not extra good; but in our present state—so very poor—we are glad to utilise every kind of fishing, although we rely more upon the herring fishing.

32670. Will you explain what you mean by saying that there were several rules made in 1883 which are intolerable?—His reverence, Mr. Macallum, has them in his hand, I believe. One rule is, I believe, that [reads] ‘All leases shall be for a period of fifteen years, with a mutual break at the end of the seventh year (unless otherwise agreed upon), with a year's written notice to quit. This notice to be alike available for proprietor

'as for tenant, and is also to apply to breaks. For crofts where there is no lease, the notice to quit shall be six months, and for cottages without land attached, three months.'

32671. I suppose you consider that notice too short?—I cannot understand these rules at all. They were formed by a lawyer, and put in such a way that he could get out of the responsibility. It would be better for me to say I do not understand them at all.

32672. You don't understand them?—No, I don't really.

32673. Although you don't understand law, you can tell me whether you think notice to quit in six months is too short? Would you like the term to be a year?—I never read these rules, because they were frightening me, I was told they were that bad. I did not even glance at them. I was told I would not understand them, they were done in such a way by the lawyer that he could get out this way and that way.

32674. What sort of people told you that?—Intelligent people. They referred me to this that the house was to be put into good order before the tenant entered. It does not say who will have to put them in order; that is one thing.

32675. So, in point of fact, you have not read the rules?—I never read them in my life.

32676. Were the people who told you they were not worth reading natives of the place or strangers?—They did not say they were not worth reading.

32677. But they advised you not to read them?—No.

32678. What did they say?—They said they were done by a lawyer in such a way that so many questions would require to be asked before a man could understand them.

32679. We should like to know who the people were who told you this?—I don't like to name any individual party, but I know they were good scholars. I never glanced at the rules myself, because none of them ever were in my possession. I had not even an opportunity of going over them.

32680. What makes me ask this question is, that in your own statement you say the rules are intolerable, and when I asked why, you say you have not read them, because somebody said you could not understand them. Why did you say in this statement that they were intolerable if you did not read them?—We drew a line under those we did not like.

32681. Do you wish me to ask you questions about them, or shall we ask somebody else?—I may say I have been consulting with the Rev. Mr Macallum about them, for he understands them much better than I do; and certainly he was reading them to me, and marked those that were not going to suit us; but I did not read them myself.

32682. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Are you and your co-delegate the only representatives from South Morar?—Yes.

32683. How many are there?—One more.

32684. Do you represent the estate generally or your own township?—Only the Bunacaimbe people.

32685. Do you know the whole estate?—Yes, pretty well. I was born and brought up on it.

32686. Were your people there long?—Yes, my father paid rent for fifty-five years.

32687. Did the estate of old belong to that branch of the Macdonalds called MacCoul?—Yes.

32688. They were a very old family?—Yes.

32689. Are you aware of anything connected with that family which was prejudicial to the estate—were there not one or two of the proprietors

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and Ranald
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INVERNESS.

ARISAIG.

Colin
Macdonald
and Ranald
Macdonald.

out of their mind?—Yes, and my father was paying rent to them at that time.

32690. For how many years was the estate owned by proprietors not competent to manage their affairs?—I cannot say.

32691. Was it nearly fifty years?—I don't think it.

32692. When did the last proprietor of Morar, who was a member of the old family, die?—I don't think it will be much more than thirty-two years, or thereabout, so far as I can calculate; but I am not sure.

32693. How many lairds of this estate were insane?—Two in the one family.

32694. There were not three?—Two, so far as I know; they were before my day.

32695. Was any money laid out upon the estate for improvements during the time of those two proprietors?—Not that I am aware of.

32696. After the last of these Macdonalds died who got the property?—One Ranald Macdonell, who came from America.

32697. He did not keep it long?—About a year or two.

32698. And then it was purchased by Mr Eneas Macdonnell?—Exactly.

32699. So far as you have heard, and are aware, is it not a fact that, except the time when he was proprietor, there was not a penny laid out on the estate?—Not so far as I know.

32700. And since he ceased to be proprietor things are no better?—They are worse; we have not got even a day's work since he sold the estate.

32701. Do I understand you to say that, so far as your land is concerned, it does not support you? You are obliged to earn your subsistence elsewhere?—That is so.

32702. Is that the case with most of the crofters in your position?—It is.

32703. Has the population upon the estate of South Morar fallen off, or is it about the same as it was in your early recollection?—My early recollection of the village is that the population, forty years ago, was much larger than it is at present?

32704. Were the people put away without their consent?—Yes, shiploads.

32705. From South Morar?—Arisaig in particular.

32706. Who put them away?—There is some difficulty in explaining that, because there were, may be, thirty families to be evicted from that part of the Arisaig estate, now a deer forest, and Mr Macdonell's mother was so kind as to take them to South Morar, over to her own side for a year and keep them there; but after that, when she was unable to support them, they were obliged to go—to scatter anywhere.

32707. That was Mr Eneas Macdonell's mother?—Yes.

32708. She was a member of the Loch Shiel family?—Yes.

32709. And she was good enough to keep them for a year?—Yes.

32710. And when there was no room on the estate they had to go?—Yes.

32711. But were any people put out of Morar itself without their consent?—It was done in some such way as this, they were cramped into a small place by overcrowders coming in as I have shown; but I don't think any of them were evicted.

32712. Can you, or any of the people now living in South Morar, complain that any of your friends were, on former occasions, evicted against their consent?—Well, I cannot say that they were evicted from so small an estate against their consent. I dare not speak about Arisaig.

32713. Are the people of South Morar, generally speaking—the class that you represent—very poor in their circumstances?—Very poor.

32714. Then the sale of the estate has not been an advantage to the people. It has stopped all work?—It has stopped all work.

32715. Is the present proprietor of South Morar a Highlander?—Perhaps he is for all I know. His name is Nicholson; he may be a Skye man; I believe he is.

32716. Why do you call him the proprietor?—Because he is our proprietor. He married Miss Astley, and that is the way we call him the proprietor.

32717. With reference to the objections you make in your statement about the terms of the articles of the regulations, have your objections been committed to writing and handed to Mr M'Callum?—Yes.

32718. And that is why you have some difficulty in entering into the question yourself?—Exactly.

32719. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie*.—You say it is eight years since you have had any work to do?—Yes.

32720. How long is it since the estate was sold?—Eight years.

32721. I understand it was only sold in 1878—five years ago?—I think it was eight years.

32722. Had you work up to the time the estate was sold?—Yes.

32723. And then it ceased?—Yes.

32724. Had you work up to the time the estate was sold?—*Ranald Macdonald*. The estate was for some years in the hands of the trustees, and during these years very little work was done. The work ceased eight years ago—three years before the estate was sold.

DONALD M'DONALD, Crofter's Son, Back of Keppoch (38), assisted by
JOHN M'EACHRAN, Crofter, Back of Keppoch (70)—examined.

32725. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie*.—What statement have you to make?—The township of Back of Keppoch contains in all ten and a half lots or crofts of about five arable acres each, one-third of which is kept as pasture. The average rent on each lot is £14, 8s. The average number of cattle on each lot is four cows. The rental of our township is £151, 17s. About forty-one years ago our rent was raised on an average by £2 on each lot, and the most of our hill pasture was taken from us; and having no place to keep part of our cattle, we had to part with them for less than half their value. About twenty-one years ago £4, 15s. were added to the rent of each lot, in name of interest on money expended on houses and drains, a sum which we believe to be a full rent in itself. When our rent was raised last the proprietor gave us plenty of employment, and consequently we did not feel the hardship to be so great. We have now nothing to depend on but the crofts and the fishing. For want of hill pasture, mortality among our cattle is very great. We lose an average of four cows every year. The loss, at times, falls on one man, at other times we share it. The soil is poor and sandy, and in many instances gives no corn. If we sow a boll of corn where we had potatoes the previous year the return very often will not exceed three bushels. We have made no meal for the last thirty years. Manure consists chiefly of sea-weare, which we carry on our backs. If we would keep a horse, one croft would not carry more than the horse and one cow, so that it is evident a croft is too dear at £14, 8s. About forty-two years ago sixteen families were evicted from the farm of

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Colin
Macdonald
and Ranald
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and John
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M'Donald
and John
M'Eachran.

' Kinloyd, which is now in the hands of one man. These were restored by next proprietor. About thirty years ago they were again removed. ' Some of the evicted were obliged to emigrate, and others were sent in among us. Those that were forced to emigrate would get no work nor food at the time unless they would sign a paper that they would emigrate. At last payment of rent the present proprietor gave us new regulations, which we considered so hard that at the time we delayed payment of rent. They consist of seventeen rules, every one of which takes away some right or other which legally belongs to us. It would take up too much time to speak of these rules minutely. We will give you a printed copy, which we hope you will have the goodness to look into, and print in your report. What we wish done for us is that we will get the land we at present possess at its real value, that the rent be fixed by land commissioners appointed by Government, or that the land be otherwise fairly valued, that all the land which was taken from our township be restored, and that we be not removed so long as we pay a fair rent. Seeing that our forefathers have been here from time immemorial, we consider that we have as much right to live in comfort here as the proprietor has to be superior over us. As to emigration—what land has a greater right to sustain us than the land for which our forefathers suffered and bled? Why should we emigrate? There is plenty of waste land around us; for what is an extensive deer forest in the heart of the most fertile part of our land but waste land? And there is far too much of that here. The best part, and almost the whole of this estate, is partly in the hands of three farmers and partly a deer forest. The deer forest itself, once land flowing with milk and honey, which supported scores of families in comfort, but who, alas! are now, on the account of the mania for sport scattered over the wide world, is far better than all the land now cultivated by the poor crofters. Although some of us have good houses, there are others who have very bad ones—so bad that on stormy nights they cannot rest for fear they will fall upon them. We wish that instead of those houses good ones may be built. We pay road money regularly, yet the road which passes through our township has never been repaired, and it is in very bad condition. We consider it a very great hardship that, though we may be short of the rent only by a few pence, we get no receipt for what we pay.' Signed by DONALD M'DONALD, ANGUS CAMPBELL, and twelve others.

32726. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Are these fourteen names those of tenants at the Back of Keppoch?—There are two more than these.

32727. Are these two at home?—Yes; I don't see them to-day; we thought that was enough.

32728. Do you believe the other two agree with this?—Yes; they are here, and can answer for themselves.

32729. Is it the case that you get no receipt for what you pay unless you pay the full rent?—It is.

32730. Does it often happen that you don't pay the full rent?—It does not often happen.

32731. Has there ever been any dispute with the factor as to the account—when there has been arrears—in consequence of not having a receipt?—No.

32732. You have no reason to question the factor's dealings in that respect?—Except that he does not give us the receipt unless we pay the rent in full.

32733. In consequence of not having the receipt in full, you have had no reason to question the factor's account?—No.

32734. Does the proprietor give any help in building the houses?—

When we do the mason work of the houses he gives us wood and slates.

32735. Do you want anything more than that in the way of assistance to build the houses?—We have been paying interest on the money expended upon them for nineteen years, and we have ourselves been at the expense of painting them for seven years.

32736. But it is stated here that some have very bad houses. These were not built nineteen years ago, and they want new ones; are they not satisfied with the proprietor's terms for new ones?—These are houses which were built by the tenants themselves, but they have become so bad that they cannot live in them.

32737. Are you satisfied with the proprietor's terms for building the new ones—that he gives you certain materials?—There are some of them who cannot do that although the proprietor should give them that assistance.

32738. Would you wish to pay interest upon the cost of the new houses if the proprietor built them?—We tired of doing so; we thought our crofts too dear, and that is why we are here to-day.

32739. And if the crofts were reasonably rented, would you be willing to pay interest upon the houses?—We desire to get the houses at a reasonable rate as well as the crofts, but not to be paying interest as long as the grass is growing out of the ground.

32740. Have there always been sixteen tenants at Back of Keppoch?—There have been no fewer for a long time; but some were sent from Kinloyd, and some from other places. Those who had weak families could not be sent to America, and they were put into the places of those who had stronger families and who had gone away. They would not be sent away under the Government unless they had strong families.

32741. People who came from Kinloyd took the place of the people who came from Back of Keppoch?—Yes.

32742. Then sixteen was always the number of the crofts in Back of Keppoch?—There are only ten and one-half, and they are divided between sixteen families.

32743. How long have there been sixteen families there?—There have been thirteen families since we went there first.

32744. And did the other three belong to the place, or were they brought in upon you?—Five came from Kinloyd.

32745. Have you lost any hill pasture?—Yes, but we are paying rent for it; it was given to another tenant although we offered £3 more.

32746. Who was the tenant?—Mr Fraser, who had the inn here.

32747. Who has it now?—Another tenant. It has been in the hands of seven or eight tenants since then.

32748. Is it in the hands of the new tenant now?—Yes.

32749. What is the extent of that tenant's holding?—He pays £33 or £35 for it.

32750. Was this paper written by yourselves?—It was composed by ourselves.

32751. Written by Mr Murdoch?—I need not tell you who wrote it—*Rev. Mr MacCallum.* Mr Murdoch did not write it; these papers were written before Mr Murdoch came to the place at all.

32752. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Who was the proprietor when this ground was taken from you?—Lord Cranstoun.

32753. When was that?—Forty-one years ago.

32754. How long was he in possession of the property?—Three or four years.

32755. From whom did he buy it?—Lady Ashburton.

INVERNESS.

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ARISAIG.

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Donald
M'Donald
and John
M'Eachran.

**INVER-
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32756. How long had she the property?—Four or five years.
 32757. From whom did she buy it?—Clanranald; she was married to Clanranald.

ARISAIG.

Donald
M'Donald
and John
M'Eachran.

32758. Were there any people evicted in her time?—No.
 32759. Were there any in Lord Cranstoun's time?—Yes, plenty.
 32760. From what places?—From Kinloyd.
 32761. Any more?—They were sent from the place now occupied by the deer forest also.

32762. Where is that deer forest?—Down at the point there, along the road side, as you came from the steamer.

32763. Was it made into a deer forest then for the first time?—No.

32764. When?—The farmer had it for a while.

32765. The sheep farmer?—Yes.

32766. Have you any idea how many families were removed from there?—Fourteen families.

32767. Where were they sent to?—They were scattered over the wide world; some went abroad and some to Moidart.

32768. Lord Cranstoun never lived there, I suppose?—Yes, he did.

32769. Do you remember so long ago as that?—John M'Eachran. Yes; it is only forty years ago; I remember it well enough.

32770. Were the people there in good circumstances?—Yes, better than they are to-day.

32771. What stock of cattle did they keep?—Some had four cows; others had three.

32772. Had they any sheep?—There were sheep only upon one portion. That portion was estimated to carry twenty-eight to thirty.

32773. Did they at that time live upon the land without any other sources of subsistence?—They were sub-tenants under the tacksman, and rented the whole place, and he provided them with work. Only one man held a place from the proprietor direct; the others were sub-tenants of the tacksman.

32774. And had these cottars the cows you speak of, or was it before your time?—Some had one cow and others had two or three, but that was before my time.

32775. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Arisaig was once the property of Clanranald?—Yes.

32776. For a long time?—Yes.

32777. Was it very populous at one time?—More so than it is to-day.

32778. Did Clanranald raise a number of his men from Arisaig and Moidart?—I believe he did when he was going to war—about 400 or 500 people.

32779. If you were going from here towards the head of Loch Shiel, would you not see the ruins of an enormous number of houses that have been inhabited by small people?—Yes, and there are plenty of them down beyond there too.

32780. Who commenced the making of the deer forest?—Mr Astley.

32781. You first mentioned Clanranald, then you said Lady Ashburton, then Lord Cranstoun?—Then Mackay.

32782. Mackay sold it to Astley?—Yes.

32783. And the present proprietrix is a daughter of Mr Astley?—Yes.

32784. Mr Astley began the deer forest?—Yes.

32785. He had a large forest?—Yes, a good size; I don't know how many acres.

32786. Does the old man recollect the time of the thirty families of whom the preceding delegate spoke as having been taken in by Mrs M'Donnell of Morar?—Yes.

32787. From what place were they put out?—It was sixteen.

32788. From what place were they put out?—It was Kinloyd.

32789. Is it for the advantage of the people who remain in Arisaig that there should be a deer forest?—No, I don't think so; very few get employment about it.

32790. Have you seen the regulations that have been recently put out on the estate?—Yes.

32791. I see that regulation 11 is as follows:—‘No tenant or crofter shall unroof or dilapidate houses or cottages, or remove or add to any of them, without the proprietor's written consent. Crofter's houses which have been erected and kept in repair by themselves shall be valued at their removal, and two-thirds of the valued price shall be paid to the outgoing crofter by the incoming crofter or the proprietor at entry. Crofters' houses shall not exceed in value three years' rent of the croft, and no additional dwelling-houses shall be erected without the proprietor's written consent.’ Do you approve of that condition, that you cannot add to your buildings?—No, I do not. There is many a convenience one would require to set up that he should not have to go to the proprietor about.

32792. ‘Crofter's houses shall not exceed in value three years' rent of the croft.’ If you want to put up a good house here you are prohibited?—That prevents us from building good houses, for the houses cannot exceed in value three rents.

32793. Do you approve of this stipulation that any member of a family on attaining twenty-one years of age, whether married or not, is bound to find accommodation elsewhere unless allowed to remain with the written sanction of the proprietor?—No man is pleased with that stipulation; it is a hard thing for any man to rear a family and expel them when they are twenty-one years of age. It is the young people who support the old. That one is so bad that it almost compels the father to curse his son, and send him out of his house, saying ‘Walk out with you, and let me see your face no more,’ when the son arrives at the age of twenty-one.

32794. Have these regulations given great dissatisfaction to the people?—Yes, they have kept us from paying the last rent for a while.

32795. Who made them?—It is a secret, I believe.

32796. Is the population of the estate of Arisaig proper, falling off or not?—For the last forty years it has been falling off.

32797. The deer have been increasing during that time, I presume?—Oh yes, and during my own time.

32798. *The Chairman.*—You said it was a great hardship that the sons should be obliged, at the age of twenty-one, to go away; but the paper says they must go away unless the proprietor allows them to remain. Do you know of any case in which the application has been made to the proprietor, and he has refused it?—I know of one man whom they are putting away just now; I don't know for what reason unless that he got married.

32799. Supposing the proprietor allowed him to remain, where would he be able to live with his wife?—I don't know.

32800. Do you think it would be a good thing that all the married sons should be allowed to remain with their wives in their father's house?—Deed, yes; one son should be allowed to stay with his father, and may be two, for even one son would not do at times.

32801. And do you think it would be a good thing if two married sons with their families were allowed to remain in the house with the father?—That is a matter for consideration.

32802. Do you know any case in which the proprietor has refused to allow a son to remain in the house whose labour was necessary to the

INVERNESS.

ARISAIG.

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M'Donald
and John
M'Eachran.

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M'Donald
and John
M'Eachran.

support of the father and mother?—Unless that one is refused, I don't know.

32803. What is the name of the one to whom you allude?—John M'Millan.

32804. Is he here?—He is.

32805. How small are the smallest crofts in your place, and what is the lowest rent for the smallest croft?—£3, 15s., I believe, is the lowest rent.

32806. The regulations say that the house is not to cost more than three times the rent of the croft, so that the house for this croft should not exceed in value £10, 15s.?—That would make a good tent, I believe.

32807. £10, 15s.? the house may not cost more than that; but I suppose the labour of the crofter who puts it up is not included?—I don't think so.

32808. Then, supposing the crofter of a little croft wanted to put up a new house could he not put up a pretty good little house, with his own labour, spending £10, 15s. in money?—It would be a good help to him.

32809. 'Crofters houses shall not exceed in value three years' rent of 'the croft.' Does that mean that no house which exceeds three years' rental in value shall be built on a croft, on the property?—I don't understand that very well.

32810. But you say if a poor man wanted to put up a new house, and was willing to give his own labour to put it up, you think that, with that labour and the labour of his family, and £10, 15s. in money, he could build a pretty good little house?—No, I don't think he could.

32811. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Have the people been pleased with the local administration of the estate for some time past?—Yes, they have; especially when Mr Astley was here. He was giving them plenty of work, and they felt no great hardships, for he was very kind to them. He gave them good houses, and I don't think it was his fault that interest was laid on them. It was the fault of the manager and the factor.

32812. But were the people pleased with the managers who were here before?—No, not half of them.

32813. There was a manager here named Alexander?—Yes.

32814. Was he dismissed for dishonesty?—Yes.

32815. Was there another of the name of Carter?—Yes.

32816. And did he disappear in a mysterious way?—Yes.

32817. With a lot of cattle?—A lot of horses.

32818. Was there another man of the name of Ailing?—Yes.

32819. What became of him?—He went away, and didn't pay some of the men. There is £26 against him or against the proprietor for one man's labour.

32820. And, altogether, these different matters were the cause of great dissatisfaction and complaint on the part of the people?—Yes

ALEXANDER M'PHERSON, Crofter, Strath (54), assisted by **ALEXANDER M'EACHRAN**, Cottar, Strath (51)—examined.

Alexander
M'Pherson
and Alexander
M'Eachran.

32821. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Have you any paper?—We have. 'The Strath, or village, of Arisaig contains about twenty-six families of very poor people. It has grievances of its own—such as utter landlessness, excessive rents, and want of constant employment. People do not expect any one to give employment for the mere sake of the labourers; but these people urge that the families to which many of them belonged were

' turned out of the better lands where they could employ themselves ; and that, thus, they have a moral right to constant employment at good wages. They would have preferred the freedom to live by the land, and they have a hankering after the land still. But the majority of them are so poor that they cannot face the expenses of a croft without assistance. ^F Cottagers who have strong families might, with the assistance of their friends, make a bold effort to get once more established on the soil. Some say that they could make a shift in their present houses for a time if they got crofts on the near lands. As it is they go far to their precarious employment ; and if they got crofts they would go as far to them until they are able to build houses on the ground. This claim of theirs to be allowed to take a living out of the land is supported, in their case, by the circumstances that the very lands which their fathers occupied are just now, in great part, lying in a comparatively unproductive state—some of it under nothing more productive than deer. They make distinct reference to the places which were cleared under the names of Ceann-Coid, Gaoideal, Ardghasairidh, Sandaig, Tor-beithe, Rumach, Acha-gharbh-alt, Auch-na-creige, Am Blar, Ard-nam-fuaran. The rents on the cottages and houses of these people are exorbitant. If there were plenty of employment and enough of trade people could afford to pay ; but with poor trade £12, £13, and £14 are quite out of the question for the houses of the little dealers, and £4, 10s. for bare walls.—ALEXANDER M'EACHRAN, ^ALEXANDER M'PHERSON, RONALD M'DONALD.'

32822. How many crofters are there in the Strath paying rent for land ?—There are twenty-six families.

32823. How many of these twenty-six families have land ?—Four.'

32824. And the others have only their houses ?—No.

32825. How much rent do these four pay—those who have land ?—Between £6 and £7.

32826. And how much rent do those who have only houses pay ?—Between £1 and £4, 10s.

32827. Is it those who have the shops who pay the £4, 10s. ?—No.

32828. Those are mentioned in the paper as paying £12, £13, and £14 ?—That is the shopkeepers.

32829. The cottages are from £1 to £4 ?—Yes.

32830. How much stock do the four crofters keep ?—M'Pherson. I have only one cow.

32831. How many cows would you be allowed to keep ?—My ground will not feed more than one.

32832. Have you any sheep ?—No.

32833. Have any of the other twenty-two families cows at all ?—No ; unless one or two may have them.

32834. Where do they get milk ?—From the farmers round about.

32835. Do they get a steady supply from these farmers if they are able to pay for it ?—No, they cannot get it in winter, and, even if they got it now, they could hardly drink it.

32836. Why ?—M'Eachran. Because it will be so sour ; they think it is good enough for us.

32837. Was it about eight years ago that work ceased to be given to you in this Strath ?—Yes, chiefly after the death of old Mr Astley.

32838. Before that time were you in steady employment ?—Yes, indeed.

32839. And were you paid reasonable wages ?—Yes ; very fair.

32840. And you were able to live in some comfort then, at least those who lost the land ?—Very good.

INVERNESS.

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ARISAIG.

ALEXANDER
M'Pherson
and Alexander
M'Eachran.

INVER-
NESS.

ARISAIG.

Alexander
M'Pherson
and Alexander
M'Eachran.

32841. Are the four crofters able to take their living out of their crofts?—No, nor anything like it?

32842. How are they able to make their living?—Just working at whatever they can get.

32843. What sort of work do they get?—There is a little work on the land and some in the woods.

32844. What are the day's wages in the place?—Two shillings for each man.

32845. And what for a woman?—One shilling.

32846. Does that hold for summer and winter?—Yes.

32847. And for all kinds of field work?—Yes.

32848. Do any of the people go fishing?—No, none in this place.

32849. I suppose they fish about the rocks for their own families?—Very little.

32850. Is there not good fishing about the shore?—Not near where we are, because we live further down.

32851. When were you deprived of these lands of which you speak here—these ten townships?—It is about thirty years since we were put out of Kinloyd.

32852. Was it from that place you came?—Yes.

32853. Kinloyd was cleared about thirty years ago?—Yes.

32854. When was the other place cleared?—Long before our time.

32855. Have you heard your people say when that took place?—I cannot say how long ago it was.

32856. Seventy years?—Not so much.

32857. And when was the next place, Ardghasairidh, cleared?—About the same time.

32858. And Sandaig and Rumach, and Acha-gharbh-alt?—Thirty years ago.

32859. Ard-nam-fuaran?—That was in Lord Cranstoun's time.

32860. There were three places that would have been cleared about thirty or forty years ago?—There are some people in some of these places yet. There are some at Achnacraigie.

32861. Largeig tenants?—Three have it.

32862. Are they in good circumstances?—Middling.

32863. They have not large crofts?—Not very large.

32864. And how are those places now occupied from which the other people have been evicted?—They are under a sheep farmer.

32865. Are they cultivated?—Some are cultivated.

32866. Are all the places named here at present cultivated or under sheep?—Most of the places that have been named are under deer forest.

32867. And were those places suitable for cultivation?—It seems they were at the time the people were in them.

32868. Have you walked through them?—Many a time.

32869. And do they look suitable for cultivation still?—Yes, quite

32870. If you got the choice of a good croft in one of these places, or steady employment as you had before Mr Ashley's death, which would you prefer?—M'Eachran. I would prefer the land.

32871. Have you tried both ways?—We have tried both. I have tried all means of work, and I was put out of the croft with my father and grandfather notwithstanding.

32872. What age would you be when you lost the croft held by your father and grandfather?—Nearly twenty.

32873. So that up to twenty years of age you actually worked the croft?—Yes, I was assisting my father.

INVER-
NESS.ARISAIG.Alexander
M'Pherson
and Alexander
M'Eachran.

32874. And you remember quite distinctly how your father's family were brought up and the people who lived upon the croft?—Yes.

32875. And have you yourself worked as a day labourer since then?—Yes.

32876. Have the family?—Yes.

32877. And, having tried both ways, would you still prefer the croft?—I would rather the croft than anything.

32878. But supposing you got the steady employmennt you had before Mr Astley's death?—That is but a little hold that I have of my day's work.

32879. Your wish, then, is to get back to these waste places, and take up a croft there?—That is what we desire, according as people can take the land.

32880. You say you would not be able to take much, still you would be able to take a small croft to begin with?—I would take the grass of two or three cows.

32881. What rent was your father paying?—£5.

32882. And how much stock did he keep upon the croft?—Three.

32883. Any sheep?—No.

32884. Any horses?—No.

32885. You would be willing to pay a rent of £3 for a croft that would carry three cows?—We will be amenable to your rule upon that point.

32886. With regard to the small crofts which you have got here, do you complain of the size of the crofts or the rent, or of both?—*Macpherson.* Both.

32887. You want a bigger and a cheaper croft?—Yes.

32888. Is it more arable or more pasture land that you want?—More arable land.

32889. Is the arable land, as it goes, good?—Mine is not, nor is that of some of the others.

32890. The crofts look very well; but, I suppose, they look their best at this time?—Yes, this is the best time. The deer trouble me; they come and eat my crops, and there is no fence to protect me from them.

32891. Did you ask for a fence?—I did, but I cannot blame the proprietor in that respect. I asked for it once or twice, and it was promised that I would get it; but the managers did nothing.

32892. You mean the factor and local manager?—Yes.

32893. And your complaint is that they have not carried out the promise of the proprietor?—Yes.

32894. Are the deer troubling other people as well as you?—Yes.

32895. The whole of your neighbours?—Yes.

32896. Is there no proper fence between your crofts and the deer forest?—No.

32897. Anywhere about the place?—None of the crofts that are mentioned in that paper have a fence.

32898. Is the arable land of the big sheep farmers fenced off?—Yes, it is, but the deer come upon it for all that.

32899. Do the people complain of that?—I don't know what they do.

32900. But you have good cause of complaint upon that ground?—We have; I have spoken to the whole of them about it.

32901. Who rents this deer forest; is it in the hands of the proprietor?—No, it is rented by Lord Kilcoursie.

32902. Was any representation made to him about it?—I did not make any, at any rate.

INVER-
NESS.

32903. Did you ever ask for damages for the amount of your crops which was lost by the deer?—No.

ARISAIG.

32904. Neither from the proprietor nor tenant?—No, I always got whatever I asked from the laird, but not from the others.

Alexander
M'Pherson
and Alexander
M'Eachran.

32905. You got the promise from the proprietor, but not the performance from the factor?—Just so.

32906. You complain that the rent is high; when was the rent fixed at the present rate?—I entered the croft fifteen years ago at a rent of £4, 8s. I was promised that a house would be built for me. It was built this year, and I now pay £2, 10s. interest for the house.

32907. Were all the cottages on the place occupied by crofters and cottars built entirely at the expense of the proprietor?—Yes, every one.

32908. And this house of yours for which you pay £2, 10s. interest, was also built entirely at the expense of the proprietor?—Yes.

32909. Do you consider £2, 10s. too high?—Yes, seeing it was promised that the house should go along with the croft.

32910. You took the croft for £4, and it was promised that a house would be included without additional expense?—Yes. That was under old Mr Astley, and I had the croft only two months when he died.

32911. What house have you lived in for the last twenty years?—When Mr Astley himself took charge of the estate he gave me another house.

32912. The whole complaint of the people of the Strath is—of those who have crofts, that they are too small and too dear; and of those who have no crofts that they have no work, and that the rent of their cottages is too high?—Yes,

32913. And those who have crofts wish them larger and cheaper; and those who have no crofts wish to get crofts?—That is so.

32914. And you say there is plenty of land, and to spare, in these places you have named?—Yes, plenty.

32915. Where crofts were before?—Yes.

32916-19. And you would be willing to pay a reasonable rent for these crofts?—Yes.

Rev. DONALD MACCALLUM, Established Church Minister of Arisaig
(32)—examined.

Rev. Donald
MacCallum.

32920. *The Chairman.*—You are a delegate?—I was appointed to see that everything was properly arranged, and that those who were to make general statements appeared in time and properly prepared. I have only been two years here, and don't profess to know very much about the people, except by having had a meeting with them about these matters, at which I took down notes from the most of them. Most of the papers were composed by me from what the people told me, and contain no representations of my own.

32921. And did the meetings originate with the people or with you?—With the people.

32922. And they asked you to assist them?—They did.

32923. Have there been any persons from outside present at these meetings?—No; except when Mr Murdoch came here on Saturday last; and we happened to have two meetings when he came, and he was present. He went along with me, but he was not asked; and the people did not know he was to be there.

32924. I do not wish to imply the least blame to you or to anybody, but I would like to know a little more about it. Have the statements now

made originated at all with him or been altered in consequence of his presence?—No.

32925. Are they substantially the people's?—They had met before he came.

32926. Would you proceed with your statement?—‘ Some notes on the district of Arisaig and South Morar, in the parish of Ardnamurchan, and in the possession of Mrs Nicholson, daughter of the purchaser, the late Mr Astley. The estate of Arisaig and South Morar has the misfortune to have passed through more than the ordinary changes of proprietors and factors within a couple of generations, and it is difficult to give a statement of the nature and causes of the present dissatisfaction among the people. There have been so many principals and agents engaged in the administration that it is all but impossible to state clearly who ordered certain things complained of, who began and who finished the work of infliction. But whether the part borne in the work by each be traced home or not, there is the broad fact that there have been so many changes that a certain uncertainty—strange as the phrase may sound—has for years disquieted the tenants and retarded all progress in the right direction. There is this one redeeming element, that we are relieved from the unpleasant necessity of piling up all the charges involved in the grievances at the door of any one proprietor or factor. It is not so very long since Clanranald reigned here, followed by Lady Ashburton, Lord Cranstoun, Mr Mackay, and F. D. P. Astley. Then came a trusteeship during the minority of Mr Frank Astley, who succeeded. He was not long in possession when he was succeeded by his sister; and now the state has the further change incident to that lady's becoming Mrs Nicholson. Morar has had the ill luck of having passed through the hands of two proprietors in succession who are still spoken of as “*an du amadan*,” or the two fools. Then there have been Mr Æneas Macdonell, young Mr Astley, Miss Astley and Mr Nicholson. Time and space would fail us if we would give the names of the factors and local managers. The case of this estate is, to a large extent, another bundle of facts bearing out the general complaint of a very injudicious and unnecessary limitation of the area and quality of the land at the disposal of the crofters and humbler classes generally. There is excellent arable land in the hands of three tacksmen; and under their sheep and the deer of the sportsman there is plenty hill pasture, while the great mass of the population is confined to the patches complained of. Rents are complained of as being excessive, and as having been increased in many cases, not by agreement, but by the one-sided order of the proprietor. The evils incident to the changes referred to are well illustrated in the case of John M'Donald, at one time tenant of Druimdubh, Bun-na-caim, where he held a croft at £15 of rent. Expecting assistance from the then proprietor, Mr Æneas Macdonell, he drained, trenched, and fenced, carried stones a great distance, and built outhouses. Besides his own work he paid a labourer to help at the fencing in particular. The amount and weight of the toil cannot be estimated without a careful survey of the situation and of the work done; and even then, the money value set upon it would never be adequate compensation. All the landlord contributed towards the improvements was some timber, lime, and slates, and when, two years after the completion of these operations the tenant was removed, all he got in compensation was the sum of £9, although the greater value of these improvements was asserted by the proprietor himself in that he added £5 to the rent of M'Donell's successor. This, be it noticed, was a decidedly improving tenant, and the case is all the more telling as illustrating the system of actual repression under which High-

INVERNESS.

ARISAIG.

Rev. Donald MacCallum.

INVER-
NESS.

ARISAIG.

Rev. Donald
MacCallum.

land crofters suffer. Macdonald is a man who can make a creditable appearance before strangers, and his proprietor gave him what was represented as quite a superior place—a sort of sheep farm warranted to support 300 sheep, at the rent of £100. As it turned out, it would not support 100 sheep. But having a spirit licence at the house, and the privilege of letting boats to tourists and sportsmen who fished Loch Morar, he was trying to make ends meet. Meantime, the estate gets into the hands of Mr Macdonell's trustees; then it became the property of Mr Astley, and the terms of Macdonald's occupancy were broken. The tenant was first forbidden to allow anglers to go beyond a line pointed out by Mr Astley; and, by-and-by, the interference was carried so far that the water bailiff was sent with notices to the gentlemen anglers; and the result was that visitors ceased to patronise Macdonald's boats, and he sank under the losses entailed. Mr Astley dies, but the repressive tendency of the management would seem to acquire increased force. Macdonald was reduced to the necessity of seeking shelter for his family, and a croft for their support; but so far from anything being done to make up to him for the losses and injuries complained of, the answer to his various applications for places was that he would get nothing, and he has only been on sufferance in a hut, far away from school, and when he sought a house about to be vacant near the school, he was told that he would have to leave the country. Young Mr Astley ruled for a time after the death of his father. Things were still tending in the same direction when he died. Applications to Miss Astley met with repulses; and when, after her marriage, application was made to her husband, Mr Nicholson, the refusal, he says, was accompanied by a statement against Macdonald that his rent was unpaid, although I have seen the receipt for the rent in the applicant's possession; and he is present to produce it, and to give personal testimony to the sad truth that proprietors may die, but the system under which the lands in these parts are administered continues, changing for the worse. The contract entered into by one proprietor with the tenant is broken by the man who buys the estate subject to the conditions of that contract. There is no binding obligation to do what is promised, if it be for the good of the tenant. So far this sample goes to show, however, there is some sort of tradition necessitating, if not a formal engagement, on the part of the succeeding proprietor to give full effect to, or perhaps increasing effect, to the preceding proprietor's grudge towards a tenant. It must be admitted that it was hard for the recent proprietors to be under any obligation to give land, or even a hut, to a man in whose person there was always to be seen, or heard, or felt, an accumulation of wrongs inflicted by the owners of the estate. Possibly this case will go far to show the necessity for some kind of constant interference on the part of the Government between crofters and landlords; and the time taken up with the narrative may not, after all, be thrown away. One thing is certain, that the changes have not done away with the old grievances, and they have brought with them an abundant crop of fresh causes of complaint. Some of the grievances, old and new, are detailed in the statements sent in from the different townships. Here the case of the Strath of Arisaig may as well be brought in. The nature of the grievances will be more easily understood when it is stated that the gathering of so many families into this narrow space is the result of the clearing of good lands now in the hands of tacksmen and sportsmen. These householders have no crofts, and with the exception of the few dealers and tradesmen—who are not always an exception—are dependent upon very casual employment. At one time there was some employment

' given, and there is an impression abroad that there have been large sums
' of money expended by the late Mr Astley ; but in this respect too the
' changes have been for the worse, from what was never very good. Even
' when there was some noticeable employment given, there were complaints
' among the workers that the wages due were sometimes difficult to get
' out of the hands of the paymaster. Of this sort of paymasters there
' have been more than one. The tradition is current in the district to
' this day that one man, who ended his days in extreme poverty, gave it
' as his dying testimony that Mr Astley's manager was owing him £26 at
' the time. Donald McDonald, Back of Keppoch, is present to bear
' witness to that fact, and to others of the same kind. And that this kind
' of managerial disregard for the interests and feelings of the poor has not
' altogether ceased is rendered probable, if not certain, from the fact that
' when Mary O'Henly or M'Donald died (as is positively alleged of starva-
' tion) on 23rd February last, there were some 10s. due to her son in the
' hands of the present manager. This case has never undergone public
' investigation ; and the rulers in those parts must lie under all the impli-
' cations until they institute the inquiry required in the circumstances.
' We are not concerned to prove that the woman died of starvation, bu
' whether she did or not, that is the general impression ; and any way the
' case goes, along with other things, to show the kind of feeling with which
' the people on the estate are regarded. If, instead of a human being
' dying of starvation, it had been the killing of a deer or the spearing of a
' salmon, that had become a matter of public concern. It would not have
' been allowed to lie over, as the case of Mary O'Henly has done—so
' people say. It is not merely that this kind of inhumanity is practised
' towards the poor people, but attempts are made to get them to practise
' inhumanity towards each other, and to dry up natural affection in the
' family circle. Fathers and mothers are required to turn out their sons
' and daughters if they get married. This, of course, is done under the
' colour of preventing overcrowding; but there would be no danger of over-
' crowding, excepting for the clearing of the people off the wider and better
' lands. The managers of the estate cause overcrowding, and after victim-
' ising the people, punish them. The spirit of this prohibition, however,
' comes out clearly at the present moment. A young man of the name of
' John McMillan got married some time ago, and is living in a house with
' his wife by themselves. They are not in the same house with any one
' else, and there is no overcrowding. The prohibition against married sons
' being in with their parents has been stretched so as to apply to this case,
' and everything is being done to get the young couple out of the place.
' His father has been refused a fence in front of his house, because the son
' will not leave the country. This year a new refinement has been invented,
' as if to carry out the idea that every new proprietor should exceed the
' previous ones in the art of mismanaging the people. There has been a
' new code of estate regulations issued consisting of what have been called
' "The Seventeen Commandments." According to the 14th of these rules,
' "the sons, after attaining twenty-one years of age, whether married or
' not, are bound to find accommodation elsewhere, unless allowed to
' remain with the written sanction of the proprietor." It is not merely
' that the people are "cribbed, cabined, and confined," as we have seen,
' but even within their narrow family circles the rent-drawer, the man
' who lives by the sweat of their brows, takes upon him to trample upon
' their judgment, their discretion, their affections, and to dictate to the
' fathers and mothers how they are to behave towards their own offspring.
' This code was handed to the crofters and others for their signatures at
' last rent collection, and some confess, with shame, that they adhilitated

INVER-
NESS.

ARISAIG.

Rev. Donald
MacCallum.

INVER-
NESS.

ARISAIG.

Rev. Donald MacCallum.

' their names. Lest it should be thought that these terms are too strong for
 ' the occasion, let us look into these rules a little further, particularly as
 ' they have been a bone of contention on the estate for some time. Rule
 ' 1 shows the disregard for the interest and feelings of the crofter class.
 ' After saying of the leaseholder that he shall have a year's written notice
 ' to quit, the crofters are tossed off with the intimation that six months'
 ' notice is all they are to get, and the cottagers without lease, three months.
 ' The poorer, the less able people are to bear hardships, the less considera-
 ' tion is shown to them. No. 3 goes into detail as to the management of
 ' the lease-holder's farm, and "any neglect or disregard" . . . "shall in
 "the option of the proprietor be held as a forfeiture of the lease," . . .
 ' just as if it were the practice in this country for landed proprietors to
 ' serve their time at farming, and had passed an examination in agriculture
 ' before a competent board—or that proprietors were born agriculturists
 ' and not made. No. 7 is so absurdly minute in regard to the permission
 ' and directions of the landlord which the tenant must have before he can
 ' reclaim or drain a bit of land, that it is a practical bar to improvement.
 ' No. 8 provokes another remark on the agricultural qualifications of the
 ' landlord, who is declared to be "sole judge" of the sufficiency of the tenant's
 ' stock for the land; and this is the slightest objection to it. The crofter
 ' is told that he must at all times have sufficient stock on pain of deposit-
 ' ing a half year's rent in the bank six month's before it is due. No. 1
 ' showed that the poorer a man was the less consideration was shown him
 ' in the matter of removals; but No. 8 makes a stride in advance even of
 ' that, for under it the poverty of a man is a reason for his being called
 ' upon to perform an impossibility, or submit to be, of set purpose, pushed
 ' further down in the slough of poverty. The presumption is that if a
 ' man has not sufficient stock, it is because he has not wherewith to buy
 ' it; and if he has not, he cannot deposit the money in the bank to
 ' satisfy his "sole judge," the proprietor. This is plain enough, how-
 ' ever, that the man's not having all the stock necessary to satisfy
 ' the demands of the proprietor, six month's before he has any right
 ' to make them, renders the poor man liable to eviction—this pro-
 ' prietor being litigant, "sole judge," and executioner. No. 11 holds the
 ' tenant bound to stay all improvement of houses until he has got the
 ' written consent of the proprietor; and, as if that were not enough, he is
 ' told that his house shall not exceed in value three years' rent of the
 ' croft. No. 12 restricts a whole township of crofters to one dog for each
 ' march; and if this dog has strayed away from his owner, and has been
 ' found in the hills, there is no intimation that he shall be carefully re-
 ' turned to his owner. Oh, no; the intimation is that the dog may be
 ' destroyed, without compensation to the owner. And so on—everything
 ' being, apparently on the assumption that the proprietor has to do with
 ' a whole population, every one of which is so ignorant, so stupid, so dis-
 ' honest, and so dead to self-interest, that directions, restrictions, and
 ' written permissions must be given to keep them from running into all
 ' sorts of forbidden ways—we say nothing of the proprietor's fitness for this
 ' general and particular directorship. There is another example, in con-
 ' nection with the matter of employment—and they are all comparatively
 ' recent. Even when there is work to be done, it would seem to be the set
 ' purpose of the rulers to exclude the natives, especially if the job be
 ' worth having. Not very long ago tenders were advertised for in con-
 ' nection with the fencing of the deer forest. Some persons on the estate
 ' wrote to the estate office for the specifications, intimating an intention
 ' to put in an offer. No answer was given to the application, and the
 ' contract was given to a man of the name of Cameron from Lochaber.

' Any one hearing this would be apt to conclude that it was well known
 ' that no one among the tenants was fit to undertake the job. But the
 ' sequel will show. Cameron was not many days at work when he gave
 ' a sub-contract to John M'Innes, John M'Eachen, Donald M'Varish, and
 ' Donald M'Donald, on the estate. When the contract was finished and
 ' the money paid, they found that they had 4s. 6d. a day for the time,
 ' and that the head contractor had cleared £100 by the job. There is no
 ' contradicting the fact of there being some incompatibility between the
 ' proprietorial and managing classes on the one side and the native popu-
 ' lation on the other. There is no satisfactory way of accounting for the
 ' variety of forms in which this sort of thing comes up. One does not
 ' like to say that these English and other folk have a positive hatred to
 ' the native Highlander; but there is something at the bottom of it
 ' which is not even so clearly understood as hatred. Rose, the factor
 ' under Lord Cranstoun, one of the great rent-raisers on the estate, insisted
 ' upon every one offering £2 additional on his croft, or that he would
 ' have to go; and the insistence was supported with the declaration that,
 ' if they did not give the £2, the land would be let to a Frenchman, rather
 ' than to them if he only gave 1s. of advance. In Mackay's time an
 ' eviction of the Kinloid people was projected, and the *maor* went with his
 ' force to turn them out by unroofing the houses. In Lord Cranstoun's
 ' time, Rose being factor, there was an eviction attempted at Brunary.
 ' There happened to be an old woman lying dead in the house on which
 ' the attack was to be made first. The circumstance of no respect being
 ' shown to the dead or to the afflicted so roused the people that they seized
 ' the functionary, tore his clothes to bits, and soon chased him out of the
 ' place. But bearing out the idea that the changes have been for the worse,
 ' Mr Astley became proprietor, and his manager, Mr John Routledge, drove
 ' out sixteen families from Kinloid, as stated in the Back of Keppoch paper.
 ' These evictions are remarkable from the circumstance that they seem not
 ' to have been prompted by a demand, at the time, for a large farm; for
 ' it remained in the proprietor's hands for some time after being cleared.
 ' It is but right to state that when these evictions were complained of to
 ' the proprietor, he said they had been perpetrated without his knowledge;
 ' he promised never to do the like again, and his sincerity was apparently
 ' confirmed by the dismissal of the manager. But there is a deduction to
 ' be made from his sincerity on account of two facts—(1) The manager
 ' was promoted to the post of hotel-keeper; and to the excellent manage-
 ' ment of Mrs Routledge and her daughters tourists are indebted for com-
 ' forts and attendance such as are not excelled anywhere else. (2) After
 ' a succession of not very wise selections of managers, a young Routledge
 ' rules where the father did such bad work. And worse than all these
 ' deductions, the people have not been restored to the land, although the
 ' farm remained in the proprietor's hands for some time after being cleared,
 ' and although it has been out of lease since—for the making of this big
 ' farm was an economic blunder, as well as an inhumane proceeding. The
 ' man who took it after the evictions failed; and it is a question to-day
 ' who lost most—the evicted, the man who got the cleared land, or the man
 ' whose reputation has suffered by the carrying out of the eviction policy.
 ' I have not sufficient knowledge of the West and North Highlands to be
 ' able to say how far that which operates to so large an extent between the
 ' tenants and those over them is to be traced to sectarian prejudice. The
 ' fact is, no doubt, that the mass of the people on this estate are Catholics.
 ' I can hardly think that this points to the cause of the pract cal
 ' antagonism to the people; yet I am told, on Lord Howard of Glosso p's
 ' little property, where the landlord and people are all of the one Catholic

INVER-
NESS.

ARISAG.

Rev. Donald
MacCallum.

INVER- * ' faith, things are managed in a totally different spirit; and we hear that
 NESS. ' the disputes on the Glen Uig and North Morar estates have been settled
ARISAIG. ' between the Catholic tenants and the Catholic Lord Lovat and Mr
 ' M'Lean. I am a Presbyterian, and the minister of the Established Church
Rev. Donald ' of Arisaig, and can have no church bias towards Catholic people or pro-
MacCallum. ' prietors; but in trying to account for the very deplorable state of feeling
 ' between the two classes on this estate, I am obliged to make reference to
 ' the remarkable facts mentioned. If, however, this incompatibility be
 ' not traceable to the churches, and that the fact must be accepted as going,
 ' along with those we read of in Skye, Lewis, Uist, and Sutherland, to
 ' establish the conviction, that whatever may be the case in England and
 ' even in the lowlands of Scotland, the present system of landlords, factors,
 ' ground officers, consolidations, sheep walks, and small crofts, make up an
 ' incongruous mass, taken as a whole, which is utterly abnormal, and must
 ' give way to an arrangement more in harmony with the genius of the High-
 land people. Whether this system is to give place to one under which
 ' the people will be left, as peasant proprietors, to manage their lands, their
 ' houses, their families, and their cattle according to their own ideas,
 ' expanded by the experience now denied them under an antagonistic
 ' system, or that they will become the tenants of the Government, remains to
 ' be seen. So far as the treatment of the people on this estate goes, it would
 ' seem to leave nothing for the people but to seek the special protection of
 ' Government. I believe that any fair proposal on the part of Government
 ' would be gratefully accepted by the crofters and householders; but they
 ' certainly look to Government and Parliament to deliver them from the
 ' kind of treatment here described. No doubt, the proprietors, past and
 ' present, desire above all things that they should be relieved from
 ' all further trouble by the people emigrating. This might suit the pro-
 ' prietors in one respect; but these people say, first, that there is plenty land
 ' for them on their native shores; and, second, that it would be a wiser
 ' economy to give them the money which would be required to transport
 ' them, and that it would do much more good, as a help towards setting
 ' them up on farms at home. They say, further, that emigration is suitable
 ' for proprietors and capitalist farmers, who can settle down on stocked farms
 ' with houses ready for occupation, and not for poor people to be cast out
 ' and left to their fate on strange shores without a penny in their pockets.
 ' Proprietors and sheep farmers try to live alone in the midst of the earth,
 ' and I, as a teacher of righteousness, am constrained to justify the ways
 ' of God to men by saying that the rapid succession of proprietors and
 ' managers on this one estate indicate a striking execution of the divine
 ' sentence, "Woe unto them that join house to house, that lay field to
 ' field, until there be no room, that they may be placed alone in the midst
 ' of the earth." They have worked hard to take and to keep the lands
 ' which God gave to the children of men to be inhabited, and yield its
 ' fruits to fill the hearts of men with grateful praises of God; but the
 ' evictors and consolidators have been seized themselves, and their acquisi-
 ' tions have slipped out of their hands as if they were no more solid than
 ' vapour. But thanks, be to God, the land is there; a large remnant of
 ' the people is there to replenish the waste lands; and we have the Royal
 ' Commission, I hope, the harbinger of the restoration.—DONALD
 ' MACCALLUM.—Summary. The grievances are—1. Insufficient land of
 ' inferior quality, and badly situated. 2. Excessive rents arbitrarily
 ' raised without any bargain being made. 3. Evictions from better and
 ' more land to less and worse—sometimes to none; removals backwards
 ' and forwards, with their inevitable consequence of a feeling of insecurity.
 ' 4. Harsh regulations, which can serve no higher purpose than that of

' raising a few over the many, and degrading the native people in the eyes of the world and even their own eyes. 5. Prohibitions against young men remaining under the roof of their parents. 6. A general system of repression, restriction, and repulsion, as if the native people were an eyesore to the other strangers who happen to have got power over them.—*Remedies.* 1. Land to those who have none, and help to stock it ; more land to the many who have too little. There is plenty land lying waste. 2. Reduction of rent, the same to be fixed by Government valuators, well acquainted with the country. 3. Better houses, the landlord's money to be expended on them by the tenant and not by his officials. 4. Fences to save crops from sheep and deer, if the latter are to be tolerated in this country. 5. No evictions without being very exacting as to the terms on which occupation is to be made secure. Let an attempt be made to redress grievances, and the rulers will find that they have a docile and amenable people to deal with. I wish to add that in the foregoing paper no attempt has been made to excite bad feelings towards any one. I have merely attempted to state facts as they have borne upon the tenants. If the managers feel that facts fall too heavily upon themselves, they will, no doubt, shift the burden to the proper shoulders. What I, and the people who have asked me to write for them, desire is redress of grievances, the prosperity of all classes of the community, and not the censure of individuals.'

32927. Have there been any evictions or arbitrary changes among the small tenants since you began here ?—No, these regulations were issued at Whitsunday and have not been in operation.

32928. There was a general complaint of the liability of the people to eviction before the regulations were brought under consideration ; and there have not been, since you came here, any cases of arbitrary eviction ?—No.

32929. Or arbitrary changes of tenants from one plot to another ?—No.

32930. How long have you been here ?—Two years.

32931. From what you have heard, how long is it since practices of this kind have been common upon the estate ?—Some of them about twenty years ago.

32932. Do you think that any complaints about arbitrary eviction or change of tenancy involving a loss and hardship to the crofter have occurred within a period of twenty years ?—Yes, or thirty, when a number of families were sent away. Thirty years ago one hundred and twenty families were sent away to America and elsewhere.

32933. But the people do not live under any distinct pressure or alarm of eviction at this time ?—No, but they have heard rumours that they were to be evicted.

32934. Was that in connection with any project for forming a forest or great sheep farm ?—My own impression is that it is because there is no work for them on the estate ; and that those who wished to send them away thought it was for their good ; that is my own explanation of it.

32935. But nothing of that sort has been carried out yet ?—No.

32936. In your statement there is an allusion to strangers—to the employment, or perhaps the tyranny, of strangers among the people. Do you refer to proprietors or factors ?—Yes, generally ; people buying estates who have no interest in them so far as their connections are concerned—English people who buy Highland estates.

32937. But, do you think that there is a disadvantage necessarily attached to the purchase of property by a rich Englishman from an impoverished Highland family ?—Not necessarily.

32938. Do you think that the English, or strangers, as you call them,

INVER-
NESS.
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ARISAIG.
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Rev. Donald
MacCallum.

INVER-
NESS.

ARISAIG.

Rev. Donald
MacCallum.

who have purchased estates in the Highlands, are more careless of the welfare of the people, and less inclined to do them good, than the old families are?—I could not say the old families were better.

32939. Is there any evidence here that strangers to the country are systematically chosen for all places of authority over the people?—I could not say, except that strangers have generally been chosen for this estate.

32940. Are they strangers at the present moment?—They don't belong originally to the place.

32941. Are they Inverness-shire people—Highlanders?—Some of them English.

32942. You mean men employed as ground officers?—Yes.

32943. Is there any hostility shown by the people to Englishmen particularly?—Not the least.

32944. They don't dislike them because they are English?—No.

32945. There was an expression in your statement which struck me about sheep being tolerated?—I mean deer.

32946. Then you will tolerate sheep?—Yes.

32947. Do you think it would be a benefit to the crofters themselves if they were allowed to keep more sheep?—Decidedly.

32948. I did not understand the regulation about the sons of crofters in the way you put it. The memorial seemed to imply that no son above the age of twenty-one years was to be allowed to remain with the father?—The last part of the rule I cannot interpret, it is put indefinitely, but it would give you to understand that no son was to be allowed to remain.

32949. To my mind, the first part implies that the oldest son, or one son, whether married or single, is to remain, at the option of the parent?—Yes.

32950. And that all other sons, after attaining the age of twenty-one, are to go away?—They don't object at all to going away, but they object to being told to go away. They want to go away and get work, and they consider that none of them will remain as long as it is for their good to go away; but they think it hard that there should be a law compelling them to do that, although they know it is for their good.

32951. I certainly don't advocate any stringent or offensive expression of policy or intention; but still at bottom is there not great reason for some restriction in that direction?—Yes, very much.

32952. Supposing this article really means that one son, married or single, may remain, and that no other sons, married or single, should remain without the consent of the proprietor, can you really say that you think that is a vicious regulation?—It is a bad thing for them to remain. But that regulation puts them all on the same level. It is given to those who send their children away as well as to those who would keep them; and it would be far better to examine the houses, and enforce the rule where and when it was really necessary.

32953. Your objection is not to the substance of the regulation, but to the manner in which it is systematically applied?—I object to its being said to every one that he must send his children away, although I consider it a good thing for them to go away.

32954. Do you think they would go away?—I think they would if they got the chance.

32955. Perhaps you have heard that there are complaints connected with overcrowding in other parts?—Certainly.

32956. It states here that 'the crofters' houses shall not exceed in value 'three years' rent of the croft.' If that really meant that no crofter's house should exceed in value three years' rent of the croft, that might appear a most objectionable and inhuman regulation? But I don't under-

stand that it really means that. It has been stated to me that it means that no outgoing tenant shall have a claim to reimbursement from the incoming tenant or the proprietor of more than three years' value?—I don't understand it.

INVER-
NESS.
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ARISAIG.

32957. Has any case ever occurred?—These regulations are new and have not been enforced; and they have been objected to. The people delayed the payment of rent on account of these regulations; and there would not have been so much about that had they not been in correspondence with Mr Nicholson about them. He said he might modify rule 14 for them, and they understood he was to enforce all the rest without modification.

32958. Do the small tenants complain of these regulations because they are couched in too technical and categorical a form?—That is the great objection to them.

32959. Who is supposed to have been the contriver of these remarkable regulations?—It is not at all known.

32960. From what part of the country do you come?—Craignish.

32961. Comparing the condition of the people here with other parts of the Highlands with your native place, do you find the people here in an inferior physical condition to those of other places?—No, they are not inferior.

32962. Do you think the people here who are industrious and well inclined, generally find some resource of labour or employment during the whole year?—Yes.

32963. Are the prices of the commodities that they produce rising?—They don't sell many things; they fish and sell herring.

32964. They sell some small cattle?—Yes, stirls.

32965. Prices for stirls are rising?—Yes, of late years.

32966. And is the price of fish improving?—It depends very much upon whether the fish are plentiful or not. In a plentiful year they get very little for them after great trouble, and when there is little they are almost at starvation; in a middling year they are more comfortable.

32967. They have cause to complain of excessive plenty?—Yes.

32968. That is not desirable?—No.

32969. Nor excessive scarcity?—No.

32970. But on the whole they have the means of gaining a livelihood almost over the whole place?—Yes.

32971. Is there any improvement in their method of fishing—are they getting a superior description of boats?—I think not.

32972. Do they go further to fish?—To Loch Hourn.

32973. Do they go to the east coast?—I am not aware.

32974. Do any of them go to the lowlands of Scotland?—Some young men do.

32975. Do heads of families go?—I don't know.

32976. In that case the family is not, properly speaking, broken up by the departure of individual members?—Not quite.

32977. Do the young men go for employment to the south of Scotland?—They go to service.

32978. Do they return home?—Occasionally. They have the croft here is their home, and they come home when they are out of work.

32979. Do they assist their parents from their earnings?—Yes, in my experience they do.

32980. And the moral condition of the parish is satisfactory?—As satisfactory as any parish I know.

32981. Is there any intemperance?—Nothing to speak of.

32982. Any public houses?—Yes.

32983. How many?—One.

INVER-
NESS.

ARISAIG.

Rev. Donald
MacCallum.

32984. For the whole region?—Yes, and it is extremely well conducted.

32985. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—I suppose a person in possession of a croft requires longer notice of removal than a person in a house?—Yes.

32986. Is that the reason the cottages should only get three months' and the farmer twelve months' notice?—It occurred to me in this light; that the farmer was rich, and could do for himself at any time of the year, but the crofter and cottager are generally poor, and it is therefore a greater hardship to them than to the farmer to be sent away at short notice.

32987. Do you know if there is any difference in the term for which the crofter and farmer pay rent?—I could not say; perhaps the crofters pay it oftener.

32988. Do the crofters pay a forehand rent?—I cannot say.

32989. You say it is very desirable that they should have better houses?—Yes; some of them have good houses.

32990. Is it not the case that the extremely high rents on this property are due to the fact that the people have been provided with good houses for which they have to pay interest?—It is, partly. They tell me that their crofts would be too dear, although they had not to pay any interest, and some of them say the interest itself is quite sufficient rent.

32991. Can the proprietor afford to build houses without interest?—No, of course not.

32992. We were told by one of the witnesses that it has been the custom here for a proprietor to give the materials—slates and wood and lime—that the tenant of the croft might make the house himself; that is generally considered a fair enough condition for the erection of crofters' houses?—Yes, I think so. But in regard to the proprietor not being able to do it, of course not; but that don't make it easier for the tenant to pay it. They don't blame the proprietor at all. The proprietor, of course, cannot do it for nothing; but when it is built interest has to be paid, which, in addition to the rent of the croft, becomes difficult to pay.

32993. How would you propose, then, that better houses should be provided?—That the rent should be reduced so that, even paying the interest of the house along with it, it should be a fair rent.

32994. But you mentioned that the interest on the cost of the house would be a fair rent for the croft, so that the land would go for nothing?—If that way were taken—either the one way or the other.

32995. Do you think it is reasonable that the proprietor should be asked to give land for nothing?—No, but I think it is reasonable that they should let it at its real value.

32996. You said just now they wanted better houses, and that the interest on the cost of those houses would be sufficient rent for the land?

—Some of them say so. Some of them pay £5 every year, and they say it is sufficient for their croft. They have, I think, only four cows.

32997. Assuming it is so, how could they be provided with better houses?—Well, I could not say, I am sure.

32998. You made a remark with reference to the strangers who, as you express it, 'happened to have much power over here'; you also mentioned that you had something to do with the writing of the statement from the Back of Keppoch, in which these words occur 'our forefathers have been 'here from time immemorial, and we consider we have as much right to 'live in comfort as the proprietor has to be superior over us.' Do you think the proprietor is bound to find cottages for these crofters at any cost to himself?—No, but I think he should be.

32999. You think that, morally, he should be bound to find cottages,

although the people cannot pay for them?—No; but I consider he is bound morally to let them live at a reasonable rate on the estate. I don't say exactly what he should do for them.

33000. There is a rule about tenants being bound to have sufficient stock. I suppose it is from the stock that the tenant pays his rent, or is supposed to do so?—It is so supposed, but it is not the case. He pays his rent from the fishing; there are cases in which the cows have all died, and the people have had nothing. Now if the proprietor discovered that, the man would be sent away because he had no money to deposit; and if the proprietor would allow him time he might get his rent from the fishing.

33001. But these rules apply to the larger tenant as well as to the smaller one?—Perhaps.

33002. And in their case it surely is reasonable that they should be bound to have full stock on the land?—Yes. A person of the name of Angus Campbell lost a cow and had only another, which he also lost recently. Having lost the first cow, should the proprietor say 'You have only one cow, you must go.' The man may be a carpenter, and he might make money by his trade and be able to pay the proprietor at the end of the year; and I think it is unreasonable that he should be asked to deposit the rent before it is due. He does not know that the tenant shall live to get the value of it. The money should be in the bank to the credit of the tenant, who may die.

33003. The stock is the proprietor's security for the rent?—It is on that assumption that the rule is made.

33004. You don't mean to insinuate that the proprietor would take advantage of a case of misfortune?—No; but no one knows what proprietor may come, and if these rules are in force, who knows that there may not be two fools, as on the estate of Morar. If a fool should come, and if these rules should remain, we do not know what might happen. The present proprietor is right and just, we consider, but we don't know who may come in his place and enforce these rules.

33005. Are there complaints of sheep worrying here?—There was something about that.

33006. I suppose that is the reason why the rule about loose dogs was made?—It may be.

33007. Do you think it unreasonable that loose dogs should be destroyed?—These dogs were destroyed. The fact is I really do not know when I heard of any sheep worrying, but I have heard of dogs being poisoned when they went astray.

33008. You did not hear that there had been sheep worrying?—No, I did not hear it.

33009. *Mr Cameron.*—I think you say that six months' notice of removal is quite sufficient for the crofter?—No; I objected to a distinction being made between the leaseholder and the crofter.

33010. Is it not a fact that at present forty days' notice is sufficient?—It may be so.

33011. Supposing it is, the new regulation is a distinct improvement, and one of a liberal character, in favour of the tenant?—Yes, but it has not gone the length that it should do.

33012. But, at present, without those regulations, the law says forty days' notice of removal is sufficient, and these regulations alter the forty days' to six months, and that, therefore, is a distinct improvement, and more liberal?—Certainly, but we are here to-day to get further advances, and to get the law so made that so long as we pay fair rent we shall not be removed at all.

INVERNESS.

ARISAIG

Rev. Donald MacCallum

INVER-
NESS.
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ARISAIG.

Rev. Donald
MacCallum.

33013. You complain of the regulations in regard to the draining?—Yes, that they are too minute, and that there are so many regulations concerning it that really a tenant cannot undertake it for a small bit of land.

33014. Is not draining rather a hazardous agricultural operation, and one which requires great care in its execution?—Yes.

33015. And don't you think the more minute the regulations are the more satisfactory the drains will prove to be?—Yes, but I think these regulations are too minute.

33016. You complain of a general incompetency of landlords to deal with agriculture; but have not landlords the power of obtaining professional assistance even if they themselves are not acquainted with the matter?—Yes, but he has to be sole judge.

33017. But I suppose there is nothing to prevent him getting competent assistance?—Yes, but we cannot compel him to do so; and the man he might send might be worse than himself.

33018. But do you think it is likely, if he knows nothing upon the subject, that he will decide that matter without taking somebody's advice?—That is what I consider so absurd.

33019. But he would be the loser?—He might not.

33020. Do people generally usually carry on their affairs by plunging into an enterprise of which they know nothing without asking advice?—It is to prevent that that we are here to object to the paper; to prevent his going headlong into things he knows nothing about.

33021. You state that the rents are arbitrarily fixed without any bargain being made?—Yes, they were raised by the factor who was here, some years ago, and he said unless they would give him £2 more rent they would all be evicted, and it is remarked that he said he would give it to a Frenchman sooner than let them have it unless they gave him more rent.

33022. Without any bargain being made?—He came and said, 'You will have to go out.' Now I consider a bargain is between two.

33023. But when rents are arbitrarily made, the rule is, I suppose, that a bargain is also made. The tenant need not take the farm unless he chooses?—No, of course not.

33024. In that sense there is a bargain?—Yes, when he remains.

33025. The remedy, you say, is more land and ability to stock it?—I am not definite on that point; I don't know.

33026. I should like to ask you to be a little definite because it is an important point. If the crofters are to get more land, to enable them to stock it it is clear the stock must come from some quarter. From what quarter should the assistance come which you request?—In some cases the proprietors give them money to emigrate, and I think if that money which was given to them for emigration was given to stock and get a croft at home it would be a good change on that policy.

33027. But ought not the remedy to be sought, in the first instance, from the proprietor himself?—Yes, of course, they have no right to get it from anyone unless they are good enough to give it.

33028. What do you suggest to us should be the remedy in the way of helping the crofter to stock the land?—Government might, perhaps, lend money.

33029. That is a different thing from the proprietor?—Yes.

33030. You said you would recommend the proprietor to lend money; and, if he refused you would recommend the Government to lend it?—Yes; but if the proprietor would be willing to do it I should say it would be better.

33031. You say that 'Everything is apparently on the assumption that

' the proprietor has to do with a whole population, every one of which is so ignorant, so stupid, so dishonest, and so dead to self-interest, that directions, restrictions, and written permissions must be given to keep them from running into all sorts of forbidden ways?—That is the general impression.

INVER-
NESS.—
ARISAIG.—
Rev. Donald
MacCallum.

33032. Are not regulations in all matters made on the assumption that everybody is not perfect, and are they not intended to keep in order those who have certain imperfections of human nature, and who require these regulations to enable them to live as they should do?—Certainly.

33033. Are not the laws of the country based upon the same principle?—They don't take for granted.

33034. Would you say that the law for the prevention, say, of cruelty to animals, is based on the assumption that everybody is liable to be cruel to animals?—No; it is based on a knowledge of the fact that people have been so.

33035. It is based on the assumption that certain people, without these laws, would commit acts of inhumanity?—Yes.

33036. And it does not assume that all the queen's subjects are given to it?—No.

33037. Would you not apply the same to estate regulations of all kinds; that they are based on the assumption that some people require them although the majority of people don't?—Yes; but, generally speaking, I don't think any person requires these; I mean the people on the estate.

33038. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You have taken an interest in the people since you have come here, in respect of your position as minister?—Yes.

33039. And you have good means of ascertaining what their real views are?—Yes, I asked them everything that I put into the paper.

33040. Are these regulations fair to the people of Arisaig?—I don't consider them fair.

33041. You said some 120 families were sent away from the estate thirty years ago?—Yes; but there are others far more competent to speak of that.

33042. Were these people at one time in possession of good parts of the estate?—Yes.

33043. And the first stage was to remove them from their holdings?—Yes.

33044. And the next to send them out of the country?—Yes.

33045. You were asked to explain whether it was advantageous or disadvantageous for rich Englishmen to purchase Highland properties?—Not necessarily.

33046. Was it advantageous for the district of Arisaig when a rich English gentleman came and removed the great body of the people, and turned the place into a deer forest?—No, but that was not exactly because he was English.

33047. A Scotsman might have done it?—Even a Scotsman.

33048. But, in this particular case, the introduction of a rich Englishman into Arisaig was not for the benefit of the people?—No. There were a great many of the proprietors here who were not for the benefit of the people, especially the managers that they had.

33049. You stated that the people in the place did not show hostility to the strangers who were temporarily placed over them?—Not the slightest, so far as I know.

33050. Did these strangers, who had been for some time in the local administration of the estate of Arisaig, show the same feeling towards the people who were under them?—I won't answer that question, if you

INVER-
NESS.

please, except to say that the management has been very bad ; but I don't say that they do it consciously with a will against the Highlanders.

ARISAIG.

Rev. Donald MacCallum. 33051. But the results have been unsatisfactory ?—Yes.
33052. In answering another question, you said it would be a good thing if some of the people, when there were several members in a family, went away ?—Certainly, they must go away.

33053. But may I put this question to you ? As long as there is land in Arisaig suitable for cultivation, would it not be as well to keep them ?—Yes.

33054. You only meant that, under present circumstances, they cannot get land ?—Yes, certainly.

33055. You were asked a question about the proprietor, with respect to the number of stock. You were asked whether, if he did not understand it himself, he would be sure to get competent assistance. But is it not likely that any assistance, competent or incompetent, would be on the side of the landlord and not of the tenant ?—The rules would illustrate that.

33056. It would not matter whether it was competent or incompetent, it would be against the tenant ?—Yes.

33057. You were asked a question about forty days' notice being the law. Are you aware that there have been Bills before Parliament proposing to extend the period of notice to two years ?—I cannot speak distinctly to that, but I think that is so.

33058. And you think, therefore, that the proposed tying down to three months and six months is quite inadequate ?—Even that is quite inadequate ; of course, a few days was ridiculous.

33059. You have heard some of the crofters' delegates speaking of the limited number of cattle they had, and stating that consequently there was a considerable deficiency of milk for the children ?—I cannot speak to that. In Strath the people have no cattle ; they are householders without land.

33060. You heard one of them say they had little milk, and that what they had was bad ?—I forget ; but they get no milk except what they buy. One or two have a cow.

33061. Is there always milk to sell ?—I don't think there is.

33062. Don't you think it is a great disadvantage, which nothing can overcome, in the bringing up of children, that they should want milk ?—Certainly.

33063. Is there not a great deal of grass lying vacant in Arisaig which would pasture a great many cattle ?—Yes.

33064. Do you consider the position of the crofters and others who are represented to-day at all satisfactory upon the estate ?—No, not satisfactory.

33065. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Do you know whether there was more destitution here than ordinarily last winter ?—I could not say there was distinctly more ; it might be a little more.

33066. You are not aware, personally, that there was any case of extreme want ?—There was a case in which it was commonly said the woman died of starvation, but there are people here who can speak to that better than I. If it is so, I think it was the fault of the inspector of poor.

33067. What was the name ?—Mary O'Henley.

33068. When did she die ?—In February last.

33069. Was it alleged that she died of starvation ?—It was commonly said.

33070. Was there any investigation into the case ?—The constable took some steps, but it didn't go far on. I think he wrote to the fiscal.

33071. Nothing resulted?—No; the policeman examined some people.
 33072. Did the fiscal not come and make inquiries?—No.
 33073. Who is the fiscal in this district?—Mr M'Niven, Fort William.
 33074. Is the administration of justice here satisfactory to the people?
 —Oh, yes; but the poor laws are not—the inspector never comes to look
 after the people.
- INVER-
NESS.
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ARISAIG.
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Rev. Donald
MacCallum.
33075. Where does he live?—Strontian.
 33076. How far is that?—At the head of Loch Suinart.
 33077. What time does he take to travel from that place to this?—
 Almost a day.
 33078. How often does he come?—Twice a year, I think; he comes
 when he lifts the poor rates.
 33079. Does he never come to visit the poor?—No.
 33080. And are there many?—Yes.
 33081. Do you know how many?—No, I don't.
 33082. Is this a separate parish?—It is not; it is in Ardnamurchan
 parish.
 33083. Is there anybody who looks after the poor in the absence of the
 inspector?—There are members of the board appointed from the district.
 33084. And do they attend to that duty?—Well, there are complaints
 of them.
 33085. Is it chiefly outdoor relief here, or are the paupers sent to the
 poorhouse?—They get aliment.
 33086. Where is the poorhouse to which they should go?—I don't
 know—Tobermory, I suppose.
 33087. *Professor Mackinnon.*—When you stated that you were not
 satisfied with the management of the estate you——?—Made a general
 statement.
 33088. I understood you to state that so far as you knew, there was no
 ill-will on the part of the managers to the people?—No, but ill govern-
 ment.
 33089. But no ill-will?—No, I would not say that.
 33090. So that while there is ill-will on the part of the people towards
 the managers, there is no ill-will, personally, on the part of the managers
 towards the people?—No.

DONALD M'VARISH, Crofter, Ardnish (64)—examined.

33091. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Is this your statement?—It is. ‘Ardnish has
 six divisions.—(1) In Beinmheanach there are seven families holding
 land and paying an average rent of £6, 3s. 1½d., ranging from £4 to £8.
 Four of these keep four cows each, two keep three cows, and one has
 only two. Some have as many as fifteen sheep and others have none at
 all. Besides these there is one who has no land at all—James Macdonald,
 who was in a small lot with his brother, knowing that it was too small
 for two, left it and went in with his father-in-law to wait for an opening.
 He is there still with a family of five besides himself and wife, and with-
 out a morsel of ground or a head of stock, although he has made applica-
 tion both to the proprietrix and to the factor. He has been refused even
 a house, and with the exception of what his father-in-law does for him he
 is dependent for his living on very uncertain employment. (2)
 Glasnacardaich contains three lots of equal size. The rent, in all, is
 £16. We keep three cows each, but the ground is not fit to carry more
 than six cows in all. (3) Laggan has two tenants and a cottar, who
- Donald
M'Varish.

**INVER-
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ARISAIG.

Donald
M'Varish.

' keeps two cows on the tenants' ground. The rent is in all £48. We ' keep twelve cows and two hundred sheep. (4) Marlarach-bui has three ' crofts. Two of us pay together £8. One has four cows, the other only ' one, not being able to put together what will get him another. The other ' crofter has less ground and pays less. We feel great hardship in having ' to carry sea-ware on our backs up a steep and high hill. (5) Slock has ' two tenants. The rent, in all, is £21, 10s. Our stock is eight cows and ' twenty four sheep. Our peats are almost done. Our houses are very ' bad. (6) Feorlain-due has one farmer and one crofter. The crofter has ' very little. The farmer pays about £22. His farm is of such a size that ' he can live on it without seeking work elsewhere. For Ardnish as a ' whole (except the farmer in Feorlain-due) we may say among all these ' there is not one family which is nearly supported by the land, and some ' of them are in a very poor state at the best. Those who make the most ' of their land buy ten bolls of meal in the year, and there are some ' among them who have bought that much already since the new year, ' while fifteen bolls will hardly meet the yearly demands of others. There ' is an idea abroad that there is much employment given on the Arisaig ' estate; but whatever may be done in the immediate neighbourhood of ' the mansion, very little reaches the rest of the estate. Attempts at fishing ' have been made from time to time, but from want of means the nets and ' other fishing gear are getting so bad that the sea itself does not afford ' the help we would be willing to take out of it. It is a matter of recent ' history that Beinnmheanach and Laggan were in the hands of one man. ' This man is still only represented by one man and his family of one son ' and four daughters, although he is the sixth in succession on the same ' spot. So that the present overcrowding is not from rapid multiplication ' nor from wilful subdivision. The crowding and the poverty are the ' result of the clearing of the townships of Goadal and Ardnafuruan, which ' are now partly in the possession of two tacksmen and partly in the ' possession of a sportsman, and under deer. Besides those who were put ' in among us, as mentioned great numbers were obliged to emigrate, and ' the numbers who are crowded together on the bad and small lots, and ' on no lots at all, are no indication of the extent of land which lies in a ' state of comparative waste under the sheep and deer and cattle of the ' few. The truth is that the greater part of this estate is in the hands of ' three tacksmen, besides some held by the proprietor; and an extensive ' deer forest, which could support many families in comfort. The crofter ' population have only the smaller and most worthless scraps. Thus the ' great grievance of want of land may easily be met, for there is plenty of ' land to satisfy the utmost demands of the crofters, and leave reasonably ' sized farms for the tacksmen as well. There is no desire on the part of ' the crofters to throw blame on the tacksmen. But it is plain to every ' one that it is a great grievance to have the many reduced to poverty, and ' great hardship when the few have more than they need and some more ' than they can manage. Another grievance is the weight of rent, although ' we have to confess that the present family have made no addition to it ' in their time. But it is too heavy, all the same; and from frequent turn- ' ing over, on account of the lots being so small, the land is much less ' productive than it was when the present rent was laid on. We do not ' like to go into the details of our grievances, but seeing that we have been ' invited to do so by the Royal Commission, we confess here that many a ' time we could not live at all but from the shell-fish from the sea-shore. ' We wish the land to be valued by land commissioners appointed by ' Government. We would gladly pay for our holdings their real value. ' We know that at present the rent is far too high, in fact double what it

'should be. As our lots are too small, we wish some of the adjoining land were added to them. We wish that in case of eviction Government should interfere between tenant and landlord. We hold that though the law at present may not acknowledge that the tenant has any right to his holding, the crofter or tenant has, in reality, as much right to live on the land of his forefathers as the proprietor has to be superior over it.' Signed by ALLAN M'DONALD, RONALD M'EACHEN, and fifteen others.

INVERNESS.

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ARISAIG.

Donald
M'Varish

33092. There are three lots in the place in which you live?—Yes.

33093. Which of them is yours?—I have a third of it. The place is not allotted out. The rent of the three is £16.

33094. How much do you pay?—£5, 6s. 8d. each.

33095. How many cows have you?—The place is let to stock seven, but in order to get an equal price we have three cows each. The place cannot support these; we have to buy fodder for them.

33096. What is your share of the two hundred sheep?—We are allowed to keep twelve sheep each, but we have only about twelve among us.

33097. It is stated in the paper 'we keep twelve cows and two hundred sheep,' what is the meaning of that?—That is Laggan.

33098. What would you think a proper rent for your place?—The old rent was £11, but it was raised by £5 in Lord Cranstoun's time. We do not complain of the rent, nor do we complain of the proprietors we have had, but we complain that we have too little land to subsist by.

33099. Where is the land you would like to get?—Well, it is not for us to specify any particular portion of land; but, at the same time, we are of opinion that, if our township were given to two instead of three, and the third man provided for elsewhere, we would be much better off. There is plenty of land in the country where I saw people dwelling when I came first, and where no man lives now.

33100. Supposing it were left to the other two, and you got your choice of some place to which you would be removed, where would you go to?—I should choose many a place before Ardnish. It is an inaccessible place. There is no road, although we pay the road money; and we have to go through the moor four miles before we can get at it. I think the third man, who would be removed from our township, would gladly choose any other place on the estate rather than remain where he is.

33101. How far is it from here?—Nine to ten miles.

33102. And have you no road?—Six miles of road, and the rest is very bad moor.

33103. Where do you get your goods for your family?—Glasgow, Tobermory, Fort William, and passing vessels.

33104. How do you carry them home?—By boats; and in winter time, when the weather is bad, we require to hire carts to carry it away from the landing place of the steamer to Borrodale, and by boat from there.

33105. How far are you from the sea?—We are on the sea coast.

33106. Is there any part of the deer forest that you consider desirable for arable land and pasture?—We would wish to get land, but we would not like to ask anything that those proprietors whom we have had for the last thirty-eight years would not be inclined to give, for they were very good to us.

33107. Where are the big farms of which you speak in this paper as occupying so much land which you would like to see subdivided?—All over the country.

33108. Are any of them very large?—Not upon this estate.

33109. Are there any of them that you would like to reduce in size?—One would like to look to his own interests first, no doubt. I don't complain of the rent nor of the proprietor, but I should like to have a little

INVER-
NESS.
ARISAIG.
Donald
M'Varish.

more land upon which to support my family. I can only provide for them for three months by my croft. Our best source of income is shell-fish. We begin to gather whelks in autumn after the crops are cut, and we continue until the spring, and the whole place depends upon that source of income more than upon anything else, now that we have lost driving and smearing sheep.

33110. What do you mean by driving?—We used to drive herds of cattle and sheep to Falkirk and other markets, and sometimes to England, and we sometimes made £14 or £15 by that in the season. That source of income is lost to us now since the railways were opened. We also used to smear sheep, and that also has gone out of fashion. There is only one man smearing now for every twelve that used to be.

33111. But is not the nearest railway station far from this, and have not sheep to be driven there yet?—They are under a shepherd, with perhaps one or two attendants, who can drive the stock to Banavie, and then they ship them from there, and sometimes they drive them to Tyndrum and put them upon the Oban railway, or Kingussie upon the Highland line.

33112. How long is it since the whelk-gathering began?—Twenty-eight years ago some of them were employed at it; but many of the people only took to that mode of getting a living after every other occupation failed them.

33113. Has not the crop of whelks diminished like everything else?—Yes, you won't gather 6d. worth now where you could gather 1s. 6d. worth five years ago.

33114. Do men gather whelks as well as women and children?—Yes, but it is very hard work for the men.

33115. Is it not harder for the women and children?—They don't complain of it so much.

33116. What can an industrious person make in a week at gathering whelks?—During the five or six days of a spring tide one works well to earn about 5s.

ENEAS RANALD MACDONELL, Advocate, residing at Camusdarrach, Morar, Arisaig (60)—examined.

Eneas Ranald Macdonell. 33117. *The Chairman.*—You wish, I believe, to make a spontaneous statement?—I do with regard to one point. The first witness very correctly stated that I had promised some of them to build better houses. That was done when I had built some three or four good houses upon the farm for six of the tenants; and I had the full intention of carrying out my promise and of building good houses for the others. This was after I had divided the farm of Bunnacaimb into separate and distinct crofts. It had previously been on the runrig system. As time passed I was satisfied that instead of building new houses there it would be better to enlarge the occupation of the people, and add to it, in course of time, the farm of Traigh, and, of course, build good houses there. That would have given them large crofts, for I was satisfied that I had gone on the wrong system entirely in making the people labourers. After I had acquired the estate I employed them very extensively, and I had subdivided the land; and as they had stated, I took from them some of the hill pasture, not to the full extent that they said, because I occupied it myself, and I understood that they might share it almost as a common;

but, as I bred sheep upon it, it was necessary for preventing the sheep being turned back too much that they should have the run over the upper part of their pasture. I do not know that I need say anything more. That is my explanation of how it came to pass that I did not build the houses. If circumstances occurred by which I was obliged to part with Eneas Ranald the estate, and I could not carry out my intention, it was for the benefit of the people. If I had continued and been able to do it, I should have fulfilled my promise and built the houses for them.

INVER-
NESS.
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ARISAIG.

33118. Your desire was to carry out in spirit your promise to build them better houses, and you had intended to accommodate them with larger holdings by applying a particular farm to that purpose?—Quite so.

33119. And, before you were able to fulfil the spirit of this engagement, you parted with the estate?—Quite so.

33120. Did you make the parties who purchased the estate acquainted in any degree with this engagement under which you lay with the tenants?—I can only say that I had no communication directly with those who became proprietors, except that I wrote to the factor strongly recommending that the farm of Traigh should be so devoted, and that I believed it would pay the proprietor much better, as well as be advantageous to the people.

33121. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You are well acquainted with this part of the country?—I was born here, and have lived most of my days in the district.

33122. I put a question to a previous delegate, to which he did not give a very clear answer. Was it not a fact that the estate of South Morar was for a very long time possessed by insane persons?—It was, before I was born and for many years afterwards; by two different parties who were under curators.

33123. I believe it is also true that the estate was embarrassed?—Very much.

33124. And I think it may be taken for granted that during the long period it was under this management nothing was spent on the estate?—I may say it was almost in a state of nature when I acquired it.

33125. Besides giving the employment referred to by the crofters' delegates, you intended, did you not, to give constant employment in the peat manufacture?—It was the case. I was under the impression that if a permanent industry could be created it would be of great benefit to the people in the country; but my views have very much changed from the circumstance that I myself have not been able to carry out my ideas. Mr Astley, a man of very large means, was most anxious to do everything for the carrying out of this idea of giving work for the benefit of the people on the estate; but when he died a stop was put to it, for of course trustees came in and could not carry out the thing. But I am satisfied that to try to make the people of the Highlands mere labourers is a great mistake; I believe that the proper system to make them independent is to give them sufficient land on which they can raise crops, and also rear a stock of cattle and sheep—a system which, I have no hesitation in saying, could be very easily adopted in this district, for I know no district in the whole Highlands better adapted for making the people comfortable.

33126. You know the Rhu of Arisaig?—Very well.

33127. And are you aware that a lot of people were removed from that place?—In Lord Cranstoun's time the first clearances commenced in this country, and I was then a young boy almost; but I shall never forget the feelings of awe and fear that came over the people of the country when the last occurred. All parties felt it, and my mother, who had then the farm of Traigh on South Morar, in her commiseration for some of the

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families, gave up Traigh for a year or two until they could get some other opening. That has been spoken to by previous witnesses.

33128. Is it not a fact that this part of Rhu Arisaig which was cleared, is admirably adapted for sustaining a considerable population in comfort—I have no hesitation in saying, and I have also said it to the previous proprietors of Arisaig in a quiet friendly way, that if that were done they might still have the deer on those portions of the estate not adapted for the use of the people.

33129. From your long acquaintance with the people, what is the general character of those who remain and are represented to-day? Are they a well-behaved and industrious people?—There is no doubt about that; but, at the same time, from my recollection of the people long ago in my boyhood, I should say that the old people were a finer race, I mean the fathers and grandfathers of these here. They were fine-looking men, and men of a very independent noble spirit, who were on the most cordial and friendly terms with their chiefs; at that time it was Clanranald, and I have no doubt it was the same with Lochiel's people. They looked upon their chief as their father, and had no feeling of fear or awe such as they have of proprietors now-a-days.

33130. It has not been brought out that the majority of the people in Arisaig are Catholics?—They have always been so.

33131. You yourself are, I believe, a representative of the old Macdonald's of Lochshiel?—My grandfather was, on the mother's side.

33132. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—In consequence of your reply to Mr Fraser-Mackintosh, I ask whether you don't think that if there were remunerative industries of a permanent character in the Highlands, labourers would not prosper here as well as elsewhere?—If you could establish a permanent industry, without doubt they would; but I don't think the country is adapted for that. At least, the efforts that have hitherto been made to establish anything like permanent industries in the Highlands have not succeeded.

33133. *The Chairman.*—Do you think it would be a desirable thing to plant largely in this country?—Certainly; as far as I am able to judge, the plantations have been exceedingly successful, and the timber has grown very well. There has been a great deal of that done upon the Arisaig estate, and it has grown very well.

Rev. CHARLES MACDONALD, Mingarry, Moidart, Ardnamurchan (49)
 —examined.

*Rev. Charles
 Macdonald.*

33134. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—You have a voluntary statement to make?—Yes. Some delegates were appointed by the people over on Lord Howard's estate to attend this meeting, in order to express the feeling of the tenants with regard to those questions which have caused the Commission to travel through the Highlands. I am asked to mention to your Lordship and the other gentlemen here, that the tenants have no complaint to urge against their proprietor, and that they are exceedingly well pleased and satisfied with him. There are some tenants here who are not exactly delegates, but who are on Captain Swinburne's property in Eilan Shona, to whom I sent word that they should come forward and express their feelings regarding the property on which they are, because, so far as I can gather, the feeling of all the tenants on Lord Howard's estate, and on the estate of Captain Swinburne, is one of complete and universal satisfaction. I may state to your Lordship that the real cause of this satisfaction

on the part of Lord Howard's tenants is, that when his Lordship came into possession of this estate, he saw at once that it would be a burden upon the proprietor if the people were to depend for a comfortable existence principally upon the support, or labour, or employment, which the proprietor or estate would afford them, because, as a rule, there is no permanent form of industry in the Highlands, certainly not in the country parts; and it would be a great drain upon the pockets of the proprietor and a great strain upon the resources of the property itself, if the tenants were to look for their maintenance principally to being employed by the proprietor and by the estate. Therefore, his Lordship saw that the real solution of all this difficulty was to put the people in a better condition—to make use of the condition in which they were before, and to enlarge the circle in which they were to move or act. For instance, he saw that if they had more arable ground, and a certain tract of hill pasture, they might be in a condition which would make them very comfortable; whilst the more active and industrious members of the family, when they came to a certain age, might go south and provide for themselves. On this account, he at once—at least, immediately after he had carried out some improvements upon those parts of the estate which he kept in his own hands—encouraged the people to cultivate more arable ground for themselves, and to enlarge the number of the stock. For instance, within the last eight years, for as many as twenty-nine or thirty tenants he has brought in close upon fifty acres of arable ground, entirely for the benefit of the people; and this is the way in which he proceeds; he allows to each tenant from £10 to £14 per acre that they cultivate. They have to trench this acre three feet deep. They take two green crops, potatoes or turnips, off this new ground before any interest is charged upon the outlay. The interest is not fixed as yet, but I think it will be from $4\frac{1}{2}$ to 5 per cent. But no rent is charged upon the ground taken in; it is merely the interest of the capital expended on it; and the people take this land in themselves, and get the money from him; or, if they are otherwise engaged, or are too weak to personally take in land, the manager of the estate employs strangers or other parties to take in the land for them, and they get the sum which the tenant would have got if he had performed it himself. His Lordship also told his tenants over and over again, that when they had taken in a certain number of acres they would be allowed to increase the number of their stock; that is to say, where they had five cows before they might keep six, provided excessive increase were avoided. He has also encouraged habits of industry by giving prizes for the best cattle, prizes for the best crofts, and for various products of the crofts; and he has built very nice cottages to make them comfortable, especially, I think, a very successful form of cottage which he has hit upon, and which only costs him £30. This cottage is a very great improvement upon what hitherto existed. With regard to Captain Swinburne's property, I may add that the land is not susceptible of much improvement. The island is a very rough and rocky piece of land, but the captain has won the great esteem of his people, who are thoroughly pleased with him, because he has greatly encouraged the fishing in the district. He has done a great deal in that respect, having spent a great deal of money in encouraging it. There is another proprietor in the district who is also a very excellent landlord, and of whom I have not heard any complaints. We are very well off indeed, so far as Moidart is concerned.

33135. *Mr Cameron.*—Are these cottages thatched?—Yes, they are thatched. The size of the cottage is forty-two feet external measurement, and this space is divided into three compartments. One end is used as a kitchen, and the other is a double bed-room. There is a long

INVERNESS.

ARISAIG.

Rev. Charles Macdonald.

INVER-
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ARISAIG.

Rev. Charles
Macdonald.

passage behind the front door, and behind this passage there is an intermediate bed-room between the bed-room at the one end and the kitchen at the other. Off the kitchen there is a slanting building erected which forms a pantry, and the roof of this is on a line with the roof of the main house. His Lordship, however, is giving £30 to the tenant, I should have added gives them bricks and lime, and as much natural wood grown on the estate as will suffice for the thatch.

33136. What does the house cost altogether between proprietor and tenant?—It is hard to tell that, because the tenant makes the contract.

33137. But does he build?—He contracts with the mason.

33138. But does he build?—Yes.

33139. Does the tenant also do the joiner work?—Yes.

33140. Does he do all the work in connection with the house?—Yes.

33141. And what does Lord Howard give him?—£30, and the bricks for the partitions.

33142. And the lime?—Yes, and the wood.

33143. I want to arrive at what the house costs. Lord Howard gives the man £30?—Yes.

33144. Also the bricks for the partition and tiles for the floor?—Yes.

33145. Then he gives him the lime besides?—Yes.

33146. Is that all Lord Howard gives?—Yes.

33147. Is that £30 meant to compensate the tenant for joiner and mason work?—I think so.

33148. Do you think the tenant can do it for £30?—I think so, because I have an instance over there of a tenant who merely got £30, and he contracted for mason and stone-work of the house at £15, and his son, who was living with his father, brought the stones and did all that work, so that I think he could have done it for £30.

33149. Does the tenant put the thatch on for that too?—Yes.

33150. So that you believe the house costs the value of the bricks, tiles, and lime and £30 besides?—Yes, of course I do not count the labour of the tenant himself.

33151. And £30 covers his outlay?—It must very nearly do so; because the man who did it could not otherwise afford to do it—he had no means.

33152. Have many people taken advantage of Lord Howard's regulations in regard to the improvement of the land?—Almost every one. But they could not begin it at first, because he had a great deal of land in his own hands—a large farm—but he cultivated that, and that employed the labour of the country.

33153. How many acres have been so reclaimed during the period Lord Howard has possessed the estate?—He has reclaimed from $45\frac{1}{2}$ to 50 acres for the benefit of the tenants alone in eight years.

33154. How many heads of families are there among the tenants?—Thirty-two, I think, altogether, but those who have benefited by this are about thirty.

33155. You think thirty have benefited by these regulations?—Yes; some to a greater and some to a less extent. Some were not able to benefit so much as others—some only brought in one acre and others might bring in three.

33156. Where does Lord Howard get the necessary pasture to meet the requirements of this additional arable land?—The hill pasture is favourably situated for that purpose. There are two hamlets, Laugal and Dalnabrach, and the hill lies behind the tenants' houses and the arable land lies in front of them. They have had access to this hill pasture for many years past.

33157. Is the stock held in common?—There are two club farms—Laugal and Dalnabreac.

INVERNESS.

33158. How do they find that system answer?—Very well.

ARTSAIG.

33159. As they take in more arable ground, do they put more cows on this common hill pasture?—I cannot say they have put more cattle on in consequence of the increase of acreage of the arable ground, but there are more cows in reality in this way. By the written transactions between themselves and the proprietor, the number of their cattle was limited to a certain figure. For instance, at one village they were allowed to have four or five cows and their followers. In one case they kept six, and in another they were keeping one more than the stipulated number, so that now they are in an agreement with their landlord; those beasts which they kept formerly without permission, and not altogether justifiably, they keep now rightly because they have had an addition to their land.

Rev. Charles Macdonald.

33160. Do the tenants agree amongst themselves as to the management of this club stock?—Yes, no quarrels whatever that I am aware of.

33161. *The Chairman.*—What is the size of the croft on which Lord Howard desires to put his people?—He thinks it is almost impossible to put tenants in a decent, comfortable, and respectable way, and in a way that would make them independent, more or less, of any extra labour or employment from the estate, without eight or twelve acres of arable ground and about six cows with their followers.

33162. And how many sheep?—About fifty sheep. It is his aim to bring the tenants on the estate up to that position; but on one part of the estate it is not possible to do so just now.

33163. Is that land under lease?—There is one part called Moss, and the people of that place are in an inferior position. I think they were drafted from other parts of the estate and put into Moss, for they were in very poor circumstances and had very little land. But this was many years before my time, and since that they have extended, and their arable land has been much improved. The average land each one has is from five to six acres, or more; but they have no hill pasture. They have moorland pasture, and not much hill pasture; they cannot get it until other arrangements are made.

33164. Has Lord Howard in view to endow them with hill pasture?—Yes, he does so virtually already, because they put their cattle on the slopes of one of the ridges facing their crofts, but they don't go beyond the top of the ridge.

33165. And the policy you have described is the settled policy of the estate which is being carried out systematically?—Yes, that is his aim, to improve as far as he can the condition of the people until they are put into an independent position.

33166. Has Lord Howard got any large farms upon his estate?—He has two; one was thrown upon his hands, and he had to take it. It was advisable on his part to keep it, I think, because as a proprietor and gentleman having a son who, naturally, was fond of sport, it was the only part where there were any deer or game to be got; and, having it in his own hands, the game were not so liable to be disturbed as they might be if a stranger had it.

33167. Has he taken the stock off it?—No, he leaves a heavy stock on it.

33168. How long has Captain Swinburne's family been in possession of the estate?—He was there before I came. I think he must have been there close upon thirty years.

33169. Is his family of English origin?—Yes.

33170. How long has Lord Howard had this property?—Thirteen years.

INVER-
NESS.

ARISAIG.

Rev. Charles
Macdonald.

33171. Are you aware of the condition of the property while it was in the possession of Mr Hope?—It was Mr Hope Scott who gave it the first start towards its present course of improvement.

33172. Did he aim at this same result?—Not in the same direction.

The country required more elementary improvement; it required to be opened up by roads, and he expended largely in opening up roads. He proceeded afterwards to erect a better style of dwelling-house for the people.

33173. Mr Hope Scott was not an Englishman?—No.

33174. But his fortune had been acquired in England?—Yes.

33175. Then we have three persons who, either by origin or fortune, belong to England—Mr Hope Scott, Lord Howard, and Captain Swinburne?—Yes.

33176. Perhaps you have heard it stated to-day that the impression prevailed that the purchase of land in the Highlands by Englishmen or strangers, capitalists strangers to the country, was not productive of harmony or not associated with good. Is that proved by your personal experience?—No, it is quite the reverse. My experience of English gentlemen who have become proprietors in the country—I do not speak for any but my own experience—is that they have been a benefit to the country, because they bring wealth and a good disposition, so far as my experience goes, towards the people.

33177. Have you the impression that the course pursued by Lord Howard at the present moment is one thoroughly in consonance with the wishes and aspirations of the native people?—Entirely so. The only thing upon which, perhaps, they would like a little improvement, or which they could wish to be taken into further consideration, is the extent of the leases. Mr Hope Scott was not prepared, for one reason or another, to grant leases; and Lord Howard, who had a very high respect for Mr Hope Scott, does not see why any change should be made in this respect. Of course, Lord Howard is extremely kind and considerate towards the people, and they have the utmost confidence in him, and are thoroughly convinced he would never dream of turning them away; but I know, from what they have told me, that it would give them particular satisfaction if they were so secured from any change which might take place on the estate that they would not be subjected to any necessity or fear of their land passing from them.

33178. Are there any elaborate technical printed regulations on Lord Howard's estate?—None whatever. When he came, I believe, the tenants, when they entered into possession of their yearly holdings, had to sign some sort of document, but that was merely, for instance, that their quantity of stock was to be limited, and that they were not to take two white crops in succession—the ordinary rules of cultivation.

33179. How does Lord Howard control the tendency of the people to accumulate upon the croft?—He told them very plainly that the over-crowding of the estate with tenants would be injurious, and that he would entertain no policy tending in that direction, and consequently, I may add, he has not increased the number of tenants on the estate since he came—not to any perceptible extent. But when there is plenty of work going on young men are employed at it, and when the work is not so active young men and women go away at once to the south, where they find constant employment.

33180. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Do you know whether it is a common thing in England for proprietors to give leases?—I believe it is not.

33181. Are you further aware that there is nothing that an Englishman coming to the Highlands dislikes more than to grant a lease?—I cannot speak very much from personal experience of that; I only know that

Captain Swinburne has not granted leases except in one instance, but this tenant has a larger tract of land than another—in fact, he is a sheep farmer; but Lord Howard has not granted any leases to my knowledge.

INVERNESS.
ARISAIG.

33182. Then this exceedingly satisfactory state of matters which you have described is entirely dependent upon Lord Howard's good-will?—
Exactly so.

Rev. Charles Macdonald.

33183. If he were to sell the property?—It might be all altered.

33184. Or if he died and left trustees?—We have no guarantee that a change will not take place, except, of course, it is the good-will of the people, and that is what the tenants are conscious of.

33185. You have made out this blemish about the lease as one in this very good man's estate; now, don't you think there is something else? Is there not a demand for more hill pasture?—There has been, I may say, such a grievance in the country, but that is an old complaint. There was a part of the hill called Dorlin, which includes Breack, Mingarry, and Blainard, in which there was a large population at one time—this, of course, was before my time—and every one of these were removed. There was not a single tenant left on Blainard or Breack, or Port Aviort or Mingarry. I tried to ascertain what became of them, and I found a few of them had been sent down to the Moss; one or two were sent up to Laugal, but the majority, I think, were sent away to Australia.

33186. What about the hill pasture?—Three of these places are very enticing, Mingarry especially; there are the ruins of twelve cottages there. Port Aviort is also an enticing place, and well adapted for small tenants, and Breack and Blainard are more or less favourable. Naturally some of the people would like to get back there—those who have the capital to take it. If they went up there, their sons might stop in the holdings they would leave behind them.

33187. In whose hands are these glens at present?—They were put into one farm, and the tenant of that farm went away about twelve years ago, and Lord Howard took it into his own hands.

33188. So that it comes to this, that there are some aspirations not yet fulfilled?—His Lordship has been approached on the subject, and he expressed a desire to grant it—at any rate he did not oppose the wish to put them in possession of it. The only thing that deterred him was the expense of building the houses and outhouses for the tenants.

33189. But don't you think these people would themselves very much contribute to the erection of the buildings?—There is a delegate here present who told me the other day that if he got a portion of this hill he would undertake to build the houses if he got £30 from the proprietor, and lime and wood.

33190. Most of the people upon Lord Howard's estate are Catholics?—Every one of them, I may say.

33191. And Lord Howard is himself one?—Yes.

33192. Has it not always been found that the Catholics are kinder to each other and stick more to each other than the other prevailing and dominant bodies?—Well, persecution, I suppose, binds people together. When the penal laws were enforced, of course we were obliged to put shoulder and shoulder together.

33193. And does not that clannish feeling still remain?—Very much so; but at the same time I must say ever since I came to the country there has never been the slightest difference amongst Presbyterians, Episcopalians, or Catholics upon religious matters. There is a perfect *entente cordiale* in these matters.

- INVER-
NESS. 33194. Are there remains of an old castle at Mingarry?—That castle is at Ardnamurchan.
- ARISAIG. 33195. *The Chairman.*—Who is the oldest delegate or tenant from Lord Howard's estate?—John M'Isaac.

Rev. Charles
Macdonald.

JOHN RANALD M'ISAAC, Dalnabreac, Moidart (66)—examined.

- John Ranald M'Isaac. 33196. *The Chairman.*—Are you satisfied with the management of the estate?—Yes.

33197. What gives you satisfaction?—The proprietor gives us every form of justice which a proprietor can give to his tenants. He told us he wished we should be marked out for prosperity in our circumstances as excelling the tenantry of the surrounding district.

33198. Does the proprietor frequently come down and live there?—He lives there for about three months in the year.

33199. Does he go about and see the people?—Yes. Every year before he goes away he holds a meeting with the people in the schoolhouse, and advises them with respect to everything that is needful and useful for themselves.

33200. Do you consider your rents are oppressive?—The proprietor has not changed them at all; the rents are as they were when he became proprietor of the estate.

33201. Is there nothing more you can imagine you would like?—There is one thing that we would desire; life is uncertain, especially with people of old age, and we would like if we could get leases; we never asked them from the proprietor; we have perfect confidence in him, and we would never ask a lease as long as he and we live; but we don't know what may happen.

33202. For how long would you consider a lease sufficient?—About nineteen years.

33203. Would you be content to take leases at your present rents for nineteen years?—If the proprietor should live long, and continue the present mode of administration, yes; for he encourages us to reclaim the adjacent land, and pays us for our trouble.

33204. Would you at this moment take your crofts for a nineteen years' lease at the present rent if the proprietor offered it?—No, it is by our work that we pay the most of the rent, and if the present work were discontinued we could pay the rents; but if the present work should be discontinued, it might be difficult for us to pay the rents.

33205. Is there any demand for an additional hill pasture in your place?—Yes, we would like to get a little more room in that way.

33206. Does the existence of the deer do you any harm?—No.

33207. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—What stock do you keep on the croft?—A horse, three cows, and twelve sheep—that is the summing.

33208. Do you keep that?—Yes.

33209. Is your rent £6?—Yes.

Captain THOMAS ANTHONY SWINBURNE, Royal Navy, Proprietor of Eilean Shona (63)—examined.

Captain Thos.
Anthony
Swinburne.

33210. *The Chairman.*—Is Eilean Shona an island?—Yes.

33211. How long has it been in the possession of your family?—I bought it in 1852 or 1853. INVERNESS.
33212. Have you built a residence?—I added to the old residence. ARISAIG.
33213. I believe you wish to make a statement regarding the fishing industry; would you kindly make it?—When I first came to this country Captain Thos. I found fishing going on to a certain extent, at certain times; but the general complaint was that there was no market. I took in hand the fishing of my own people, and fitted out better boats, and improved them, and saw that they had proper lines and gear to commence with. They fished during the cod season, which commences generally about February, and goes on till the latter end of April. They dry the cod, and I take fish at a certain rate, and provide salt and labour to cure the fish and send them south. I have had as much as sixteen tons, and sometimes the fish sell at £16 per ton or £20, or more; and by that the people make a good deal of money during that short season. I have also gone into the fishing much more extensively. During the time of the Rockall fishing I fitted out three vessels, and went out to Rockall, and afterwards I sent the vessels to Ireland, and if Government had looked after the banks then I think I should have made a good thing of it, and it would have been a perpetual source of employment. Anthony Swinburne.
33214. Do you mean the banks at Rockall?—Rockall principally, and also the banks from the Butt of Lewis to Barra Head; and the west side of the Long Island is lying waste, and unfinished, although it is swarming with fish.
33215. You state that your first object was to supply the people with proper boats and tackle?—Yes.
33216. What was the nature of the boat you supplied?—A larger boat than they had—boats upwards of twenty feet in length.
33217. You did not supply them with any of the big boats with which we are familiar on the east coast?—Not at first; I had the large boats afterwards.
33218. How far could they go with an open boat of twenty feet keel?—They go out to the banks where the cod are found and near this off the Ardnamurchan coast from seven to eight miles off Stoona, and sometimes the fish are pretty close to the point of Rhu.
33219. On what system did you supply the boats? Did you receive in the usual way half the catch, or did you make a present of the boats to the people, or sell them, or how?—Various ways. With one boat I got a share of the catch, and another boat was supplied entirely to the people who were not well off, and in various ways; but the way I have done usually has been to give a set price for the fish.
33220. Did you find that the people entered readily into your suggestions?—Yes, the people of my own place, and of the next property to mine; and also, I think sometimes one or two boats across from Arisaig, and so on. I have odd boats from these places.
33221. Do you look upon the present type of big boat now coming into use as the proper definitive type of boat for the north of Scotland?—Yes, you want a big fishing boat for the deep sea fishing.
33222. What tonnage?—The tonnage is a very difficult thing to say, but I should say the dimensions of a boat would be about 60 feet in length, by 16 feet or 17 feet beam; in fact, the largest class of boats about Buckie and so on, is the class of boats wanted.
33223. I don't think we have seen anything above 52 feet?—Yes, but the mean over all, and these Buckie boats run a great deal more over all.
33224. The 52 feet keel is the type you mean?—Yes.

INVERNESS. 33225. Would you state the cost of the boat and tackle, and gear of every description necessary for herring fishing?—From £400 to £500.

AKISAIG. 33226. Is such a boat equally useful for the deep sea line fishing?—Yes.

33227. Is such a boat capable of being fitted for both fishings?—Yes.

Captain Thos. Anthony Swinburne. 33228. Have you any such boat now?—Not in my own possession, but I have built such a boat.

33229. You suggested something about Ireland?—After the Rockall fishing was getting slack I sent two vessels to Ireland, and they brought home a good cargo of fish; but it was too late in the season to dry the fish properly.

33230. What kind of fish?—Cod principally, and also herring, which I hear has since become a great industry in Ireland. I had very few nets; herring were merely caught as bait for the cod.

33231. Do you think, generally speaking, that the seafaring population on this side of the country might become as expert fishermen as the east country people if they had boats and tackle?—I don't see why they should not. At the time when I was working with my three vessels I had Orkney men, Shetland men, and one crew from Grimsby, and I found some of my own men did just as well. Latterly I had a whole crew of my own men.

33232. When we saw the fishery at Barra this year, there were hardly any large boats belonging to the west country people in the herring fleet?—Yes, I know they have a peculiar class of boats there, the Barra skiff, and they use them principally for night line fishing for cod outside of Barra.

33233. Is there any suggestion you are able to make at this moment which Government might consider in regard to the encouragement of the fisheries? Is there any form in which Government could advance boats, or money for the purchase of boats, to the people, with a fair chance of recovering the outlay?—The greater number of the people are now so very poor that it would be a long time before there could be any repayment; but when men have a little money they are very glad, I think, to get boats. My own tenants have now two very good boats which they have bought for themselves; but they had something to commence with. I think if Government found out from the proprietors that there was an inclination for fishing, and so on, they might advance a certain sum for boats, and be repaid in the course of a certain number of years.

33234. Would the proprietor be inclined to make himself in any degree responsible for the repayment?—That I cannot say. If I were in that position I should be glad to do so; but I cannot speak for other propietors.

33235. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—You referred to some want of action on the part of the Government which prevented your attempt to fish at Rockall being successful?—Yes, the fishing ground was overcrowded. The offal of the fish was thrown overboard, and vessels, instead of standing off from the fishing ground, cleaned their fish there, bringing sharks and big fish, and utterly destroying the fishing. Instead of being full of cod, it became full of big fish and sharks. If the vessels had been compelled to leave the fishing ground, and clean the fish in deep water, that would not have happened.

33236. Is there any Rockall fishing now?—Not to any extent; I never hear of it.

33237. You think if Government took charge of the boats there, it would be a great source of revenue?—I do.

33238. You mentioned that there were good banks from the Butt of Lewis to Barrahead?—Yes.

33239. Have you seen them fished?—I have fished them there myself.

33240. Do you know if any of the long island boats fish there?—The Barra 'sixers' go out to a certain extent. I don't think there are any from Uist, Benbecula, or North Uist; but boats went from Loch Roag and Berneray. I believe it was first commenced there by an Englishman named Robinson, who went round in a Gravesend smack. He found the fishing good, and remained in the country, and bought a good-sized boat and got a crew of Highlanders and commenced the fishing. When I was there a few years ago there were several good-sized boats fishing there from Loch Roag, and I believe they did well.

33241. And you think the fishing might be extended so as to occupy the people from this district?—Yes.

33242. Where would they cure their fish?—Glendale, in Skye, is, I think, the best place. They would have to come through the Sound of Harris.

33243. Would they do that every day?—No, once a week or so. I had a store there, at Hamara. There is plenty of beach for drying fish; I had that place myself. I used to work at Rockall, and come in through the Sound of Harris.

33244. Do you think the boats would fish provided there was a curing place at Glendale?—Yes, but no doubt there are other places. That place was enlarged for me; but I believe Carloway, at the other side of Lewis, is a good place. That could be still more enlarged, and possibly at Eilan Monach, at the back of North Uist; and there might be other places. Barra, at Kessimull Bay, would be a good station, or at North Bay. The back of Lewis is very flat and bad for fishing.

33245. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Have you any crofters on your estate?—Yes, two good-sized tenants, and about ten crofters.

33246. Are they able to get their subsistence from the land, or must they fish?—Scarcely from the land; some of them can make a livelihood by that, but they all do other work.

33247. You made use of the expression that a great number of people were now so very poor that they could not purchase boats to fish. Why are they so poor?—Because they have not had employment, or because the crofts are too small, or something of that sort. I don't know exactly the occasion of their poverty.

33248. But you suggest these two causes as probable?—Yes.

33249. Insufficiency of land and —?—Yes, and insufficiency of work. I think also that the oysters and mussels would be a great source of wealth and employment in this country. There are ledges all over the west coast, with a very fine climate, where oysters are to be found, to a certain extent, and mussels; but they are not looked after or cultivated. If the landlords had the sole right of the fore-shores, and were to look after their fore-shores, that would be a great source of wealth and employment of a description suitable for the people who gather whelks and so on. They might look after the oyster and mussel beds, and it would pay better than anything I know of here. There are miles of the sea coast fitted for oyster and mussel cultivation.

33250. *The Chairman.*—Has there been at one time a much larger stock of oysters and mussels on these beds than there is now?—Oysters decidedly. They are taken away by strangers.

33251. It would, I presume, be necessary, in the first instance to have a period of very strict preservation?—Decidedly.

33252. Would that be sufficient, or would it be necessary to replenish the beds?—I think it would be necessary now to replenish in some places; they would have to be imported at first to commence new plantations. Mussels could be put on some of them. Although there is not such a run upon them as upon oysters, still they might be planted to a large extent.

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INVERNESS.

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Captain Thos. Anthony Swinburne.

They are very valuable upon the east coast ; but here they are not thought anything of.

33253. Is anything done on the east coast to keep up the stock ?—Yes, there are regular mussel beds at most of the large fishing places ; and many parts of this coast are just the very thing for it. There is another thing—the lobster fishing. When I came here at first I used to work the lobster industry ; but I found that the supply was falling off. There is a Scottish law which forbids fishing between certain dates ; I stuck to the law, while others fished all the year round, especially in the summer time, and that, I think, should be prevented. In a few years there will be no lobsters at all.

33254. We ate two lobsters to-day ?—Then you are lucky ; in a few years you will not.

33255. Ought this present time to be made a close time ?—Yes, I think it should.

33256. *Professor Mackinnon.*—The law makes the close time from the 1st of June to the 1st of September ?—Yes.

33257. But it is never observed ?—No, I don't think it is. There is a great deal of fishing to be done on this coast ; I have gone into it largely myself, and I know that there is a great deal to be done. I have not sufficient capital to continue what I have begun, but there is enough work in that direction to employ all the surplus population on the west coast.

NIGEL BANKS MACKENZIE, Solicitor, and Factor on the Estate of Arisaig, Fort William (44)—examined.

Nigel Banks Mackenzie. 33258. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You don't reside here during any portion of the year ?—No.

33259. You are not a native of the district, but have been resident some time at Fort William ?—I am a native of Inverness-shire, a Highlander, and I speak Gaelic.

33260. You have heard to-day what some of the delegates or people say about the estate of Arisaig ; do you wish to make any observations ?—I wish, with the permission of the Chairman, to read a short statement which I have prepared :—‘ The late Mr F. D. P. Astley bought the estate of Arisaig in 1851, with the view of building a residence and residing in a part of the country which he dearly loved. After the purchase he at once began to improve and develop the estate. A new mansion house was built, with suitable offices and gardens, at very considerable cost. I have been unable to ascertain the exact cost, as the estate papers prior to 1858 are not in my possession. It is, however, one of the finest residences in the West Highlands. At the same time he commenced to improve the tenants' houses and to rearrange the estate, having especial regard to the improvement and amelioration of the condition of the crofters and cottars. Substantial stone and lime and slated houses were built for most of the Back of Keppoch crofters, and their arable land drained. Similar houses were built at Arisaig for the cottar class. Interest at an average rate of 3 per cent. was charged on the former, and the rents of the latter were fixed at a similar rate of interest on the cost of their new houses. When the estate was bought it was very populous. Being obviously more so than the land could support even with such assistance as he could give them, he encouraged such of the crofters and cottars as were disposed to do so to emigrate, their whole expenses in doing so, including outfits and every-

' thing requisite for their comfort, being borne by him. I have been
' unable to ascertain how many emigrated, but I understand that a good
' number did so. Mr Astley's intention was that crofts should not be of
' a smaller size than a family could live upon in comfort, and he aimed at
' every crofter on the estate having eventually a stone and lime and slated
' house. His son and daughter, who afterwards succeeded him in the
' estate, carried out the same policy, and from time to time new houses are
' being built. Everything that could be thought of was also done to
' elevate the social position of the smaller tenants. Schools were erected
' at two places where none had previously been, and the salary of one of
' the teachers is still paid by the proprietrix. A reading room has also
' been started in the village, and entertainments of various kinds given in
' connection therewith. Prizes are also given for the best kept cottages,
' gardens, &c., and the best cultivated croft. Direct communication
' between proprietor and tenants has ever been the rule of the estate, and
' nowhere else throughout the whole Highlands has more kindly consider-
' ation been shown by the proprietors to their tenants than upon this estate ;
' and, generally speaking, the tenants appreciate and acknowledge the kind
' treatment they have always received from the Astley family. The popu-
' lation of Arisaig at the last census in 1881 was 727, and is not decreasing.
' There are no large tenants on the estate, a gradation of tenants having
' been what was aimed at. The following classification speaks for itself :—
(1) Tenants paying over £100, under £200, 3; (2) Tenants paying
over £30 and under £100, 10; (3) Crofters paying over £2 and under
£30, 66; (4) Cottars on crofts 15; (5) Cottars not on crofts, 13; (6)
Cottages in village, &c., paying £2 and upwards, 26. The expenditure on
the estate improvements has been very great. Since 1st January 1858
it amounted to £58,370, and was expended as follows :—roads, £1260;
plantations, £1564; trench or canal at Mains farm, £948; buildings,
exclusive of mansion house, £7993; fences, £5685; drainage and
trenching, £5352; workmen's wages, £35,568 = £58,370. The rental
of the estate has increased very little since 1857. There has been no
change on the crofters' rents other than that they pay £54 additional
for their new houses and the drainage. On the farms, and the new
cottages in the village, there has been an increase of £156, making a
total increase of £210. In 1857 the rental, exclusive of shootings and
fishings, was £1460, and in 1882, £1670; the difference being as above,
£210. The shootings and fishings were let last year at a rent of £330,
making a total rent of £2000. The expenditure upon estate improve-
ments has therefore largely exceeded the rental, even excluding the
cost of the new mansion house. The crofters and cottars got the greater
part of the wages, as the proprietors were anxious to keep the work as
much as possible for their own tenants. There is no way whereby
additional land can be given to the crofters except by breaking up some
of the small farms and dividing it among them, and this is obviously not
desirable. There is, however, every wish to make the crofters as comfort-
able as possible. Certainly none need fear eviction so long as they pay
their rents, and the proprietrix will be as ready to help them in the future
as she has been in the past. It is not desirable, however, to increase their
numbers, as at best the croft affords but a bare subsistence, and the
work on the estate is now necessarily getting less. With regard to the
estate of South Morar, it was bought by the late F. D. Astley in 1878.
As it has been purchased so recently nothing has as yet been done except
improving some of the crofters' houses and erecting some fencing, upon
which no interest is charged. The rents of the crofters remain the same,
with the exception of one or two reductions of small amount. No

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ARISAIG.

Nigel Banks
Mackenzie.

'alterations have been made upon the farm boundaries.' I may remark, in addition, as some allusion has been made to the forest, that what is now forest is a very small extent of ground indeed. It will be observed that the whole shootings, including the forest, were let last year at a rent of £330, which does not indicate any great stretch of ground. It was very much larger at one time, but the present proprietrix, Mrs Nicholson, thought it desirable to reduce its extent, and a considerable stretch of it was let two years ago. The principal part was let, and divided amongst the two adjoining tenants at the west end of Rhu, or let to another tenant. All the tenants held upon leases, with the exception of the crofters, who were yearly tenants.

33261. What is the total acreage of the estate?—It is believed to be about 25,000 acres.

33262. Including the two properties?—Yes, including the two properties; that is a mere approximation, for we have no plan showing the exact acreage.

33263. How much of that was under deer forest until lately?—I should fancy something like 2000 acres.

33264. Originally?—Originally.

33265. When it was at first made?—Yes; but the deer forest is a very small affair.

33266. You have heard what the delegates stated to-day?—I have been present all through, and have heard what they said.

33267. And they agreed in stating that they are poor, and not in a desirable position?—I should like to see every man of them better.

33268. You don't deny that there is some poverty, and it may be other grievances?—I think, wherever there are crofters, there is more or less of poverty.

33269. So long as crofters exist there will be poverty?—I am afraid so.

33270. Did it not occur to you when the proprietrix thought of reducing the forest, that, in place of adding it to the bigger farms, it would have been advisable to try the effect of giving it to those who were wanting it so urgently?—I am afraid, from the nature of it, that it would not divide among the crofters.

33271. But they seem to think it would suit them?—I am not sure that any one said so exactly. I think they said they would like some of what is forest land, but I am not sure that they said they would like any of what has been let to other tenants.

33272. What are the names of the parts let to other tenants?—Glen Beasdale and Rhu of Rhumach.

33273. I think several people said they would like Rhu?—I should like it myself.

33274. We passed through it this morning?—No doubt.

33275. And you don't suppose that we did not see a great deal of very fine grass?—Very good grass indeed.

33276. And the remains of places where people had once been?—I am not aware as to that.

33277. Perhaps you never went over it?—Oh yes; every part of it.

33278. Next time you drive down that way you will find appearances of a considerable number of small crofts?—I don't think so.

33279. You state that the population of Arisaig was 727, and that it is not decreasing?—Not decreasing; it is pretty stationary, according to the census tables.

33280. You have, no doubt, looked into matters connected with history of old. How many fighting men could be taken out of a population of 727?—I could not say.

33281. Would it have been too much to have taken one in five?—I would rather not express an opinion.

INVERNESS.

33282. You have not studied the matter?—No, I have not given very much attention to that.

ARISAIG

33283. At the time you state Mr Astley bought the property, you state that he found the place too populous?—That was his opinion.

Nigel Banks
MacKenzie.

33284. And the consequence was that so many people either emigrated or had to go?—No, they emigrated themselves at his expense.

33285. Did they get any inducement to remain?—The inducement was rather to go.

33286. Have you heard that they were willing to go?—I have been told that every one went with his own consent, but I am aware people emigrated from the Highlands with extreme reluctance.

33287. You have stated that a good deal of the expense on the estate has been laid out on buildings?—That is so.

33288. Is it not possible that the buildings are so good merely to please the eye of the proprietor, and that they may be rather beyond the means of the occupants who pay the rent or interest?—That is quite possible; but I know the intention was to make them good, so as to promote the comfort of the people.

33289. Does such a house necessarily increase the comfort?—That is always a matter of opinion. I think a good house always adds to the comfort of the occupant.

33290. Have you ever heard that a slated house is not so comfortable as a nicely built thatched house?—I have heard such an opinion expressed, but never by a person who lived in such a house.

33291. The crofters paying between £2 and £30 amount to over sixty in number?—Yes, I think sixty-six.

33292. And that is the class about which this Commission has more particularly to inquire?—No doubt.

33293. And cottars are also included?—No doubt.

33294. Is it, or not, too arduous a task for such a proprietrix as that of Arisaig, to satisfy these sixty-six crofters?—It is a very difficult thing to satisfy every person.

33295. To satisfy their reasonable aspirations?—I know that the proprietrix of this estate is exceedingly anxious to satisfy every aspiration which she considers reasonable.

33296. But she reserves to herself the right of saying what is reasonable and what is not on the part of the crofters?—Naturally.

33297. But you will allow the crofters to think they are the best judges of what is reasonable and convenient for themselves?—No doubt they are of that opinion; but it is also right to add that Mrs Nicholson, and her father and brother before her, always listened to, and considered fairly, any representation by the crofters before coming to a conclusion themselves.

33298. There has been a general concurrence by the delegates to that effect; that the proprietors have treated them affably, and with consideration?—That is so.

33299. You stated further that for the last thirty years the Astley family have laid out in roads £1200?—That is so.

33300. How much of that was laid out for roads that benefited the crofters?—I really cannot tell you—it was before my factorship; but I have been told that probably one-half of that would be for the benefit of the crofters.

33301. You heard one delegate say that he lived nine miles from this, and had to travel over six miles of road and three miles of moor?—That is perfectly true. It is an abominable road; I have traversed it myself; but,

INVERNESS. from the nature of the country, it is impossible to make a road ; it is a physical impossibility.

ARISAIG. 33302. You have stated that of the large expenditure of £58,000 no less than £35,000 was for wages ?—That is so.

Nigel Banks Mackenzie. 33303. Spent among the people ?—Precisely.

33304. But you cannot consider that as of anything but a temporary nature ?—No doubt, that cannot go on always.

33305. And has that gone ?—It has all been spent.

33306. And the crofters have not any left ?—I should think not.

33307. There may be some lying in the bauk ?—I am not at liberty to tell you.

33308. You say £5000 or so was laid out in drainage, what was the bulk of that for ?—The greater part of it was done before the period of my factorage, and I cannot tell you from personal knowledge ; but I have been told that the greater part was spent in the reclamation of the land. At the time Mr Astley purchased this estate the arable land was of the most limited character and of the worst description, and almost everything that has been done upon it has been done by the Astley family.

33309. But you gave us these figures, and you don't separate what is applicable to the crofters' land and what was done upon the big farms and the home farm ?—These figures represent the total expenditure upon the estate. I endeavoured to separate what was done upon the crofters' land from what was done on the large farms, and what for the proprietor's own residence, but unfortunately the books don't show it.

33310. Where are the books that would show it ?—It is impossible to trace some of the old books. I could not get anything beyond 1858.

33311. One of the delegates stated that there have been a considerable number of changes in the local administration for some time ?—That is so.

33312. Has that not necessarily been prejudicial to the estate and to the people ?—I don't think it is desirable, certainly.

33313. Is that all the length you can go ?—I can go almost any length you like ; but it is not desirable to have frequent changes. They were not voluntary, but it was necessary to make them.

33314. We have been told that, from the factor down to the lowest gamekeeper, these vacancies have not been filled by local people ?—It is not the case upon Arisaig.

33315. Who is the highest official in Arisaig that is a native ?—The under factor, Mr Joseph Routledge.

33316. That is to say, he was born in the district ?—That constitutes a native, I think. He was born and bred in it, and never left it.

33317. I am afraid it is not a Highland name ?—That is his misfortune.

33318. Does he speak Gaelic ?—Yes.

33319. Where did his father come from ?—I don't know ; I know his father is not a Highlander ; but he is an exceedingly clever man.

33320. In answer to my question you state that Mr Joseph Routledge must be considered a native of the estate ?—I think so.

33321. And a Highlander ?—And a Highlander ; I wish he had a Highland name.

33322. How long has Mr Routledge been in charge ?—Since about five years ago.

33323. His name has never been mentioned by any of the delegates as a person to whom they had any objection ?—No.

33324. Can you give any other instance of a native official ?—There are no other officials but myself and the under factor.

33325. Have you any remark to make with regard to what one gentleman stated, that the inspector of poor comes only twice a year, and then

to lift the rates?—I heard it with exceeding regret, and, as a member of the Parochial Board, I must make inquiries about it. His duty is to come quarterly, and I shall be exceedingly disappointed if I don't find out at the board meeting that he did not attend to his duty; and there is a meeting to-morrow.

INVERNESS.

33326. How do you get on in school matters when there are so many Catholics in Arisaig; have they a school of their own?—There are two schools—a Roman Catholic school and a Protestant school, and the arrangement works very well.

ARISAIG.
Nigel Banks
MacKenzie.

33327. Has the priest of Arisaig any land?—He has.

33328. Of what extent?—He pays, I think, a rent of £10; he has a croft.

33329. Has he got it in feu or is he dependent on the will of the proprietor?—He holds from the proprietor the same as an ordinary tenant.

33330. Has that facility always been given to the Roman Catholic priest?—It has during my time as factor.

33331. And has always been?—I think so.

33332. But the people are not quite pleased. What do you propose to do with the complaints you have heard to-day?—I am not quite sure. The proprietor, upon his return, will consider most carefully everything that has been said to-day. What determination he will come to I cannot tell, but I can say that both Mr and Mrs Nicholson will give it their most careful consideration, and that their leanings will be towards improving the condition of the crofters.

33333. *Mr Cameron.*—Would you tell us exactly the acreage of the present ground which is called a deer forest?—I have been endeavouring to calculate it from the Ordnance survey, and it seems something like 1500 acres.

33334. And it is fenced?—It is most securely fenced; there is a six feet fence round the whole of it. I heard with surprise one delegate mention that the deer got over it!—If anything can be done to keep them in it shall be done.

33335. 1500 acres is surely a very small extent of ground to be dignified with the name of deer forest?—It is more a sanctuary than a forest.

33336. Is there no other deer forest except that?—Nothing else.

33337. Do you know anything of the three cottars, Donald Macdonald, Donald Macdonald, sen., and Archibald M'Dougall, who live in Polnish?—Yes.

33338. They have some potato land?—Yes.

33339. They have had some potato land off a farm upon which they are cottars, and they complain very much, that the deer have destroyed their potatoes. Where do these deer come from?—I have no idea.

33340. Where is that deer forest—round about here?—No; it is on the Kinloch Moidart part of the estate.

33341. Where do these deer come from?—They must be wild deer travelling over the country.

33342. It is stated that the late Mr Astley promised to fence this potato ground. Do you know why that has not been done?—I do not know; but Mrs Nicholson was disposed to fence it, and there was an arrangement that it should be fenced when a certain thing was done. There was a small rent put on the tenants, and, as soon as they clear that, I understand they will get that altered.

33343. But has that been intimated to these people?—Yes, I have done it myself, by letter. It is a small potato patch.

33344. Are the schools you spoke of board schools—Catholic and Protestant?—No.

INVER-

NESS.

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ARISAIG.Nigel Banks
Mackenzie.

33345. Neither of them?—Both private schools, and the other school is started by the estate as a private school also, but all under Government inspection.

33346. *The Chairman.*—How many board schools are there in the parish?—Seven.

33347. Are any of these board schools situated in the quarter inhabited by the Roman Catholics?—Yes, there is.

33348. What is the proportion of the Roman Catholic population to the Protestant population in the parish?—In the Argyleshire part of the parish the bulk of population are Protestants; in the Inverness-shire part the great proportion are Roman Catholics.

33349. Do you say three-fourths are Roman Catholics?—I should say 95 per cent, are Catholics in the Inverness-shire part of the estate.

33350. How many board schools are there in the Inverness-shire part of the parish?—Speaking from recollection, about three.

33351. In addition to these two private schools?—In addition to the two private schools.

33352. Then I may assume that there is a very large population of Roman Catholic children going to the three board schools?—No doubt.

33353. Of whom is the School Board composed?—It consists of seven members. The proprietor of the estate of Arduamurchan; Mr Dalgleish; Mr M'Lean of Glenugie; myself; Mr Coulter, tenant upon the Arduamurchan estate; the parish minister; the Moidart priest; and the seventh I forget. There are two Roman Catholics.

33354. In these three board schools in the Inverness-shire portion are the teachers Protestants or Roman Catholics?—I really cannot say; I know some of them are Roman Catholics; but the board always shows an anxious desire to appoint a teacher of the religion of the majority of the people among whom they are to teach.

33355. As a matter of fact?—As a matter of fact, I cannot tell you from recollection; my impression is that two out of the three are Roman Catholics.

33356. Are they men or women?—Women.

33357. The three teachers?—I think so; two at any rate.

33358. Gaelic-speaking people?—No; none of them, I think.

33359. Can you tell me on what footing the religious teaching in these three schools is?—It is governed by the conscience clause of the Act.

33360. The Act allows the School Board to have any form of religious teaching?—I don't think the board have laid down anything. I think it is left to the teacher to carry out the use and wont of the locality.

33361. But use and wont in Scotland usually means the Shorter Catechism?—I know.

33362. Do you think it applies to the Catholic Catechism?—To whatever comes in place of a catechism.

33363. Has the School Board, as a matter of fact, authorised the distinct teaching of the Roman Catholic religion by a teacher in any of the board schools?—They have given no instructions for or against it.

33364. As a matter of fact, is there any distinct religious teaching?—Personally, I am not aware that there is; I never inquired.

33365. I think you said you were a member of the board?—Yes.

33366. Have you ever visited any of those three schools?—Yes.

33367. At the hour of religious teaching?—No, I do not remember ever being present at the hour of religious instruction.

33368. In fact you really are, although a member of the School Board, unable to state in what form religious instruction is given in these schools?—I am not able to state whether or not any religious instruction is given.

33369. But you have a general impression that the secular instruction is satisfactory?—We pay very close attention to the secular instruction.

33370. Have you ever heard any complaint on the part of the Roman Catholic population that their religion is not sufficiently considered, in connection with the schools or teaching?—No, certainly not.

33371. They are quite satisfied?—So far as I know, they are. The matter has never cropped up in this parish.

33372. *Mr Cameron.*—Would you explain the exact meaning which you give to paragraph 11 of these new regulations which have been referred to?—The meaning of rule 11 altogether is to this effect; that as the crofter's houses—the slated houses—have been erected by the proprietor at his sole expense, the last clause of the rule does not apply to those at all, but solely to the thatched houses; and it is thus that at present they get no value for the thatched houses if they remove. But that was considered hardly fair, and it was thought they ought to get something, and the rule was framed as it stands, that two-thirds of the valued price should be paid to the outgoing crofter by the incoming crofter or the proprietor at entry, and the instructions to the valuator are that not more than three years' rent is to be held as the value of a thatched house.

33373. I think you must admit that it is rather ambiguous in language?—I am quite sure the proprietor will be only too glad to alter it so as to make what is meant perfectly plain.

33374. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Our attention was called to the ambiguity of the clause which states by whom the houses are to be put in good order?—The intention is that the house should be put in a state of repair by the proprietor at entry, and that any subsequent repair is to be done at the mutual expense of the proprietor and tenant, which is much more favourable than usual on many estates, where they are called upon to keep everything in order after getting everything put right. Here, all the subsequent repairs shall be at the mutual expense of the proprietor and tenant.

33375. It is not very clearly stated so?—That is so.

33376. *The Chairman.*—We have the regulations before us, and I would like to ask you, in a general way, whether you consider that regulations expressed in rather technical professional language are likely to give satisfaction to a numerous body of the tenants?—It was always thought better on any estate with which I have had to do, to have the estate rules printed so that the tenants may really know what they are. It is not kind to hamper a good tenant in any way; but it is only for cases of difficulty that it is advisable to have a rule to fall back upon.

33377. But do you think that paper, put into the hands of an ordinary Highland tenant without a very copious verbal commentary, could be understood by them?—I think it could. I never found any difficulty except upon this estate, and I heard with regret that there were difficulties in understanding them.

33378. Is this an example of the regulations which are common in the country?—Quite common.

33379. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—The two first delegates spoke of the cessation of work from the time Mr Macdonell ceased to be proprietor of the estate; is that correct?—It is.

33380. Will you explain what the cause was?—There is nothing more to do so far as I know. Mr Macdonell expended a great sum of money upon the improvement and development of the estate, and it is pretty well improved, and latterly there has been very little work to do. I know there are one or two small matters, fencing and so on.

33381. Was there any particular reason why the trustees should not

INVER-
NESS.

ARISAIG

Nigel Banks
Mackenzie.

INVERNESS. expend money in the circumstances?—I should think the reasons would be best known to the trustees themselves, and they gave instructions not to expend any more.

ARISAID. — Nigel Banks Mackenzie. 33382. But you know what the reasons were?—I know generally that probably there was a difficulty in finding money to go on with the improvements.

33383. *Mr Cameron.*—You stated with reference to these regulations that they were similar to those on other estates with which you are connected? I am afraid I feel bound to ask you if rules such as these exist on the estate with which you and I have to do?—I am not aware of any such regulations on the Lochiel estate.

33384. We get on very well without?—Yes.

33385. *Professor Mackinnon.*—The general complaint was that there was scarcely any work till of late years?—That is so on the South Morar estate.

33386. And that, in connection with the rents they have still to pay for the houses, I think the general drift of the complaint was that formerly there were work and wages, and they were able to live in comfort; and now they have to pay rent when there is no work and no wages?—I think there is a cessation of labour, and it is more difficult for the people to pay their rents.

33387. Is there any prospect of there being work in the future?—There will always be something to do.

33388. To the same extent as in the past?—I should doubt that it will be to the same extent as in the past.

33389. Were those people who are now in these cottages since this family came into possession once holders of crofts?—I am not aware; but great changes were made during the proprietorship of Lord Cranstoun.

33390. Do you know what they were before these houses were built at all?—No.

33391. One of the names which happened to turn up amongst them was Rhumach?—Yes.

33392. Are any of the places still under deer mentioned as places from which people were dispossessed in Lord Cranstoun's time?—Yes, one or two.

33393. Do you think these would be suitable for repeopling again?—No doubt one or two of the places named are perfectly suitable.

33394. Both for arable and pasture ground?—I suppose pasture ground especially.

33395. I suppose that could be said of most of the country side?—No doubt.

DONALD M'DONALD, sen., Cottar, Polnish (nearly 80)—examined.

Donald McDonald. 33396. *The Chairman.*—What statement have you to make?—‘Polnish is not a crofter, but only a cottar, township of three householders, whose fathers had land in the place. Two of us pay 30s. a year and one pays £2 of rent for mere shells of black houses which we thatch ourselves; and for a cow's grass apiece we pay £3 to the tacksman. At first we had ‘of land what enabled us to winter the cows and grow some potatoes. ‘Some of this land was near our houses, where we could look after it, but ‘another portion is about a mile away. But the tacksman took the near ‘portion from us and only left us the distant piece; but since the deer

'have come in we have lost the use of it entirely. For a time we were able to guard it from the sheep; but the deer come by night, and the last time we attempted to grow potatoes, they were of no use. So we have had to give up grass and potato ground, as no fence has been erected to protect the ground from the sheep and deer. We were promised a fence by the late Mr Astley and by Mr M'Kenzie, factor, and on the strength of these promises we planted potatoes; but they were destroyed, and our husbandry entirely stopped. The result is that from being poor we have become poorer, and our case is truly pitiable. We are a sad example of the ruinous effects of the growth of deer forests—especially where they are not fenced. Our demands are not great. We would be thankful for as much land as would afford us summering and wintering for a cow, and land in which we could plant a few potatoes; and we wish to be protected from the deer above all things. Sheep were bad enough, but the deer have nearly finished us.—DONALD M'DONALD jun., DONALD M'DONALD sen., ARCHIBALD M'DOUGALL.'

INVERNESS.
—ARISAIG.
—Donald
M'Donald.

33397. Is Donald M'Donald jun., who signs this paper, your son?—He is a sister's son.

33398. Do you pay rent to the proprietor or the farmer?—We pay rent for the house to the proprietor, and for the cow's grass to the tenant.

33399. How much do you pay?—Two of us pay 30s. each, and one £2.

33400. Is that for the house alone without any land at all?—There is a little garden.

33401. How big is the garden—as big as this room?—About as big as this room. We pay £3 each for the cow.

33402. Who built the house?—My brother had first the house and the ground. Then the house got old, and it was young Mr Astley who reroofed it and put it in order.

33403. Is that the reason you pay rent for the house?—Yes, that is the reason.

33404. And you have a piece of potato ground?—We have just the enclosed garden for potato ground.

33405. If it is enclosed how did the deer get at it?—We had formerly potato ground and wintering for a cow.

33406. What complaint have you to make about the deer?—The tenant gives us potato ground which is a mile away from the house, and we used to be troubled with the sheep first; and then the deer began, and they are worse. They promised to put up a fence, but that was not done, and we ceased to plant potatoes there.

33407. Whose deer are they?—They belong to the estate. I don't know where they come from.

33408. Do they come out of the park here?—They don't come out of the forest upon this estate; they come from the mountain land in the heights of the country. I pay 48s. for the wintering of a cow.

33409. The factor stated that you were in arrears of rent, and that if you paid that you would get the fence put up for you?—There is no rent due except the current half year's.

33410. (*To Mr Mackenzie, factor.*)—The old man states that there is no arrear of rent?—I am sorry to say the rent roll shows an arrear of rent.—*M'Donald.* There were no arrears of rent due to the proprietor at last Martinmas.—*Mr Mackenzie.* Which of them is in arrears I cannot state; there are three of them altogether.—*M'Donald.* Two of us have fully paid up, but I cannot say for the third.

33411. How many years have you been living in this house?—Forty-six or forty-seven years.

INVER-
NESS.

ARISAIG.

Donald
M'Donald.

33412. Have you been paying rent the whole of that time to the landlord?—Yes, but the rent was only 6d. till the last repair was made.

33413. How long is it since the last repair was made?—Four years.

33414. How much did the repair cost?—I don't know. Only he asked me whether I would be willing to pay £1 for the house when I got it repaired, and I said I would.

33415. Were you better pleased to pay 6d. for the house as it was before, or 30s. as it is now?—Well, it was in danger of falling formerly, and you could not live in it anyhow.

33416. Have you a son who helps you?—Yes, one son and two little daughters.

33417. Is your son married?—No, he is quite a young man.

33418. Then it is your son who pays the rent?—Well, yes, it is he that earns the rent.

33419. Are you able to work a little yourself?—Yes, I work some yet. I never worked in this country.

33420. Could not your son help a little to put up a fence round the potato ground?—Yes, if we got ground along with the cow and the wintering of her. The old way was that the proprietor should set up the fence, and that we should pay interest.

[ADJOURNED.]

ARGYLL.

TYREE, ARGYLL, TUESDAY, AUGUST 7, 1883.

(See Appendix A, LXXXVI.)

Present:—

Lord NAPIER and ETTRICK, K.T., *Chairman.*

Sir KENNETH S. MACKENZIE, Bart.

DONALD CAMERON, Esq. of Lochiel, M.P.

C. FRASER-MACKINTOSH, Esq., M.P.

Sheriff NICOLSON, LL.D.

Professor MACKINNON, M.A.

DONALD M'DOUGALL, Crofter, Balphuil (52)—examined.

Donald
M'Dougall.

33421. *The Chairman.*—Have you been elected a delegate?—Yes.

33422. Were there a good number of people present?—Yes, a great many.

33423. Have you a written statement to produce?—Yes, but we wish to say something before that. We wish to know whether it is true that an assurance is being given to crofters and cottars in giving their evidence before this Commission from proprietors and factors.

33424. Such an assurance has been given in many places by proprietors and factors, and I will now ask whether there is any one present who will give an assurance in regard to the island of Tyree?—*Mr M'Diarmid.* I am local factor to his Grace the Duke of Argyll.

33425. Do you feel enabled to give an assurance to the people here present that no one will suffer prejudice in consequence of what he says here on this occasion?—No, I cannot give any such assurance. I did not ask for it, and I was not told to give it.

33426. You don't think you are, knowing the disposition and character of the proprietor of the island, enabled to give such an assurance on your

own responsibility?—I would say the Duke of Argyle won't do anything against any man who will tell the truth.

ARGYLL

TYREE.

Donald
M'Dougall.

33427. Are you able or not, from your knowledge of the character of the proprietor, to give a positive assurance that no prejudice will occur to any one on account of what is said here to-day?—I am not going to say that.

33428. (*To Witness*).—It is not in the power of the Commission to give you any assurance of the kind. The Commission cannot interfere between you and your proprietor, or between you and the law. Whatever you state, therefore, now will be at your own risk and on your own responsibility. But from what we know of the character of the Duke of Argyle, we cannot believe—we do not believe—that any prejudice could occur to you on account of what you say.—*Witness*. We live in that part of Scotland where most of that suffering is taking place, and oppression and slavery. We are poor people. We cannot give any of the statements that we came here prepared to make unless we receive the assurance that no crofter will be evicted from his croft, or cottar put out of his house, for telling what we have to tell; and that is the truth, and nothing but the truth.—*Mr M'Diarmid*. I have had this moment put into my hands a letter from the Duke's chamberlain. He says the crofters are at liberty to make any statement they have to make without any fear of after consequences.—*Witness*. What I have to say is, that we never had much fear of the good man the proprietor, because factors here were his eyes, his ears, and his mouth in his dealings with us. And, concerning the house of Argyle, we desire that whatever we say, anything that we complain of as having been unjustly done, will be put to the credit of the factors, and not to the house of Argyle. My reason for saying so is that we get letters from Kintyre—I don't know if cottars get such information, but we crofters do—if we have any complaint to make in respect of rent, or any injustice done to us, we must go and state our case in such and such a place in Kintyre. These letters are written in English, in the name of the Duke.

33429. Is the complaint this, that when you have anything to state you are obliged to state it in writing in English to a factor living at a different place?—No; we do not complain of that at all. We think that this is an indication on the part of the proprietor that he is willing to hear and redress our grievances. That is our understanding of it.

33430. Have you got a written statement on the part of your township which you wish to communicate to the Commission?—‘Unto the Right Honourable the Royal Commission, the Petition of the Crofters of the Township of Balephuil, humbly sheweth, That our grievances are—1st, ‘We have been deprived about thirty years ago, by John Campbell, Esq., ‘the then factor of the island, of a part of Ben Hynish, which from the ‘time of our forefathers belonged to the common pasture of the township ‘of Balephuil, thereby reducing the stock on each croft by one horse, one ‘cow, and one stirk less. 2nd, We do now pay, and had been paying, ‘since we have been deprived of that said part of our common pasture ‘rent as high as when we have been in possession of that part. 3rd, We ‘do not possess any shore where to obtain sea-weed wherewith to manure ‘our ground, since we have been deprived of that said part of our ‘common pasture, if we be not allowed by the good-will of the occupier ‘of that part of our common pasture we have been deprived of to have ‘the sea-weed. 4th, We pay road rates, though we were ourselves keeping ‘up till this year about three miles of road. We are under these disadv- ‘antages, while we humbly think we ought not to be under any of them, ‘for the following reasons:—(1) We had our rent paid at and up till

ARGYLL.

TYREE.

Donald
M'Dougall.

' the time we have been deprived of the said part of our common pasture ;
 ' and, moreover, we have been deprived of it without summonses being
 ' served upon us. (2) If we have been deprived of that said part of our
 ' common pasture, we were entitled to have our rents reduced in propor-
 ' tion, as our ground could not then raise better or more bountiful crops
 ' than when we were in possession of said part of our common pasture.
 ' (3) From the time of our forefathers the township of Balephuil possessed
 ' a shore from which to obtain sea-weed to manure the ground, till we lost
 ' possession of it by having been deprived of that said part of our common
 ' pasture, as the shore belongs to that piece of land. (4) As we are
 ' assessed for road money, we consider it very unjust that we should
 ' have ourselves to keep up any road, as we have done for thirty years.
 ' Therefore our demands are—1st, To get back that part of our common
 ' pasture of which we have been deprived, or rent reduced in proportion
 ' to extent of land taken from us, and £1176 for loss occasioned us by
 ' having been deprived of said part of our common pasture for thirty
 ' years. 2nd, That we shall be entitled to have a right to foresaid shore,
 ' with road thereto for sea-weed to manure our ground. 3rd, That as we
 ' are assessed for road money, and we were ourselves keeping up about
 ' three miles of road till this year, we shall get £360 for the work we
 ' have done on the road in that length of time—thirty years. These our
 ' said grievances and demands we submit to your Lordships, and pray :
 ' May it therefore please your Lordships to make an inquiry thereinto,
 ' and redress our grievances accordingly.—DONALD M'DOUGALL, delegate.'

33431. You say that thirty years ago you were deprived of a portion of your common pasture, and had no reduction of rent ; did you receive any other advantage or benefit from the proprietor in connection with the deprivation of your land ?—Nothing.

33432. You complain that, in consequence of the common pasture being taken away, you have no proper access to the shore ?—That is so.

33433. But although you do not possess the shore, do you go to the shore practically to get sea-weed ?—Yes, we do ; but that is through the good will of the person who got the ground.

33434. Has the tenant of the ground ever prevented you, or put any difficulty in your way, in all those thirty years ?—There was a gate erected to prevent our passage, for fear of spoiling the grass. That gate was closed, and we were not allowed to pass. He did not keep the sea-ware from us, but he did not wish us to go trespassing through his ground, spoiling the grass.

33435. As matter of fact, do you habitually go for the ware ?—We have no other way but that of getting to the shore and getting sea-weed.

33436. And do you habitually go without any impediment at this moment ?—Yes, we do.

33437. Do you make any payment to the tenant on account of the sea-ware ?—We do not, because it belongs to ourselves, if we get it out.

33438. Is there a sufficient quantity on the shore for the use of your lands ?—Plenty.

33439. You complain that you pay road money, and yet that you are obliged to keep up a particular road of three miles ; who made this road of three miles long ?—I don't know who made it, but we measured it.

33440. Is it a made road, or is it merely a natural road across the ground ?—It is a made highway from quay to quay.

33441. Do the crofters expend any money upon it, or do you merely apply some labour ?—We pay our rates for the general public highways, and we keep up this road besides with our own labour, although it is entirely outside the boundaries of our farm.

33442. But it leads to the shore. How much labour does it come to for each occupier in the year?—I believe it comes up to about twenty days a year for each crofter, with a horse and cart—nearly that, anyhow.

33443. Do you mean that each crofter has a cart and horse engaged in the labour?—Yes.

33444. For twenty days?—Yes. It may be ten days one year, and twenty or more than twenty another year.

33445. You say that thirty years ago a portion of your pasture was taken away; has any of your pasture or arable ground been taken away since that?—No.

33446. During the last thirty years has the rent of your crofts been increased?—Yes, it was twice raised.

33447. What stock do the crofters keep now on a full croft?—I keep two cows and two horses.

33448. Young cattle?—I have no young cattle at present.

33449. Any sheep?—No; no crofter in the island has sheep.

33450. What rent do you pay?—£15, 2s.

33451.—How many acres of arable land have you?—Sixteen acres.

33452. What is the area of the hill pasture for the whole township?—I cannot tell that.

33453. Is it very large?—It is not large now, since we were deprived of a part of it.

33454. Is the road to the shore, on which you expend so much work, only useful for your township, or is it of use to and used by other people?—Yes, it is useful to the country side.

33455. Who uses it?—It leads to the quay.

33456. Does anybody else work upon it, or only the people of your township?—No one else does, or has ever done, any work upon that road but us.

33457. What goes on at this quay? Is it for fishermen or the exportation of cattle?—It is for fishermen.

33458. Is that for the fishermen of your own township, or of other townships?—It was originally built for our township, but it is often used by people from all parts of the country, who run in there in bad weather. In connection with this quay, I have to mention that nine crofters and some cottars who had their lands near this quay were moving to another part of our hill pasture. The pretext that was used for taking the hill pasture from us was those nine cottars that were moving from the quay. The place was cleared, and now when we go upon a rough day there is no person to hold a rope.

33459. Have any cottars within the last thirty years been brought in and put upon you in your present township?—Yes, some even since that time; there was all that number, and there have been some since.

33460. Were these cottars the natural increase of your own population, or were they brought in from the outside?—They belonged to our own township. There were some that came from the outside as well. Some of those came from some ground cleared by the factor to make a farm for himself.

33461. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Who got the land when it was taken away—the whole of the hill pasture thirty years ago?—It was the tacks man of Hynish who got it from us, and now Mr M'Quarie has got it.

33462. Who is Mr M'Quarie?—One of the tacksmen of the place.

33463. Is he a large tacksman?—Yes; he has two large tacks.

33464. What do you want to say in addition?—That this factor that cleared our place thirty years ago got the management of the property, but ordained a statute, like that of the Medes and Persians, that no one should have either a sheep or a pig, for fear that these sheep of ours

ARGYLL.

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ARGYLL.

TYREE.

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M'Dougall.

would break in upon the large farms. He went round also among us, holding a paper in the one hand and a notice to quit in the other, and he told us that unless we signed this paper, the effect of which was that we would require to be obedient to anything and everything which either he or the Duke of Argyle would order us to do, we would have to quit the place. We signed the paper, otherwise we would have to quit. After we signed the paper, his mode of procedure was to raise our rents excessively, our idea being that he did not mean to raise our rents because he thought the place was worth the rents, but because he thought he would get us to follow our neighbours to foreign places and give up the crofts. That day we would have signed ourselves out into the sea, but that alternative was not put before us; and what we wish now to bring under your notice is, that while we live in a land of law and liberty—it gladdens our heart that our country is a country of law and liberty—still neither the law nor the liberty reached this estate. We were in a state of slavery and oppression. We have heard, but we are not quite certain whether it is the case, that it is the Duke's desire that those places which were cleared by the removal of our neighbours to foreign places and some to the sea should be distributed among us. If that had been the case, it would have been good for us—if such a policy had been pursued—but it was not. Instead of that policy being pursued, those vacant farms were consolidated into large farms. There are ten of them now upon the island, and upon eight of these there were crofters in old times—before Mr Campbell's day.

33465. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—What is the size of the large farms you refer to?—I believe the smallest of them is about £100; the highest is about £400.

JOHN M'FADYEN, Crofter, Caolis (42)—examined.

John
M'Fadyen.

33466. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—You have a written statement to submit?—I have. ‘To the Royal Commissioners, Highlands and Islands. ‘I represent the small crofters of Caolis, Ruaig, and Salum, who complain ‘of—(1) The smallness of our holdings, the inferior quality of the soil, ‘through continual cropping, there being no room for rotation of crop. ‘(2) High rent and the high-handedness of factors in using every means ‘to exact more rent from us; for example, a late factor got all the ‘crofters to sign a paper to him, that they would comply with anything ‘he would see proper to do to them, or they would be evicted, and when ‘he got them to do so, he raised two times their rent. The consequence ‘is yet seen in our poverty. Under these circumstances, we petitioned ‘his Grace the Duke of Argyle last December for a reduction of rent, ‘but were refused; his Grace, however, gave some help in seed to those ‘that could not sow their crofts, and offered leases to those that did ‘not sign the petition, and were better off than their neighbours before. ‘(3) Paying rent for drains made thirty-six or thirty-seven years ago, ‘which ought to have ceased in twenty years: these drains are now useless. ‘(4) Having to buy almost all the meal we require, as well as about £6 ‘worth of coals yearly, and all the wood we use for building or repairing ‘our houses. (5) Having had formerly to work about twelve days a ‘year on the estate without payment of any kind, and that at any time ‘of the year the factor saw proper to send for us; if we refused, we would ‘be fined. (6) The partiality of factors in favouring the larger tenants ‘against the small crofters, when the larger tenants can get the factors ‘to remove cottars from their own larger holdings, and put them on the

' small crofts against the crofters' will. (7) We are under all these disadvantages, while the half of the island is under large sheep tacks held by strangers, and the people of the island are not allowed so much of the land as to make a living off it. The large tacks are the cause of much of the pauperism in the island. The people having been evicted from their holdings and removed to the sea-shore, and their holdings converted unto sheep tacks, six of which are held by three individuals. (8) There is no harbour accommodation where goods and passengers can be landed or shipped by steamers of ordinary size in rough weather, in consequence of which goods and sometimes passengers are taken north until the steamers land them, if possible, when returning south. The postal communication is also so irregular that for a fortnight at a time neither letters nor papers are received in the island; nor is there a post running between the post-office at Scarinish and the east end. Our demands are more land, fair rent, fixity of tenure, and compensation for improvements.'—Signed by JOHN M'FADYEN, Caolis, delegate, and by nineteen others.

33467. What is the extent in acres of your crofts at Caolis?—There might perhaps be about twelve acres of arable land in addition to the outrun; but in some cases the outrun has been apportioned along with the arable ground; the acreage in this case is larger, of course.

33468. But the extent of arable land is usually about twelve acres?—Short of twelve perhaps.

33469. Is that not sufficient for a rotation of crops?—I am afraid not; there is a good deal of the land within the arable area that is rocky and unsuited for cultivation, and that is counted of course in the acreage.

33470. What extent of arable land would you think sufficient to admit a rotation of cropping?—To make a crofter comfortable probably he would require about twenty-four acres.

33471. Besides the outrun?—Yes, besides the outrun.

33472. You don't think a rotation of crops could be carried out without an acreage of that extent?—The ground is so poor and gives forth such poor crops that I think we could scarcely maintain much stock upon all the arable land that we do plough just now.

33473. How long is it since you signed the paper which the late factor asked you to sign?—Thirty years ago, perhaps.

33474. That is given as an example of the high-handedness of factors; can you give a more modern instance?—There are many examples of high-handedness down to the present day, but some of them are specified in the other papers sent in to-day, and those who sent them in are more capable of speaking of them. But this high-handedness does continue.

33475. How much meal are the people generally obliged to buy in the course of the year, on an average?—Twenty-one bolls per family this year in the township of Caolis; but this year is exceptional.

33476. Do you grind any of your own corn?—Yes, we grind some barley some years—very little.]

33477. What amount on an average will you make from your own crops?—Some of us make none at all. They have more than enough to do after feeding the stock to sow down crop again; some of us have to buy seed.

33478. Do you use the whole produce of the croft in feeding your cattle?—The greater number give to the cattle the whole of the barley and oats. Of course, the potatoes always go to the family; but there are others who send something to the mill.

33479. Do you keep more than one horse usually?—Two.

33480. On twelve acres of arable land?—Yes.

ARGYLL.
TYREE.
John
M'Fadyen.

- ARGYLL. 33481. What quantity of potatoes do you usually raise?—Perhaps fifty to sixty barrels in an average year, off an average croft; some more, some less
TYEEE. 33482. Do you sell potatoes?—They are always sold out of the island more or less; but there has scarcely been any sold out of our township the last four years.
John M'Fadyen. 33483. Do you sell some when you have sixty barrels?—Yes, we would.
 33484. What quantity would you use yourselves?—Probably between thirty and forty barrels. That would depend of course upon the number of the family, but it is an average.
 33485. How long is it since you ceased to give twelve days' work in the year to the estate?—It has not entirely ceased yet. In Mr Campbell's time it was twelve days, and it got less, and now there may be a few days now and again; it has not yet ceased. We do not complain of it now.
 33486. For what purpose is that work given?—Any kind of work. We were once obliged to put up a fence between two large tacks—a stone wall six feet high. We had to do the whole work; quarry the stone, carry, and all. I built it.
 33487. That has ceased to be a ground of complaint now?—Yes, unless it may begin again.
 33488. Have any cottars been taken off the large farms and put upon the crofters' lands at Caolis?—Not out of the large tacks, but they were taken off some other crofts that were consolidated into one, and they were removed as matter of favour to the sitting tenant, and made to settle down upon the smaller crofters' holdings.
 33489. In Caolis?—Yes.
 33490. How many instances of that have there been at Caolis since you remember?—I and three neighbours had a piece of outrun attached to our arable ground, and four crofters who were removed from their holdings were settled down upon this outrun of ours. There were instances of sitting upon an individual croft.
 33491. Who got this ground?—A man who was a bachelor, and who had no one to look after; but he was in favour with the factor. He is not living now.
 33492. What was the extent of those four crofts, or what was the rent of them?—There was only one croft, although there were three families upon it. Two of them were in the rent-book, and one was a cottar. They were moving to make room for him, and sent off upon our land.
 33493. Had this old bachelor any other land besides?—No.
 33494. Had those two crofters and the cottar grown up upon that piece of land, or had they been crowded in upon it?—Yes, they belonged to the place.
 33495. What rent do you pay?—£14, 8s.
 33496. What have you—stock and acreage?—Ten or twelve acres of arable ground, two horses—one of them only about a year old, three cows, a quey, two starks, two sheep. The place is rather fully stocked; the croft would scarcely feed them well.
 33497. Have you beyond this arable acreage any outrun belonging to you individually?—There is a portion of outrun to some extent, but principally rocky, and five of us have the right to put stock upon it. One of us only puts a horse upon it.
 33498. What extent will it be?—Probably thirty or forty acres, rock and all.
 33499. Have you any pasture besides for the whole township?—No, nothing; that is all. The outrun of the other crofts is allotted to each croft separately.
 33500. Do you consider your rent too high?—Yes.

ARGYLL.

TYREE.John
M'Fadyen.

33501. Do all the rents bear the same proportion to the land that yours does, or about it?—Probably it is much about the same; some may be cheaper.

33502. You think yours is dearer than ordinary?—Well, perhaps it is.

33503. Do the large farmers pay lower rents than the crofters in proportion to their acreage?—Perhaps some of the large farmers may be dearer than the crofts, but take them all round, considering their extent, I should say the crofting communities are as highly rented.

33504. What would you consider a fair rent for your croft and right of pasture?—I think, considering the stock it keeps, it is dear enough at half the present rent.

33505. How do you arrive at the value of the land?—I fix the rent in proportion to the amount of stock the croft can provide for. We practically take little out of the produce of the croft itself. It is the outcome of the stock that provides our rent and the value of the croft.

33506. That being so, what value of rent do you put upon the horse, the cow, and the sheep?—I look upon it this way: the horses are employed for cultivating the croft, and we take no profit out of them, so we do not count them in making up the rent. I would set apart, perhaps, 25s. or 30s. for each cow.

33507. But if a man keeps two horses on twelve acres of land, is he not consuming in an unprofitable way a large proportion of the produce of the croft?—I can scarcely admit that it is unprofitable. We cannot do with one horse; the ground is light and sandy, and some of it mossy; it must be ploughed quick, and sown when it is ploughed. One horse won't do, and unless we have a horse we cannot have the crops at all.

33508. Can two of you not arrange to keep two horses between you?—I tried it, and we could not get on with it; not but we agreed well enough, but we would be behind hand with the work.

33509. Then if instead of having twelve acres of land you had twenty-four, would you require four horses?—No; the two horses would cultivate more land equally well as the present croft.

33510. Why then will they not do it when it is divided between two men, if they would if one man had it?—There is a great difference. The neighbour may have other work to do with the horse when I would like it to plough. It may be he is carrying sea-ware when I would like to be at the plough.

33511. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Are you a native of the island?—Yes.

33512. Are you well acquainted with it?—Yes, I know it; but I live upon one end of it, and there is some portion of the other end I don't know so well.

33513. Is the population of the island falling off?—It is decreasing.

33514. Was there a much larger population in Tyree in old times than now?—Yes; there was once about 4000 people, and now it is short of 3000.

33515. Is it the case that half the island at least is in the hands of a few large tacksmen?—Probably there is about half the island.

33516. Can you name the large tacks?—There are some of these large farms that have crofters still within their bounds, but a considerable portion of the old boundary of the township has been added to the tack.

33517. Name those that have no crofters upon them?—Scaranish, Baliepheathrish, Cornaigmore, Hough, Grianal, Hynish, Cruaidhgoirtean, Crosspool, Reef. There are several others where the place was only

ARGYLL. partially cleared and a large tack formed of the portion that was cleared, and a few of the crofters still remain on the outskirts of the place.

TYREE. 33518. Upon the various tacks you have enumerated, how many people may be living now?—I don't know that there is more than a family on each farm.

33519. Is it the fact then that of these large tacks six of them are held by three people?—Yes.

33520. I want to know the position of those tenants—are they Tyree people?—Two of them are natives of Tyree.

33521. Where did the others come from?—The factor has two, Mr M'Quarrie has two, and Mr Barr has two."

33522. Are these people resident on their farms?—Yes, they are resident in one of the places.

33523. What is the name of the present factor's farms?—Hough, Hylipool or Cruaidhghoirtean.

33524. Were there a great number of people at various times working these nine possessions you have referred to?—Some of those places were cleared before my recollection, some since. I live upon one end of the island, and could not tell the population, but there are others coming after me who can.

33525. Can you speak generally whether the removal of these people benefited those of the small crofters who were left behind?—In some of the townships that was the case; they were the better of it; but in the great majority of them they were nothing the better of it; the cleared lands were added to or made into tacks.

33526. Are the crofters in your position worse off to-day than they used to be?—Yes, we are; and the reason is that we pay higher rents, and the crofts are not so good as they used to be in the days of our fathers.

33527. Did the system of creating large farms in this way benefit in any degree, directly or indirectly, the crofter class?—I think it was greatly to their loss, because some of those who were removed were added in and crowded upon the small crofters, and their places made less.

33528. May it be stated with truth that of the total population of Tyree nearly the whole of them are situated upon one half of the island?—That is the truth, according to my judgment.

33529. Are the lands that are under tack of a better class, both arable and pastoral, than the lands in possession of the crofters?—Well, perhaps it generally may be said to be better land, but anyhow it looks very much better, because a great portion of it is not under cultivation, and therefore the pasture is good, and the portion of it that is arable can be cultivated upon a better system, and yields better crops, than we in our small crofts are able to raise.

33530. Is there a good deal of land that was once under cultivation now in the big tacks, and not cultivated at all?—Yes, I can tell you some of those townships out of which the people were sent away.

33531. Mention them?—Out of Scarinish went ten crofters. Then there is another tack not named before, Baugh, where some crofters still remain; five crofters were sent out of it. Another place that was added on to the farm of Bailiepheatrish, eight crofters were sent from it. It was called Kennoway. Out of Hylipool twenty-six crofters were removed and twenty-one cottars. There were nine crofters and three cottars cleared from Balephuil, and this portion added on to the farm of Hynish. Those four crofters were removed from a piece of land which was given to the British Sea-weed Company. There is another tack, Manal, where there is still crofts, but twenty-nine crofters were removed from a portion of it that is a large farm now.

33532. You said you bought a lot of meal last year; where did you buy it?—Chiefly from Glasgow.

ARGYLL

TYREE

John

M'Fadyen.

33533. Did you use to produce much more meal than you do now?—In old times we used to send to the mill almost as much as would feed the family, in many cases where now we do not send a grain.

33534. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie*.—Was the land from which the four crofters were removed for the British Sea-weed Company the piece next to the quay at Balephuil spoken of by Donald M'Dougall?—No.

33535. Does the British Sea-weed Company give any great employment in Tyree?—Yes, there are a few that find direct employment from this, and there are others that manufacture kelp, and they are obliged to sell it to this Sea-weed Company; they are not allowed to sell it to anybody else.

33536. Is that for want of a market, or because the factor orders it?—No, it was neither the one nor the other, but because the Company rented the shore from the proprietor, and accordingly they have the right to purchase at a price fixed by themselves all the kelp manufactured on the island.

33537. What wages are those that they employ able to make?—There is a statement bearing upon that among the papers sent in.

33538. Can you make better wages by burning your own kelp?—So far as I know, they do not make better wages. You cannot manufacture kelp except for a few weeks; whereas those in the employment of the Company are employed all the year round.

33539. What was the date of the removals you have spoken of—was it in modern times?—The greater portion of them would have been sent away some thirty years ago; but upon a change of factorship in the place about twenty years ago, some more were removed. There might have been a few cases since that time, but not to speak of.

33540. Those removed about thirty years ago would be removed after the potato famine in 1848?—Yes.

33541. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh*.—Without anticipating any statement that may be made about the case of the Sea-weed Company, can you say whether the Sea-weed Company ever pay money to people employed by them?—Perhaps they have given away money once or twice, but they won't pay any money if they can help it.

ANGUS MUNN, Crofter, Heanish (44)—examined.

33542. *Professor Mackinnon*.—You have a statement to submit to the Commission?—Unto the Honourable the Royal Commissioner, appointed to inquire into the Condition of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, the Statement of Angus Munn (44), crofter and fisherman, Heanish, Tyree; Humbly sheweth, That we have been forcibly deprived of our holdings of two crofts, during our father and mother's lifetime, to make room for another party who got into the factor's favour, and on going to his Grace the Duke of Argyle to Mull, he advised us to come home and that he himself would look after it. On the factor becoming aware of this he reported that we had no stock to stock the ground with, and on being challenged by the factor as to the stock, we had to call witnesses to let them see what number of stock we had; and on the factor's becoming aware of this, he, in a rage, asked us about the stock. Having replied in the affirmative, he said, "Did I not tell you that you were not to have a hoof on the grass after a certain day?" On being questioned as

Angus Munn.

ARGYLL. ‘to what was to be done with them, “Drown them,” said he. We had then to confine them in our byres until some of our cattle died. Now, TYREE. ‘on his Grace having found this out, and that we were able to stock the ground, he further instructed the factor to reinstate us on the crofts; but after all we never got but one of the crofts we had before, after being two years from us, and much rent was imposed upon us on that croft than what was before. Mr Geikie was the ruling factor for his Grace at that time. The crofters grieve for high rents, as it was about doubled within the last thirty years, exclusive of rates; and our land, by constant rotation, does not yield the one half of the produce it used to do previous to the rent being raised, and by that reason, we are buying our meal regularly from the south, and also feeding stuff for our cattle. The most useful part of our common pasture was taken from us and added to the one in whose hands the greater part of the township is. Our demands are—More land, fixity of tenure, fair rent, compensation for improvements.—ANGUS MUNN.—Signed HUGH M'KINNON, senior, MALCOLM M'KINNON, HUGH M'KINNON, junior.—P.S. We also complain of our harbour accommodation, and for larger fishing boats, such as are required for that part of our industry.’

33543. How many crofters are there in Heanish?—Four just now, and the minister counts for one; that is five, who have got three crofts.

33544. What is the whole rent of the place?—I pay £7 and a few shillings; I cannot tell the total rent of the place.

33545. You say the rent was doubled within the last thirty years; what was your rent at that time?—We had only one croft at that time, and we paid 40s. to 50s. for it.

33546. And do you pay your present rent for the same land you had then?—Yes, for the same land we pay now £7, for which we paid formerly 40s. to 50s.

33547. But the two crofts that were taken from you were not restored to you?—Yes, we got the one that we have now.

33548. But not the other one?—Not the second.

33549. How long ago was that?—Nearly twenty years ago.

33550. What was done with the other croft which was not restored to you?—It was given to a neighbour and favourite of the factor's.

33551. Had he no land before?—Yes, he had.

33552. How much had he before?—He had three crofts.

33553. And you were not in arrears when that croft was taken from you?—Yes, we were a little in arrears.

33554. Did you or your father make any improvement upon these two crofts you had?—Yes, we made some drains, and we put some soil upon the rocky ground.

33555. Was the land worth more after you did that than it was when you came into possession of it first?—No.

33556. Was it not yielding better crops?—Yes, the portions that were drained were yielding better crops, but the other portions were getting worse.

33557. How?—Because it required to be ploughed every year, and we could not give it rest.

33558. Why did you need to plough it every year?—Because it was so small; we were not able to support ourselves unless we ploughed it every year.

33559. When was the part of the common pasture taken from you?—About sixteen years ago; it was in Mr Geikie's time.

33560. What reason did he give for doing so?—No reason at all, but his own good-will and pleasure.

33561. To whom was it given?—To the man who got our croft—the ARGYLL
favourite.

TYREE.

33562. What was the extent of it?—About three acres, rock and all.

33563. What stock do you keep now?—One horse and two cows. This portion of outrun which I speak of was used as a passage to the general outrun of the place for the cattle, so that it is not merely the loss as pasture land, but the loss of it as a direct road. We have now to make a circuit of a mile to get to the outrun upon which our cattle graze. There used also to be horses upon it some portions of the year.

Angus Munn.

33564. What feeding stuffs do you get for your cattle?—Pease-meal and bean-meal.

33565. Do you use that food all winter?—No.

33566. What generally does it cost you?—26s. or 27s. per bag; it is in bags we buy it.

33567. How many bags do you use in a season?—Two to four usually.

33568. How many bolls of meal have you had to buy since last autumn for yourself?—Nearly twenty.

33569. At how much the boll?—Fifteen to twenty shillings off and on—oatmeal 20s., flour about 15s.

33570. Do you fish?—Yes.

33571. Do you make your living by fishing?—No. I was obliged to take to the fishing when I lost the second croft. My father and mother were bedridden, and I had to support them.

33572. Were the two crofts sufficient to support them?—Yes, we were able to live by them, but it was just hard enough.

ALEXANDER M'LEAN, Crofter, Balmeanoch (78)—examined.

33573. *The Chairman.*—You have a statement to submit to the Commission?—I have. I, Alexander M'Lean (74), elder and crofter at Balameanoch, Tyee, humbly beg to bring before the Royal Commissioners the following facts and grievances, and crave their attention and consideration to the poor circumstances unto which I have been reduced through the ill-treatment I have received from time to time. About forty years ago I bought the first of my crofts for the sum of £95 sterling, the yearly rental of which was at that time £6 sterling. I afterwards got possession of other two crofts, but for one of them I had to pay £5, and for the other £8, before I was allowed to take possession of them, these sums being equal to the yearly rental of the crofts. I held possession of the three crofts for a good number of years, and, although they were but small, having been together, I was able to live comfortably, and was perfectly satisfied. But a few years ago the last two mentioned crofts were taken from me, without either compensating me for improvements made, or even giving me back my own money which I paid for them, and this for the direct purpose of extending the ground of a stranger, who is not content by reducing me into my present poor circumstances, but who now uses all means to deprive me of my remaining one. The rent of my present croft is now £12, 11s. 6d., as compared with £6 thirty years ago, or upwards of £1 per acre of poor soil. I have now so little land, and what I have is so dear, that I would be utterly unable to fight against poverty, were it not for the support I get from my children in the Lowlands. My prayer is that I should get back my two crofts, and that the rent of the other one should be reduced to the old

Alexander
M'Lean.

ARGYLL. 'standard ; and were this prayer answered I would be perfectly content 'and fairly comfortable.

TYREE.
Alexander M'Lean.
33574. What do you mean by saying that forty years ago you bought the first of your crofts for the sum of £95 sterling ?—I bought it, as I stated, from the outgoing tenant. He went away to America at that time, and he had the right to sell the croft and everything that was upon it. There were two horses and one cow of stock, and there were the crops and houses; and when I valued the amount I paid him £95, and when I valued the amount of seed and labour that he expended upon the croft for that year and the houses, I considered I was over £40 out of pocket beyond the value of everything that I received.

33575. Did the sum of £95 include the cattle, horses, and growing crop ?—Yes, it included the stock, crops, and houses.

33576. How much were the houses valued at ?—There was no valuation.

33577. How much did you count out of the whole £95 was for the houses and offices ?—They were not much worth ; they were in a very backward condition, and I had to repair them and put them in order again, and I believe they were not worth as much as I expended in putting them in repair.

33578. The rest of the £95 was for stock ?—Yes.

33579. Why did you say you bought the croft for £95 sterling, when the money was for the purchase of stock on the croft ?—I bought it in order to have a dwelling there, and that I should cultivate it myself afterwards.

33580. You got two other crofts ; who did you get them from ?—From the factor of the day.

33581. Who did they belong to before ?—It was other two men that had the crofts that I had before. One of them removed voluntarily to take up the croft his father possessed before, and the other one left, I don't know why or how.

33582. But you got them from two crofters ?—Yes, it was two crofters occupied that before.

33583. They were taken away from you and given to somebody else ; who were they given to ?—They were given to the British Seaweed Company.

33584. What use does the company make of the land ?—They cultivate it.

33585. Is it the company that cultivates it, or has the company given the two crofts to two tenants, or to one tenant ?—They keep it in their own hands.

33586. When the two crofts were taken away from you, you say you got no compensation for improvements. What improvements had you made ?—Well, I cultivated them ; then they were drained ; but they were drained at the factor's orders and his expense ; but I paid interest all the time I was in possession of the crofts.

33587. Did you build any walls ?—There were fences, and I kept them in repair.

33588. You say there is a stranger who is not content with reducing you to your present poor circumstances, but wishes to deprive you of your present croft. Who is this stranger ?—The manager of this seaweed company. He wanted to get the only one I have.

33589. How do you know that ?—The factor told me.

33590. When the manager asked the factor for the croft, what did the factor say ?—I cannot tell that ; I did not ask that.

33591. Do you think you are in any danger of losing your last croft ?

—I cannot say very well. Of course, I did not know that I was in danger of losing those that I lost. But what I particularly wish now is to get them back again.

33592. But the people from whom you got them might come and ask to get them back again?—Well, they have another place.

33593. So have you?—Oh, yes; but it is very small. I consider it far too small. If it was large enough, I would not ask these crofts back.

33594. Lots four, five, six, seven, and eight are in the possession of the stranger. Do you mean the company?—Yes.

33595. What use does the company make of those five lots?—They cultivate them.

33596. Are these five lots necessary for the trade of the company—for their business?—They must have considered that themselves anyhow before they asked them or got them.

33597. What do you think?—My opinion is that they might have done without them. Their allegation is that they required them in order to feed the horses necessary for their work; but they had two crofts before these, and they might have fed their horses upon these.

33598. Does the company do good to the people?—I believe in a sense they do some good, to some of the people at least. They employ some of the people; they keep a store, where they provide goods for the people.

33599. Do they give good wages?—The wages do not seem large, and the people complain of it.

33600. Do they ever give money, or do they always pay in goods?—With goods.

33601. What is the reason the company do not pay in money?—It is likely that they make profit off the goods, and that they prefer to give goods rather than money.

33602. Do the people complain that the goods are bad or dear?—They complain that they are dear.

33603. But is the quality of the goods good?—I believe they may be about as good as are going; but when they pay in money they only pay half. For a ton of kelp they only give £2 in ready money, but they give £4 worth of goods.

33604. If a man refused to accept the goods in payment, would he get any employment from the company, or would the company turn him off?—I really cannot tell.

33605. This paper is all about your own case. What have you to say about the other crofters in Balmeanoch?—There is only one other tenant and myself and this company in the whole township. He has his two crofts still; he was not deprived of any of them; but I believe he complains of the high rent.

33606. Have you been deprived of any hill pasture?—No; the township has the old hill pasture.

ARGYLL
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TYBEE.
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Alexander
M'Lean.

DONALD MACDONALD, Crofter, Balamartin, assisted by HECTOR MACDONALD,
Cottar and Fisherman, Balamartin (38)—examined.

33607. *Mr Fraser Mackintosh.*—You have a statement to submit to the Commission?—Donald Macdonald. I have.—‘ Unto the Right Honourable the Royal Commission the Petition of the Crofters of the Township of Balamartin, humbly sheweth, That our grievances are—1st, High rent, and the manner in which it was raised being unfair, and

Donald
M'Donald and
Hector
M'Donald.

ARGYLL. 'against the terms made, or rules under which the township of Balamartin was formed. 2nd, We have our common pasture or outrun diminished in extent at one end by cottars' houses, and at the other by its being annexed to the township of Balephuil. 3rd, We have to pay to the factor for sea-weed to manure our ground. We are under these said grievances, which we humbly consider to be unfair and contrary to the rules under which the township was formed, for the following reasons :—(1) At the time the township of Balamartin was first divided up into crofts—about eighty years back—the township then consisted of thirty-eight crofts, with four acres in each, with a common pasture or outrun besides, capable of holding one cow and one stirk to each croft, and the horse we keep to till the ground on the four acres. The total rent of the township then divided among the thirty-eight crofts amounted only to £60, and we had fuel-peats without extra charge. But at the time John Campbell, Esq., became factor of the island, he raised our rent from £60 to £124 yearly; and, worse still, in our then straitened circumstances—as the ground yielded us not crops of such quality as it formerly yielded, though by causes uncontrollable by us—he doubled our crofts, sending most of the crofters to one end of the outrun as cottars, and introduced strangers from the township of Hellipool, as he was to make a sheep-tack of that township. Therefore, upon the remainder of the crofters, numbering thirteen, it has fallen to pay that rent of £124, and the expenditure of £6 yearly to each crofter for coals, as we could not get any more peats, making the total amount in rent and coals payable by us £202 yearly. Moreover, year by year our crop is reduced in quality, as the soil gets more inferior in quality each year. And last year we suffered so much from floods and storms that we had at last to apply to his Grace the Duke for assistance in the shape of seed to plant our ground. We applied also to the Duke for reduction of rent, but his Grace would not grant our demand in regard to rent. (2) If the factor evicted the crofters, we consider it very unjust that the outrun at one end should be allotted to them for houses, thereby diminishing its extent without compensation; and we consider it very unjust as well that at the other end it should be annexed to the township of Balephuil without compensation either. (3) Though the shore of our township is not generally liable to sea-weeds, and therefore we go to the nearest beach to obtain it, along a part of which beach the factor's ground extends, we do not in the least damage the factor's ground, as there is a road from the beach to our township without touching the factor's ground at all. So we think it just that we should not have to pay to the factor for the sea-weed; still the factor insists on payment. And we do pay for it in the shape of work given him three or four days with our carts in harvest time, and three other days in winter time manuring his ground. On this grievance as well we applied to his Grace the Duke; but he treated this petition as he did the one petitioning for reduction of rent. Our demands therefore are—1st, Fair rent; 2nd, compensation for what of the outrun we have had taken from us and damaged; 3rd, that we shall have not to pay for sea-weed to manure our ground. These our said grievances and demands we submit to your Lordships, and pray: May it therefore please your Lordships to make an inquiry thereinto, and redress our grievances accordingly.—DONALD MACDONALD, delegate.'—I wish also to read a paper containing general cases of evictions of special importance:—1st, Neil M'Donald, crofter at Mannal, was about thirty-four years ago, for no well-grounded reasons, evicted from his home and farm by the factor, John Campbell, Esq. He had no other home to go to, and

- ' was forbidden by the factor to build a house in any part of the island. ARGYLL.
 ' The factor also threatened with instant eviction any crofter or cottar TYREE.
 ' who might out of pity afford him even one night's shelter from the cold.
 ' So his only place of shelter was a small boat turned upside down, with
 ' a hole in the centre for a chimney, and some straw laid round the M'DONALD AND
 ' openings to prevent the snow drift from perishing himself and little HECTOR
 ' ones. One neighbour, who out of pity was moved to take and give his
 ' children shelter in his house, was instantly summoned before the factor,
 ' and severely reprimanded for being so humane. 2nd, Hector M'Donald,
 ' Balamartin (crofter), was some time afterwards evicted in the same
 ' manner. Forced to leave his house and home, having no house to go to,
 ' every individual crofter and cottar in Tyree were, on the threat of evic-
 ' tion, forbidden to give him even one night's shelter. His wife being
 ' nigh her confinement, he for her sought shelter in his sister's house ; but
 ' the farmer on whose croft the sister's house stood (John Sinclair, Baria-
 ' pool) was instructed by the factor to turn the evicted family out. In
 ' the said John Sinclair's cart the wife and family were removed, and the
 ' woman, while being driven in the cart, by the way was delivered of a
 ' child, as no one would be allowed to shelter her during the time of her
 ' delivery. 3rd, Hugh M'Lean, crofter, Mannal. This man, who was
 ' blind, was about nineteen years ago disgracefully evicted as the above.
 ' Having no house to go to, he was still in his own home. The factor
 ' then sent men to strip the roof off that home by means of instruments
 ' of iron. He then removed to the barn, in which lay a quantity of grain.
 ' The same men were then sent back with orders to strip the barn too ;
 ' and the poor blind man, with his crippled wife, and no sons to help
 ' him, as of the sons he had two were drowned some time before, and his
 ' only other son was insane in the asylum, was cruelly turned out and left
 ' at the roadside. 4th, Alexander M'Donald, a blind man, was evicted
 ' while John Campbell, Esq., was factor of the island, by whose orders
 ' men were sent to have this man's house stripped while the poor man
 ' was in bed and unable to leave it. He was then removed by some
 ' friends to the barn, but the factor ordered the roof to be taken off the
 ' barn too ; and thus the sightless man was rendered houseless. And the
 ' only reason for evicting this man was simply to give his holding to one
 ' of the factor's favourites. The man then became a burden to the parish,
 ' and from that time till now his maintenance cost the parish about £600.
 ' —I am Gilchrist M'Donald. Since I can remember, my father was a
 ' crofter in Balamartin. About nineteen years ago, although being only
 ' one year's rent in arrears, he, and a neighbour who was only 50s. in
 ' arrears, were evicted. The latter from his own croft. This was done
 ' in order to give both the crofts to the factor's servant man, which
 ' servant was not a native of the island. Some weeks before the time to
 ' leave the house I paid the rent, but on the appointed day (as we were
 ' still in the house, not having another to go to) some men—others
 ' refused to do it—by order of the factor were sent to the house, and
 ' these men by means of an iron bar broke open the door, turned us and
 ' all our things there and then out of the house. My father was about
 ' sixty years of age, and without the croft was unable to do anything for
 ' himself. My mother, who was about the same age, was imbecile, and in
 ' that state was carried by them out of bed and laid at the road side. As
 ' the factor would not grant me leave to build a small house to shelter
 ' them, I had to remove them to Glasgow, which city not agreeing
 ' with them, I was obliged to return with them to Tyree again, but the
 ' only house I could get was an old kiln belonging to the crofters of
 ' Balamartin. The little I got for the stock on the farm was all spent in

ARGYLL. ' maintaining us before getting leave from the factor to build a house
 ——————
 TYREE. ' and had it ready for dwelling in.—GILCHRIST M'DONALD, Balamartin.'
 ——————
 Donald ' —I lost my holding in the same way as the above.—DONALD M'LEAN,
 M'Donald and ' Caolis, formerly tenant of Balamartin.—Hector Macdonald. I have
 M'Donald. a paper to read on behalf of the cottars and fisherman of Balamartin :
 ——————
 Hector ' In the township of Balamartin there are at present thirty-two
 M'Donald. families, consisting in all 172 individuals. Our fathers and even
 ' some of ourselves had crofts which, without any reason being assigned,
 were taken from us, and that without any compensation having been
 ' given us for houses or for any improvements affected by us. It
 became necessary for us, therefore, to build other houses for ourselves
 and families at the seashore (that is), on the common belonging to the
 crofters of Balamartin, and for these houses some of us had to pay rent.
 ' Our ordinary employment is fishing, but for want of a safe harbour
 ' wherein to preserve our boats, we are compelled to use much smaller
 boats than is required for our fishing coast. Some of us have tried
 larger boats, but for the want of a safe place to keep them some of them
 ' were driven into pieces upon the rocks and others were sunk while
 riding at anchor. We wish it to be clearly understood that it is next
 to impossible for us to make a living for ourselves and families without
 such a harbour. For the want of such a harbour our lives are often in
 great danger, especially on the act of landing. As a rule, we can only
 continue to fish for about six months of the year. We find it impossible
 under these circumstance—that is, by fishing alone—to maintain our-
 selves and our families in any way like a comfortable position. What
 we want therefore is a few acres of land on which to graze a cow and
 plant a few potatoes, and also a safe harbour erected for our fishing
 boats at the south end of the island. We are all quite willing to pay a
 reasonable rent for the land, and of course we are also prepared to pay
 reasonable dues for a safe harbour.—HECTOR MACDONALD, Balamartin,
 ' delegate.'

33608. Are you quite sure that the rent of the place was raised by
 Campbell, at one swoop, from £60 to £124 ?—Donald M'Donald. No,
 not at one time ; it was raised twice.

33609. By the same man ?—Yes.

33610. Did he assign any reason for doing it ?—No reason whatever.

33611. Was it at that time that Hillipool was made into a sheep farm ?
 —The rent was raised a little before that time.

33612. But at the time Hillipool was made into a sheep farm did you
 get any reduction ?—Nothing.

33613. Were your peats upon the pasture from which you were
 deprived ?—No.

33614. Then how were you obliged to buy coals instead of peats ?—
 The peat bank was exhausted ; there is no peat in the place to speak of.

33615. Last year you say you presented two petitions to the Duke of
 Argyle, one for seed and the other for reduction of rent ; the one about
 the reduction of rent was not granted, what was done with the other ?—
 We got the seed ; but we were told we would get no reduction in the
 rent.

33616. Was it the understanding that you were to pay back the value
 of the seed ?—We promised to pay it.

33617. And do you think it will be asked of you ?—We cannot tell ; it
 has not been asked yet.

33618. Do you pay the factor any money for the sea-ware ?—He does
 not ask money, but he asks us for some work ; and we do not pay this
 factor except what we paid to the previous tenants of the farm. The shore

and the sea-ware belong to the farm of Hillipool, and we have paid them for the sea-ware all along.

ARGYLL.

TYREE.DonaldM'Donald and
Hector
M'Donald.

33619. In the form of labour?—Yes.

33620. What value in money would you put upon this labour?—It would be about 30s.

33621. Do you get anything from the factor while you are doing this work; do you get any money or any allowance in the way of food?—We get our food well.

33622. Do you consider that upon a great estate like Tyree it is worth the while or proper that tenants should pay for sea-ware at all?—Well, we don't think that we either injure his land or the roads, but merely gather the drift ware that comes upon the beach; we don't think any value ought to be exacted for it.

33623. Can you labour your crofts without this sea-ware?—No.

33624. Can you pay your rent if you do not labour and manure your crofts?—No; unless we work them and manure them we cannot pay our rents.

33625. Would it not appear then that the deprivation of sea-ware is rather a prohibition of labouring your farms at all?—We cannot say that.

33626. You state that you want a fair rent and compensation for the outrun which has been taken from you and damaged, and that you shall not have to pay for sea-weed to manure the ground; don't the people want to get back the land which is in Hillipool?—Certainly.

33627. Why did you not put that in the paper?—We never were in Hillipool.

33628. Would you like to get the common pasture back which was taken from you?—Yes; but a great portion of it is filled with cottars.

33629. Are the cottars that are here a great burden upon the crofters?—Certainly, they have deprived us of our grazing.

33630. Are you able to pay your rent out of your croft, or do you labour otherwise?—I must needs pay the rent out of the proceeds of the croft, for there is no means of earning wages in this land.

33631. You do not go fishing or abroad then?—No, not now.

33632. What is your rent?—£11, 7s. 6d. I have three crofts.

33633. Are the people whom you represent much like yourself, with the same grievances?—Yes, practically the same.

33634. What would you consider would be a proper rent for you to pay now under the circumstances you are in?—I would be very glad to get it at the rent my father paid, about £4, 10s.—the three crofts for which I now pay £11, 7s. 6d.

33635. *Sheriff Nicolson* (to *Hector Macdonald*).—How many cottars are there at Balamartin?—Thirty-two families.

33636. Are all of you people belonging to the place?—No.

33637. Were some of you removed from other places to Balamartin?—Yes.

33638. What places?—They were put out of Hillipool.

33639. How long since?—Some of them before I was born, or about that time; some others since.

33640. And there are some of you who had crofts which were taken from you?—Yes.

33641. To whom were they given?—The factor's servant got the one that my father had anyhow, and his neighbour's as well.

33642. Was your father in arrears?—Thirty shillings.

33643. What was the rent?—I cannot tell.

33644. You were removed from the houses as well as from the land?

ARGYLL. —Not at that time ; our houses were old ; but a neighbour was removing from his houses. They were new and good, and there was only one man going in, and he occupied these houses. Afterwards, when our own houses got bad, we had to build them again.

TYREE.
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Donald
M'Donald and Hector
M'Donald. 33645. How many people had to remove from their own houses to build new ones ?—I cannot tell.

33646. What sort of houses have you ?—Thatched houses covered over with felt ; others with ordinary thatch.

33647. Are they not as good as ordinary crofters' houses in Tyree ?—Quite as good.

33648. How many rooms have you in them ?—Three.

33649. What does it cost you to build a house of that kind ?—We cannot tell ; it was ourselves quarried the stones and built them.

33650. And did none of those who were put out of their houses and built new ones get any compensation for the old ones, or assistance to build the new ones ?—I did not get a penny whatever, and I did not hear of any other person that did.

33651. Did you not ask it of the factor ?—No, we did not ask for any assistance, and the reason of it was this, we were asked to leave the stone and wood of the old house for the new comer, and we thought when we were asked that there was no use asking for any assistance at all. It is but right to say we did not leave it, however ; we took it away with us.

33652. How much land has each of the thirty-two cottars ?—The high road.

33653. No land at all ?—Nothing whatever.

33654. Not even a bit of ground for potatoes ?—Not the breadth of the soles of our feet.

33655. Your living is by fishing—what kind of fishing ?—Cod and ling, lobsters, and all kinds of fish about the shore.

33656. Do you go far to fish ?—Sometimes the length of fifteen miles off the shore.

33657. Who takes the fish from you ?—Some send to Glasgow ; some sell it at the shops.

33658. You get a regular market ?—Yes.

33659. What do you get for the cod and ling ?—We get £26, 10s. to £28, 10s. per ton for the ling, and £23 per ton for the cod.

33660. That is for dried salt fish ?—Yes.

33661. Is that a good price ?—Yes ; we never had it so good, except last year.

33662. Do you fish for herring also ?—No, we have no herring boats ; we have no place to keep them.

33663. Are all your boats small ?—Comparatively small ; they are 16 to 26 feet keel.

33664. In other parts of the islands they have fine large boats, with which they go to Barra and the east coast ?—Yes ; but we have none here, because we cannot keep them.

33665. Could you afford to buy such boats if you had a good harbour for them ?—Yes, some of us could.

33666. What kind of harbour would you propose ?—A harbour of refuge.

33667. A pier and breakwater, or simply a pier ?—We would require a breakwater as well as a pier.

33668. Could it be made of stones in the place ?—There are plenty of stones in the place.

33669. Could it be made strong enough with hewn stones and cement ?—I think it could be made of concrete strong enough.

ARGYLL.

TYREE.

Donald
McDonald and
Hector
McDonald.

33670. Have you any idea what it would cost?—No.

33671. But you would be willing to pay something for the cost in the way of dues, would you?—Yes, we would.

33672. *The Chairman.*—I understood you to say you had received no assistance from the proprietor towards building your house?—Yes; no assistance was granted.

33673. Did any of the other people receive any assistance?—No.

33674. I understood you to say you had received no land from the proprietor?—No, nothing.

33675. Nor any of the other people?—No; not of those cottars I have named.

33676. Did you ever receive any work or wages from the proprietor?—Not in my day.

33677. Or did any of the other people receive work and wages from the proprietor?—I believe the factor employs a few of them.

33678. What description of work?—Drains and ditches.

33679. Have you ever received any assistance towards the purchase of boats, nets, or apparatus, or any assistance towards the industry of fishing, from the proprietor?—All that I can ever remember that he sent to Tyree in connection with the fishing was one boat, with its complement of her-ring nets.

33680. Has the proprietor expended any money in making a pier or harbour of any description in this island since you can remember?—Not a penny ever since I remember.

33681. We see here present a great number of young, strong men: are any of the people away fishing at present, or are they all here?—Yes, there are many of them away; some at the east coast fishing, some on board steamers, and some in all quarters of the earth.

33682. Do many of them go to the Lowlands for agricultural labour or work for wages?—Yes, but the greater number of them go to sea.

33683. In ships?—Steamers, and ships too.

33684. Do you think most of the people of the cottar class make their living by fishing and by other work in the island, or do they make it by going away to other places?—I can speak better, of course, of my own case, and I obtain the whole of my livelihood as a fisherman. I know very well that the people send home assistance to their parents here; but I believe the greater portion of their livelihood is taken from the sea round this coast here.

33685. Have you ever had the misfortune to lose any of your relatives at sea by drowning?—Yes.

33686. Are there any widows now in the island of men drowned at sea?—Yes, there may be perhaps one or two, but I was only a young lad at the time; it was considerably over twenty years ago—it was not out of my township, but out of the township of Balephuil. Since that time there was a boat with a crew of five lost at Skerryvore lighthouse, twelve or fifteen miles off the shore here.

33687. In cases of that sort, when people fall into poverty, are they kindly treated—does the factor assist them?—When this great disaster occurred I was only a boy, and I cannot very well remember; but a brother of my own was drowned off the shore two years ago, and my mother was a widow, and there was nothing done on that occasion.

33688. When the people fall into poverty and go on to the poor's roll, are they well and kindly treated by the parochial authorities?—I cannot very well tell; I know that the paupers complain, but that may very well happen without there being good ground for it. It is the nature of some

ARGYLL. of them to complain. Besides, I am at the sea, and don't know very well what may happen.

TYREE. 33689. In cases of sickness, is the parochial medical officer here?—Yes, certainly.

DONALD. 33690. Is the medical officer kind and attentive to the people?—Yes, very.

DONALD MACFARLANE, Cottar, Balamartin—examined.

DONALD MACFARLANE. 33691. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—You have a paper to submit?—I have. ‘Some thirty-two years ago I had a croft at Hillipool, before it was cleared for a sheep farm for the factor's nephew. The last year I had the croft, the factor tilled the third part of it for his own use, without even telling me that it was to be done. I paid the rent in full from Whitsunday till Martinmas, and the factor's crop growing in it. If I would say anything against the factor's doings I was in danger of losing all I had. I then lost the whole croft and got another holding in Balamartin, for which I was charged twice as much rent as the tenant that had it before me. Shortly after I gave it up, as it would not pay at such high rent. My house is still on the holding, but the present tenant is against its being there, and is determined to have it out of his way.—DONALD M'FARLANE, Balamartin.’—‘We, the undersigned, beg to state that our grievances are very similar to the above, and that we have been wrongfully evicted for no other reason but to make room for the factor's nephew. Afterwards it fell into the factor's own hands, who had it until his death. JOHN CAMERON, Scarinish; DONALD M'MILLAN, Mannal. Other fifteen families were evicted from Hillipool at the same time, and for the same reason as the above.’

ALEXANDER BUCHANAN, Surgeon, Tyree (46)—examined.

ALEXANDER BUCHANAN. 33692. *Professor Mackinnon.*—How long have you been in the parish?—Twenty-three years.

33693. I suppose you have charge of the neighbouring parish of Coll?—I had for twenty years, but I gave it up two years ago.

33694. You know it almost as well as Tyree?—Yes.

33695. And I suppose you may state that your interest in the place is not that of medical officer entirely, but your relatives are connected with the district?—Yes.

33696. And have been for a long time back?—Yes.

33697. You have been continuously in Tyree for the last twenty-three years?—I have.

33698. And you know the condition of the people thoroughly well?—Pretty well.

33699. You have heard the evidence that they gave here to-day?—I have since you resumed after lunch.

33700. The outcome of it is that perhaps some time before you came to the place, and also since you came to the place, there has been a good deal of consolidation of small crofts into big farms, that there has been a raising of the rents, and that there is a large number of people in the island without land at all?—Not since I came. There have been only two farms cleared since I came—Scaranish and another.

33701. The tradition of clearances was quite fresh when you came?—Yes.

33702. So that the evidence led in that respect was quite true?—Quite true.

ARGYLL.

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TYREE.

Alexander
Buchanan.

33703. Would you like to say whether you know that the rents have been increased?—They have not been much increased since I came, except in some isolated cases.

33704. But before you came there was an increase?—There was an increase before I came.

33705. And you are quite aware that there is a large number of people in the island without any land?—I am.

33706. What is the condition of this cottar class that are without any land at all, are they very poorly off?—A great number of them are poorly off, and some are as well off as the crofter class.

33707. I suppose those who have strong young families are well off?—Yes.

33708. And those who have no strong men are just not so well off?—They are badly off.

33709. What is the general condition of those of the crofter class whose rents are £12 to £15; are they in such circumstances that they are able to carry on from year to year, and perhaps stand a bad year?—The crofters who pay £15 are not so well off as those paying above that sum; but where they have families in the south they support them, and some of them are pretty well off. Of course, their crofts are not able to pay their rents as well as crofts say of £25 or £30.

33710. As rents go in the place, what kind of croft—what rent—do you think would be the minimum upon which a crofter could live fairly just now?—£20.

33711. And what would be about the size of that croft?—Say about thirty-two acres or so.

33712. And what would his stock be?—Two horses, eight to ten cows, and some sheep.

33713. They complain that they have no sheep, and that the outrun was taken from them; do you think that is a reasonable grievance?—No; because they would quarrel among themselves with sheep in their outruns. That has been the case as far as I can see.

33714. Do the cottar class live mainly by fishing?—A number do; but a number have families in the south, at sea, or working as agricultural labourers, and they send them home money from the south to support their parents. There is a good many of that class in the island.

33715. Are there many able to make a living by fishing off the shore?—Yes.

33716. And do you think, if they had good shelter for their boats, as the last witness spoke of, a greater number would be able to make their living?—Certainly, and they would have larger boats.

33717. That is very much required?—It is.

33718. I suppose as boatmen at home and sailors away there is not the beat of them?—They are really very good.

33719. They are strong men?—Yes.

33720. I suppose with respect to their physical condition you would say they are very strong men?—They compare favourably with any of the other islands as regards physical condition.

33721. And healthy?—Yes, averagely healthy.

33722. Do you draw any distinction between the crofter and cottar class in respect of their physical condition?—Yes, I do as to the children. The cottar class children appear to be in want of milk a good deal as compared with the crofter class.

33723. And I suppose that would tell in the future?—Of course.

ARGYLL.

TYREE.

Alexander Buchanan.

33724. There are a large number of them whose crofts are less than £20, and they would all wish to make them of reasonable size; is there sufficient land in the place to supply those people with land, and still not break down large farms?—There is not; but if they had a large outrun for cattle, they could cultivate their crofts.

33725. And is there such a large outrun in the place?—There is not a large outrun vacant, as far as I am aware.

33726. What would be your own opinion with respect to the amount of the estate under large tracts and the amount under a large population of crofters—whether there is really too much of it under the large tacks?—According to the population, there is at present.

33727. The farms are not so very large in this district as they are in others; what is about the rent of the biggest farm in the place?—About £400.

33728. What is the rent of the smallest of the large farms?—I suppose about £98 or £100.

33729. And are there crofts at £30, £40, and £50?—There are some crofts of £40 and £50.

33730. So that in that respect there is a fair gradation?—Yes.

33731. So that a large portion of the surface is under farms, under and over £100 rent?—Yes.

33732. Do you think that if the people would get increased crofts in the event of a farm being out of lease, or the like of that, there are many in the place who could take a croft?—There are a few, but a large number would not be able to take them,—that is, without outside assistance.'

33733. You speak about the present population of the place; of course you know that the place is not peopled to such an extent as it was forty or fifty years ago?—No; there was then a population of something like 5000.

33734. Do you think it is still, considering its capacity, sufficiently peopled?—There is sufficient population for the land.

33735. Rather too much population than too little?—Rather, to make a living.

33736. Even supposing that the land was more evenly distributed among them than it is now, would that still be the case?—It would be still the same.

33737. Has there been much emigration from the island since you came to it?—Not much emigration to foreign parts.

33738. There was a great deal before you came?—A great deal.

33739. And you have yourself been abroad?—I have.

33740. Have you seen any of those people when you were abroad?—I saw one or two who had gone, but they had only newly gone.

33741. Have you heard often of the condition of those who emigrated long ago from relatives at home?—I have.

33742. What is their general condition?—Their condition is that they would not return, although they would get their land back again for nothing.

33743. You are quite convinced that those who went are better off than those who remained?—I am.

33744. Those who remained were not much improved in their condition by their neighbours going away?—No; in fact, there was no improvement.

33745. It was rather the other way they say?—Yes.

33746. Are you a member of the School Board?—I am.

33747. And have you been since the commencement?—I have been since the passing of the Act.

33748. How is the Education Act administered in this island?—Fairly.

ARGYLL.

TREES.

33749. Any complaints about children not going to school?—There is a difficulty in getting them to go at certain times of the year.

Alexander Buchanan.

33750. Are there a sufficient number of schools in the island for all the children in the place?—There is.

33751. Good schools?—Yes, but there is one township complaining a little—at least there was a complaint—it was a Free Church school, and they wanted a board school, and there were some complaints, but the place was well enough supplied at the time, and we did not think it desirable to erect a board school in the meanwhile.

33752. We heard elsewhere that although children were perhaps taught more regularly now, and although a greater number got the elements of education, there were formerly better scholars; what have you to say to that in Tyree?—Tyree was well off as regards education before, because the Free Church sent students here regularly; and they sent good men. And we have been so far fortunate in getting some good teachers since the passing of the Act, and I do not see much change.

33753. Are you able still out of the island to send young men to college?—We are.

33754. And do they take a good place after they go?—Yes.

33755. Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.—Has there been much poverty or distress this last winter in the island?—No.

33756. Did the potato crop fail?—Yes.

33757. And notwithstanding that the people were able to find subsistence?—Yes, they were able. Their friends assisted them from the south, and their families did not come home this year as they used to do. Some of them come home that have been serving in the south as agricultural labourers, but last year they did not come, and so were able to send more home.

33758. Is it common, except when they are in good circumstances, to come home at the end of the year?—Yes, a number come in the winter time.

33759. And they remain away all winter when they are pushed?—Yes, a greater number remain now than when I came here first.

33760. Do you think those who get into the habit of remaining away all winter will absent themselves altogether when their parents die?—They will.

33761. And in that way there will be a natural decrease of the population?—There will.

33762. I observe in the report of Sir John M'Neill thirty years ago, it is stated by a number of people, including Independent and Established Church ministers I think, that 2000 would be a sufficient population for this island; is that your population?—It is at present 2700—I would say it would carry about 2400 or so. If there was a decrease of 300, it would be enough.

33763. Do you think all cottars should be removed, and that crofters should receive larger holdings?—Certainly not.

33764. Would you give the crofters larger holdings?—I would only increase the holdings of the crofters as one crofter died out—adding the one to the other.

33765. You would not break up the large farms?—I might where there was a very large farm.

33766. I think there are three tenants in the island who hold arable farms altogether, worth about £600 a piece?—Yes.

33767. Are these farms which you think might be judiciously reduced

ARGYLL.

TYREE.

Alexander
Buchanan.

in size?—Some of them. Others could not very well be given to crofters, such as Hynish.

33768. If the people are tolerably well to do—and they look so—have they much ground for complaint, do you think?—They have ground for complaint for want of a proper harbour and want of small harbours for fishing.

33769. That, you think, is really the principal practical grievance?—I think so.

33770. Are those small harbours to be easily made?—Not easily without a good deal of money, but they have never been tried.

33771. What do you call a good deal of outlay?—Say for a principal harbour it would cost £8000 or £9000 to make a pier.

33772. But you would require subsidiary small harbours?—Yes.

33773. And they would cost a good deal of money too?—They would.

33774. In fact, you contemplate an outlay of not less £10,000?—Not less than £16,000 or £17,000.

33775. Would that add very much to the prospects of the island?—Certainly it would to the fishing and cottar class; they would get larger boats, and prosecute the fishing to a larger extent and go further out.

33776. There would be no direct profit from these piers?—The principal harbour would pay good interest, I have no doubt, upon the produce that leaves the island.

33777. It would not pay 3 per cent. on an outlay of £7000 or £8000, would it?—It would pay 2 per cent.

33778. On £7000 or £8000?—I think so.

33779. *The Chairman.*—You mentioned that although there had not been many clearances or evictions, within your own recollection two farms had been cleared—did you mean two townships?—Two townships.

33780. How long is it since these were cleared?—Eighteen or nineteen years ago.

33781. Was that during the tenure of the present Duke?—Yes.

33782. Was there any particular reason for clearing those townships?—I suppose arrears of rent, that is the only reason I heard at the time.

33783. That there were long arrears of rent?—Yes.

33784. We have heard a great deal in the course of our inquiry, and very different opinions, upon the question whether the fishing industry can be best prosecuted by a separate class of people or by people associated with the crofting class. What is your opinion upon that question?—My opinion is that a fisherman could not prosecute his fishing successfully with a croft.

33785. Your opinion would be that if the fishing industry was established here upon a solid basis by the creation of convenient and safe harbours, then there might be a separation of the classes?—Yes, that is my opinion.

33786. But you don't think that there could be a separation of the classes until these improvements were carried out?—No.

33787. I do not wish to suggest that opinion to you—is that your own opinion?—It is my own opinion, but I believe that in a township where fishermen are, they would require a small outrun for a few grazing cows to give their families milk.

33788. You think every fisherman's family should have grazing for a cow?—Not every fisherman a cow, but that so many in a township should have cows, so that they would be able to get milk.

33789. You would have as many cows as families?—No, just a few, that there should be plenty of milk in the place for their children.

33790. What is your idea of a fair rent per acre for arable ground in this island?—Between 10s. and 12s.
33791. Do heads of families, apart from fishing, ever go to labour outside, or is it only the junior members?—Only the junior members.
33792. In your recollection, do you observe any decline in the physical condition of the people?—No decline.
33793. Is the quality of the food improving?—A few more of the luxuries have crept in among them. Their food has changed a good deal. Now they have tea and coffee twice a day, instead of porridge and milk.
33794. Is the use of baker's bread increasing?—Yes, it is.
33795. Is the bread baked in the island?—No.
33796. Where is it imported from?—Oban, Tobermory, Bunessan, Glasgow.
33797. Is the consumption of bread in that way increasing?—It is of late years.
33798. Is the consumption of wheaten flour for making wheaten scones increasing?—It is; it was only lately imported here.
33799. Do you consider that the substitution of wheaten flour for oats and barley is beneficial to the people, or is it indifferent?—My faith is in oats and barley as yet, because you cannot make wheaten bread into the forms that you can make oats and barley.
33800. Is there any disease in this island connected with poor dietary and bad lodgings?—No; no cases of the sort, so far as I have seen. I have only seen one case of scurvy within the last ten years.
33801. Any remains of cutaneous disorders?—Oh yes, a good many cutaneous disorders.
33802. Is that associated with a peculiarity in the food?—Not, so far as I know; only cases of infection, or local cases.
33803. Have you had any fever?—Not for a long time. The last fever was typhoid, seven or eight years ago—a little of it.
33804. When it occurred did you find it possible to isolate the cases? Yes.
33805. How did you do it; did you clear the house?—No, I said that no person must go near it.
33806. You did not place the individual cases in isolation?—No, we left them in their own houses, and when it was known that it was fever all the people kept away.
33807. But if it was typhoid it was not infectious?—Yes, it was infectious. I have found typhoid to be infectious.
33808. Have you had to treat typhus here at all?—No, not typhus.
33809. When the fever occurred did you find, on the part of the Parochial Board, every desire to afford people liberal assistance?—I did.
33810. Was any skilled nursing obtained for the people?—No.
33811. It was not necessary?—It was not necessary.
33812. You mentioned that the people in the last season had not returned as much as usual from the south; do you mean to say that individuals in families remained away at service for the specific purpose of assisting their parents?—I do.
33813. In consequence of the greater distress?—Because they heard there was a failure of the potato crop here, they did not want to come home and burden their parents.
33814. You said it might still be useful that there should be a slight decrease in the population of the island; if a decrease took place, and the ground vacated by the people was added to the larger farms, would it still be useful in that form—if when people emigrated the lands they

ARGYLL.

TYREE.

Alexander Buchanan.

ARGYLL.

TYREE.

Alexander
Buchanan.

occupied were added to the larger lands ?—No ; I would add them to the crofts.

33815. It would only be useful in the case of land vacated being specifically distributed amongst the crofters ?—That is what I mean. A crofter with forty or fifty acres is nearly as well off as a large farmer.

33816. Would you say, on a general review of the situation, that the management of the estate had been a liberal one, in reference, I mean, to a fair proportion of the rental having been spent in benevolent and useful work in the island ?—I would rather not answer that question.

33817. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—In Sir John M'Neill's report, which is now thirty years old, it was stated that the population, which was then 4000, might properly be reduced to 2000 ; but are you not aware that since that time the population has decreased very considerably ?—I am.

33818. Is it also not the fact that a great deal of the land of the remaining population has been consolidated and added to large farms ?—Not since I came here, twenty years ago.

33819. I am speaking of the date of Sir John M'Neill's report ?—Yes, it has been since that time, I think ; but I can only speak from 1860.

33820. So that what Sir John M'Neill pointed to, in the matter of population being reduced, was not at all consistent with adding farm to farm, was it ?—I do not understand quite.

33821. Was not the idea that must have been prevailing in the mind of Sir John M'Neill, or those whom he consulted, when suggesting that the population should be reduced, that the reduced population should have the full benefit of the island of Tyree ?—That would be the sense of it, I think ; that the island would support 2000.

33822. Would there be any use in reducing the population to 2000, or to the 2300 you suggest, unless the lands occupied by the population to be removed were to be given to the small people ?—Certainly not.

33823. Can you instance any case within your own recollection, or have you heard, of any lands being added to the crofter class ?—No, not that I am aware of.

33824. So then any pretence of saying that emigration is good for the country would be of no value unless it benefits those that remain behind ?—No, certainly not.

33825. Supposing, for instance, that farm was to be added to large farm in the island of Tyree as people went away, you might reduce the population to twenty people ?—You might.

33826. You state with regard to the food of the people that it has altered a good deal, and that, in place of the good old porridge and milk, tea and coffee have been introduced ?—Yes.

33827. Whose fault is it that that food has changed ?—It is no fault of the people, it is the good communication with the south—with the towns.

33828. In former times had not the most of the people land which was able to supply them with meal, and also cows to supply them with milk ?—Yes.

33829. And therefore they took their own produce ?—Yes.

33830. But then, when their lands were diminished and their cows taken away, where could they get the meal or milk ?—Supposing the lands were not there they gave the crop to the cows, and that got them tea and sugar and meal from the south.

33831. But don't you think the change is to be more attributed to the altered circumstances in which the people were placed by the deprivation of their lands than to any new-fangled idea of luxury ?—No, I place it all to the communication with the south.

33832. How is it then that people in a better position in life are very fond of taking porridge and milk?—Because times have changed. Gentlemen now have taken to porridge and milk, and the poorer classes have taken to tea and coffee.

33833. It is merely a whim of fashion you think?—I think so.

33834. You were asked a question just now about the state of the island generally, and whether large sums or any sums of money had been spent in benevolent and philanthropic objects; is there anything spent directly for the benefit of the poorer people?—Not much that I am aware of; there may be a few things.

33835. Who is the representative of the Duke of Argyle in the island?—Mr M'Diarmid.

33836. Does everything centre in one gentleman locally?—Yes.

33837. Is there any society of any kind in the island whereby the crofter and cottar class, by coming in contact with them, might have their social position improved, and their ideas and views elevated; is there any society in Tyree?—Not much.

33838. Are there any prizes offered for nice houses or gardens, or agricultural shows?—Yes, there are; the Duke gives in the summer for agricultural shows some £20 every year.

33839. That you can point to as one direct act?—Yes.

33840. Are you in favour of large properties with large populations, when the proprietor does not reside amongst his people?—No.

33841. How often has the Duke of Argyle been in Tyree?—Lately, I think, he has been here every August.

33842. Within the last four or five years, how long does he stay?—A day, or perhaps two days.

33843. Does he go about speaking to the people?—He does.

33844. Can you trace any benefit in the position of the people by his appearances here?—No, I see no change from his coming and going.

33845. What is the character of the people of Tyree generally; is it a place where crime is comparatively unknown?—Crime is unknown. The people are quiet and peaceable.

33846. Do you yourself find satisfaction in going out and in among them?—I do; I never get an uncivil word.

33847. About Coll; what population is there there now?—About 700 or 800.

33848. Are the people there in a comfortable condition?—As far as I know, they are; I hear no complaints.

33849. Are there any big farms upon it?—Yes, large farms, say about £500 rent. There is one farm of that extent, and others down from that to £45.

33850. Coll was the ancient heritage of a family named M'Lean?—Yes.

33851. It was then purchased by John Lorne Stewart, chamberlain for Argyle?—Yes.

33852. What did he do after he came to Coll?—Commenced to improve it.

33853. What did he do with a lot of the people?—Of course, these things were before I came here. I suppose some of them were removed, or removed themselves; I cannot say which.

33854. Did he not improve a great number of people off the face of Coll?—I am not aware of that.

33855. They were improved where?—They voluntarily left. By improvement I mean he built good houses and introduced dairy farming.

ARGYLL.

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TYREE.

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Alexander

Buchanan.

ARGYLL.

TYREE.

Alexander
Buchanan.

33856. Was it for the benefit of the people that he put them out, or his own convenience and comfort?—Both, I think; to make a little money and to bring Ayrshire farming perhaps into use there.

33857. And did the remaining people of Coll benefit by the dairy farm?—Do you mean the original people?

33858. Yes?—No, not a great many, because they did not take kindly to it at first; they preferred Highland cows.

33859. Where did Mr Lorne Stewart come from?—Campbelton.¹

33860. Was he a Perthshire man originally?—I believe so.

33861. Is it his son who has the place now?—Yes, and I hear no complaints.

33862. Is the population of Coll now much less than forty years ago?—It is.

33863. Do you know whether any notice was given to the people of Coll that the Commission was to sit here to-day?—I believe there was, but I don't know.

33864. What communication is there between Coll and Tobermory?—The same as there is here, by sailing ship and steamers once a week.

33865. When we came in to-day we came into a pretty creek where there is some appearance of a quay. It looks rather old. Can you give me any idea when it was built?—I don't know.

33866. Is it beyond the memory of man?—I don't know.

33867. Has anything been laid out upon it?—Oh, yes; it has been repaired by cement being put into the holes.

33868. Who did that?—The factor, I suppose.

33869. He did not put a new stone, do you think, into it?—There might have been, but it would be on the top.

33870. Do you know that the people have been petitioning about this matter of the harbour over and over again to the Duke of Argyle without effect?—I am not aware that they petitioned very often, but the place has been surveyed two or three times.

33871. Did they petition the House of Commons complaining that they had no proper harbour?—I am not aware of that.

33872. *Professor Mackinnon.*—You stated that there was no increase in the area over which the crofters' ground extended within your time, but I suppose there have been several instances of a croft being made larger?—Yes, individual crofts made larger.

33873. Then, with respect to Coll, I suppose there is no crofter, as we understand the term, upon the portion of Coll that constitutes Mr Stewart's estate?—There may be one or two, but that is all, under £30.

33874. All the crofters are still upon the east end portion with which you yourself are connected?—Yes.

33875. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Who is proprietor of that part of the island?—My wife is.

33876. What is the property called?—Cornaig.

33877. *Professor Mackinnon.*—How many crofters will there be on Cornaig under £30?—Twelve or fourteen.

33878. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—These are the old people?—These are people who were removed from Mr Stewart's ground.

33879. Did your family take them on?—My father-in-law did.

33880. What was his name?—Colin Campbell.

HUGH MACDIARMID, Sub-Factor to the Duke of Argyll, Tyree (38)
—examined.

ARGYLL
TYREE.
Hugh

33881. *Mr Cameron.*—Where do you belong to?—Perthshire.

33882. How long have you been resident here as sub-factor?—Seven Macdiarmid years.

33883. Who is the head factor?—Mr Wylie.

33884. You are the only factor here?—The Duke has no factor here, only a sub-factor.

33885. Do you represent the Duke here?—Yes.

33886. Who was your immediate predecessor?—Mr Geikie, who was chamberlain of Tyree.

33887. Then the dignity of the office was lowered at the time of your appointment, in succession to Mr Geikie?—Yes, it is more centred in Luveraray.

33888. Do you know the cause which determined the Duke to do that?—No.

33889. How long was Mr Geikie here as resident chamberlain?—Twelve years, I believe.

33890. Do you hold any land from the Duke?—Two farms.

33891. Did you take those farms when you first came to the island, or did you get them subsequently?—I took one of them six years ago, and another a year last Whitsunday.

33892. Who held the first farm which you took from the Duke?—A Mr Campbell.

33893. Did you take it as it was in his possession?—Exactly.

33894. And with regard to the second farm, who held that?—Messrs Sproat and Cameron, writers, Tobermory.

33895. Was that also held as you got it?—Exactly in the same way.

33896. Has anything been done in the way of consolidation of farms at the expense of smaller holders during your occupancy of the place you hold?—None whatever; an occasional crofter may have got two crofts instead of having one before.

33897. You say there were not many instances of that?—No.

33898. And where it occurred was it in consequence of a vacancy arising from natural causes in a croft, or from removal or eviction?—It was on account of natural causes in most of the cases, because the people emigrated.

33899. Has there been much emigration during the time you have been here?—Very little, perhaps fifty or sixty people.

33900. Do you know if the people who have emigrated have written to their friends at home since their departure?—Oh, yes.

33901. Have you happened to hear what reports they gave of their new position?—Most of them very favourable, and would not like to return.

33902. But has that encouraged other people to go abroad and join them?—No, very few have gone; I may say none at all.

33903. Do you find the tendency for people to go and seek their fortunes abroad more extensive than it was, or less so?—I cannot say; for the short time I have been here I cannot say I know any difference.

33904. In point of fact, the consolidation of farms which we have heard of this morning took place in your predecessor's time, and not in yours?—Yes, not my immediate predecessor.

33905. With regard to leases, have any of the smaller tenants got leases on this estate?—None.

33906. But larger tenants have?—Yes.

- ARGYLL. 33907. What is the limit below which leases are not granted?—About £100 is the lowest rent where there is any lease.
- TYREE. 33908. Have you heard any general wish expressed by the smaller tenants to obtain leases?—No.
- Hugh Macdiarmid. 33909. Is there much improvable land in the island?—No, very little.
33910. Most of it has been already reclaimed?—Yes.
33911. Is any reclamation going on at present?—No.
33912. With regard to piers, I believe representations have been made to the Duke from the people that if piers could be erected it would be a great advantage to them, and we have also heard evidence to-day to the same effect; do you know if any estimate has ever been made by the Duke as to the cost of erecting a suitable pier?—Oh, yes, he has got two estimates made very recently—one last year and the other the year before.
33913. By engineers?—Yes, from eminent engineers.
33914. What was the outcome of these—what report did they submit to the Duke?—They would not guarantee that the pier would stand.
33915. Were they not left free to select the place where they thought it would be best?—Yes.
33916. And to submit designs of a suitable, substantial pier?—Yes, and these were submitted to the Duke.
33917. And do you say that the engineers submitted designs of a pier with the remark that it would not stand?—They were afraid it would not stand, it is so very stormy.
33918. And was there an estimate submitted at the same time of the cost?—Yes.
33919. Do you know what it came to?—No.
33920. You are not able to give any opinion upon that?—No.
33921. Have there been any raisings of rent of late years—since your occupancy of the place you now hold?—There might be an isolated case, but no general raising of rent.
33922. No general revaluation or raising of rent?—Not at all.
33923. Are the prices of stock to any extent higher than seven years ago?—Yes, the price of stock has been very high this year.
33924. But I mean not this year only, but has the price of stock been gradually rising?—No, I think not. This year and the end of last year was exceptional; three or four years ago it was exceptional.
33925. Is much stock exported by tenants?—Yes.
33926. What do they export besides live stock?—I cannot say there is much of anything except live stock.
33927. How many times in the week do steamers come?—Once a week. There are three steamers, and they call once a week; they all call on the same day.
33928. You have three steamers all through the year, once a week each way?—Yes.
33929. Have there been any remissions of rent in consequence of distress or other causes of late years?—No.
33930. Was there any remission of rent or reduction of rent last year in consequence of distress?—No.
33931. Was there any great distress last year?—Not very.
33932. From the failure of the crops?—No very great distress.
33933. As far as you have heard, was it equal to what it was in other parts of the West Highlands?—I don't think so.
33934. They were assisted by seed potatoes to a certain extent?—Yes, to a certain extent.
33935. Was the cost of these potatoes repaid, or is it expected it will be repaid?—It is not repaid yet.

33936. Is it expected to be repaid?—In some cases.

33937. Cases where the people are sufficiently well off to do so?
—Yes.

33938. We heard something in the course of the evidence about sea-ware. Can you tell us what the regulations of the estate are in regard to the people getting sea-ware?—The complaint was about that farm I got last Whitsunday. It seems the tenants of Balamartin always give a certain amount of labour for getting sea-ware off this farm, and the same thing was attached to it when I got it. I did not make any new rules to them.

33939. When you got the farm you found that these tenants were bound to give so many days' labour on the farm?—Yes.

33940. And in return for the labour they were allowed to take away sea-ware, was that it?—Yes.

33941. What is the position of affairs now?—It is still the same.

33942. That they give the labour and take away sea-ware in return?—
Yes.

33943. Was that included in the rent which you give for the farm?—Not at all, it was always understood between the tenant of that farm and those smaller tenants.

33944. But I mean is it included in the bargain which you made at the time you entered into the farm?—That is a bargain with the proprietor.

33945. It was one of the advantages you got when you took the farm?—No, I did not discover it until after I took the farm.

33946. Then you discovered yourself to be in a better position than when you took the farm?—I suppose I did.

33947. How many days' labour are these people supposed to give?—Two or three days in the year, and they have to put up fifteen carts of sea-ware off the shore.

33948. For you?—Yes.

33949. How many days' labour would that take?—About two days.

33950. How far have they to carry the sea-ware?—In some instances about perhaps 500 or 600 yards, and in other places longer than that.

33951. Have they ever complained to you at all about that or objected to it?—We talked about it.

33952. Did it ever occur to you to suggest to the Duke that it would be very much to the comfort and contentment of the people if an alteration in the terms of the lease was made by which this could be done away with?—No. I may state that I find the arrangement very troublesome, and if they can do without the wrack I will do without their work. I have often sent my carts there and could not get a pound of wrack on the shore.

33953. They give their labour in exchange for the right of taking the sea-ware?—Yes.

33954. Can no arrangements be made by which a limited portion of the coast should be set apart for them to take sea-ware, reserving to your farm what would be required for its proper manuring?—That would be a very difficult arrangement to make, because the sea-ware all comes in a sort of common, and it would be difficult to arrange to give them a share of it—in fact, almost impossible.

33955. Can you tell us anything about the kelp manufacture?—The kelp manager is here himself, and perhaps might give you some evidence.

33956. Have you any observation to make upon the evidence which you have heard given—did you take any notes?—Yes, but I wish to go to Bunessan, where Mr Wylie will be; I have been taking notes for him.

33957. Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.—I don't know what your position

ARGYLL

TYREE

Hugh

Macdiarmid

ARGYLL. exactly is here; is your advice accepted in the letting of farms?—No, I don't let farms at all.

TYREE. — 33958. What are your duties as sub-factor?—Just doing any work through the estate and collecting the rents once a year.

Hugh Macdiarmid. 33959. And you superintend any expenditure?—Yes.

33960. Do you not give any advice if a farm falls vacant?—I am quite admitted to do that if the Duke or chamberlain asks me.

33961. Mr Wylie takes his information from you?—To a certain extent.

33962. Do you know what the policy of the estate is when small crofts fall vacant; is it the policy of the estate to join them together; and when large farms fall vacant is it the policy to enlarge them or to restrict their size? Is there any desire to alter the present character of the holding, or is the desire to retain the present character of the holding?—The character of the holding is retained very much.

33963. There is no wish to enlarge a croft?—In some cases they have been enlarged, and in some cases they have been reduced.

33964. What do you consider a suitable size of croft on which a man can make a living and pay his rent fairly?—It is a difficult question to answer; I would rather not answer it.

33965. With regard to the character of the cultivation here; you yourself are a considerable farmer; is yours principally a grazing or an arable farm?—It is a grazing farm now, but it was arable, a good deal of it, at one time.

33966. You are not an arable farmer?—No.

33967. You are not competent to give an answer as to cultivation?—I am not an arable farmer here.

33968. Have you been so elsewhere?—Yes.

33969. Do you think the cultivation here is as good as it might be amongst the crofters?—I think they are very fair farmers here.

33970. I saw the lands here were sown with old grey oats and rye, and that the crops were thin and light; do you think nothing better can be made of the soil than is produced?—You say you have seen old grey oats and rye; I don't think anything else would grow here in the land you have seen that in, except barley.

33971. The soil is very inferior—or is it the climate?—The soil is very light; there is something in the nature of it that won't grow large oats.

33972. But it is also very thin in the stalk?—That must arise from the soil, I think.

33973. Not from too thin sowing or want of manuring?—It might arise from all these; it depends very much on the farmer.

33974. But generally you think the soil is well farmed?—Yes, I think the people here are good farmers on the whole.

33975. I am astonished to find that a twelve acre crofter keeps two horses; to my mind that would be the ruin of any man who adopted it?—They all keep two horses here as a rule.

33976. Do you think that consistent with good farming?—They seem to make some money out of their horses. They keep them as a source of revenue.

33977. As breeding stock?—Yes.

33978. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Do you think there has been no rise of rents for the last thirty years?—There has been no general rise that I am aware of. There may have been before my time; I could not speak to that.

33979. Can you say what the present rental is?—About £5400.

33980. I find it stated in a return given in Sir John M'Neill's report in 1851 that the rental was £2636?—I could not say as to that.

ARGYLL

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TYREE—
Hugh

Macdiarmid

33981. That looks as if it had been doubled in that time?—So it seems.

33982. Do you know whether the increase was on the bigger farms or the same all over?—I think the most of the increase was on the larger farms decidedly.

33983. What is the highest rent paid in the island for one farm?—Between £400 and £500.

33984. How many are there paying a rent above £100?—I believe from ten to a dozen or so.

33985. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Is it the rule all over the Duke's estate that nobody gets a lease paying rent under £100?—I am not aware whether that rule exists.

33986. You stated it did apply to Tyree?—They have never been asked for.

33987. It would appear from the questions which have been put to you that the rental has been doubled within the last thirty years; are you able to specify any improvements that have been done upon the estate during those thirty years?—No; I have been here such a short time I cannot speak to that.

33988. Was your predecessor styled chamberlain of Tyree?—Yes.

33989. Why did he get that appellation—is there anything in the titles to justify that?—I don't know; I only know the fact.

33990. Were you brought up as a factor?—No, as a farmer.

33991. Did you come here more as a farmer than as a representative of the estate?—Well, I am very fond of farming.

33992. But was it offered as an inducement to you to take the farm?—Not at all.

33993. But which occurred first; did you take the farm first or were you appointed to the office?—I was appointed to the office first. That was a year before I had a farm.

33994. You say you have changed the first farm you got from an arable farm to a grazing farm, can you tell me how many acres of that farm have run out?—I don't think I stated that; it was once cultivated, but not by me.

33995. How much upon that first farm?—Very little of that has been cultivated.

33996. Is the second one cultivated?—No.

33997. How many acres are there upon it?—Eight hundred acres altogether.

33998. How much cultivated?—I really never thought of that; I could not say.

33999. Have you not got an estate plan?—Yes, but I have never made up the acres of that. I have the Ordnance Survey maps, but I never made up the acres of arable land, because it is all under grazing now.

34000. Have you any such rule in Tyree, which I understand prevails in some other places, that when a husband dies leaving a widow without a son twenty-one years of age, the widow must remove?—No, not at all; there are a great many widows here who have crofts.

34001. Would you approve of such a rule?—No, I don't think so.

34002. Do you think there are too many people in Tyree yet?—I don't know; I would not like to answer that question.

34003. But with regard to their circumstances, within the last seven years, are they better off now than then, or more contented?—I cannot say that I see much difference.

34004. Can you explain why it is there is such a large audience here to-day?—I suppose it is greatly out of curiosity.

34005. You won't attribute it to a deeper ground?—They will have

ARGYLL. an interest in the Commission coming here ; it is very natural that they should come and see what is going on.

TYREE. —
Hugh Macdiarmid. 34006. Do you think they have any grievances ?—I would not like to answer that question. I have found them always very nice people.

34007. You can give them a good character ?—Yes, I can.

34008. There is no public house, I understand, upon the island ?—No.

34009. Is that not considered a grievance ?—I think it is a very good thing there is not.

34010. What do people say about it ?—I have never heard them complain.

34011. How long is it since it has been done away with ?—I could not say.

34012. Was it before your time ?—Oh, yes, some time before.

34013. What does a person do who is ill, and who may be recommended to have something of the nature of stimulant ?—I suppose they may get it from a neighbour.

34014. But where will the neighbour get it ?—Well, there are ways and means always—by having it in the house, they will get it from the steamers.

34015. There is no licence in the place ?—No.

34016. There was a licence—probably more than one—at one time ?—I suppose there was one at one time.

34017. Was the licence taken away on the *ipse dixit* of the Duke or at the wish of the people ?—I don't know. It was before my time, and I never inquired.

34018. Supposing this were done, not by request of the people but by the wish of the Duke himself, would it not indicate that a person taking that step was one exercising a close interest in the people ?—I believe it was for their good the Duke did it ; there is no doubt about that, because I believe he would get a large rent for a public house there.

34019. That is one instance of the interest he takes in the people ?—There is no doubt it was done for their good.

34020. Can you mention any other overt act showing his interest in the people of Tyree ?—I know he always takes an interest in them, and would like them to be well off.

34021. That is a generality ; can you point to anything more specific ? I cannot say.

34022. You heard what the previous witness stated, that the Duke came and went without its apparently doing any perceptible good ?—He comes and stays for a day or two, and he sends clothes and books to be distributed amongst the people.

34023. Books for prizes ?—Yes.

34024. And clothes for the poor ?—Yes.

34025. Are these distributed by you ?—By my wife.

34026. You state that the people last year were not at all so ill off ; how was it necessary to apply for seed ?—I suppose they must have been worse off last year than other years.

34027. Did they apply for public charity ?—Yes, I applied myself for some for the people here.

34028. Does that not denote there was a little more than usual distress ?—I admit there was that.

34029. But you consider that was exceptional rather ?—No doubt about it.

34030. Were you troubled here with the great storms that went over the

west coast?—Oh, yes; no doubt of it, and they did a good deal of damage.

34031. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Is there no house on the island for the accommodation of strangers?—Oh, yes, there is a temperance hotel.

34032. *The Chairman.*—You mentioned you were a tenant of two farms?—Yes.

34033. Were those farms, or either of them, in the hands of a resident tenant before or an absentee tenant?—One of them was in the hands of a resident tenant and one of them in the hands of an absentee.

34034. So that, as far as resident tenure is concerned, they are just where they were?—Just where they were.

34035. In reference to the farms of above £100 of annual rental in the island, are there any of the farmers or tenants non-resident, or are they all resident?—They are all resident on the island.

34036. All the tenants of those farms?—Yes.

34037. In no case are two farms held by the same person excepting your own?—Oh, yes.

34038. Then there is one other case?—Two other cases besides myself.

34039. Then there are as it were two farms on which there is no tenant in that sense?—Three farms on which there is no separate tenant.

34040. But there is no farm held by an absentee tenant?—None.

34041. There was a statement made by, I think, the first delegate about a road from Balphuil to the shore upon which the crofters were said to labour although the benefit of the road was not exclusively theirs, can you explain that?—The benefit of the road is entirely theirs more or less; the benefit is theirs except a small piece at the end of it.

34042. This is a township road existing for the particular benefit of these people?—Yes, it is meant for the township.

34043. A delegate made a statement which rather surprised me, that the occupiers in the township were required to work for an average of twenty days in the year, and in each case with a cart and horse, for the repair of the road?—They have always been keeping up that road themselves, but how long or what time they take to work upon it I don't know. I have never heard that statement before.

34044. Does it appear to you that twenty days' labour in the year is unlikely?—I know they spend a good deal of labour on it; there is a good deal of labouring in keeping that road.

34045. But it is indispensable to their welfare?—It is.

34046. The proprietor contributes nothing to keep that road in order?—Not until this year; but he has offered to do it this year.

34047. Why did the proprietor particularly offer to do it this year; was it to afford work in distress?—Not at all, but they represented to me it was a hardship, and I spoke to the chamberlain, and the Duke said he was willing to assist to keep it up.

34048. One of the delegates exhibited a plan from which it appeared that the kelp company, or sea-weed company, was in the possession of five crofts; what is the reason that those crofts are in the occupancy of the company?—The company farm some land to keep their horses in food.

34049. Would the company not find it possible to purchase their food?—I suppose they would find it cheaper to work their own land. They do a great deal of good to the island.

34050. We heard it stated that the company did not pay wages, or very little, in money, but pay their wages in goods; what is the reason of that?—I cannot say.

34051. Is it the fact?—The manager of the company is here, and he may say; I don't know much about their business at all.

ARGYLL.

TYREE.

Hugh Macdiarmid.

ARGYLL. 34052. Have you ever heard it stated in public or in the island that the people did not receive money wages?—I heard that that was the case. In some instances I have heard where they have got money.

TYREE. Hugh Macdiarmid. 34053. But have you heard it stated that the general system of traffic with the company is the truck system, or the payment of wages in goods? —That is spoken of by the people.

34054. Has that ever been a subject discussed between the proprietor or the chamberlain and yourself?—No, never.

34055. Do you know whether the chamberlain is aware of it?—I could not say whether he is or not.

34056. What is the nature of the commodities in which the company deals?—Just a regular store or shop.

34057. Do they purchase as well as sell?—No, I am not aware that they purchase anything.

34058. They merely sell goods?—Yes.

34059. We learn that the proprietor was in the habit of offering prizes for an agricultural show?—Yes, there is an agricultural show held here every year.

34060. What is the nature of the competition, for sheep and cattle?—Cattle and horses and butter.

34061. Cheese?—No, just an ordinary agricultural show.

34062. Poultry?—No.

34063. Has the proprietor taken a particular interest in the improvement of the breed of cattle?—Yes.

34064. Is there a bull kept here?—A large number of them.

34065. Afforded by the proprietor?—No, the people pay for the bulls themselves.

34066. But perhaps the movement in favour of good breeding may have originated with the proprietor; was there ever a proprietor's bull kept here?—Yes.

34067. What is the cross introduced into the country now?—Highland cattle.

34068. You adhere to the pure Highland cattle?—Yes, there are one or two dairy farms, but principally Highland cattle.

34069. You have no shorthorn crosses?—Yes, on some of the larger farms.

34070. Are the crofters taking to that at all?—No.

34071. What is the sheep used generally on the island?—Blackfaced sheep and Leicester rams.

34072. You said that during the scarcity of last year you had applied for public charity on behalf of the people; did you receive any?—Yes.

34073. In what form?—Meal and money.

34074. From what source was it?—Glasgow.

34075. Not from the Lord Mayor's fund?—We got a little from the Lord Mayor's fund about a week ago.

34076. Speaking of public works in the island and useful works, you stated that you were not able at that moment to mention any particular work which had been carried on since your arrival; but with reference to the roads which intersect the island, were they originally made by the proprietor or his predecessors?—I suppose they were made by the proprietor, and they are kept up by the road trustees.

34077. Which means the proprietor?—Yes.

34078. Were the roads originally the landlord's work?—I could not say.

34079. We have not seen very much of the island, but on landing I was rather struck by the want of fencing in the landscape; is there in

other parts of the island much substantial stone fencing?—There is a good deal of fencing in the island, but it is principally wire.

ARGYLL

TYREEHugh

Macdiarmid

34080. Is there fencing actually between the different crofts or only the boundary of the whole township?—It is the boundary of the township as yet.

34081. Are the grazing lands of the crofters now almost all divided from the sheep farmer's lands by fences?—Yes, the whole of them, I think.

34082. Is there any substantial stone fencing about the larger farm houses?—There is not much stone fencing.

34083. Is there any facility for stone fencing?—Plenty rocks, if you blast them.

34084. But you don't find stones in the soil?—No.

34085. Do you think stone fencing superior to wire?—I think so.

34086. Much more?—Yes.

34087. The place is not advantageous for it?—No.

34088. We have been told there has been little peat left; can you form any conception or estimate of what the cost of fuel, either peat or coal, to the family of a Tyree crofter would be in the year?—I could not form an estimate, but I know it must be a considerable item in their expense; but I could not form an estimate.

34089. Do they import any peat, or is it all coal?—All coal.

34090. £6 was mentioned by one or two witnesses as the probable cost of fuel?—I think that is a high enough estimate for a small crofter.

34091. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Are you acquainted with a crofting community elsewhere?—Yes.

34092. Where?—Perthshire.

34093. Much the same class of people?—Yes, on Sir Donald Currie's estate.

34094. You were in Mull before you came to Tyree?—Yes, as ground officer.

34095. As compared with the estate in Mull, would you consider the crofters here better off?—I would say they are.

34096. With regard to those that asked or that got the seed last year, were they the smaller crofters or the bigger crofters?—Principally the smaller crofters.

34097. With respect to those for whom you asked outside aid, charity, were they chiefly of the crofter or cottar class?—Entirely of the cottar class.

34098. So that, even in a very bad year like last year, a good substantial crofter can weather the storm with comfort?—A good substantial crofter would.

34099. And there are a considerable number of them in this island?—I hope so.

LACHLAN M'PHAIL, Farmer, Kilmoluag (50)—examined.

34100. *The Chairman.*—How long have you been tenant in your present farm?—Twenty years.

Lachlan
M'Phail

34101. During that period has it always been the same size?—Yes, an adjacent croft was added to it since that time.

34102. How large is it now?—I cannot very well tell you the exact extent of arable ground. There was a good deal of arable ground once, but the sand drifted and I gave up cultivating it, and I have it mostly under pasture now.

ARGYLL.

TYREE.

Lachlan
M'Phail.

34103. Have you got hill pasture?—All the grazing is enclosed—the whole land is enclosed, grazing and all. There was a strip that used to be common pasture to the remaining crofters in the township, but it was a cause of difference between us, and it was valued and added to the rest and fenced in.

34104. Was your father or any member of your family a tenant there before?—No, myself and my brother had it at the beginning.

34105. Was the croft which was added to the farm of great use to the farm?—No, it was not of much use to the farm or to me, and I did not ask it. But the marches suited to put them together.

34106. What became of the previous tenant of the croft?—The tenant of it is still upon the croft. He had to give it up, for he had no stock and fell back. He gave it up of his own accord.

34107. Have you got a lease?—No.

34108. What is your rent?—£49, 3s. 6d.

34109. Has the rent been the same during the whole period of your occupancy?—Yes, the same.

34110. Do you find farming more profitable at present prices than when you began?—No, not so far as the arable cultivation is concerned, because we are subject to the drifting of sand on the place; but the grazing stock is more profitable now.

34111. A tenant was asked by Sir Kenneth Mackenzie what he thought the proper rent for a cow was, and he answered from 25s. to 30s. I want to know whether the cottars or the poor ever ask the farmers here for the grazing of a cow for the summer or during the whole year?—It is quite a common practice.

34112. How much do the cottars, where they graze a cow on a farm, pay for the grazing?—The practice is to give the grazing for the six months of summer and autumn. It is not the practice to charge for winter grazing. And the price depends exactly on the condition of the outrun for the time being, whether the tenants keep a greater or less amount of stock upon it. Sometimes it is down to 7s., as this year, and sometimes it is as high as 16s. There is not, so far as I am aware, a single crofter in Tyree who would give pasture for a cow within what we call the ring fence, within the arable portion; he might allow it to graze upon the outrun, but not to pasture within the croft.

34113. Then the price upon the outrun would run up to 17s. for six months?—Seven shillings to 16s. for as much as a cow would pick up. It has sometimes been down to 5s.

34114. How does a cottar sustain his cow during the other six months of the year?—On the goodwill of his neighbours.

34115. Does he pay for the goodwill?—I am not aware. The cow is allowed to feed as it may; as much as it can gather outside without any charge, but any hand feeding is paid for.

34116. Do you know how much a cottar would usually pay for winter fodder?—It is very difficult to say what the outlay of a cottar is; a cow would require, to be well fed, £4; but no cottar lays out that amount.

34117. Do you think he would lay out £3 for winter food?—I really cannot tell; there is many a one I know who feeds a cow has not £3 to spare; how he does it I don't know.

34118. Would it be any advantage to you to have a lease; or are you quite satisfied as you are?—No, I am not dissatisfied. I have no fear that I will be dispossessed as long as I pay my rent.

34119. Were your houses and offices built by the proprietor or by yourself, or by both together?—The houses were built before I went there;

but I believe they were built by the tenant, and that the proprietor had nothing to do with them.

ARGYLL

34120. Did you pay the previous tenant anything for them?—Nothing.

TYREE

34121. Then if you went away you would not expect to get any compensation?—I really cannot say what may happen in the future, but that has been the practice of the place.

Lachlan
M'Phail

34122. There are no regulations on the estate for compensation for buildings?—I am not aware that there has been for small holdings like ours.

34123. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Had your father a holding?—Yes.

34124. What was his rent?—£5. He lived in a different township.

34125. Do you remember any of your neighbours in this island at the time of the potato disease that had a large croft?—No, I don't remember any that had a very large holding; an ordinary croft.

34126. You remember perfectly well the time that has been spoken of to-day when the people were removed and went away to America?—Yes.

34127. Was it entirely of their own free will that those people went away?—So far as I know, many of them went away of their own free will.

34128. Did the whole of them go of their own free will?—I am not aware.

34129. Are you aware that many of those who emigrated were in arrear of rent when they went away?—I believe some of them were in arrear. I know others went away and sold the croft. The phrase 'selling the croft' means of course selling the crops and the stock and the houses; but there is also something of the nature of goodwill that perhaps is rather difficult to explain—a sense of possession that grew. One would give more for the crops because he was to enter into possession of the land.

34130. You heard the things that were said to have been done under the management of the former factor?—Yes, I heard, and I saw the men.

34131. Are you aware that there was great dissatisfaction with the management among the people?—Yes, I know that there was great dissatisfaction, but whether the cause of that might be justified of course would be another matter. The people spoke of great dissatisfaction. I had no land at the time; I was young and without care, and did not take much heed of the matter.

34132. Were you aware of many people that were able to come well out of the distress following the potato disease in Tyree?—Yes.

34133. And are there some of those in the place yet?—Yes.

34134. And have they bigger holdings now than they had then?—There are plenty of their descendants still in the place.

34135. There have been a good number of large farms made since that time?—They were made about that time.

34136. And do you think the people would have been better off if they had got the lands of the crofters who went away instead of these lands being turned into big farms?—I know that some of them would be very glad to have them anyhow, and would be able to take them. Others would not have been able to take them.

34137. Those who pay rent from £30 upwards like yourself, are they not in a better position than those who have the small crofts?—They are in a much better position.

34138. In a bad year like last year those people did not require assistance?—Well, they are all present here, those who asked assistance last year. Each man can answer for himself in that respect, but I neither required nor asked for assistance.

34139. Between those who have land and those who have not, are

ARGYLL.

TYREE.

Lachlan

M'Phail.

those who have no land much poorer than those who have?—Some of those who have no land are quite as well off as some of those who have. Some of them in the cottar class, with a trade or the like of that, are better off than the poorer of the crofter class.

34140. But take them class for class?—Any person can understand which class is best off; of course it is the crofter class.

34141. And the bigger the croft the better he is off?—The small crofter invariably says so.

34142. But does the big crofter say the opposite?—Well, he would get the opportunity of having his choice pretty often if he did say it. It could be turned to a small croft any day if he pleased.

DONALD CAMPBELL, Crofter, Kilmaluag (36,) assisted by DONALD MACLEAN, Cottar, Kilmaluag (65)—examined.

Donald Campbell
and Donald Maclean.

34143. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Have you papers to submit to the Commission?—Yes.—*Ballvulin and Kilmaluag.* Our complaints, which we consider grievous, are, that a part of the “common,” for all which we still pay, was taken from the township some fifty years ago; thirty-five years ago another part was taken off our common, and we still pay for that part also. When John Campbell, Esq., was factor on the estate, our rents were raised at three different times, so that they were nearly doubled. Previous to the raising of our rents, we had to come bound to him by compulsorily signing a paper that we would be obedient and submissive to any orders from him in all time coming. We signed this paper at the threat of instant eviction. The third rise in the rents was made for drainage. We have to pay for the sea-ware we use as manure, either in money or take twenty carts to the land of the farmer on whose shore the sea-ware is got. This is equal to five or six days' work. We have also to complain that when our growing grass is in need of the greatest care, the manager of the Sea-weed Company sends his horses and carts through our grounds, and states that he has authority to do so. The above complaints apply to both townships.—*Kilmaluag.* The whole township of Kilmaluag had to sign a paper to the then factor, Mr Geikie, to give to a neighbouring farmer out of their common as much land as he chose to take from us, which, if they (the crofters) did not consent to do, he threatened he would send every mother's son of them out of the island.—DONALD CAMPBELL, delegate.—‘To the Honourable the Royal Commissioners appointed to inquire into the State of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland. We, the cottars of Ballvulin and Kilmaluag, want to let you know the poor condition we are in through a great many causes (too numerous to mention), some of which we will try to state here. We have got houses built on the crofters' common, and the landlord wants us to pay rent for the sites, although the crofters are paying for it already. We cannot prosecute the fishing with safety for the want of harbours for the safety of our boats. We had a sort of a quay at Kilmaluag, but the big tide that was two or three years ago tore it down, and it has never been mended yet. We are making kelp, and are paid at the rate of £4 per ton of 2520 lbs. with goods, which are charged for more than in any shop or store in the island. There are sixty cottars between Ballvulin and Kilmaluag, and we are troubling the crofters very much getting ground to plant potatoes in, as their holdings are so small (a thing that is out of the question to get from the tacksmen); also getting horses and carts for a great many things we need them for.

' Some of us had crofts, but they were taken from us without any known reason but to please the factor that was here at the time. What we most want is a bit of land to plant potatoes in and grazing for a cow or two, and harbours for our fishing boats.—DONALD MACLEAN, delegate.'

34144. (*To Campbell*).—Who got the common land that was taken from Ballvuilin?—A neighbour of ours.

34145. Has he got it yet?—Yes.

34146. What is his name?—A man named John Cameron has it just now, and another piece of it is occupied by Donald Kennedy.

34147. Had your father a croft?—Yes, my father is still in a croft.

34148. Do you know the rent your father was paying when he was a young man?—£6.

34149. What is he paying now?—£12.

34150. Was there anything done for him by the proprietor in the way of helping him to build his house or fences or drainage?—I am not aware of any.

34151. Who is the farmer upon whose shore the sea-ware is got?—Mr M'Diarmid.

34152. About the grass, the manager of the Sea-weed Company sends his horses and carts there; is there any way for this manager to send them except this pasture?—The complaint is that they spread their sea-ware upon the grass in order to dry it—upon our pasture ground.

34153. What rent does the manure company pay to you for taking your land in this way?—Nothing.

34154. How long is it since they began to do this?—Ever since they came, some fifteen years ago.

34155. The paper states that the manager says he has authority to do so, but did you never make a complaint to the factor or ground officer?—I am not aware that we did.

34156. It would appear to be wise for you to do so?—It would appear so.

34157. About Kilmoluag, you state you had to sign a paper to the chief factor, Mr Geikie, whatever he chose out of the farm; did the neighbouring farm get anything out of your farm?—Yes.

34158. How much?—We got a bad bit in exchange for it.

34159. What was done at that time prejudiced the town?—Yes, it is a loss to the township to the present day.

34160. Who is the person that has this place?—Lachlan M'Phail.

34161. What would you consider a fair rent to pay for your place?—I don't think it is worth more than £6.

34162. What your father was paying first?—Yes; it is worth less to-day than when my father got it; the sand has drifted upon it.

34163. Are you a fisherman?—I sometimes fish about three months, and work on land the rest of the time.

34164. Is it necessary for you to engage at fishing here to keep your family alive?—Yes, and we must buy our potatoes from elsewhere as well, and earn our wages elsewhere also. That is the way we now live.

34165. How many people are now living in Ballvuilin?—Seventeen have land; thirty or thirty-two are without land.

34166. At Kilmoluag how many have you?—Nineteen.

34167. And how many cottars?—About thirty.

34168. Are the cottars a great burden upon you?—Yes.

34169. Do you pay poor rates?—Yes.

34170. Are these cottars in whole or in part people who have been sent into these two towns from other places?—Yes; there were some of them sent consequent upon the clearing of Hylipool; some also were sent from

ARGYLL.

TYREE.

Donald Campbell and Donald Maclean.

ARGYLL. another town which was partially cleared, Baugh, but the great majority of them belong to the place.

TYREE.

Donald Campbell and Donald Maclean. 34171. (*To Maclean*).—You state that there are sixty cottars between Ballvulin and Kilmoluag; where could you point out any land that could be given to you?—Wherever they would wish to send us.

34172. You are willing to go to any place in Tyree that is convenient?—Yes, anywhere where we might assist ourselves in any way.

34173. Would some of you be able to take small places yourselves and build your own houses without, or would you all need to get some assistance to move?—There are some of them that would be able, they would be willing to make a home in these new places. There are some of them that are exhausted building houses—shifting about here and there, and building houses wherever they go.

34174. Are there enough of them in the position of being able to build houses for themselves and stock the new lands—are they in sufficient numbers that would much relieve Ballvulin and Kilmoluag if they went? Yes, certainly there are.

34175. Would not the crofters of Ballvulin be very likely willing to help you to move?—I don't know that they would assist us very much.

34176. But would not it be a great relief to get rid of you—would not it be worth their while?—Yes, if they had the good intention.

34177. Considering the overcrowded position you are in, do the crofters and cottars live very agreeably together?—Sometimes; there are exceptions.

34178. Had you ever land?—Yes, I had it, and I lost it when Mr Geikie entered on the management of the property; before he raised the rents. I have a special complaint amongst these papers.

34179. Had your father a croft before you?—Yes, they always had—my fathers.

34180. Was your father able to bring up his family respectably?—Yes.

34181. You are working at kelp?—I do not personally do very much but there are plenty of people working at it in the place.

34182. Do they ever get money for what they do?—No, they do not get money, and those of them who have been asking money for the last year or so only get £2 per ton in money; they would get at the rate of £4 if they took goods.

34183. But although the goods were stated to be worth £4, perhaps the goods were not worth more than £2 in another shop?—Perhaps not even £2.

34184. I suppose the people do not like to be treated in that way?—No, they do not; they are badly treated in many a way. They very often have to get up about midnight and go away down and pick up tangle out of the surf when the sea is washing over them, and take it up out of the reach of the tide on their backs over rough ground, and all they get is 4d. per cubic yard of root of tangle.

34185. What is sold in the shop—nothing except provisions?—Yes, clothes also.

34186. Anything else?—Tea, tobacco, meal; and all sorts of luxuries.

34187. Are there other places where people can purchase goods in Tyree?—Yes.

34188. And I suppose you and the other people would like to get money for what you earn and spend it where you chose?—Certainly it would be better for them.

34188*. You would not object to go to Glasgow and make your purchases if you liked?—Anywhere.

NEIL M'NEIL, Crofter, Vaul (50)—examined.

34189. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Have you any paper?—I have:—‘To the Royal Commissioners for the Highlands and Islands of Scotland. The township of Vaul consists of twelve crofters and fourteen cottars. I represent the township. Our grievances are—(1) That a former factor made us sign a document that we would be obedient to his laws; the result was that he nearly doubled our rents within the last thirty-eight years, partly for drainage and twice for reasons unknown to us. (2) That, owing to the inferiority of the soil through incessant tillage, we have to buy all our meal from Glasgow. Our sons and daughters gather our rent through the world. (3) Scarcity of fuel and wool, for we have no sheep. (4) That the cottars are a great burden to us. By order of the Crofters of Vaul. NEIL M'NEIL.’—I have been requested to hand in the following papers also:—For John M'Kinnon, Kirkapool; Hugh M'Dougall, Vaul; and Lachlan M'Kinnon, Vaul. ‘To the Royal Commissioners for the Highlands and Islands of Scotland. *Statement of John M'Kinnon.*—I was formerly a crofter in Kirkapool. My grievances are—(1) That the land was taken from me while my rent was paid. I was gathering the rent the best way I could, at all sorts of fishing; and as soon as my father and mother died the land was taken from me, and no recompense. I may state that my father and grandfather were crofters on the same land before me; (2) that I have a large family, some of them young, others unable to do anything for, themselves; (3) that I mostly live by fishing. I have no boat nor nets of my own.—JOHN M'KINNON, Kirkapool.’—‘*The Statement of Hugh M'Dougall, Cottar and Fisherman, Vaul, Tyree.*—Sheweth, That our house was damaged by the November tide of 1881, and I sought liberty from the factor to build another house at my own expenses, above high-water mark, and that was not granted us. I having no other occupation but the fishing. What I desire is that we shall be allowed to build another house, where our lives shall not be in peril. Trusting that your Lordships will give our case due consideration, and as in duty bound, I shall ever pray. HUGH M'DOUGALL.’—‘To the Honourable the Crofters’ Commissioners at present sitting in the Island of Tyree. *Statement by Lachlan M'Kinnon,* residing there. Gentlemen, I desire to state that over twenty years ago I purchased, for the sum of £40, a croft at that time belonging to one Archibald M'Phail. M'Phail was then in arrears of rent to the extent of about £12. This sum was deducted by the factor from the principal, and the balance handed to M'Phail, who subsequently went to America. The late Mr John Campbell was then chamberlain to his Grace the Duke of Argyll, and Mr Lachlan M'Quarie, ground officer here. After occupying my croft for over twelve years it was taken from me, and no reason given for doing so. When I asked the chamberlain if he had anything against me, he said that he had not, but that there were other reasons. I was then paying for my croft a yearly rent of £5, 10s., and was not in arrears. My family was then young. My stock consisted of one horse and two cows. These I was obliged to sell. With the proceeds, and some money which I borrowed from a friend, I purchased an east coast fishing boat, which I have since had enlarged; and from the time I was deprived of my croft until now the boat has been the principal means of support of myself and family. I have a wife, six sons, and three daughters. At the time my croft was taken from me, I was allowed to retain one acre of it, or thereabout; the remainder being given to another crofter. During Mr Campbell’s time I

ARGYLL

TYREE.

Neil M'Neil.

ARGYLL. ' was not charged any rent for the acre retained, but during the factorship
TYREE. ' of his successor, Mr Geikie, I was obliged to sign a paper agreeing to
 pay rent, if required, at any future time. I was never charged rent by
Neil M'Neil. ' Mr Geikie, but I am now paying the sum of 30s. for the said acre yearly.
 ' When my croft was taken from me I was promised another croft in
 return, but which, notwithstanding my frequent applications to the then
 and subsequent factors, I am still without. On the ground I now occupy
 ' I can only plant a few barrels of potatoes, and am obliged to plant more
 ' potatoes in other crofters' ground, paying rent therefor. My present
 ' stock consists of two cows and one horse, the grazing and wintering of
 ' these respectively costing me over £20 a year. I have never received
 compensation of any kind for the loss of my croft, although at the time
 ' it was taken from me I was willing to emigrate with my family, had
 money compensation been given me. As I consider that I have been
 most unjustly deprived of my land, and there being no apparent intention
 ' on the part of his Grace the Duke of Argyll to reinstate me therein, or
 ' in another croft, I beg humbly to present this statement for the consider-
 ation of your honours.'

34190. Did you ever see again this document you signed saying you would be obedient to the factor?—No, but I have heard people who have seen it and who signed it.

34191. You have not seen it?—No, not I.

34192. Was it ever produced again?—Not to my knowledge, but the people who signed it told me they did so.

34193. Did they get a copy of it?—It seems not.

34194. What is your rent at the present time?—£21, 10s. 6d., I think.

34195. Was your father in the croft before you?—We were in Balphuil first.

34196. How long have you been in possession of the present croft?—Thirty years.

34197. Was it your brother or your father that came there first?—My father.

34198. What was the rent?—About £18.

34199. How much money was put on for drainage?—None upon us.

34200. Therefore, the rise from £18 to £21, 10s. is a rise that was put on for reasons unknown to you?—I may state the reasons perhaps. The rents were raised twice forbye the drainage money, and it was sent by the factor amongst the tenants to divide amongst themselves, and they valued the crofts amongst themselves, and if you did not take so much of this rent which is given in lately you will give me your croft, and the crofters had to remove back and forward amongst themselves.

34201. Did they value the whole township?—Yes, among themselves, and we had to give up one of the crofts we had for one of these light sandy ones, and latterly we were removed down there altogether.

34202. You present a paper from Lachlan M'Kinnon, in which he says he bought his croft and paid £40 on entering it; was that a common custom?—Yes, it was in old times that such as Lachlan M'Kinnon bought the rental; that is when he bought the stock it was understood that he bought the use of the rental along with it.

34203. When he paid £40 he got some stock for it?—He would have some stock, but it was understood he would have the benefit of the croft by buying the rental.

34204. The goodwill?—Yes, his Grace allowed them to sell the rental. John Maclean bought his place, that was what he did. It was understood he had it while he paid his rent.

34205. And did everybody have the right of selling it in old times?—It seems they had before factor Campbell's days.

ARGYLL

TYREE.

Neil M'Neil

34206. He stopped that?—Yes, my father bought his first croft the same way in Balphuill.

34207. How long is it since this practice was stopped?—Thirty-eight years ago, I think, since factor Campbell came.

34208. You mention the scarcity of fuel, what on an average will you spend on coals?—About six tons to each family on an average. Some can do with less and some more.

34209. Where do you get it?—From Ardrossan.

34210. What do you pay for it?—The price varies, sometimes 14s., 16s., and 17s. 6d., and it has been as high as 30s. per ton.

34211. Will it come to £4 on an average?—They were allowing £6 on an average for each family; some require more than six tons.

34212. Have none of the crofters any sheep?—I am not aware of any.

34213. They do not make any cloth at home?—Oh, yes.

34214. Do they buy the wool?—Yes.

34215. And spin it at home?—Yes.

34216. Are there many weavers in Tyree?—A good many.

34217. *The Chairman.*—You say your sons and daughters gather your rent through the world?—Yes.

34218. Do your sons and daughters frequently send home money from their wages?—Generally they do.

34219. Would it be possible to pay the rent throughout the country unless the younger members of a family sent money from their wages?—As far as I know, I don't think it would; in most cases it would not.

34220. Do you know anybody here present who actually signed that document in which they promised to obey the factor's wishes?—Yes, Donald Macdonald.

34221. (*To Donald Macdonald.*) Did you sign the document promising to obey whatever the factor desired?—Yes.

34222. How did you know what the contents of the paper were—was the paper read over to you aloud?—All we know is this—the paper was not read to us at all, but the ground officer had a lot of notices to quit in one hand and this paper in another, and we were told that the contents of the paper were that we would require to obey anything that the Duke of Argyll or his factor would ask us to do.

34223. Was it written or printed?—It was written.

34224. Was M'Quarie the ground officer?—Yes.

34225. Is he alive yet?—Yes.

34226. Is he here?—He was here; he may be here yet.

34227. Was that in the time of the present Duke or his predecessor?—In the time of the present Duke.

34228. Do you know of anybody who can read and who saw the paper himself and read it?—I am not aware of any who read the paper before he put his hand to it.

34229. Was your knowledge of the contents of the paper solely derived from the statements of the ground officer?—The factor was not present upon the occasion; our only information regarding the paper was what the ground officer told us at the time.

34230. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Was each tenant obliged to sign a separate paper, or did several of them sign one paper?—I believe it was the same paper that every crofter in Tyree signed.

34231. Did you put your cross to it?—I believe I signed my name; I can sign my name.

34232. What year did this occur in?—It would be about thirty-five

ARGYLL. years ago ; some two or three years after Mr Campbell got the management of the estates.—*John Campbell, Bailenoe.* Probably it was in the year 1847. Mr Campbell got the management of the estate in 1846, and it was the year after.

TYREE. 34233. *The Chairman.*—Did you sign it?—I did not sign it myself, but everybody in the township where I lived signed it.

Neil Mc'Neil 34234. (*To Donald Macdonald*).—How did you know that the papers in the man's other hand were summonses to quit?—He told us.

JOHN CAMPBELL, Crofter, Bailenoe (77)—examined.

John Campbell 34235. *The Chairman.*—Have you a paper?—Yes.—‘The principal grievances or hardships of which we have to complain are the following:—At the time when Mr M'Nicol had the neighbouring farm, three crofts and their share of the common were taken from us by Mr Campbell the factor, and added to Mr M'Nicol's farm. Mr M'Nicol also desired the stock of the three crofts to be grazed in our township, and since we refused £10 more rent was laid on us forbye the loss of the crofts. The stock of the schoolmaster's croft, which previous to Mr M'Nicol's time was to be grazed on his farm, was forced on our township without any payment. At another time a croft was cut off our common for a man who in the course of some years went to America. The factor, Mr Campbell, then gave it back as at first, but laid on us the rent charged on the tenant who left. He (factor) sometime after gave the croft to a blacksmith, a favourite of his own, and charged a new rent, but did not lower our charge. A short time ago another croft and its share of the common were taken from us, and added to the same tack. At the time of the neighbouring tack being cleared two of the crofters got share in our township, and also the very best. All such doings greatly spoiled our township, and led to one of our best roads being closed. Our township was drained, and the interest of the money spent in so doing was laid on us as extra rent. This was promised to be taken off in the course of twenty-one years; but we are now thirty-five years paying it, and still no signs of lowering such rent. Crofters who lost their holdings in other townships built houses on our common grazing ground, and these being so scattered greatly ruins our grass. What we want now is a lowering of rent; for at the rent charged at present we are unable to take a living out of our crofts, if our sons and daughters did not send us help from other quarters. We also want the crofts mentioned above restored, which would greatly make up for our loss, for four of us have only one croft each at present.—*DONALD CAMPBELL.*’

34236. How long has Bailenoe been a township?—It was under crofters of old.

34237. What is the name of Mr M'Nicol's farm?—Hylipool.

34238. Was that an old tack?—No; it was under crofters of old times, there were twenty-one there.

34239. You say, ‘A short time ago another croft and its share of the common were taken from us and added to M'Nicol's tack,’ how long ago was that?—Four years ago.

34240. How did the croft which was taken away and added to the farm become vacant?—The man that occupied it got a croft in another township.

34241. And would the crofters at Bailenoe have been glad enough if

that had been divided among them?—Certainly they would have much preferred it.

ARGYLL.

34242. How long is it since the drainage was executed?—There was some made thirty-five years ago; then for the last twenty-eight years a few have been made now and again.

TYREE.

34243. By whom was the drainage done, by the crofters themselves or outside people?—Partly by the crofters and partly by outside labourers.

John
Campbell

34244. Were they stone drains or tile drains?—Partly the one and partly the other.

34245. Was the work well done?—Yes, very well done.

34246. Did they do a great deal of good to the soil?—Yes, as long as they were open.

34247. Is the land still the better for it, or has the land become as it was of old?—Those that were first done are of no good now; the ground has gone back very much. Those that were more recently done are doing good.

34248. How long did they continue to do good?—Twenty years.

34249. Did any of the crofters open the drains again and relay the tiles?—Some of them.

34250. And did that do good again?—Yes, they were better.

34251. Why did not they all do it?—They cannot do it; there are no stones, all the stones have been used up. They cannot blast the big rocks.

RONALD MACDONALD, Cottar, Heanish (46)—examined.

34252. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You have a paper?—Yes.—‘To the Honourable the Royal Commissioners appointed to inquire into the Condition of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland. *The Statement of Ronald M' Donald* (46), cottar and cattle dealer, Heanish, for Heanish and Baugh cottars—Humbly sheweth, That many of the cottars of Heanish and Baugh were deprived of their holdings, either directly or indirectly, to make room for tacks, as in the case of one party who was deprived of his holding at Baugh, then partly cleared to make an addition to the tack of Reef, and same party again was evicted from his croft at Heanish to make room for a blind man and his family from Hylipool, then a crofter township, but which was at this time converted into a tack. This party never received a penny for his outlay in house erection, but had to build another house at his own expense down at the sea-shore; and ejectments were served upon us during our occupancy of the crofts for being one day behind in ploughing our turnip ground, and fines imposed for fictitious faults, and had to be paid on rent day, for such as if any of our horses should break in accidentally from one part of our common to another part, both which was our own by right. The sums paid for each collectively amounts to £17. The late John Campbell, Esq., was factor for his Grace the Duke of Argyll. Cases could be cited where the crofters were evicted to make room for factor's servants and favourites. The result is that many are reduced to poverty; their only employment in winter is gathering tangles for the British Sea-weed Company, and making kelp in spring for the same company whenever they get the chance of doing so, those of them who do not go to the fishing. What we desire is a few acres arable land and as much grazing as will be a sufficient keep for a cow or two.’—Also Scaranish cottars' statement by Duncan M' Kinun, crofter formerly, but now labourer, age fifty-five. My father and grandfather

Ronald
Macdonald

ARGYLL. 'occupied the croft or holding from time immemorial and paid the rent, 'yet evicted to make room for sheep. My father was seventy-five years of
TYREE. 'age when we were evicted. The croft was about eight acres, giving plenty
Ronald. 'of work and returns to keep us comfortably.'—'Also Archibald M'Kinnon,
Macdonald. 'shoemaker, crofter's son, age forty-three, deprived of the place for which his
'father paid £50 for the goodwill of it in Scaranish, and never received a
'penny for our loss there. There was a large family of us thrown out.'—
'Also the whole of Scaranish crofters, numbering twenty-two families,
'were badly used; twelve families went to America, and a number of them
'died on the passage through want of proper food and allowance. The
'rest were allowed to remain and got their lots increased, but subsequently
'all of them were evicted and reduced to poverty. We humbly pray
'that our crofts shall be restored to us again, for which we are willing
'to pay fair rent with fixity of tenure.—DUNCAN M'KINNON, Scaranish;
'ARCHIBALD M'KINNON, Scaranish.'

34253. What rent are you paying now?—I just paid one rent last year for the garden I got along with the house.

34254. Had you any land at any time yourself?—My mother had; I never had.

34255. What rent was your mother paying?—About £6.

34256. Was your mother long a widow?—Yes, she was married twice; and it was the land that her husband had that was taken from her.

34257. Were your father and mother in comfortable circumstances to bring up a family?—Yes, they were in good circumstances. My father died when I was only an infant, but my stepfather was in good circumstances.

34258. Until they lost the croft?—Yes.

34259. Where would you like to get land—yourself and the other people of Heanish?—Wherever we would get it.

34260. Would some of you be able, if you got land, to build houses for yourselves, and to put some stock on it?—Some of us would be.

34261. Would you?—I would myself and others would also.

34262. Would you be able to take as much land as would enable you to live without doing anything else but attending to the produce and stock?—The croft would always stand good, and I might still be going backwards and forwards as I now am.

34263. Are there some of the other crofters in Heanish and Baugh who could take land?—Some of them are—three or four at least; others of them are very poor.

34264. Do you know the case of Duncan M'Kinnon, who is referred to in the paper?—I don't know very particularly about the case; I know the man; he is here.

34265. Will the whole of the people mentioned here in Heanish, Baugh, and Scaranish, ever be in anything but a precarious position unless they get more land or steady employment?—It is difficult for me to say generally with regard to that, but I don't see how they can live at all as they are.

34266. Are the people referred to in this paper, for whom you have been speaking, generally very poor—poorer than they have been in your recollection?—Some of them are poorer than they were, others are much about the same condition.

34267. And you represent to us that the general demand of the people is to get more land; and some of them to get potato ground and enough to keep a cow?—That is their demand.

34268. *The Chairman.*—How do you make your own living?—I am a cattle dealer.

34269. Is the droving trade going on as well as before?—Yes, sometimes better, sometimes worse.

34270. But is it interfered with or altered by the railways and other causes of that sort?—It goes on as before.

34271. Do you pay rent for your house?—I paid one rent for both the house and the garden.

34272. Is the house a new one?—The house is about six or seven years old.

34273. Why did you only pay one rent for the house if you have had it for six years?—It was not asked.

34274. Then you had your house for nothing for five years?—Yes; perhaps more than five, but five anyhow.

34275. Who built the house?—I built it.

34276. How much did it cost you?—It did not cost much. If you get suitable stone here it can be built cheap; there is not much outlay excepting the wood.

34277. If you had to leave it would you get any compensation for it?—It has not been usual in the place to give compensation.

34278. Did you ask the factor's leave to build it?—Well, it was an old house that was re-made, and I leased the land—just went to one of those old houses and made it suitable for habitation.

34279. Did you pay anything to the former occupier?—No, it is one of our own houses; we did not leave the houses although we lost the land.

ARGYLL.

TYREE.

Ronald
Macdonald.

DONALD SINCLAIR, Cottar, Balphuil (40), assisted by ARCHIBALD CAMPBELL, Cottar, Balphuil (49)—examined.

Donald
Sinclair and
Archibald
Campbell.

34280. *The Chairman.*—Would you please to make your statement?—The principal grievances or hardships of which we have to complain are the following:—The most of us, and our fathers before us, had crofts, and without any reason being assigned they were taken from us. Our crofts were then added to the neighbouring sheep farm. We then had to build new houses at the shore, without any compensation for the houses left. The only means of living then left us was fishing, and owing to the want of a safe harbour we are unable to prosecute the fishing to any great extent. On that account we have only small boats which we must haul up every night so as to be out of danger. Again, our houses are nearly a mile distant from where our boats land, and that being the case we have many a time to go even at midnight to look after them. On coming from the fishing with these there is none at shore to render any assistance, as our homes are so far from the sort of quay we have. This again gives us great inconvenience when we go for meal, salt, or coals, with our boats to where the steamer lands, that is a distance of six or seven miles, and on coming back we have to pay dearly for a horse and cart to take such goods to our homes. The inconvenience would be great had it only been that; we have to carry the fish home on our backs. It may be mentioned that the Fisheries Board built a quay previous to our crofts being added to the neighbouring sheep farm. It is at that quay, although in a very ruined condition, that our boats are still landing. There are no signs of said quay being repaired, although the proprietor promised to keep it in repair after the board built it. What we now want is a safe harbour, and our houses built near it, so that we could prosecute the fishing in a right style. We also want as much land as

ARGYLL. ' will enable us to keep a cow and plant some potatoes, for which we are willing to pay a reasonable rent.

TYREE. 34281. You say that the meal in the company's store is 8s. per bag higher—how much is the oatmeal at the company's store per boll?—It is over £2 per two bolls.

Donald Sinclair and Archibald Campbell. 34282. How much would that be per boll?—£1 per boll.

34283. Is that higher than the current price in the country?—Yes.

34284. We have generally heard that the price of oatmeal is either over £1 or 2ls. per boll?—We do not get that kind of meal here.

34285. What is the chemical work of which you speak?—It is in connection with their work south—the manufacture of iodine.

34286. Are you employed at so much a day or per week in this work?—We do not know.

34287. Does the company never show you the account in which the value of your work is written down?—The only way to know your wages is to go and ask for more provision, which usually consists of Indian meal, tea, and sugar, and the only account that is rendered is that you are told there is nothing to your credit.

34288. Does the company buy things as well as sell?—They take eggs in return for provisions.

34289. Do they take eggs from the families of the people whom they employ?—Yes, from any one.

34290. Do they pay for the things they buy ready money, or do they enter that into the account?—Goods in return for the eggs—goods only.

34291. You never got money from the company for your work or for the eggs or other commodities?—Well, we got occasionally 1s. or 2s. to put half soles upon our shoes, or the like of that; but we must tell what we want the shillings for before we get them.

34292. Have you ever complained of this system to the factor?—No, but we complained to a member of the company who was here recently, either to give us more wages or to give us the meal at the current rate of the country.

34293. What did he say?—His reason was that it would be so much money into his pocket if there were none of them working at all, implying thereby it was out of charity that he employed us at all.

34294. When did this company come into the country?—About twenty years ago.

34295. Do they hold their storehouse and premises as tenants from the proprietor, or from some farmer or tacksman?—We understand that they hold direct from the proprietor, and pay him rent for the shores as well as for the land.

34296. You speak of working in gathering tangle or sea-weed; is this a new kind of work in the country; was it introduced in connection with the company?—Yes; but the kelp was manufactured before that time, and when the kelp was being made in the country the proprietor bought it. We got £5 a ton for it.

34297. But did you gather tangle in the same way at night?—They did not use the tangle for the manufacture of kelp at that time.

34298. Do you frequently gather the tangle in the middle of the night?—Yes, I was at it myself; of course, we must attend as the tide suits.

34299. Do the women and children work at night?—Yes.

34300. Do you really say that women and children occasionally at least go out at midnight to gather the tangle upon the shore?—Yes; my sister was a widow with three children, and she was out with me gathering those tangles at night. The night was so dark that if I did not see it I could feel it among the sea-weed.

34301. Was that in the winter?—Yes, it is in the winter that we take it.

34302. How much is it possible to make by the day or week at this work—you named 4d. per yard?—I believe if there was a very strong young man and a very strong young man along with him they could both possibly make 2s. 6d. each in a day; but very often we can get none for weeks; sometimes not for a month—sometimes only an arnful.

34303. Did your sister's children work at this work at night with her?—Yes, her children were along with her; and that is customary all over the place, as the tide suits.

34304. Does the company sell coals?—Yes, it is always dearer than the current price of the country.

34305. (*To Archibald Campbell*).—What is your case?—In addition to what is stated in the paper, we think that if the quay in our place was put in order and kept up we might have larger boats, and might prosecute the fishing with greater success. We live a mile from the quay. We were removed at the time the nine crofters were cleared away, as was spoken about in the former part of the day. My father had one of those crofts. When my father lost the croft he was sent to a smithy that was in the place. He gave that croft to another man to crop it for the year. We had to begin to quarry stones and build the house for ourselves. We would not get a stone or a stick that belonged to the place when we left.

34306. Have you anything more to say on the part of the other people?—Yes, we think that if, in addition to the quay being put in order, we were removed down close to it, and got some bit of land with cow's grass, we could be able to make our living as fishermen.

34307. (*To Donald Sinclair*).—What do you pay for oatmeal at the company's store?—About £1 the boll, more or less; sometimes 19s., and sometimes a little over £1.

34308. How much would it cost if you bought it at a shop in the island?—Eighteen shillings sometimes; sometimes higher.

34309. Then the two prices are very nearly the same?—No.

ARGYLL

TYREE.

Donald
Sinclair and
Archibald
Campbell.

JAMES SLEVEN, Resident Manager to the North British Chemical Company—examined.

34310. *The Chairman*.—You have been here part of the day, and have James Sleven heard several of the witnesses refer to the system of trade carried on by your firm?—Yes; some of these are erroneous.

34311. Have the kindness to explain the system of trade which you carry on with the people?—Mr Stanford, the principal partner of the company, first introduced this into the island. He found a great difficulty in conveying money as cash to pay the workmen and kelp burners or makers here. Once or twice he sent a clerk from Glasgow with the cash box, and the clerk and the cash box were taken north and south, and could not get landed. Then there is no bank in the place; and when I came to the island it was the request of the people that the company should open a store for their benefit. The company did so, and are supplying goods as good as can be got in any part of the island, and as reasonable.

34312. Does the company give the people the option freely of receiving their wages either in money or in goods?—They do; but if they get it in cash they reduce the price of the kelp. The kelp at present is almost a drug in the market, and Mr Stanford has given up the purchase of it in

ARGYLL. several places. This place he has kept on the same as at first, and is paying the same amount for it.

TYREE. 34313. But do I understand that any labourer in your employment may come to you freely and ask you either for money or for goods just as he likes ?
James Steven. —Those people who work the kelp are not labourers. They commence to work—they know our system—and they can work or not at all as they please. We do not employ them ; they just commence to put up the seaweed.

34314. I want you to speak of other classes of labourers?—One of the delegates who was here last said it was only seldom any money could be got. That man I paid more than £6 to last summer, for work he did for the company.

34315. I do not understand what description of labourer?—He is a joiner, the one who was here last.

34316. I want to know what description of labourers you employ ; you say that the people who work the kelp are not labourers?—No.

34317. Who is employed by the company—what other class?—Just a few men, carters, and three or four who work in the factory when it is working.

34318. With regard to the chemical works?—That is the chemical work where we prepare the tangle in the rough state for the other work of the company, which is at Clydebank.

34319. The few labourers employed by the company, may they receive their wages freely in money or goods as they like?—They get money occasionally, and other times goods.

34320. But if one of your labourers came to you and said, ‘I want to have the whole of my wages in money, and always to have it in money,’ would you always give it him?—I would, if I had it on hand.

34321. But would you try for his benefit to keep it on hand?—Well, I cannot do but just as I am done with. I have sometimes cash on hand, and other times I have not. When I have it on hand, and they ask it I give it to them.

34322. Are all the labourers you employ in debt to the company, or are some of them not in debt?—The greater part of them are in debt to the company. We just give them goods as they require them, and we do not speak of whether it is due or not.

34323. Suppose one of your labourers said, ‘I insist upon having the whole of my wages in money always,’ would you promise him to do it or not?—I would say, ‘If you keep within your wages, we will pay you altogether in money.’

34324. That is to say, ‘if you are not in our debt’?—Yes.

34325. Now explain on what system the people gather the tangle, and sell it to you?—It was stated here it was 4d. a cubic yard ; it is 6d. per cubic yard. Two feet high and 3 feet long is 4d. ; the cubic yard, 3 feet long and 3 feet high is 6d. It is but 2 feet high that we take it, as tangle keeps better in that state.

34326. Do the people gather it and bring it to you wet?—No, it is placed on the shore, and is measured there by a man employed by the company to measure it, and they all get lines for this tangle, and come to the store and get paid for it.

34327. And you take it to your store?—Yes, to our work.

34328. Suppose a man who has got this heap of tangle said, ‘I want to sell it for ready money and not goods,’ would you give him ready money?—No, I would not.

34329. And if you did, you would give him less than if you gave him goods?—It is possible.

34330. Is it true that the people are in the habit of gathering the tangle at night in winter?—It is very seldom; that is a rare case.

34331. Had you ever any knowledge of the case in which the women and children went out in the middle of the night to gather this stuff?—James Steven.
They might go early in the morning, which we might say was night—dark—so as to catch the tide.

34332. Did you ever hear of children going out at night?—I never heard of an instance until to-day.

34333. Is this system of truck or barter which you carry on—have you heard it complained of by the people, or is it agreeable to them?—It has been agreeable until lately.

34334. Is this system of barter or truck approved of by the Duke's chamberlain?—I cannot answer that question.

34335. Do you know whether he is aware of it?—Our resident factor is aware of it.

34336. Did the resident factor ever discuss the question with you?—We have often talked of it.

34337. Did the resident factor seem to approve or disapprove of it?—He appeared to approve of it. With regard to the land, as was stated by the delegate—he stated that I, as an individual, went to the factor, and asked his present croft. Now, that I totally deny, and the present factor can be asked the question, if it is true. I never sought his croft, and never asked it for myself, or any one.

34338. You are able to assure him at the present moment that you do not wish to possess his croft?—I can if he is listening; I do not wish it.

34339. But the other crofts which the company possess, how were they occupied before they got into possession of the company?—They were occupied by crofters.

34340. What became of the crofters, were they turned out?—No, one of them got a better place.

34341. And what did the other get?—He had two crofts, and he has one yet; the other was given to the company.

34342. Does the company make any profit on the purchase and sale of these articles, or do they do it really for the good of the people?—They do it more for the good of the people than for profit; their profit is very small indeed.

34343. Do you think the profit you make is smaller than the ordinary profits of a shopkeeper or trader?—No, I don't think they are smaller, but just something similar.

34344. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Is it drift tangle cast up by the sea that they gather?—Yes.

34345. They do not cut it?—No.

34346. Why do you get it mostly at low spring tides?—When the tide is out it is got, and when the tide is in it cannot be got. It is partly covered by the sea.

34347. Does the tide not bring it up?—It drives it up.

34348. *Professor Mackinnon.*—There was a statement made, that the weight of a ton of kelp was $22\frac{1}{2}$ cwt.?—That is correct, that is allowed for sand and stones, and I can assure you it is no profit. In some cases I have seen 28 lbs. of stone coming out of a piece of kelp, placed there undoubtedly by some individual.

34349. But is it not rather an unusual mode of procedure to call $22\frac{1}{2}$ cwt. a ton?—No, it is always so in the kelp trade.

34350. Don't you think it would be as well to pay less for 20 cwt. and call it a ton?—It would be just the same.

ARGYLL.

TYREE.

ARGYLL. 34351. The people also stated that when they did get money for the kelp they got at the rate of £2 per ton?—That was offered them.

TYREE. 34352. But when they got goods they would get at the rate of £4 per ton?—Yes, that they would get the option. I have offered that.

James Steven. 34353. Does that mean that you charge 100 per cent. profit upon the goods?—No, it does not.

34354. What does it mean?—That we wish to pay goods, and it is more convenient.

34355. To the extent of 100 per cent.?—That is not the case. You are well aware that kelp is at a low rate at present.

34356. I do not mean to dispute that £2 may be a good price; but what is the meaning of £2 per ton in cash or £4 per ton in goods?—That was never mentioned except to one or two individuals who were there pushing to get cash by other parties from the outside, and just to stop the claim we said so.

34357. You actually give them for kelp £4 worth of goods?—Yes.

34358. But if you were to be put to it, and they insisted upon getting money, you would give them half?—Yes.

34359. So that the evidence upon that matter is quite correct?—It is so far.

34360. There was a man who said here as a matter of complaint that you were using his pasture ground for drying the sea-ware?—That is true.

34361. And that you had the authority of the factor for that?—We have the authority of his Grace. The company's lease gives them that authority to put up sea-ware on the shore to dry it and burn it.

34362. On the crofters' pasture land?—Yes.

34363. So that his Grace derives rent from the crofter and a second rent from you?—In some cases it is more beneficial than injurious to the pasture, the sea-weed being put up upon it.

34364. The crofters seem to take a different view?—Some of them do.

34365. At what hour is high tide at the height of the spring?—Six in the morning.

34366. And low water at twelve at night?—Yes.

34367. Then is it not at twelve at night that they can get the tangle best?—Yes, if they go.

34368. It is in winter they get it?—Autumn, winter, and spring, up to the month of April.

34369. You said they went for it in the morning?—Yes.

34370. As matter of fact, is there ever a low tide upon a winter's morning?—It does not require to be low tide; you will get it at half tide or one hour's ebb.

34371. And they go for it at half ebb in the morning and low tide in the middle of the day?—Some of them go early in the morning and remain until late at night, and do not return to their homes.

34372. Perhaps the night tide puts it up best?—It comes up day and night.

[ADJOURNED.]

BUNESSAN, ARGYLL, WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 8, 1883.

ARGYLL.
BUNESSAN.

(See Appendix A, LXXXVI.)

Present:—

Lord NAPIER and ETTRICK, K.T., *Chairman.*

Sir KENNETH S. MACKENZIE, Bart.

DONALD CAMERON, Esq. of Lochiel, M.P.

C. FRASER-MACKINTOSH, Esq., M.P.

Sheriff NICOLSON, LL.D.

Professor MACKINNON, M.A.

Mr Wyllie, Chamberlain to the Duke of Argyll.—My Lord, I am glad to inform you, on the part of the proprietor, that all the *Duke of Argyll's* tenants are at perfect liberty to make any statement that they wish without any fear of after consequences.

ALLAN M'INNES, Crofter, Creich (52)—examined.

34373. *The Chairman.*—Have you a statement to submit?—I have.—
Creich, comprising Arigluss. The principal cause of our grievances is the repeated rising of our rent from 1850 to 1876. When Beinntrich-ladain, with other portions composing half of our hill pasture, were taken away twenty-five years ago by the factor as the share of eight crofts, and added to his own farm, our rent was considerably raised. Subsequently two of the eight crofts were relet; and a row having been raised by the new occupiers for hill pasturage for their crofts, which was provided to them by taking away reclaimed portions of other crofts. Our stock was not reduced in proportion to our pasturage, on which twenty-four crofters had a right to keep three sheep each and their horses in summer, and besides fifteen crofters having the privilege of sending their cattle to it all the year round. First, crofters built and maintained dwellings, steadings, and fences by clearing much of their croft lands from ground-fast stones, which have been improved upon by their successors in many cases, and we suppose by the proprietor in some cases. Now our rent is raised the last thirty-three years from about £4 to more than the double bare rent, without any regard to the quality or condition of our croftlands or capacity of our pasturage, no compensation given for improvements on being evicted, or on quitting, and no inducement for improvements. In 1872 we petitioned to restore us our old boundaries, the farm to which the same has been added being then in his Grace's own hands for two years. Our petition to his Grace for three years was rejected in 1881, though based on the excess of stock assigned to our occupation and excess of rent laid on us, and humbly praying that his Grace would be graciously pleased to appoint valuators or assessors to compute stock and adjust rent. However, for that year some help was given to some for losses by storm or otherwise. Constant tillage to raise provender, generally scarce, deteriorates the production of our crofts. On the area of a mile of the poorest land in Ross, there are forty-six families who are paying rent directly or indirectly, with the exception of five paupers. Of late there is a progressive mode of diminishing our pasturage by giving sites and adding lands for another rent to our great annoyance.—ALLAN M'INNES, DONALD BEATON, WILLIAM MACGILLIVRAY, ALEXANDER M'FARLAN, delegates.

Allan
M'Innes.

34374. In the year 1850, how much was the rent of the croft?—My

ARGYLL. father was paying £8, 7s. for the two crofts, and that was the average rent paid throughout the whole township.

BUNESSAN. 34375. What was the rent for the one croft?—That is £4, 3s. 6d. for the single croft.

Allan M'Innes. 34376. Including the share of hill pasture?—Yes.

34377. And at that time what stock did the single croft keep?—Three cows, a stirk, three sheep, and a horse.

34378. And that was for £4, 3s. 6d.?—Yes.

34379. What were the successive rises of rent from 1850 to 1876?—Twenty-seven years ago, when the hill pasture was taken from us, as mentioned in the paper, the rent was raised from £8, 7s. to £10, 9s. 6d. for the double croft.

34380. That is £5, 4s. 9d. for the single croft?—Yes.

34381. When was it raised again?—In 1876 it was raised to £17, 8s. the double croft, or £8, 14s. the single croft.

34382. Does it stand at that figure now?—It does.

34383. But in the meantime a portion of the hill pasture was taken away? Was the amount of stock reduced by the hill pasture being taken away?—We were keeping the same stock, but we had not sufficient food for them as before.

34384. You say that eight crofts, twenty-five years ago, were added to the farm of the factor; what became of the crofters on these eight crofts?—Some went out of the country, and some were removed to other places.

34385. How many do you think went out of the country, and how many were provided for on the estate?—One family went to Australia; the rest got houses in the country.

34386. Did some of them remain upon the Duke of Argyll's estate?—Yes, the whole.

34387. Were they provided with crofts or houses without land?—Houses without land.

34388. The one that went to Australia, was he assisted to emigrate—were his expenses paid?—I cannot say.

34389. Did those who remained in the country on other parts of the estate receive compensation for their houses when they left?—So far as I know, they got nothing.

34390. Were they assisted to build new houses or to establish themselves in their new crofts?—They got houses that had been erected before.

34391. Had they to pay the old tenants of these houses?—I cannot tell.

34392. What became of the old tenants who lived in the houses before?—They had perhaps died, the houses were vacant at any rate.

34393. In the year 1872 we petitioned 'to restore to us the old boundaries'; does that mean that in 1872 you petitioned to have those portions of the township restored to you which had been taken by the factor?—Yes.

34394. The land at that time was in the hands of the Duke of Argyll?—Yes.

34395. But it was not given back?—No; the reply we got was that that would be as it was.

34396. How large would the factor's farm be without the eight crofts which were added to it—how large was it originally?—I cannot precisely say, but it was a large farm.

34397. What is the rent of it now?—I cannot say.

34398. But if the ground was given back which was taken from it, would it still be a large farm?—It would be large enough.

34399. Why did the farm remain in the Duke's hands?—The person who occupied it died.

34400. It was over two years in his Grace's hands; did his Grace execute improvements upon it?—I am not aware.

34401. Was it retained by his Grace in consequence of a difficulty in finding a tenant?—I cannot say.

34402. What is the present area of the arable land of each croft?—I cannot tell the acreage, but I can tell the quantity of seed that was put into it.

34403. Can you not tell about how much in acres?—It may be guessed to be between three and four acres in each croft, but that is a mere guess.

34404. Then it stands at three cows, one stirk, three sheep, one horse for £8, 14s. ?—We have no sheep at all now since that hill was taken from us.

34405. You say that on an area of a mile of the poorest land in Ross there are forty-six families; does that mean in your own place?—Yes.

34406. You say that the pasturage is being diminished by giving sites; to whom are those sites given—to cottars?—To people who have no land.

34407. What amount is given in that case to each family?—About the size of a garden or kailyard, or a little bigger.

34408. Any pasturage for a cow?—No.

34409. Who builds the house in that case? Is it the Duke?—I believe it is the people who are going to live in the house that build it.

34410. Is the place near the sea?—No; part of it is very far from the sea.

34411. Are these people to whom sites are given fishermen?—They do fish, but that is not their ordinary occupation.

34412. *Professor Mackinnon.*—What is their occupation? Do they work in the quarry?—Yes, they are chiefly engaged in the quarries.

34413. In Camus?—No, in Tormore.

34414. Who was the factor at the time those crofts were taken from you?—John Campbell.

34415. And the crofts were taken from you to add to his own farm of Ardfenaig?—Yes.

34416. He occupied that farm till his death?—Yes.

34417. And it was at his death that you asked that the crofts should be restored to you?—Yes.

34418. The farm of Ardfenaig was at that time over two years vacant?—Yes.

34419. And it is now occupied by a tacksman who lives there?—Yes.

34420. How much stock would that pasture which was taken from you keep?—We were keeping three sheep each on the twenty-four crofts on that hill, and the horses during summer and autumn.

34421. So that you have ceased to keep the sheep since you lost the pasture?—Yes; we have no place to keep them.

34422. But you are keeping the horses still?—Yes.

34423. But you say your pasture is by that amount so much the worse?—Yes, in so much that, although we are keeping the same number of cows, our land does not produce grass sufficient to feed them during summer.

34424. Is it the arable land or the pasture land of your place that is being injured by these new houses that are being put up?—It is the pasture that is injured.

34425. There are none of the houses being put upon the arable portion of the crofts?—No.

34426. Your rent was raised, you say, in 1850?—Well, it was raised just about that time—from 1850 to 1876.

ARGYLL

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BUNESSAN.

Allan
M'Innes.

- ARGYLL. 34427. 1850 was in Mr Campbell's time also?—Yes.
- BUNESSAN. 34428. What was the reason alleged for the rent being raised in that terrible year?—That is a thing I cannot tell; but when the ground was taken from us the rent was immediately raised.
- Allan 34429. That was in one of the worst years following the potato disease?—Yes.
- M'Innes. 34430. The rents then remained the same till 1876?—There was very little increase until 1876.
34431. Who was the factor in 1876 when the rent was raised?—The present chamberlain.
34432. And it was raised in that year from £5, 4s. 9d. to £8, 14s. Was there any reason given to you at the time for that large increase?—No reason whatever was given to us.
34433. But you consider the rent too high?—Undoubtedly. We, three years in succession, sent a request to the proprietor to reduce the rent in respect of its being too high, but we got no reply for the first two years. The third year we got replies stating that the rents would not be reduced, but that the Duke would agree to give some assistance to the tenants on account of some special losses they had sustained; and he did give that to those who needed it.
34434. What were the special losses?—Loss of cattle or of boats. That was a help, but it was not a diminution of the burden of the rent.
34435. So that what you consider the excessive rent still remains?—Certainly that is so. Is it not double what it was? That is the bare rent, and there is besides that the school rate and the poor rates, road rates and others.
34436. You say that upon one square mile of the poorest land in Ross there are forty-six families. Do you consider your own land the poorest land in the island?—We consider it as poor land as there is in the Ross or in Argyllshire.
34437. What do you consider the best land in the Ross?—That is a thing I cannot touch, because it does not belong to me to do so.
34438. You might give us the information?—The large farmers in the Ross have the best lands, in my opinion.
34439. What are the names of their farms?—Scoor, Fiden, Knockvaolagan, Ardalanish, Ardachy.
34440. You say there are forty-six families on this square mile. Have all these land?—No, they have not.
34441. How many of them have land?—I am not aware that there is any of them that has not some small bit of land, except those on the poor roll, unless two or three.
34442. How many of them would you call crofters?—Formerly, when it had its old boundaries, there were twenty-four crofts; now there are only eighteen.
34443. And all the rest of the families have just a small bit of land or none at all?—Yes, all of them have some little bit of land, except three or four, unless those on the poor roll.
34444. How did such a large number of people without crofts come in?—They gathered there when they were removed from other places, and there was fishing near it.
34445. What other places were they removed from?—They came from some of the farms that have been depopulated throughout the country.
34446. What places are these?—I cannot name them accurately, and therefore would rather not attempt it.
34447. Was Fiden crofted in your time?—No.

34448. How long is it ago since it was made a farm?—As far back as the memory of anybody can go, it was occupied by a gentleman.

34449. What do you consider a double croft to be worth yourself?—I would say that the rent that was paid thirty years ago, when it was first raised, was quite sufficient. It was as much as we could do then to make ends meet.

34450. Don't you think that a croft is worth more now than it was in the year 1850?—I don't think a croft now is worth so much as it was in 1850. It does not yield the same crop as it did then. In proof of that, there are some in our township who have not sent any corn to the mill for twenty years; and those of them who were able to send corn to be ground had to buy as much again for seed.

34451. May they not be giving more of the fodder to the stock than in former times?—They must give more fodder to them, because they have not the pasture they had before, and the crofts do not yield sufficient to feed them. This year itself many of them were much in debt, yet their cattle were in such poor condition that they could not make any market of them.

34452. But don't you think that in ordinary years, for the last five years or so, that a croft was worth more than thirty years ago?—I don't think so.

34453. What is the condition this year of those who have no crofts?—They were getting work throughout the country, and there was help coming from the south.

34454. Were they so poor that it was necessary to get help for them from the outside this year?—It seems that that was the case, because there were very few who had a single potato out of their crop of last year.

34455. I suppose this was felt most by the very small crofters and those who had no land at all?—Yes, of course; because, with their large rents, when they had no produce out of the ground, they suffered more.

34456. What part of the shore do you border upon; is it upon the Sound of Iona?—Yes.

34457. Is there the fishermen are?—Yes.
34458. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie*.—Was any improvement made on your croft by the landlord before your rent was raised in 1850?—He did nothing before that, but since that time there has been some drainage done; and we pay the interest of that for the last twenty years, and that is added to our rent. It is included in our rent at present.

34459. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh*.—Has the Duke of Argyll a large property here in the Ross of Mull?—Yes.

34460. How many crofters are there upon the Duke's estate here?—I cannot tell.

34461. Will there be about fifty?—More than fifty, I think.

34462. Do they occupy much of the land, or shall we say half of the land, belonging to the Duke?—No.

34463. Is the great bulk of the population upon the Duke's estate upon the crofters' land?—Yes.

34464. Will there be one hundred souls altogether upon the big farms?—I cannot say.

34465. Is there anybody living upon them except those necessary to work the farms?—Yes, there are others; a few who may be paupers.

34466. Was the taking away of the ground by Mr Campbell a permanent impoverishment of this township?—It was.

34467. Was there any reason whatever, so far as known to you, why the land should not have been given back when it was in the Duke's own hands?—I don't know any reason.

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Allan
M'Innes.

34468. Your rents have been raised nearly to double from time to time. What object was there in raising the rents?—I cannot tell the object.

34469. Speaking generally, now, about the crofters in Mull, do you know that there is any rule to the effect that when a man dies, leaving a widow with a son not twenty-one years of age, she must remove?—In some cases they were getting land, and in other cases the widow and her children were turned out.

34470. But was it a thing that was generally understood as a rule or regulation on the estate that widows in these circumstances must remove?—It was said so, that when the husband died the widow was no longer to retain the croft; and I myself knew an instance in which this was done.

34471. Do you know a person of the name of Widow M'Phail?—I know the woman; I am not very near her, but I heard about her. There are persons present who were nearer to her.

34472. Are there any delegates present who know the circumstances?—Yes, there are some here from the same town.

34473. What are their names?—Duncan M'Lean and Lachlan Macdonald.

34474. What is the name of the place?—Ardtun.

34475. Has the policy of the estate since the time of Mr Campbell been to impoverish the crofting population in the Ross of Mull?—Yes; since the time of Mr Campbell the rent has been greatly increased, and that always tends to impoverish the crofters.

34476. Except the little drainage that you referred to, can you state anything that has been done by the proprietor for the benefit of the crofters?—I cannot say anything, but the provision made in special cases of loss.

34477. Are you and your brother the joint occupants of the croft?—Yes, we are together.

34478. But your name does not appear in the valuation roll; can you explain that?—The reason why one only appears in the valuation roll is, that we could not have both a vote to send a member to Parliament, and the land had to appear in the name of one.

34479. Is your brother older than you?—Yes.

34480. But in reality the croft belongs to you both?—Yes. The receipt for the rent is only in the name of one.

34481. Did you think the right of voting a very important one?—I think nothing of it.

34482. You now trust to the honour of your brother that you will not be dispossessed of half of the croft?—I am quite sure of that as long as he is of the mind he is of now.

34483. But the Duke of Argyll did his best to put you out of the farm, did he not, when he struck your name out of the roll?—I don't know what was in the Duke's mind, but I did not view what was done in that light.

34484. You were quite willing to let the matter be settled so?—I was.

34485. Was your concurrence asked to allow this change to be made?—Yes, the request was made of myself; my brother was not present; but I fully concurred in what was to be done.

ARGYLL

—
BUNESSAN—
Donald
Beaton and
Alexander
Macfarlane.

DONALD BEATON, Blacksmith, Creich (48), assisted by ALEXANDER MACFARLANE, Crofter, Creich (75)—examined.

34486.—*Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Have you been sent here by the tenants of Creich?—Yes.

34487. Was there a gathering of the township?—Yes.

34488. Were you all present?—Yes, with the exception of one.

34489. Have you any written statement to submit on behalf of the township?—The statement produced is a common statement.

34490. Have you anything further to say on behalf of the people of the township?—Nothing more than what is stated in that paper, excepting that the crofts are too small to maintain a family on them.

34491. (*To Macfarlane*).—How long have you held your land?—Forty-two years.

34492. Do you remember Donald M'Lachlan and Donald M'Gillivray who were crofters in the township thirty years ago?—Yes, I remember them.

34493. Are they still living?—M'Lachlan is alive.

34494. Is he here to-day?—No; he is not on the estate now.

34495. Why did he leave the estate?—The place was taken from him.

34496. He was a tradesman?—He was a smith; Beaton is his successor.

34497. You remember the state of the country thirty years ago; do you consider it poorer now than it was then?—In a certain sense, matters are worse now; the crop does not turn out well, and rents are more than double.

34498. But what I want to know is whether your food is scarcer or worse, or your clothes or houses are worse?—I cannot say that our houses are worse, for the Duke has given us some thatch and lime to make them more comfortable. I am dependent upon my family for a supply of clothing; but for them I would be naked.

34499. My question relates to your knowledge of the country, and not yourself personally?—The houses are better, but the mode of living is not better, for they grew themselves, thirty years ago, what was requisite for food.

34500. And in consequence have they less of it now than they had thirty years ago?—I have less to eat now than I had, for this reason, that I am dependent upon others for it, and my credit is not so good.

34501. *The Chairman.*—We were told that in the year 1850 the rent of the croft was raised about £1?—Yes, between 15s. and £1.

34502. Do you remember the bad years between 1848 and 1851?—I remember these years.

34503. Were the people very much impoverished by these bad seasons?—They were as poor as could be, but relief came from other quarters.

34504. Did they receive much relief from outside quarters?—Yes, a great deal of relief came to the country from other quarters.

34505. Did not the proprietor about that time make very large remissions of rent and give large sums for the assistance of the people?—I never saw anything that reduced the rent, but rather to increase it.

34506. But were not large arrears of rent forgiven?—I never got a penny reduced.

34507. But perhaps your family never was in arrears?—I was in arrears so much that I had to sign bills.

34508. In the year 1850 were the people already recovered from the

ARGYLL. bad years, or were they still very poor?—The people were still very poor.

BUNESSAN. 34509. How long was it before the people had recovered from the bad years of 1848–50, and got into the position they occupied before?—Whatever improvement took place in my circumstances arose chiefly from what was given to me by my family who were in service.

Donald Beaton and Alexander Macfarlane. 34510. (*To Beaton*).—I have questioned Macfarlane because he is an old man; have you anything to add?—I have nothing new to say, but I concur in what has been said by Macfarlane.

34511. *Sheriff Nicolson* (*to Macfarlane*).—Were you in this place some time before 1850?—Since 1842.

34512. What rent were you paying before 1850?—Four guineas.

34513. Was the rent raised in 1850?—The hill was taken from us, and the rent was raised in that very year.

34514. The hill was taken from you, and the rent was raised after the very worst years you had ever had?—Yes.

34515. Are you sure there was no remission of arrears to the people at the time the rent was raised?—I cannot say for others, but there was no remission in my case.

34516. What was your rent raised to then?—From four guineas to £5; 16s. were added to my rent.

34517. How much is it now?—£8, 13s.

34518. Is the land better now than it was forty years ago?—No, it is much worse now. Forty years ago the ground was strong, but it is now so much reduced that it does not yield a right crop.

34519. Was there not some drainage done to improve the land?—No drains were made for me; others got their land drained. £3 were laid out in drainage on my croft, and I am paying interest for that. This interest paid for drainage is now swallowed up in the rent; you cannot distinguish the one from the other.

34520. You don't know how much it is per annum?—It is included in the rent.

34521. Do you expect to be paying it as long as you are alive?—I think I will have to pay it as long as I am in possession.

34522. Did you get much benefit from these drains?—Yes, I got benefit.

34523. Did it not improve the land?—Yes it improved the land, and will improve it as long as the drains remain good.

34524. Are they not in good order?—A drain does not last long, and if not looked after it chokes.

34525. Why don't you look after them yourself?—I am looking after the drains and opening them up and sorting them wherever required. I have made many drains myself, but the £3 mentioned is all that I ever got.

34526. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh*.—Although you suffered very much in those times, would you not have recovered your position and not now been a poor man were it not that your pasture was taken from you and your rent almost doubled?—Yes, no doubt.

34527. *Sheriff Nicolson*.—Are you employed in the quarries?—No; I never worked in the quarries.

34528. But many of your neighbours do?—Very few are working in the quarries altogether.

34529. Why is that?—There is no employment; they only employ a few.

34530. What wages do they get?—If they work full time they have from 18s. to £1. None of the crofters have work in the quarries that I know of.

34531. *The Chairman (to Beaton).*—Is there an understanding upon the Duke of Argyle's estate here that no revaluation is to take place for ten years?—I don't know that such is the case.

ARGYLL
BUNESSAN.

Donald
Beaton and
Alexander
M'Farlane.

JOHN M'CORMICK, Crofter, Catchesan (55), assisted by **JOHN M'KINNON,** Crofter, Catchesan (33)—examined.

John
M'Cormick
and John
M'Kinnon.

34532. *Mr Cameron.*—Have you a written statement?—I have.—The principal of our grievances is the high rent put on us for our holdings, and the excess of stock assigned to our pasturage since the year 1850. Our township consists of twelve crofts. One holds three crofts, one two half crofts, one two crofts, four single crofts, and three half crofts each, paying a rental of from £4 to £27. The average rental before 1850 was £3, 15s. A crofter holding five crofts, and paying a rental of £18, 15s., lost almost all his stock by the biting of rabid dogs, brought to the place by the gamekeeper. He was advised by the chamberlain to make his case known to his Grace, which was done after a copy was provided by himself. The crofter restocked in full; but the proprietor acknowledged his petition by a summons of removal depriving him of three crofts. A settlement was refused, and he was obliged to bring his stock of three crofts to Bunessan for sale. The auctioneer was prohibited by the factor from crying the sale, which left the alternative of selling to his own drover, at a disadvantage; and the rental of the two remaining crofts was, moreover, raised to £10. The crofts taken away were cropped by the proprietor for two years, after which they with two other vacated crofts were turned into common grassing, while the rental of the two crofts in his possession was further raised to £18, and the stock from two to four cows. Subsequently the crofts were relet to crofters at the raised rent, and increased stock. A quarry was opened about twenty years ago; in connection with it a croft was given for grassing for manager's cow, and horses required in the quarry, and the common was put to the crofters. At a later time four crofts and a strip with a portion of the common was marked off for the quarry, and still later two additional were made over to them, occupied by the crofters as sub-tenants with their rent raised, which in itself is a grievance. The quarry is the cause of much damage, and no compensation given or allowed. In 1874 or 1875 a croft was taken off our common, cutting off free access to our stock watering-place. A system for diminishing our means to pay our rent is in progress by giving sites and attaching lands for another rent. Our pasturage is now been for one-half the stock assigned to it. The harsh and cruel law of evictions, formerly used, has now given way to the more modern and refined mode of grinding away our subject, by diminishing our means, which will eventually serve the purpose of bringing us into abject poverty. The discouraging treatment to which the peasant was subject was, and is, deemed sufficient prohibition to lawful wedlock. The writer hereof is an instance. The population of this parish, including Iona *quoad sacra*, was in 1841, 5197; in 1871, 2461; in 1881, 1990. Notwithstanding the enormous decrease of population, the poverty of the remnant crofters is as enormously increasing. Thirty years ago eleven families including one cottar were all the occupants of this township, now there are twenty-two, all paying rent, and six of them only for houses. At one time un-protected patches were sown in a large piece of the common, which was

ARGYLL.

'the cause of two crofters dropping off our petition, for an amicable way of arranging rent was refused in 1881.'

BUNESSAN.

34533. How many crofters are there in the township of Catechan paying rent?—Nine.

John
M'Cormick
and John
M'Kinnon.

34534. How does it happen that there are only three in the valuation roll?—*Mackinnon.* There are some of them sub-tenants.

34535. (*To M'Cormick.*)—You do not live upon the croft?—I am not living on the croft there is no house on the croft.

34536. Where do you live?—I live on a croft that is sublet.

34537. Are all these seven other crofters, besides those in the valuation roll, sub-tenants of the three that are mentioned?—John M'Kinnon here, Archibald Campbell, and myself next, and the Free Church minister. None of these have sub-tenants.

34538. Who have the sub-tenants?—The quarry people.

34539. How many are sub-tenants of the quarry company?—These are sub-tenants of the quarry company, and other three are paying rent to the proprietor.

34540. Do you represent the sub-tenants as well as the crofters who pay rent?—The sub-tenants never came into our meetings at all except one.

34541. Then I am to understand that you represent yourself and the other two crofters?—I represent myself and the other two crofters.

34542. And you do not represent the sub-tenants?—I do not represent the sub-tenants.

34543. Will you state what is the grievance that you and your two fellow crofters who pay rent to the Duke have at present?—High rent and bad pasture.

34544. I see that you all three have some pasture which you hold individually besides the common pasture—is that so?—No, the sub-tenants and others have the full pasture in common.

34545. And do the three crofters who pay rent to the Duke possess any pasture for themselves?—None whatever.

34546. What amount of stock do you keep yourself?—We stock about three cows on the croft and a horse.

34547. And what is the extent of the arable land?—The crofts will sow about two-and-a-half bolls to three, with half a dozen barrels of potatoes.

34548. Do you know how many acres that represents?—We would put about a boll to an acre—say two and a half acres to each croft, and about an acre of potato ground—three and a half acres of land between oats and potatoes for each croft.

34549. Your rent is £6, 15s.?—Yes.

34550. Do you consider that high?—It is double what it was thirty years ago.

34551. Do you consider it high now as things go?—Yes.

34552. Do you get back any of that rent in the shape of rent for sheep grazings?—Yes.

34553. How much do you get back for that?—£2, or £2, 5s.

34554. For wintering hoggs?—Yes.

34555. So that practically reduces it to £4, 15s.?—Yes.

34556. When did you first get this benefit of rent back for wintering hoggs?—We do not consider it a benefit at all; it would be some twenty-five years ago, or not so long.

34557. But before that time there was no wintering of hoggs?—No, none.

34558. Will you explain how that is no benefit?—Because our pasture is bare enough without that.

34559. That might be no benefit to the man who owns the hoggs, but it is no disadvantage to you?—It is too bare for our stock as it is. Thirty years ago we used to have plenty of fodder, and the land is now exhausted.

ARGYLL.

34560. About those hoggs I don't quite understand why it is no benefit to you to get £2 out of £6, 15s.?—All the rent we got for the hoggs goes to the Duke as a rise.

BUNESSAN.

34561. But wouldn't it explain in some way the rise?—But that destroys the grazing.

John

M'Cormick
and John
M'Kinnon.

34562. But it is a clear benefit to you getting £2?—Of course, in the circumstances, it is; but it is spoiling the summer grazing.

34563. But you are not compelled by the factor to do it?—We were compelled to have them.

34564. But would you give it up if you could?—No mistake of that.

34565. You would give up the £2, and not let the pasture to hoggs?—Yes, if I would get the croft at a reasonable rent.

34566. But as it is now?—No, we must have something to pay the rent.

34567. When did those rabid dogs come?—In the year 1852.

34568. Who was the gamekeeper or factor then?—Mr Campbell was factor.

34569. Who was the gamekeeper?—One Ross.

34570. I suppose neither of them are present here to-day?—No.

34571. And it was in 1852 that this matter of the auctioneer took place?—No, some years after that.

34572. Was Mr Campbell the factor then too?—He was.

34573. You say a quarry was opened 'about twenty years ago, and in connection with it a croft was given for grazing the manager's cow and horses required in the quarry, and the common was put to the crofters. At a later time four crofts with a strip was marked off to the quarry, and still later two additional were made over to them, occupied by the two crofters as sub-tenants with their rents raised?' Were those who were formerly crofters and paid rent to his Grace removed?—The crofts were let over their heads to the quarry.

34574. The people are there, but instead of paying rent to his Grace they pay rent to the quarry?—Yes.

34575. And they object to that?—Yes.

34576. They would rather hold their land direct from the Duke?—Of course.

34577. Have the people who hold the quarry raised their rent?—They have. They raised the rent 10s. in 1873.

34578. Do you know if any equivalent was given for that?—I am not aware of it.

34579. Do you know if any reason was given why the rent was raised?—I don't know any reason except that they wished to raise it.

34580. What was the average rent of those sub-tenants before it was raised?—They were £7, 10s., and they were raised to £8.

34581. Is that all the rise that has taken place in these crofts?—Yes.

34582. It is stated that in 1874 or 1875, 'a croft was taken off our common, cutting off the access to our stock watering-place;' who was the croft given to?—To the Free Church minister.

34583. Do you know if he asked for it?—I am sure he did; but he is not there now.

34584. Has the present Free Church minister still got the croft?—Yes.

ARGYLL.

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BUNESSAN.John
McCormick
and John
M'Kinnon.

34585. Did you ever ask him if he would give it up?—No, and I don't suppose he would.

34586. Did you and the other crofters remonstrate with the chamberlain for giving the croft to the Free Church minister?—Not much, because there was no use talking about it.

34587. How could you tell until you tried?—We just thought it; we were threatened everywhere.

34588. Had you a general feeling of alarm that you dare not ask for that or anything else?—That was just the case. My father was a very old man at the time, and did not want to make any row about it.

34589. Did you think that feeling of alarm was entertained by the others as well as your father?—It was entertained by my father; every one of them expressed themselves against that croft being taken off and given to the minister amongst ourselves.

34590. But you did not express it to the management of the estate?—I don't think so.

34591. (*To M'Kinnon*).—Do you concur in saying that the reason it was not asked was that there was a general sense of fear?—Yes, that was the reason. It was fear that we would be visited with after consequences.

34592. Were most of the people members of the congregation of the Free Church minister?—Yes, some of the sub-tenants were members of the Free Church, but none of the other three.

34593. All the people whose stock watering-place was injured, were not members of the Free Church?—No.

34594. (*To McCormack*).—What is the prohibition to lawful wedlock to which you refer?—Because there is no encouragement to multiply on the land when we are huddled about so much, or rear a family in a respectable way.

34595. There was no direct prohibition to marry?—No, but twenty or thirty years ago there was.

34596. Was it prohibition of banns?—No, the marriage was delayed on account of prohibition by the chamberlain. One of the parties is living yet.

34597. One of the people whose marriage was prohibited?—Yes.

34598. Did he afterwards marry?—They were married afterwards by Mr M'Gregor, Iona.

34599. How long afterwards?—A few weeks.

34600. Have they lived happily ever since?—They lived happily while they lived; but the husband is dead, and the wife is now a pauper.

34601. Was the husband industrious?—Middling.

34602. But with this exception, there was no direct prohibition to marry; but people from their poverty are not able to marry?—Just from their circumstances.

34603. Are you really in a state of poverty—are your means insufficient to enable you to live tolerably comfortable?—They are.

34604. Do you get no work?—There is some work in the quarry.

34605. Do they not take advantage of it?—A few work in it—able-bodied men.

34606. What wages do they earn?—I suppose from 15s. to 20s. a week when they work a whole week.

34607. The sub-tenants have all got a cow's grass?—Yes, and one of them has two crofts in his tenancy, and one old woman has her old croft yet.

34608. Do you consider it a case of great hardship in the condition of things where the head of a family can earn 15s. to £1 a week, and where

they have cow's grass and some of them two and potato ground?—I would not consider that a great hardship.

34609. And had a small croft?—No.

34610. Then why are these people in such abject poverty if they have a cow's grass and potato ground, and can earn that?—They are not very regularly paid, and some of them are in great distress sometimes owing to that; and some of them have no cow.

34611. I thought you said they had a cow?—They have a cow's grass, and if they have a cow they can graze it.

34612. Do not the company pay their wages regularly?—No.

34613. When they do pay their wages do they pay in money, or is there a store?—I suppose they pay them now in money.

34614. There is nothing of truck?—Not much now that I am aware of.

34615. Was there formerly?—There was.

34616. How long ago?—It was very considerable before the year 1868.

34617. Who put a stop to it?—The quarry company failed.

34618. Then this is a new company?—I suppose it is.

34619. And they started a new system?—Yes.

34620. Do the people prefer being paid in money to taking their wages in goods?—So I should think.

34621. What does that mean about the two crofters dropping off?—The factor's cattle at that time used to break in over our march, and one crofter got two cows killed by the factor's stock, and the other fellow had to leave off for breaking down his croft fence and destroying his crops.

34622. He gave up the land?—Yes, he is without the land.

34623. He had the land taken from him?—Yes.

34624. For doing what?—He had done nothing that I know of.

34625. You said something about a cow?—That was the man M'Cor-mack, who lost two cows by the factor's stock.

34626. And another man lost his land because his cows fought with the factor's?—Yes.

34627. I understand the factor's cows came over the march and killed two of the crofter's cows?—Yes.

34628. And in consequence of that another crofter, whose cows had nothing to do with it, was dispossessed of his land?—Yes, because his fence was knocked down and the crops destroyed—a man named M'Gilli-vray, living at the ferry.

34629. Was any explanation given of that?—No, not that I know of.

34630. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—I suppose you do not belong to the Free Church?—No, not now; I once did.

34631. You had no objections to the Free Church minister getting the croft; but I suppose you thought it should have been given from a big farm?—No; we would have been agreeable to give him a piece of the common in another fashion altogether.

34632. You said it was no benefit for you to get the £2 for the wintering. Whose hoggs are wintered on the croft?—Mr Elliot's, for the last nine or ten years.

34633. Who is Mr Elliot?—A farmer on the other side of Mull.

34634. Is it understood you are bound to winter his hoggs?—No, because others had it before he had it; but he is as good a man as we could get. I was bound to take some hoggs.

34635. You said it was not worth the £2 this winter, because it destroyed your grazing for the next summer?—Yes.

34636. In fact, it is a burden upon you which you would rather be rid of?—Yes; if we could get rid of the rent, we would soon get rid of them.

34637. Did you ever hear anybody assign a reason why the quarry

ARGYLL.

BUNESSAN.

John
M'Cormick
and John
M'Kinnon.

ARGYLL.

—
BUNESSAN.John
M'Cormick
and John
M'Kinnon.

people were allowed to get some of the old crofters as their sub-tenants?—I don't know, indeed. I don't know unless that they wished to do away with the crofters that were there.

34638. Have the quarry people the power if they chose to dispossess their sub-tenants?—I think so, if they chose.

34639. And does it come to this, that the authorities would like, in the event of any people being put out, that they should be put out by somebody else and not themselves?—I think that would be it.

34640. Are you aware that in every well-regulated property now-a-days sub-tenancies are prohibited, and that everybody is made to pay direct to the proprietor?—No, I was not aware of that; but it is far the best way. [Question repeated to M'Kinnon.]—I think that is the best way.

34641. (*To M'Cormick.*)—At the time the truck system, which before 1868 you said was very severe in the quarries, do you know whether the proprietor or those in authority on the estate were aware it was going on?—They would be aware.

34642. Are you aware that such a system, called the truck system, has been prohibited by Act of Parliament as an oppression to people under it?—I know there is such a law.

34643. So far as you have an opportunity of judging of the state of people like yourself in your neighbourhood, do you consider that they are as poor now as ever they were, if not poorer?—They are much poorer now than they have been that I can remember.

34644. You say the united parish in 1841 amounted to 4113, and now it is reduced to 1990, being a reduction of more than one-half?—That is correct.

34645. So that although the united parishes have fallen off by more than one-half, the state of many of the people remaining is worse than before?—Yes.

34646. Can you also say that the rental of parishes has risen enormously during forty years?—Yes.

34647. Rents have been rising and population diminishing?—Yes.

34648. Do you consider the state of matters in the Ross of Mull generally satisfactory to the crofting community?—I do not.

34649. What do you suggest should be done to improve that in a permanent form?—That every crofter should have ten cows and fifty or sixty sheep to rear his family respectably.

34650. And a horse?—Two horses and as much land as would do that.

34651. For such accommodation would they be willing to pay a fair rent?—Yes.

34652. Is there more than enough of land in the Ross of Mull which would sustain at that increased acreage all the people that need it?—Yes.

34653. And something to spare?—Yes, and even leave the large farms.

34654. Is there any official connected with the estate of Argyll who has a farm upon the Ross of Mull?—I don't know. The ground officer has a croft, I suppose.

34655. Only a croft?—Only a croft.

34656. No one has a farm of any size?—Not that I remember of just now.

34657. Is there any higher official resident in the Ross of Mull than the ground officer?—No.

34658. I think you used the expression about taking hoggs, that you are bound to take some hoggs?—We were made bound to take them before, and necessity compels us to take them now.

34659. Are you aware that there is such a rule upon the Argyll estate

that no person under £100 will get a lease?—I am not aware, but there may be.

ARGYLL.

BUNESSAN.

John

M'Cormick

and John

M'Kinnon,

34660. Have any of the crofters got leases here?—Not that I know of.

34661. Are there any printed regulations that you are bound by?—Yes, I suppose there are printed regulations, but I never saw them.

34662. And you never signed them?—My father may have signed them.

34663. Is this prohibition about widows put in force now?—I heard about a widow M'Phail. I recollect it being strongly enforced.

34664. What was the reason assigned for such a law, if any?—I don't know what reason could be assigned for it. I knew one widow whose husband died in February, and she was removed in March, and she had a full stock.

34665. Had she a son?—A son about seventeen or eighteen.

34666. What became of that family; were they removed from the estate altogether?—No, she was one of the best crofter-farmers in Ross, and she was sent to another croft; and she was removed from it to another croft, and from the croft where her husband died to a house without a croft; and at last she died out of the place altogether.

34667. What was the name of that woman?—Mary M'Kinnon or M'Coll.

34668. What was the name of the town she was in first?—Suie; she was sent from there to Ardalanish; from there to Cathean; and from there to Ardalanish, back again to the house without land.

34669. *The Chairman.*—You stated you were about fifty-five years of age; does your memory extend back to the year 1850?—Yes.

34670. We heard it stated that about the year 1850 in another township an addition of £1 on the rental had been made—do you know anything about that?—I do not particularly know about that.

34671. Do you remember that the people were very poor in those years?—Yes, they were very poor, and many of the crofters in that township left the place.

34672. Did you ever hear when you were a young man, that the Duke of Argyll had made large remissions of rent, and spent large sums in support of the people during the bad years?—So far as I remember, I heard that he remitted the rents of some, but I did not hear that it was general.

34673. What parish are you in?—Iona *quoad sacra*.

34674. Is this the united parish of Kilfinichen and Kilvickeon?—Yes.

34675. In the year 1851 there was a report made to Government by Sir John M'Neill upon the state of the people in the islands. In that report I find it stated, that in the four years, from 1846 to 1850, the Duke of Argyll expended in wages and gratuities to the inhabitants £1790, besides the whole revenue derived from the property in those four years. Did you ever hear those great sacrifices made by the Duke of Argyll spoken of among the people?—I heard that he remitted the rent of some who had large and young families, but he did not do it as a rule throughout the country.

34676. Do you think it is right for a proprietor to discriminate between those who need it and those who do not?—I think it is right that the proprietor should distinguish between the needy and the less needy, and that he should give in accordance.

34677. Has there been any expenditure by the landlord of late years upon considerable works of improvement in the parish?—I am not aware that there was much; there was this year a little done at Creich.

ARGYLL.

BUNESSAN.

John
M'Cormick
and John
M'Kinnon.

34678. At whose expense have the improvements on this place and port been made?—I think it was the Duke of Argyll.

34679. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—I suppose you are obliged to let the wintering of the croft, because the high rent makes it necessary you should make the most money out of the croft?—That is the very reason.

34680. If your rent was less wouldn't you try still to make the most money out of it?—I would endeavour to make more out of my own stock; it deteriorates our grazing.

34681. But whether your rent is high or low your endeavour is to make the most money possible out of the croft?—Yes, but we make more money by raising our own stock.

34682. If you would make more money in that way, why do you make less money by having this wintering stock in?—We were bound to take them in once, but we continue now from necessity.

34683. You were bound by the regulations of the property?—I am not aware; but we were bound by the factor.

34684. You mean that the factor had a farm of his own, but made you take his stock?—I don't know whether they were his stock or not—he had a nephew, and he left the wintering to him for two years, and never paid it.

34685. And the factor insisted you should let the wintering to his nephew?—He let it without our consent.

34686. And paid you the money?—No, he never paid us the money.

34687. What year was that?—I think about 1866 or 1867.

34688. He did not let it; he took possession of your crofts, in fact?—He let it to them, and put in a stock of hogs.

34689. And did that man pay any rent for it to anybody?—No, because when Mr Campbell died the crofters put in an account to the trustees, and the trustees declined to pay it, and then it was sent to Mr Wyllie.

34690. And Mr Wyllie knew about it?—He knew about it; the account was sent to him, and never a farthing was paid.

34691. And at present you continue this practice because you make more money in that way than otherwise?—Yes.

34692. You said it would be desirable to enlarge the crofts so as to have ten cows and fifty sheep, and that you could do that and still retain the large farms?—Yes.

34693. How could you do that?—The old townships that have been cleared into large farms, if they were given to the people now, there would be quite sufficient for all the people of Ross.

34694. Reduce the large farms?—Yes.

34695. To what they were—when?—In the year 1850.

34696. That would leave enough land to supply the crofter and cottar population with crofts sufficient for ten cows and fifty sheep?—I think so.

34697. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Are you the writer of the paper yourself?—Yes.

34698. I understand that the factor's cows broke the fence of the crofter and ate his crops?—Yes, and not only that, but the neighbour's did it too.

34699. And then these cows went and killed the neighbour's cow?—They went and killed two cows.

34700. And were there any damages got for this?—The only damages given was that the land was taken from him.

34701. Did he ever ask any?—I don't know; the children of one of them are here to-day.

34702. I suppose, if there was any likelihood of their getting damages they would ask them?—I believe they would ask it.

34703. About this expenditure of money, were you in the country yourself between the years 1846 and 1851?—Yes.

34704. Although you took no part yourself in the work going on at the time you know well enough what work was going on?—The work which was going on was draining and trenching, and building fences and making boundaries.

34705. Where were these things done?—They were mostly done about the farm of Ardfenaig.

34706. In whose possession was that farm at that time?—In the factor's.

34707. Did you ever hear of the statement before that, during those years, there was expended upon works on the estate and upon gratuities to the people, the whole rental of the estate and £1790 more?—I never heard it before to-day.

34708. How were the people paid for the work that was done at that time?—Some who were working there—Alexander Macfarlane, who has been before you, and another—worked twenty years, and I heard them saying last night they were only getting from 1d. to 1½d. the hour; and they wrought for about twenty years.

34709. Were they always paid in money?—No, they were paid in kind.

34710. By whom?—The clerk to the factor.

34711. From your knowledge of the amount of work that was done and the number of people that were employed, and the wages they received at that time, are you able to understand the statement that there was expended upon the people of this place the whole rent of the estate and £1790 more?—I could not say as to that; the work was done very cheaply. There was a good deal of work done and improvements made, especially in Ardfenaig and some other large farms, but I cannot give any idea of it.

34712. In what kind of goods were they paid?—Meal; the factor kept a meal store.

34713. What was the amount of meal usually paid for a day's work?—I don't know; I suppose they would get what they worked for.

34714. You don't know the rate they were paid?—No.

34715. Are there some people here yet who were at this work and got this kind of wage?—Yes.

34716. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Is it possible that much of this large sum which is said to have been spent may have gone out of the Duke's pocket and never have been spent in reality upon the estate?—I cannot say.

34717-9. Is it possible?—It is quite possible.

DUNCAN MCLEAN, Crofter, Ardtun (60), assisted by LACHLAN MACDONALD, Crofter, Ardtum (60)—examined.

34720. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Have you a paper?—No.

34721. What have you to state for the people of Ardtun?—The only thing we have to say is that we complain that the rents are higher than the land is worth.

34722. How many crofters are there in Ardtun?—More than twenty.

34723. Do the rents vary, or are they uniform?—They vary.

34724. What is the highest rent?—About £22; that is, £11 for one croft.

ARGYLL
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BUNESSAN.
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John
McCormick
and John
McKinnon.

Duncan
McLean and
Lachlan
Macdonald.

- ARGYLL. 34725. Are there any who have more than one croft?—The most of them have two crofts, paying from £16 to £18 and £20.
- BUNESSAN. 34726. What is the smallest rent any of them pay?—About £8.
- Duncan M'Lean and Lachlan M'Donald. 34727. What is the amount of arable land on a single croft?—About six and a half acres; that is an average.
34728. And what extent of pasture have you?—I cannot tell the extent of it. It is not good.
34729. What stock do you keep on your two crofts?—Some have four, five, and six cows on the two crofts; that is the whole stock.
34730. Horses?—Two horses besides.
34731. Any sheep?—No sheep.
34732. Where is your hill pasture?—Our pasture is a moss between our township and Bunessan; and there was at one time a place where peat was cut.
34733. Are there any cottars there?—A few.
34734. How many?—A good many about Ardtun.
34735. Have they any land?—No, except what they get from the crofters; they get a bit generally from the crofters gratis to put potatoes in.
34736. Has your rent been raised much within the last twenty years?—I moved to Ardtun in 1855. At that time the rent was £8. Then it was raised to £10.
34737. How soon after?—I cannot really say. Then it was raised to £12.
34738. What is it now?—£16, 8s. The last rise was about seven years ago.
34739. Has the land been much improved since you came into possession?—It has been very much improved by myself.
34740. What improvements did you make?—Draining and reclaiming. I drained about 900 roods of the ground and built houses and many other things.
34741. What houses did you build?—Dwelling-house, stable, and byre. The whole places were in perfect ruin when I went.
34742. Did you get assistance from the proprietor to build the houses?—No, there was no such thing allowed at that time; but since this 'hooley' came we get all things we require, such as lime and wood.
34743. Have you received any advantage in that respect in building or improving your houses?—No, not a penny. I got £3 in Mr Wyllie's time for damage done by storm and for repairing the houses again.
34744. Have you a lease?—No.
34745. Have any of your people leases?—Not one that I know.
34746. Have they ever desired to have leases?—I think they are just as well wanting them while their rents are so high; they cannot stand the pressure on them owing to the high rent.
34747. If you were removing from that place to some other, would you get some compensation for the buildings you erected?—I don't know. I am not aware that any compensation was given for any improvements of lands or houses previous to the present chamberlain's time of office; but lately lime is given in every improvement that may be necessary about the buildings.
34748. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—I understand you are able to give some information about widow M'Phail?—I know something about her case; she was near me in the township.
34749. How long is it since her husband died?—A twelvemonth last May.
34750. What was the age of her eldest son about that time?—I cannot exactly tell his age.

34751. Was he upwards of fourteen?—Between fourteen and fifteen.

34752. Can you tell us whether or not the widow presented a petition to the chamberlain asking that she might be continued in the croft?—I don't know myself, but there may be others who know.

34753. Did you hear it was done?—I heard it.

34754. So far as you are aware, was the widow in pretty comfortable circumstances, and quite able to keep a good stock upon the place?—Yes, she had a full stock, and was able to pay the rent.

34755. Do you know if any answer was received to that petition?—I cannot say further than that I heard she was not to get the land.

34756. Was it afterwards given to a schoolmaster?—He is not a schoolmaster; he was a schoolmaster.

34757. Is he an inspector of poor?—Yes.

34758. And does he hold some other offices as well?—Yes, he is collector of poor rates and clerk to the School Board.

34759. Was it a common report in the locality that the first notice that the widow got that she was not to occupy the place was by this man going about and telling he had got it?—She understood that to be the case.

34760. Are you aware that this matter of widow M'Phail got into the Glasgow newspapers?—I heard that it was in the papers, but I did not see it myself.

34761. Have you also heard, or do you know yourself, that pressure was brought to bear on the widow by some people on the estate to get her to sign a paper that she was willing to go out of her own accord?—I have heard that such was done, but I cannot speak of it from my own knowledge.

34762. Is the widow here?—She is living in the village of Bunessan.

34763. And her son?—Yes. She has a little shop. I was hearing these matters, but I was not inquiring.

34764. Was the result that she left the place voluntarily or involuntarily?—She left the place on the term day.

34765. What is she doing now?—She keeps a little shop in the village.

34766. Who is the proprietor of the shop?—Donald M'Lean, junior.

34767. Does he pay a feu-duty to the Duke of Argyll?—I think he does.

34768. What is the name of the inspector of poor?—Alexander M'Gregor.

34769. Where did he come from?—I cannot say. He came to this place from Coll.

34770. Was there no other place on the estate for him but the widow's croft?—I don't know; at all events, he got it.

34771. Was it talked of a good deal in the country here—the hardship of putting out this poor woman who was not in arrears, and who had a good stock and a son past childhood?—I was hearing a great many speaking about it.

34772. Do you know Uisken?—I know it well.

34773. Was there a widow in Uisken lately put out of her croft?—I am not aware of any person but the widow of John M'Ewan, and she got the croft back.

34774. What rent was she paying?—I don't know the rent.

34775. Are you aware there was a petition presented to-day by a woman from Uisken that she was deprived of her croft, although she was able to pay her rent?—There are some from Uisken who know the circumstances better than I do.

34776. Professor Mackinnon (*to Macdonald*).—Have you lived in Ardton all your life?—No.

ARGYLL.
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BUNESSAN.
—

Duncan
M'Lean and
Lachlan
M'Donald.

- ARGYLL. 34777. Where did you come from?—Shiaba.
- BUNESSAN. 34778. When?—In 1838 my father left Shiaba. We went to Ardalaniish.
- Duncan M'Lean and Lachlan McDonald. 34779. And from there?—From there to Ardtun.
34780. How many years were you in Ardalaniish?—Sixteen years.
34781. And did you remove to Ardtun at the same time as your neighbour?—In the year 1854.
34782. Was Shiaba under crofters when you were there?—Yes.
34783. How many were there?—Eight.
34784. Did they hold their land from the proprietor?—Yes, from the Duke direct.
34785. Not from the tacksman?—No.
34786. But there was a tacksman in the place?—There was a factor.
34787. And what was done to the place after these eight left it? Were other crofters put in, or was it added to the farm?—The tacksman took it at that time, and it is now in the hands of a Lowland tacksman.
34788. Is the arable ground you and your neighbours cultivated there, still being cultivated by the present farmer, or is the place now a grazing farm?—No, not a bit of it cultivated, and has not been for the last twenty years or more.
34789. Where did your old neighbours in Shiaba go?—Some left the kingdom.
34790. When you removed to Ardalaniish?—I cannot say for certain, but some came to this neighbourhood.
34791. How many families were there?—Twelve families.
34792. What was done to the land those twelve had?—The land they had is a sheep farm under one tenant.
34793. When you went to Ardtun, what was your rent?—£8.
34794. Has your rent been raised like M'Lean's?—A croft in the place was added to the hill pasture, and the rent of that croft was divided among the tenants, and my portion of that for the two crofts came to £1. We considered it good value.
34795. You were quite agreeable to that rise, because you got value for it?—Yes.
34796. What is your rent now?—I pay now £18, 15s. for the two crofts.
34797. And is the land for which you pay now £18, 15s. the same land exactly as that for which you paid £9?—Exactly the same.
34798. In what year was the croft added to the hill pasture?—About sixteen years ago.
34799. You began to pay £9 then?—Yes.
34800. When did you begin to pay £18, 15s.?—In 1876.
34801. Does that mean that within the space of nine years the rent of the croft was doubled?—That is so, and 15s. more.
34802. What is the stock you keep?—Three cows on the croft and a horse.
34803. Any sheep?—Twelve sheep on one croft.
34804. You have small beasts as well as the cows?—Yes.
34805. What is the summing upon the two crofts?—Six cows, two horses, and twelve sheep.
34806. Have all your neighbours sheep?—Yes.
34807. Do they all keep their full stock?—Yes.
34808. Do you remember Ardtun before you came to live in it?—It has always been under crop.
34809. But you like the place quite well, except that you consider the

rent too high?—I like the place well enough and the neighbours, only I consider the rent too high.

34810. What rent would you consider reasonable for those crofts for which you are paying £18, 15s.?—I think if the rent was about £13 it would give me room to live.

34811. You quite agree, after considering the price of stock and labour, and the general improvement in the condition of the place all over, that the croft is worth now somewhat more than it was when you went to Ardtun first?—Some of the crofts are better than others; and those I have, if they were drained and reclaimed, would be worth fully more than when I went.

34812. Your neighbour said he did not want a lease because the rent was too high. If you got your crofts at a reasonable rent would you like a lease?—We would take a lease from the Duke.

34813. Would you wish it?—Yes, if the rent was reasonable.

34814. But you would not wish to take a lease at the present high rent?—No; we are not prepared to take a lease just now.

34815. Did you ask for a reduction?—I spoke to the chamberlain about a reduction, and he said he could not do anything in the meantime; he would speak for me, and I think he will do it.

34816. Are there many in the place, in Ardtun, without land at all?—Yes, a good many.

34817. What was their condition this last winter?—Some were complaining, and some bad enough. They were tiding over as best they could.

34818. They were in very much poorer circumstances than those who had land?—I cannot say that their state was worse than those who had the land.

34819. Were you in the country yourself between 1846 and 1851?—No.

34820. Or your neighbour?—No, neither of us were; we were helping our parents.

34821. I suppose there is as much land, arable and grazing, attached to the village of Ardtun as when you went there?—I am not aware that any person lost an inch.

34822. Your only complaint is that your rent is so high?—Our only complaint is that the rent is too high, and if we get it down we will be all comfortable. I have a small matter to bring before the Commission which was entrusted to me by a neighbour. When I came to the crofts I now have they were in the hands of the factor, and the grass that was then in the crofts the neighbours got it to put their cows in. For this privilege some paid 10s., some more, and one paid 30s. That got into the Duke's booke, and remained so until this time. The rent was raised a short time after that, and I was of opinion that they are confounding what they were paying for the privilege of grazing upon this croft with the rise which was made upon the rent. I am only speaking as I was informed; I cannot say myself; I was not in the country at the time.

ALEXANDER MACPHERSON, Crofter, Kinloch (40), assisted by MALCOLM M'LEAN, Crofter, Kinloch (38)—examined.

34823. *The Chairman.*—Have you got a paper?—Yes.—In the township of Kinloch there were in 1861 twenty-five people. Up to that time the crofters had been in the enjoyment of hill pasture, but the then

ARGYLL.

BUNESSAN.

Duncan
M'Lean and
Lachlan
M'Donald.

Alexander
Macpherson
and Malcolm
M'Lean.

ARGYLL. proprietor deprived them of it, and in consequence they were not able
 ————— to keep so large a stock. No abatement of rent was made when the
 BUNESSAN. pasture was taken away. In 1815, fifteen crofters were deprived of
 ————— their crofts, and these were converted into a large holding. Twenty
 Alexander Macpherson years ago rents were £6 and £6, 10s., but they have been increased
 nd Malcolm until now they are £8 and £10. The present proprietor, besides raising
 M'Lean. our rent, took away the horse park, still further reducing the grazing.
 The crofters also have to build their own houses, the landlord giving
 no assistance. We now beg to make a statement which will enable the
 Royal Commission to take in the surroundings as well as the condition
 of the complainants, and perhaps see how far it is in the power of the
 rulers of the country to redress the grievances complained of without
 loss or injury to any one else. From any elevation here about, the eye
 will take in a strath at the head of the loch at least three miles in
 length, and averaging a mile in breadth. On the north side of the loch
 there is a fine slope of ten miles, combining excellent arable land and
 about the best of hill grazing. On the south side there is an equal
 extent although not of equality, but still what the poor cottars and
 crofters would be thankful to have for all this wealth of land within.
 Near the whole of the crofters' population, and nearly all the cottars
 are like so many half-water half-land plants studded over the poorest
 parts of the slopeland often flooded by the tide, and never properly
 drained for seed; in short, the Kinloch crofters are placed as above on
 the only spots in the district of this sort of land. The average extent
 of arable land held by the crofters is two acres a piece, as estimated from
 the quantity of seed sown—about one boll of oats, and four or five
 barrels of potatoes; and the only pasture is made up of the worst
 patches about and among the arable portions. Eight crofters make a
 shift to keep two cows each by buying fodder in the winter, and not
 one of them has a horse. For this there is a rent of £72 exacted.
 There are two who are neither crofters nor cottars, having a small bit of
 garden, each pay between them £4, 5s. There is ten cottars who pay
 £1 a piece house rent, and for every barrel of potatoes they pay 10s.
 extra. There are four cottars who must be mentioned to the credit of
 the estate as paying no rent at all, but their only visible means of sub-
 sistence from the local resources is the small quantity of potatoes which
 they raise out of land given them by the crofters. There is only one
 pauper on the Kinloch estate just now, several having died of late years,
 some of them under circumstances which require to be laid before our
 gracious Sovereign. Neil Black, an old man, who was well to do at one
 time on a farm, and on being evicted by the late Loch Buy, could not get
 even a cow's grass, died a pauper four years ago. He was so poor and
 so neglected, that when the neighbours felt called upon to minister to
 his necessities and offered him bodily attendance, his flesh was falling
 off his bones, and he was in so disgusting a state that only stout-hearted
 men could go near him. The cause was aggravated by there being two
 sisters in with him, which only add to the distress. Widow M'Donald,
 also very old, and a pauper, died nearly two years ago, and but for her
 poor neighbours would have been dead years previously. But they could
 not prevent all the effects of official neglect, and the woman became
 diseased from want of attention, and the maggots were alive in her body
 before she was dead. Donald Black, at one time a crofter, but being
 unable to cultivate his land without a horse, gave up, and soon became
 a pauper. He also died about three years ago, his death having been
 hastened by want of care, and the consequent filth in and about his
 bed and clothes. He was a prey to heaps of vermin, insomuch that

' those who in desperation visited him wondered he was not being carried
' out of his bed by the parasites. His widow died shortly afterwards,
' and such was her state of body and bedding from the same causes that
' she besought the neighbours to bring her nettles that she might relieve
' herself from the irksomeness of the vermin with the stinging pain of the
' nettles. These poor objects of pity and disgust are examples of the
' natural tendency of the system under which their less wretched neigh-
' bours are struggling against the forces which the law of the country
' place at the disposal of the owners of lands. At the head of the loch
' there were, within not much more than twenty years, fifteen crofters
' who were able, from their arable land and hill pasture, to keep three
' cows and followers, thirty sheep, and about seven horses among them.
' All these were removed, and the existing ten have only been allowed to
' remain because their lots were inferior. One of the evicted was put
' among the remainder, on a croft which another one was unable to
' work to advantage. All this land is now in the proprietor's hands. On
' the north side there were ninety-seven crofters in such comfort that they
' were under no necessity to go elsewhere for any part of their living ; and
' although some of them were only cottars, they were far better off than
' the crofters of to-day. They all had cattle and sheep, they paid but
' little rent, and there was always employment for them. All these
' were removed, and now the lands on which they lived are occupied by
' the tacksmen who have no families, and the remainder is in the hands
' of three proprietors, two of whom, like the tacksmen, have no families.
' Without repeating details of the process of laying the land waste on the
' south side of the loch, it is all with the exception of two tacksmen in
' the hands of three proprietors. Yet with all these resources lying com-
paratively waste, the remnant of crofter and cottars are in the abject
' condition partly described. It was not merely that they are a remnant,
' but were reduced still further by the taking away of the hill pasture
' which lay by Loch Buy, without any reduction of rent, although by
' this curtailment dispersed of the pasture thirty sheep a piece, he left
' them an enclosed bit of pasture for their horses ; but although this was
' in name of supporting five horses, it would not graze more than two
' horses. Even this small mercy was taken away when Mr Mitchell
' became proprietor, and given to the tenant of the inn, at a rent of £5
' per year ; and instead of a reduction being made in the rents of the
' crofters, they were raised at an average of £3 and £4 a piece. In
' these circumstances, the crofters and cottars have to look out elsewhere
' for employment, that they may pay their rents. Even if the crofts
' were free, they would not support the crofter's families a quarter of a
' year. The only thing they get out of the land in good years are potatoes
' and milk ; grain is out of the question. Oats do not come to perfection
' in the poor late soil, and the whole outcome of them can only be used
' as fodder. All the meal and all the other necessaries have to be pro-
vided out of the wages earned elsewhere, and that they are alive at all
' on the dismal spots which they occupy is an abundant refutation of the
' wanton charge of laziness. The only employment the proprietor ever
' gives is an occasional spell at sheep-shearing and the like, and the
' people give him their work for no other wages than one meal of
' food a day. In short, he promotes industry by paying no wages for
' work done for him. In his brother's time we got the loan of a horse
' sometimes, as we did from the tacksmen about, but if we did, we were
' obliged to defer the ploughing and sowing until they were ready, and
' until it was late in the season. Mr Mitchell has no horses now,
' but he sends for us as stated all the same, as if he were in the practice

ARGYLL.

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BUNESSAN.—
Alexander
Macpherson
and Malcolm
M'Lean.

ARGYLL. ' of lending horses to us. Mr Mitchell seems to be aware that there is
 —————— ' fish in Loch Scridan, but he knows also that we are so poor that he
BUNESSAN. ' would require to have security for his rent if he gave us back the hill
 —————— ' they took from us. He brands us as being too lazy to catch the fish.
Alexander ' We have disposed of this charge already; but we desire to state as a
Macpherson ' simple fact that there is not a crofter in the estate or a cottar who has
and Malcolm ' wherewith to go to fish. There are only three boats among the twenty-
M'Lean. ' two families, and not one of these has the necessary fishing gear. The
 ' able-bodied would fish the loch, rather than go from home to work, but
 ' they have been so impoverished by rack-renting, taxes, and stripping
 ' of lands, that they cannot catch the fish which comes within sight of
 ' their doors. In many cases our houses are of the humblest class, and
 ' even at that they are in a very dilapidated state. Some of them are
 ' liable to be flooded by the sea; but Mr Mitchell does not contribute one
 ' farthing in money, timber, stone, or lime to save us from being buried
 ' in the ruins. From the brief survey taken of the three divisions of the
 ' neighbouring lands, it has been seen that there is plenty on the hands
 ' of the proprietors. The chief remedy for all our grievances is more and
 ' better land, and that to be held at moderate rents, and on a secure
 ' tenure. The land we have might be drained and greatly improved,
 ' and with the hill pasture restored we could make some progress. Our
 ' stock would improve and increase, and in a short time we would be
 ' able to stock more land. If the excessive rents which we have paid
 ' during the past twenty years were refunded as they ought to be, we
 ' could stock all the land we require, and get boats for the fishing. Mr
 ' Mitchell says he gives £1 a year for hogg wintering as a present to reduce
 ' the rents; in this case he only gave us 2s. per head, while they get in
 ' every place 3s. 6d. per hogg. About two years ago we sent the proprietor
 ' a petition asking reduction of rent. The answer was that he could not
 ' think of letting down the rents, as he heard that we made a great deal
 ' of money on the fishing that year. But we must protest against the
 ' adding of interest for the cost of the drains. We have paid ten times
 ' over for all the improvements the land requires in the excess rents
 ' which we have been paying to the three proprietors in succession, who
 ' have been rack-renting us and cutting off our lands. There is excellent
 ' land lying waste nearly in the hands of the proprietor, that is ready
 ' for the plough; and if he does not allow the men who are willing to
 ' work it to take a living out of it, and add to the wealth of the nation,
 ' it is a good enough reason why we should add our voice to that of the
 ' others who have suggested that the Government should take the lands
 ' into their own hands, and make sure that it is applied to the purposes
 ' for which God created it.—ALEXANDER M'PHERSON and MALCOLM
 ' M'LEAN, delegates.'

34824. How many crofters are there in the township?—Ten just now.

34825. Your statement extends from 1861 to the present time, that is rather more than twenty years, how many crofters were there in the year 1861?—Fifteen.

34826. In your paper it is said there were twenty-five; do you mean crofters and cottars, or crofters only?—There were twenty-five in 1861.

34827. Who was proprietor in 1861?—MacLaine of Loch Buy.

34828. Who is the proprietor now?—Mr Mitchell.

34829. Mr Mitchell bought the property in 1873 or 1874?—Ten or eleven years ago.

34830. In what year were you deprived of your hill pasture?—Twenty-two years since—1861.

34831. When you were deprived of your pasture in 1861, were you

obliged to keep a smaller stock, or did you go on keeping the same amount of stock?—We had to lessen the stock.

34832. How much?—We had three cows before 1861 and a two-year-old, and now we have only two cows; and we lost grazing for thirty sheep and a horse.

34833. In 1865 fifteen crofters were deprived of their crofts; what became of those fifteen crofters?—They were sent away.

34834. Were they sent to other parts of the estate or all over the world?—Some got places on the estate and others found for themselves; only two of the fifteen remained on the estate.

34835. And thirteen went away?—Yes.

34836. Did they emigrate or remain about the island?—Some of them remained in Mull, and others went where they could get.

34837. The fifteen crofts were converted into a large holding; did they form the whole of the holding, or were they added to a holding which existed before?—They were divided between two farms, some were given to a place in Loch Buoy.

34838. Were those two farms already large farms?—One of them was a farm before, pretty large, and the other was small.

34839. What are the names of those two farms—what is the name of the large one?—Rossal.

34840. And what is the name of the small one?—The rest was added to the lands of the inn at Kinloch.

34841. So that you now pay £8 and £10 for your holdings, for which you paid £6 and £6, 10s. twenty years ago; but you have lost the hill grazing, and you have been deprived of the horse pasture?—Yes.

34842. You say that the land is not sufficient even for two cows; have you to hire grazing for the cows in summer and buy fodder for them in winter?—We are obliged to buy in the winter. In the summer we have grazing for them, and in winter we are obliged to buy straw.

34843. How much will you pay for straw for winter feeding?—We have sometimes to buy £2 and £3 worth over and above what we have ourselves.

34844. How many acres of arable ground have you?—They never mentioned the ground, but we plant about five barrels of potatoes and some oats.

34845. Can you not give an idea?—About an acre for potatoes and an acre for corn.

34846. Where is the pasture?—It borders about the arable land. There is no common at all.

34847. Has the proprietor got the farm in his own hands; is he both proprietor and tenant?—Mr Mitchell, the proprietor, died, and was succeeded by his brother. Mr Mitchell had a farm to himself, and I think it is still in the hands of his brother.

34848. Does Mr Mitchell reside there?—He does not.

34849. Who is the factor?—Mr M'Lachlan, Tobermory.

34850. Is he here at this moment?—He is not.

34851. Is Mr Mitchell here?—Yes.

34852. You say that you pay £8 and £10; why is there this difference of rent? Are some of the crofts better than others?—Some of them are better than others.

34853. Do the crofters who pay £10 keep three cows?—They are keeping them in the summer and trying to keep them in the winter too, but they have to buy straw for them.

34854. *Mr Fraser Mackintosh.*—Was this estate long in the possession of the MacLaines of Loch Buoy?—Not long.

ARGYLL.

BUNESSAN.

Alexander
Macpherson
and Malcolm
M'Lean.

ARGYLL. 34855. Who had it before them?—Fitzroy M'Lean had it before Loch Buyn.
BUNESSAN. 34856. Was it Sir Fitzroy?—I am not aware; I was but young at the time.
Alexander Macpherson and Malcolm M'Lean. 34857. How is the ground which was taken from you and which is now in the occupation of the proprietor, used?—It is at present under sheep in the proprietor's hand.

34858. Has he got any other place than this—estates or farms?—I think they have lands in the north, but I don't know whether they are freehold.

34859. I suppose when this proprietor bought the estate he found crofters rather in the way of what he wanted it for?—I don't know.

34860. At all events, your lands were taken from you?—Yes, that was so.

34861. What do you now want exactly—those of you who remain?—We want land at a reasonable rent to enable us to live.

34862. Can you exist otherwise than in the state of misery unless that is done?—There is no employment; nothing scarcely but misery; we were so poor this year that we had no seed to put into the ground, had it not come from other quarters.

34863. Have you and your forefathers been in this place?—Our forefathers were and we also.

34864. What did the proprietor who took away the hill pasture do with the land?—Mr MacLaine of Loch Buyn divided the land he took away from the township to Rossal, and some to the Kinloch inn.

34865. And what the present proprietor did was to take away the park and increase your rent?—That was all that was done by the present proprietor.

34866. Does the present proprietor give you any employment?—No employment.

JAMES WYLLIE, Chamberlain to the Duke of Argyll—examined.

James Wyllie. 34867. *The Chairman.*—How long have you been chamberlain here?—Eleven years.

34868. Does your authority extend over the whole of this parish?—Yes, so far as it belongs to the Duke of Argyll.

34869. I am afraid I must ask you some questions referring to things long before the period of your administration; were you employed in any other capacity on the estate in previous years?—No.

34870. Had you any personal knowledge of the place at an earlier period?—No; I am afraid I cannot answer anything before my own time; I know nothing about what took place before.

34871. You cannot, for instance, explain why there was an increase of rent on some of the townships, or at least in one township, in the year 1850?—No.

34872. But there was a larger increase of rent in the township in the year 1876; have you any knowledge of that transaction?—Yes.

34873. What was the consideration which justified the increase of rental in the year 1876?—The great advance in the value of sheep and cattle.

34874. Was it a general rise all over the crofting lands of this estate?—Yes.

34875. What did it amount to per cent.; 30 per cent.?—I could not answer that question. ARGYLL.

34876. But there was a rise of rent in the year 1876 all over the estate?—Yes. BUNESSAN.

34877. Was that imposed in consequence of a revaluation?—Yes.

34878. Who was the revaluation conducted by?—It was begun in Mr Campbell's time, and I carried it out. I made my own valuation afterwards, and carried out what he began. There was one of the township's in Iona where the increase was made before I got charge of the property. All the rest were carried out after I got charge of the property.

34879. But the increase on this part of the estate was carried out by your own estimate of what was a fair rental?—Yes, and taking what information I could get amongst Mr Campbell's papers.

34880. In forming your estimate, did you adhere substantially to his views, or was your estimate a reduction of what he had proposed?—Generally I adhered to his views, as I knew so little of the estate at that time.

34881. I find on page 8 of the Appendix to Sir John M'Neill's Report in 1851, that the whole rent of the united parishes is estimated at £4371. Can you tell me what the whole rental of the united parishes is now?—It is in the valuation roll £8599.

34882. Can you tell me what the rental of the Duke of Argyll's property was in 1851?—It was £3799 in 1853; that is in all the parishes.

34883. What is it now?—£6389 in all the parishes.

34884. So that there has been a rise of rental on the estate in all the parishes of £2590. Can you tell me in a general way whether this rise of rental has been greater on farms above £30 a year in value than in those below £30 a year?—I think pretty equally on both.

34885. You think that all classes of farms are rented pretty nearly on equal terms?—I think so.

34886. There has been therefore a rise of 69 per cent. upon the rental of this class of property during the last thirty years; do you consider that a rise of 70 per cent. on this class of property is justified by the increase of value in the prices of the stock?—I should think so.

34887. When you say that this rise of 70 per cent. is justified by increase in the price of stock, would that be giving the whole benefit of the increase in the price of stock to the landlord?—No.

34888. You think that a fair share would still remain to the tenant?—I think so.

34889. What has been the rise in that time?—The price of stock has almost doubled since 1853.

34890. We have heard a very general complaint made that although the price of stock has risen very much the quality of the land of the small holdings has deteriorated by constant cropping; is that consistent with your knowledge and experience?—It ought not to do, if there is a proper rotation followed.

34891. But have the small tenants always room to follow rotation?—They ought to have upon this estate.

34892. Is there any rule upon the estate with reference to systematic rotation?—Yes.

34893. Is it enforced?—Not very stringently.

34894. The crofters very generally allege that although their crofts are estimated by the estate to keep a certain number of cattle, they are practically obliged to buy a great deal in for the wintering; is that consistent with your knowledge?—No; I cannot speak to that of my own know-

ARGYLL. ledge ; but the summing, generally speaking, has been very much fixed by the crofters themselves at first.

BUNESSAN. — 34895. But since that summing was fixed is it not the case that portions of their hill pasture have frequently been withdrawn ?—Not on this property, with one exception.

James Wyllie. 34896. During your period ?—Since 1853 there has been no withdrawal except on one occasion.

34897. Has there been practically any consolidation of land since you have been connected with the estate ; I mean have any small holdings been consolidated in large holdings ?—Very little in that way.

34898. Have you at this moment more farms on the estate under your management exceeding £100 than you had when you came into office ?—No.

34899. There has been no consolidation ?—No.

34900. No deprivation of hill pasture ?—None in my time.

34901. And no eviction except for non-payment of rent ?—Not even for that.

34902. You have had no eviction at all ?—No

34903. No person has been removed ?—Not by a sheriff-officer.

34904. Or by pressure on the part of the authorities ?—No, not since I came into authority.

34905. We have heard here and elsewhere that peculiar regulations with reference to widows are enforced upon the Duke of Argyll's estate ; would you give us a statement of what these regulations are, if they exist ?—There are no regulations whatever about widows ; that is to say, there is no regulation such as I have heard mentioned to day. At this present time there are thirty-six widows in possession in Tyree and three on this property in Mull.

34906. Have you any printed regulations which are made known to the tenants at all ?—We have printed regulations.

34907. Can you put in a copy of them ?—I have not a copy here

34908. Can you furnish one afterwards ?—Certainly.

34909. Is there in these printed regulations an article as to widows at all ?—Not a word.

34910. What is the practice of the estate with reference to widows ; when a woman becomes a widow and has a son able to assist her, or who will shortly be able to assist her, in the management of the croft, is the croft continued to the widow and son ?—Generally speaking. The Duke uses his own discretion in the matter.

34911. In the particular case ?—Yes.

34912. When there is a widow without a son, or without any male relative able to assist her in the croft, if she has herself some means and stock and is capable of managing the croft, is she allowed to remain or not ?—There is no general rule ; the Duke exercises his own discretion in every case.

34913. Are there many cases in which such an unassisted widow is allowed to remain ?—Yes.

34914. And in case a widow is removed from the croft on the death of her husband, in consequence of not being supported by a male relative, what description of provision is made for her ?—Generally speaking, I should say she gets a house ; if she is well off, she looks out for a house for herself.

34915. If she is not well off the Duke provides her with a house ?—Yes ; that would be the rule. I cannot speak of any particular case at this moment.

34916. Are you aware of cases in which widows are so supplied with houses —I don't recollect of any cases recently.

34917. I placed in your hands a copy of Sir John M'Neill's Report, in which a statement was made in reference to the large outlay in the famine years, between 1846 and 1851; had that statement ever come under your notice before?—I have heard it merely; I have never seen it James Wyllie.

ARGYLL.
BUNESSAN.

34918. Did you observe the statement in the report I gave to you was not distinctly supported in the appendix by any particular reference?—I did not observe that.

34919. You cannot give any information upon that?—No.

34920. Did you ever hear it reported in the country that the great outlay stated to have been made on the Duke's estate at that period—no doubt, as far as he is concerned, justly—had been abusively or wastefully applied?—No, decidedly not.

34921. Where were you yourself resident about the famine years?—I think I was upon Breadalbane at that time.

34922. We have heard a very general complaint of common pasture having been withdrawn, no doubt at an earlier period than you are acquainted with; do you think that cases may or may not arise in which any pasture might be taken from the larger farms and restored to the crofters?—Not without detriment to the farms, and I should not like to give my opinion upon that. That lies entirely with the Duke.

34923. Do you think it could be done with advantage to crofters?—Yes, but not with advantage to the farms.

34924. But in a case of this sort, which do you think is the weightiest consideration, the welfare of the farm or the welfare of the crofting class?—The crofting class is more numerous; I should not like to answer that.

34925. The balance of your opinion is rather in favour of improving the crofting class, perhaps at some little detriment to the farms? The question is, Are the crofts too small at present?—I am not prepared to say that they are on this estate; I think they are a very good size on this estate.

34926. I put the question with reference to the common pasture, and not arable ground?—It depends entirely on the estate. There is not one case where a small portion has been taken from a township.

34927. But my question was, whether land either once common pasture, or which had never been common pasture, might be taken with advantage from the larger farms and given back to the crofters, not with advantage to the farm, but with advantage to the crofters?—It depends entirely on the state of those crofters; what size their common pasture is—whether they are in need.

34928. In fact, it depends on individual cases?—Yes.

34929. And you could not give a general opinion?—No.

34930. You have no opinion as to the policy of increasing the area of the common pasture?—Not unless it is required.

34931. And do you think it is generally required or not?—In some cases it may, and in some it is not.

34932. *Mr Cameron.*—You said just now, in answer to the Chairman, that the rise of rent between 1853 and 1876 was equally divided between the large and small farms; do you mean by that that the rise was divided proportionately between the large and small tenants, or absolutely?—I consider that the rents of the farms are as dear as the rents of the crofts; in fact, they are very much rented upon the same principle, according to the class of stock kept upon them.

34933. But when you were asked as to a certain sum which represented the rise of rent, whether that was a rise of rent upon the large or

ARGYLL. small farms, you replied it was equally divided : was the sum divided into two, one half of which was upon the small and the other half upon the large, or did you mean that the proportion upon each was the same
BUNESSAN. James Wyllie, upon the large and small ?—I should say the proportion was the same.

34934. What is the rental of the large as compared with the small farms ?—The area is not the same.

34935. But what is the rental ?—The total rental in 1853 was £3799 ; in 1883, £6389.

34936. That shows a rise of rent of £2590 : what I do not understand is, whether the amount of, say £1290, was a rise upon the large and the other half upon the small, or whether the £2590 was a rise proportionately ?—Proportionately.

34937. So that the rise was proportionately the same on the large as upon the small ?—That is my opinion.

34938. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—How long have you been chamberlain of Argyll ?—Fourteen years, but only eleven years connected with this property.

34939. Had you experience of property management before ?—Yes ; I was factor for five years upon the Breadalbane estate.

34940. I think you stated you had no special knowledge of the Argyll estates before you came here ?—No.

34941. But did the part of the Breadalbane estates you had charge of extend towards Oban on the west coast ?—No ; the part I had marched with the Duke of Argyll's property near Dalmally.

34942. Had you some knowledge of the west of Scotland ?—No, I cannot say I had, beyond Dalmally.

34943. You have stated that you followed to a considerable extent the policy that had been laid down by Mr Campbell your predecessor ?—Yes, in the increase of rents put upon the farms.

34944. Did you consider that a wise policy ?—I exercised my own judgment as well.

34945. Have you ever heard the general opinion of the country about the policy of Mr Campbell ?—No, I have heard very little about him ; in fact, I avoided inquiring about him.

34946. Why ?—Because I thought it was mere reports not to be relied upon.

34947. It would appear from Sir John McNeill's Report in 1851 and the present valuation roll that the rental of Tyree had almost doubled ?—I cannot speak of my own knowledge.

34948. But you would no doubt take it for granted that Sir John McNeill was furnished with correct information ?—No doubt.

34949. What did the Duke of Argyll do for Tyree during those thirty years ?—I have not the means of knowing ; I have never seen the accounts previous to my own charge.

34950. What has he done for it in your own time for the benefit of the crofter population ?—He has expended considerable amounts on improvements from time to time.

34951. We tried to get that information yesterday, but were not able to get any ?—Draining, fencing, buildings.

34952. I am speaking of the crofters ?—For both classes.

34953. What sum was laid out in draining and fencing ?—I could not say that.

34954. But you will state generally there was something ?—Yes.

34955. Have complaints reached you of the state of the people of Tyree ?—No, with the exception of some petitions within the last year ; nothing before that.

34956. So far as you are aware, you consider the people have no grievances at all, and are perfectly comfortable?—They appear to be; they seem to be comfortable; but that is a general question; there are particular cases.

ARGYLL.

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BUNESSAN.

James Wyllie.

34957. The rental has been very considerably raised in the Ross of Mull; what do you consider the chief duty of a factor or chamberlain in the discharge of his office?—He has a number of duties to perform.

34958. You cannot name one in chief, can you?—I could name a great many.

34959. I will suggest one. Is it or is it not the chief duty of a chamberlain or factor to raise the rents?—No, it is not, independent of other considerations.

34960. At all events, it has been well done upon the Duke's estates within the last thirty years, that part of it?—That is a matter of opinion.

34961. Is it not a fact?—It has been done; it is a matter of opinion whether it has been well done.

34962. You state that one of the reasons which you thought justified the increase of rent you put on in your own time was that the value of stock had risen so much. That is the principal ground?—Yes.

34963. Are you quite sure that this great rise you speak of in stock has occurred within the last thirty years? Has it not gone back a little further?—It may.

34964. In answer to the Chairman, you stated that you would send a copy of the regulations now in force?—Yes.

34965. What is the date of those regulations? Were they made by yourself?—Yes.

34966. I presume further there were older ones?—I am not aware; I don't think so.

34967. Were there no Campbell regulations?—No, not so far as I am aware.

34968. Are we to understand there were never any printed regulations before your time?—Not on this estate, so far as I am aware.

34969. But would the general rules not apply to all the estate?—Decidedly not; there are different estates and conditions applied to them specially. There are regulations for Roseneath, Inveraray, and this estate of Mull, including Iona.

34970. Are there ones for Tyree?—There will be, I expect, soon; they are in course of preparation.

34971. There being no printed regulations and no leases, how did the people know under what regulations they stood?—I don't know.

34972. Probably you saw it was rather a hardship that the people did not know under what rule they were?—I thought it desirable that there ought to be regulations.

34973. There were regulations on the Breadalbane estate?—Yes.

34974. Without having definite parish regulations, would it not be perfectly competent for people in an inferior position, like ground officers or others, to make statements with regard to the regulations of the estate that never existed?—I don't think so; I think it is very improbable a ground officer would take upon himself to say that.

34975. Will you go this length, that the absence of any such rules might give rise to suspicions on the part of the people, and idle stories that things were, that did not exist?—There is no reason that they should; the people will manufacture those things of course.

34976. There are three widows at this moment, you say, in Mull, and thirty-six in Tyree?—Yes.

34977. With regard to those thirty-six in Tyree or three in Mull are

ARGYLL. you able to state whether they have not sons of legal age?—I could not state the information about the whole of them.

BUNESSAN. 34978. Is there not a rumour about widows that they will be turned off if their children are young?—It is quite an untrue rumour if there is; there is no such rule.

James Wyllie. 34979. Has there been any distinction in the treatment of widows who may have sons twenty-one years of age and widows who have no sons of that age?—In any case of that kind that arises the Duke uses his own discretion; he considers each case separately.

34980. About the case of the widow M'Phail, who has been referred to, why was she put out?—All the answer I can give is that the Duke informed himself of all the circumstances connected with the case, and he came to the decision himself after considering the circumstances carefully.

34981. Did any one here by your authority go to that woman to persuade her to go out voluntarily?—Decidedly not. The ground officer took an ordinary letter of removal to her to sign, and asked her if she was willing to sign it, and she said she was willing.

34982. Was any inducement given to her to sign it?—None whatever.

34983. What has the estate done for that widow?—She is in pretty independent circumstances. I believe the proceeds of her sale amounted to more than £200. Besides that, the Duke has given her compensation for anything done to the buildings. She has a small shop of her own in the village here.

34984. Who gets the benefit of the crop?—She does.

34985. There is another person who has made a complaint, named Margaret M'Arthur?—For the young girl's own sake, I would rather not go into the case. If you choose I will explain.

34986. You state her case is one that has been duly considered?—Yes, the Duke decided upon removing her—indeed, she was not removed. It remains with the tenant on the farm, and I think he has continued her.

34987. But you state the circumstances are such as made it proper that she should be removed?—Yes.

34988. *The Chairman.*—You are to understand that we received a letter from this person?—I am aware; but I think it better for the girl herself not to go into the case.

34989. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—I must again put the question to you. The population upon the two estates we have to do with of the Duke of Argyll are decreasing very much; the people say themselves they are getting poorer and poorer; what is going to be the result? Are you satisfied with the state of matters?—I don't think poverty is increasing except in a bad year.

34990. Don't you think the people are telling the truth?—I am sure they would tell the truth. I can only speak as a matter of opinion.

34991. And you don't wish to give any opinion as to the propriety of recurring to the former matters, and giving to the people larger holdings than they have at present?—The crofters on this property had not larger holdings, neither had they any better, with one or two exceptions.

34992. I am afraid, if you will look into matters, you will find there have been a great number of removals?—I speak of the crofters. I think they have the same possessions as they had before, except on Creich.

34993. But not the same as their predecessors had?—Yes, there were more crofters before.

34994. In your opinion, then, the people practically have no grievance?—I do not say that; it is hardly a fair question to put to me.

34995. What I should like to know is what you, having the great

authority you have under the Duke of Argyll, propose doing; and you cannot suppose all those people come to us with idle grievances, do you? —I am afraid some of them are not well founded.

34996. But surely you would admit there is a residuum—a grain of truth—at the bottom of their grievances?—I am not prepared to admit that.

34997. *Professor Mackinnon.*—You gave us the rent in 1853; you heard the crofters state the rents were raised in 1850. I suppose you have no idea what increase was made upon the rents then?—No.

34998. All the removals that have been spoken to were made at that time or before it?—Yes.

34999. And I rather think since that time, with respect to the crofting area, the crofts were as a rule made larger?—I think very likely they were.

35000. Of course, the number of crofters has decreased?—Yes, they have decreased.

35001. We find that there is a very large number of people on all the townships without land at all; are there any such people upon the big farms?—Some of them are upon the big farms.

35002. But not in the same proportion as they are upon the crofts?—No.

35003. The rent, I find, payable by the big farms, is about two-thirds of the rent of the estate. You would not say there are two-thirds of the cottars upon the estate upon those farms?—No, I don't suppose there are.

35004. How does it happen that those poor people without land are thrown in upon the crofter class?—Although they happen to be amongst the crofters you cannot say that their houses are taken off the crofters. The crofts are rented separately without taking into consideration the cottars' houses.

35005. Don't you think it is a great injury to a crofting township that there should be twelve or fifteen families asking continually for the grazing of a cow, and having right to trespass continually?—No doubt, cottars are a great nuisance to the crofters.

35006. And in all the clearings made before 1850, has it not been the case that those who got no land, and were not removed, were thrown upon the crofters and not the farmers?—I cannot speak to that. I don't know what was done in 1850.

35007. You heard to-day the people themselves stating it?—Well, I suppose they may speak correctly. There are a number of cottars, no doubt.

35008. And mainly among the crofters?—Yes, I should think so.

35009. There was one man before us who stated that his rent was doubled within nine years; I suppose the last rise only was in your time?—Yes.

35010. I forgot whether you mentioned who made the valuation when the last rise was put upon the crofters?—I got certain materials to make it, and the whole thing was submitted to the Duke, and it was he who decided.

35011. There were no independent men consulted?—No.

35012. Or whose judgment was asked in any way?—No.

35013. Is there great competition for a croft when it is vacant?—Considerable.

35014. So that in fact, supposing the rent was made larger, the crofts would still be taken?—I believe so.

35015. As matter of fact, there is none of them ever vacant?—Yes.

35016. Of the big crofts?—Yes. There have been some vacant in this

ARGYLL.

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BUNESSAN.

James Wyllie

ARGYLL. neighbourhood within the last two or three years, and taken up at an increased rent.

BUNESSAN. 35017. Do any remain long vacant?—No.

James Wyllie. 35018. So that although in the case of a big farm it is a question whether you can get a tenant, in the case of crofts, you know you can get a tenant whatever rent you may put on?—Oh, no, not whatever rent you put on; so long as it is a fair rent.

35019. I am afraid those crofters do not consider their present rent a fair rent?—Why do you get plenty of tenants to work it and make their living by it?

35020. Anyhow, you will get any number of applications for any croft that is vacant?—Yes, within the district.

35021. In that case, whether the rent is unfair or fair, the croft will not be vacant?—No, if they see the rent is fair. I am not prepared to admit any rent is unfair.

35022. But even supposing it was unfair, it would let?—No, I am certain it would not.

35023. Has the competition not continued after the rise in 1876?—Yes, it is owing to the advance of the price of cattle and sheep.

35024. You would not say there was a great advance before 1876?—It has continued still, and I suppose no person ever saw prices so high as they are now.

35025. The rent was raised 30 or 40 per cent. in that year, and the competition remained quite as keen; would not that imply that though the rents were raised a little more the competition would continue?—Not unless there was a rise of prices to justify it.

35026. You think you hit the line beyond which competition would not continue?—I am not prepared to say.

35027. Is there an old regulation that the outgoing tenant leaves a portion of the crops to the succeeding tenant?—Decidedly there is.

35028. Does that apply when the outgoing tenant holds no land?—Oh yes; it is all the same.

35029. And has it always been the same?—Yes, since those regulations I have referred to have been in force.

35030. How long have they been in force?—Since 1876.

35031. Do you know the custom upon the estate before that time?—I do not.

35032. The outgoing tenant leaves a portion of the crop to the incoming tenant whether he himself goes to another croft or not?—There is no condition of that sort at all; it is the outgoing tenant who leaves a certain thing. I can read the clause.

35033. What fraction of the crops does he leave?—All the growing grain, rye-grass, hay, and green crops, from the outgoing tenant.

35034. What fraction does the outgoing tenant leave to the incoming tenant?—All the growing grain, rye-grass, hay, and green crops.

35035. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Is that a Whitsunday entry?—Yes. The outgoing tenant is bound to give them at a valuation.

35036. *Professor Mackinnon.*—The outgoing tenant is compelled to give over the crops at a valuation?—Yes.

35037. Is that the case upon the large farms, and upon the small farms as well?—Yes.

35038. Do you know what the practice was before that regulation was enforced upon this and similar estates in this quarter?—I cannot speak as to that.

35039. Was it not the rule formerly that the outgoing tenant kept the crop?—So it is now.

35040. He is bound to give it to his successor at a valuation?—He ARGYLL. gets the price of it.

35041. Was it not the rule formerly that he had it himself?—I don't know; but I know the rule upon all properly managed properties is that James Wyllie, the incoming tenant gets the crop at a valuation. BUNESSAN.

35042. When you framed the rule you did not inquire what the condition was upon which the sitting tenants held the croft?—Possibly I might.

35043. At the present time, anyhow, they are bound to give over the crop at a valuation?—Yes.

35044. When is the valuation made?—That is stipulated also.

35045. With respect to those crofters, is it part of the policy of the estate or the wish of the crofters themselves to be without a lease?—I never asked them.

35046. They never asked for a lease?—No, I am not aware that a single one has asked it.

35047. But supposing they asked it?—I should represent the case to the Duke and take his instructions.

35048. You do not consider you would have authority to grant leases?—Decidedly not; I cannot sign a lease.

35049. And it has not been the rule of the estate to give them?—They have never been asked.

35050. Of course, you heard them state to-day that they would not take them at the present rents?—Yes.

35051. But that they would be glad to get them if the rents were less?—Yes, I heard that also.

35052. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Is there any fixed interval between the periods when rents are raised? Do you revalue the crofts at fixed periods of nineteen or twenty-one years?—The last time the crofters signed the general conditions of lease there was a minute at the end in which the Duke engaged not to have any revaluation of rents for ten years.

35053. When did they sign this minute of lease?—In 1876.

35054. Their rents were fixed then for ten years?—Yes.

35055. How long had they been fixed before that?—I cannot say, unless in 1850.

35056. Is there any tendency among the crofters here to subdivide their crofts among their children?—No.

35057. Do any of their children marry and settle upon the crofts?—No, they go out of the country.

35058. Then those cottars are not children of old tenants?—No.

35059. They are people who formerly lost their crofts?—I suppose so; I don't know.

35060. *The Chairman.*—I ought perhaps to have asked you to make remarks at the beginning, but will you be good enough to do so now?—At Tyree yesterday Donald Macdonald, Balphuil, referred to letters sent from the Duke from Campbeltown. These were merely notices from the county assessor of an alteration of the rental. He also stated that no crofters in the island have any sheep. One township in Tyree has a regular summing of sheep, and a great many crofters have a few sheep on their crofts, and others let their wintering—bring in sheep to winter. John Campbell, Ballinloe, made a statement about the croft added to Balphuil farm four years ago. That croft was added—or rather he got a change of croft at his own express wish, and the croft was added to Hillipool farm, to which it lies—it is rather an ugly boundary there—by the Duke's special directions. Allan M'Innes, Creich, was asked

ARGYLL. to-day if he was tenant of the croft and he answered he was not, it was his brother's name that was in the rental. Before any change was made they were both asked; in fact, it came partly from himself that the change should be made.
BUNESSAN. James Wyllie.

35061. We stated as much!—The increase of rent which was made on the crofters in the Ross of Mull in 1876 was apportioned in the different townships by the crofters themselves; that is the answer I have to give for Lachlan Macdonald, who said his rent was doubled.

35062. *Professor Mackinnon.*—The total amount of the increase was told to them?—Yes, and they appointed parties amongst themselves to apportion that.

35063. But they did not fix the amount put upon them?—I do not say that. That accounts for some of the rents being raised more than others; it was their own doing. John McCormack, Catechan, said there was no individual grazing attached to their crofts. There is individual grazing to almost every croft besides the common grazing. The statement that witness also made as to being compelled to let their wintering is not correct. I am not aware of ever having spoken to them about their wintering.

35064. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Your predecessor did so?—But I am not aware of any compulsion.

35065. *Professor Mackinnon.*—He said there was no compulsion unless the necessity for getting money.—I think he also mentioned about some hogg wintering Mr Campbell had let himself for the stock of a nephew, and that he applied to me about it. I have no recollection of it. If he had I should have referred it to Mr Campbell's trustees; it was before my time.

35066. *The Chairman.*—As you have referred to Tyree, there are one or two points I would like to ask you about. We had a statement made to us about the Sea-weed Company and the system under which they pursue their traffic, both in reference to the payment of wages and the payment for commodities received, and the payment of things that they buy. The general complaint over all was that they paid in kind, and kept a running account with their customers and rarely ever paid in money. In fact, it seemed to us to be the truck system in full vigour. What do you know about it?—I know little about it except that I believe it exists, and I certainly do not approve of it.

35067. On the whole, you do not approve of it?—Still, it is the rule in almost every work of the kind, even quarries. You will find it over any part of Scotland I am acquainted with.

35068. We heard that this system had obtained at the quarry here, but had been abandoned?—I suppose it is hardly worth while keeping it up now for the number of people they employ. I don't know what the reason is for having given it up, but I fancy it is that.

35069. We have heard a good deal about the truck system in the north, but we found in Orkney and Shetland a general impression that it was being dissolved, and people were far more contented, especially among the fishing population. Has the truck system with this company in Tyree grown up and been practised with the knowledge and approval of the proprietor?—Oh, yes; his knowledge at any rate.

35070. Is the company paying rent to the Duke of Argyll?—Yes.

35071. For buildings, land, and the privileges of the shore?—Yes.

35072. Was there any provision made in the lease with reference to the manner in which wages should be paid?—None whatever.

35073. Has the lease long to run?—There was a new lease entered into in 1882 to 1887.

35074. Had any complaints been made of the truck system previous to the lease being signed?—Yes.

35075. It is not a new subject of consideration which has sprung up recently?—Yes.

35076. Are you aware that the company were in the habit of buying small commodities from the people in the country, such as eggs?—I was not aware.

35077. You are not aware that they buy anything from their labouring people?—I am not aware.

35078. We asked them that question, and they told us they did buy some things, and mentioned eggs; and I asked whether they paid for those small commodities in money or in goods, and they said in goods, or they took them on account. You are not aware of any traffic of that sort the company carried on?—No, but it is quite possible. It is quite a traffic entered into by shopkeepers and storekeepers in Tyree.

35079. It is the custom of the country?—Quite.

35080. Are money payments very rare in that sort of small traffic between a small tenant or labourer and the shop with which he deals?—Oh, no; it is usually money payments.

35081. That is to say, if a labourer carries his eggs to the shop he is generally paid in ready money?—I should say generally in kind in that case. A great many people go to a shop who have no eggs.

35082. We were told that if the people insisted upon being paid in money they got a lower price for their labour or goods; but if they consented to take payment in goods they got a higher price: were you aware of that?—No; I cannot speak as to that.

35083. In speaking of the rise in rent on the larger description of farms on the estate, you said that the proportionate increase had been the same; but, with reference to the larger farms, do you get the rents—I mean has the proprietor to make reductions, occasionally remitting portions of the rents, or have they been well paid up?—They are well paid up.

35084. Supposing the large farms, as they may be called, were at this moment vacant, would you have any difficulty in getting the same rents?—I think not; prices are very high at present.

35085. You think you would get a tenant to take the farms at the same rent as those who are now sitting?—I have no reason to think otherwise.

35086. We heard something about the distribution of money or seed obtained from public charity in Tyree; was there an application from Tyree for assistance from the outside?—There was, from some of the crofters.

35087. Through whom was this application conveyed to Mr M'Dairmid the sub-factor?—It was laid before the Duke, and approved of by him.

35088. What was the distress in Tyree founded upon?—The bad season and the failure of the potatoes.

35089. What amount was got for the relief of the people in Tyree from sources of public charity?—£115; I think that was entirely for cottars, and was given in money and meal.

35090. It was procured from public subscription for the relief of poverty in Tyree?—Yes.

35091. And has been distributed?—Yes.

35092. Not among the rent-paying class?—No; amongst cottars.

35093. Do the persons who have been in receipt of this description of charity in any case pay rents to the proprietor?—No.

35094. Are they in receipt of parochial assistance?—Not generally.

ARGYLL.

BUNESSAN.

James Wyllie.

ARGYLL. 35095. They are persons paying no rent and receiving no parochial assistance?—Persons in poor circumstances.

BUNESSAN. 35096. Has any distribution of public charity taken place on this estate?—Yes.

James Wyllie. 35097. How was that applied for?—It was partly applied for direct, and partly sent through me.

35098. From what fund was it taken?—Partly from the Glasgow fund and partly from the Mansion House fund.

35099. How much has been obtained for the relief of this estate?—I really could not say; there was £50 sent through me from the Mansion House fund.

35100. Any more?—Several sums besides.

35101. Do you think more than £100 has been distributed?—No, I don't think so; possibly less than that.

35102. By whom has this money been distributed—was it by a committee?—Yes.

35103. Who were the members of the committee?—The parish minister; Mr Campbell, the ground officer; Mr M'Quarie, and the inspector of poor.

35104. In that case the ground officer was a member of the committee for the distribution of public charity among persons living upon the proprietor's estate?—Cottars.

35105. Was any of this money given to any class of persons paying rent?—No.

35106. Nobody has received money through public charity who is paying rent?—Not that I am aware of; only cottars in destitute circumstances.

35107. But has any public charity been given to persons paying rent of any class?—A few cottars who pay rent received assistance, but all cottars—any one in destitute circumstances.

35108. Does that apply both to Tyree and here; have persons there paying rent received any?—None there.

35109. Did any on this estate?—There may have been a few, but the general rule was not.

35110. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—In valuing a farm or farms for the purpose of raising or lowering the rent, if the latter is ever done, what principle do you go upon—what means do you take for estimating at what rate the increase should be made?—There are several ways of valuing a farm; either putting so much per acre upon it, or valuing it by the stocking.

35111. In the valuation which was made in 1876, was it the increase in the price of stock that was taken into consideration in raising the rents of the farms?—That was the principal reason, as I have mentioned already—the increase in the value of sheep and cattle.

35112. In valuing a township on which there is a number of crofters, how is the valuation made?—Either by valuing the land at so much the acre or valuing the stocking.

35113. But it must be either the one or the other?—It can be both; I generally do both, to check myself.

35114. But do you apportion the increase to each individual crofter, instead of leaving it to themselves? The calculation must be made for the stock which each particular man holds: ought not the increase, if it be a proper one, to be put upon each croft?—All hold the same proportion of stock, or ought to; sometimes the arable land of one is a little better than that of others; and I consider, if they agree to it themselves, it is the best way to allow them to apportion it if they are satisfied to do so.

35115. Are they quite satisfied with the apportionment made amongst themselves?—I never heard of any complaint at the time. ARGYLL.

35116. Have they any form or constitution among themselves for uniting and considering their common affairs? Have they a constable in the village, a man who represents the township?—The usual way is, they appoint themselves one or two managers for the year. That is the proper way to do. BUNESSAN. James Wyllie.

35117. Is that the case in most of the places?—It ought to be, and I believe it is.

35118. *Mr Cameron.*—Are the large farms sheep farms?—Some sheep and cattle.

35119. You would have more difficulty in letting a sheep farm just now?—I should think so; because it is a very heavy matter to go into a sheep stock just now, considering the prices of sheep.

35120. What is the highest rental?—£700; that is a sheep farm entirely.

ANDREW MITCHELL, Proprietor and Farmer, Drumderfit,
Inverness (41)—examined.

35121. *The Chairman.*—Do you wish to make a statement?—I heard one of the delegates making a statement or two which I think not correct. With reference to the horse park, it was my brother who had the property before we got it, and there was a horse park which belonged to the small tenants previously, and when he came there in 1873 the stone and turf dyke was knocked down in many parts, and, I understand, my brother offered the tenants the park the same as formerly, and that he put materials upon the ground to erect fences again if they choose to do it; and they did not choose to do it, and hence the reason they have not the park at present.

35122. If the tenants choose to assist in restoring the fence would the park be resigned to the tenants now?—I won't say that, but this was in 1873. I could not say that upon my own part, because I am only joint-proprietor.

35123. How long have you been in joint possession of the estate?—Since January 1880.

35124. How long was your brother previously?—From 1873.

35125. Did you hear the statement made respecting the alleged successive reductions of the area of the small holdings and the number of the small holdings?—That was before my brother's time.

35126. Since your family came into possession of the management of this farm or property, has anything been taken away from the small tenants?—No, not that I am aware of—nothing whatever. Some of them have retired, and we have one or two of the crofts in our own hands, which we were willing to have re-let if the tenants had wished.

35127. Since the place came into the possession of your family has there been any increase of rental?—Yes, I believe my brother increased the rent a little; but since then we have been giving them a cow each for the winter for the use of the crofts, so that the increase has not been very much—perhaps £1 or so, or perhaps 30s. in some cases.

35128. *Mr Fraser Mackintosh.*—What is the extent of the estate?—2500 acres. We offered the whole ground to the small tenants this year as a club farm if they choose to give us security for the stock, and offered them two years to pay the stock.

Andrew
Mitchell.

ARGYLL

BUNESSAN,

Andrew
Mitchell.

35129. What was the rent you proposed charging them?—The old rents.

35130. That in the valuation roll?—Yes.

35131. How much is that?—£95 for the one end, and £240 for the other. That includes the inn, however, which is let separately.

35132. And if they gave £295 as a club farm?—We would give it all to them, and give them two years to pay it.

35133. Would you have allowed some of the older people who were there before to have come back again?—I don't think there are any of the older people there. Those that were there previously are away out of the country, as far as I am aware. We would allow the tenants who are there to take it between them.

35134. What answer did you get from them?—They could not do it, I suppose.

35135. But since you were so kind as to put it into their power to get the whole, would it not be better to give them a little encouragement by giving them a small quantity, so that by-and-by they might take it all?—It could not be done easily, the marches would not suit. You could not make a distinct march unless you put up a fence.

35136. I suppose your family purchased the property for the purpose of working it with other land?—No, my late brother bought it as a place of residence and as an investment.

35137. *The Chairman.*—I understood you to mention two places, one of £95 and the other at £200 or something?—Yes; when my brother had the property he farmed part of it himself, the west end, Glenleedale, and it is in the valuation roll at £95, and the east end he let, which was in the possession of other parties.

35138. This experiment of a club farm interests us particularly if it could be made, and I want to understand more clearly from you whether it would not be possible to deal with the subject of Glenleedale farm without the other; is there no natural march?—No, none; it was very difficult to keep between my brother and the tenant at the other end.

35139. But they seem to have been separate holdings?—Yes; but the sheep were always mixing, and it would be more difficult if tenants went in.

35140. Would it be possible to divide them with a fence?—Yes, possible; but very expensive.

35141. It is not for me to advise you about the management of your property, but it would be interesting to see whether the tenants could not take the £95 farm?—I am afraid they could not. They say they are very poor; they are very lazy, I know. I don't think they take the advantage of fishing that they might. The loch is at their door, and it is full of fish.

35142. Do they fish?—They do; euddies and white fish.

35143. If they had a superior description of boat would they be able to keep that boat in security?—Oh yes, quite well.

35144. Is there a natural harbour?—There is a little loch at the head of Loch Scridan, and it is quite protected, and the upper side of it is sheltered from the west and south-west wind.

35145. If they had a big boat they could keep it safe?—I think so. There is nothing in the way of a harbour or pier; it is all shore.

ALEXANDER M'KECHNIE, M.B. and C.M. Glasgow University,
Bunessan (31)—examined.

35146. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—How long have you resided here?—Over six years ARGYLL.

35147. I suppose it is the first place you practised in?—No; I was in Inverness. BUNESSAN.

35148. Have you heard the evidence given by the people to-day?—I have. Alexander M'Kechnie.

35149. Have you the means of judging whether it was correct and well founded?—I cannot tell you that; I am not in a position to give an opinion upon that.

35150. Are there many poor people in the district?—There are not very many paupers, considering the extent of the united parishes.

35151. But are there many people who find a difficulty in making a living on their land?—I believe there will be some of them poor through last year's potato crop having failed.

35152. Is there much difference between the condition of the crofters and the cottars in that respect?—Of course, the crofters have the benefit, I have no doubt.

35153. Do you find that there is any want of milk anywhere?—The cottars, as a rule, have no cows; at least, a number of them.

35154. And are they able to get milk for their families?—Several of them will get milk from their crofting neighbours.

35155. Is the health of the people generally good?—Pretty fair.

35156. Are there any particular diseases to which they are liable?—Chronic rheumatism is very prevalent.

35157. What kind of houses have they generally?—They are pretty fair; I have seen worse houses.

35158. Are there any of them that you consider so poor as not to be proper dwellings for people in their position?—They are always repaired by the proprietor, those bad houses.

35159. Are none of them very bad?—No, I really cannot say they are very bad at all; there are several places worse.

35160. Are none of them so bad as to have any injurious effect upon the health of the inhabitants?—Well, there is a want of drainage about several of them, and that will have an effect upon the health of the people.

35161. Are they generally well clothed?—Fairly well.

35162. And the children also?—Yes, pretty well too.

35163. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Of what place are you a native?—Jura.

35164. How long have you been here?—Over six years.

35165. In reply to Sheriff Nicolson, you said you were not in a position to give an answer to one of his questions?—Not about the crofting system.

35166. Why not? Is it because you hold a public office?—And I don't interfere with their transactions in that matter.

35167. But you hear a good deal, don't you?—I sometimes hear complaints.

35168. But although you don't interfere with these things, yet you must hear?—Sometimes.

35169. You have heard the people to-day telling their story?—Yes.

35170. And you are aware there is some poverty, or else there would not be an application for extra relief?—That is so.

35171. Had you anything to do with the distribution of that extra relief?—No, except that I gave a guinea to the fund.

35172. You were not one of the committee for the distribution?—No.

ARGYLL. 35173. At that time had you occasion to go among the people and observe there was very serious destitution?—I was going about daily at the time.

BUNESSAN. Alexander M'Kechnie. 35174. What did you observe?—I observed nothing particular, but they said they were very poor.

35175. What did the distribution consist of? Was it money or provisions?—It was given in money and provisions both.

35176. Do I understand you to say there was not at that time anything extra bad in the position of the people that were so receiving this money?—Well, the application for relief from the board was heavier than in former. Of course, I had no other means of testing the thing.

35177. But before you gave your guinea to the fund, didn't you think there was a necessity for making a subscription?—I simply gave because I was requested to do so.

35178. *Mr Cameron.*—I suppose the applications to the Parochial Board are, generally speaking, a fair test of the poverty or well-being of the people?—I think it is the only test there is.

35179. Are there more applications now than when you first came?—They are fewer now, I believe.

35180. What allowance is given to the poor?—It varies from 2s. 6d. to 30s. per month.

35181. What is the average allowance to an ordinary pauper without dependants per month?—One or two get nearly 30s. When there is a family that can support their parents, they come down to 5s. or 6s.

35182. What is the ordinary allowance to a pauper who can do nothing for himself per month?—6s. or 8s. per month, or more or less.

NEIL MATHESON, Fisherman, Bunessan (60)—examined.

Neil Mathe-
son. 35183. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Have you any statement to make?—I have been a fisherman from my youth, and that source of living for the last sixteen years has been getting less and less; and now, in my old age, I would be glad, if possible, to get a piece of land.

35184. Are you a native of this place?—I am.

35185. And you have ceased fishing how long since?—I am still fishing.

35186. What fishing do you follow now?—Lobster during the whole year except summer, and salmon fishing in summer, for the last eight or nine years.

35187. Who rents the salmon fishings here?—Clark and M'Lean, in Ulva.

35188. And you fish salmon for them?—For myself.

35189. You have a piece of the shore for yourself?—Yes.

35190. How much of the shore have you?—I have the whole place round Ulva and Gometra.

35191. Whom do you give the fish to?—Mr M'Quarrie; we are in shares.

35192. Where do you fish the lobsters?—Erraid Island, since thirty years.

35193. You cannot fish there in winter?—Yes; I was there thirty years fishing winter and summer all round.

35194. And do you say the fishing is going back?—Yes, every kind of fish is getting scarce.

35195. You want to get land now?—Yes.

35196. Are you tired of the sea?—Yes.

35197. There is no cod and ling fishing about here, is there?—Yes, there is.

35198. Can it be prosecuted with success?—People are so poor, and they cannot prosecute the fishing in summer, because there is no way of curing the fish.

ARGYLL.
—
BUNESSAN.
Neil Matheson.

35199. Where do they fish cod and ling?—Between Iona and Dhu Heartach.

35200. And do you know the fishing ground well enough?—Oh, yes.

35201. Do you think there is plenty of fish?—Plenty.

35202. And what is required in order to enable the fishing to be prosecuted successfully?—Just good boats and help for the poor fishermen.

35203. To get boats and lines?—Yes.

35204. Do you think if they had that they would be able to make a living out of the fishing?—Yes, I am sure of it, if the fish are as plentiful now as they were in my time.

35205. Do the herring come this way at all?—There are plenty of herring passing, if there was a good boat to get them.

35206. Do you think the herring come so near the shores here, that if people had large boats and nets they should get the herring?—Yes, I am sure of it; and every year since I have commenced I have seen plenty of them between Dhu Heartach and Iona, and out here just the same.

35207. You don't know if any of the people here have tried the herring fishing outside?—It was never tried outside.

35208. But you are quite convinced from your knowledge of their ways and habits the fish are there every summer?—I am quite sure of it.

35209. Is there a good harbour at Erraid Island?—Plenty of good islands all round the coast, and good harbours too.

35210. So that there would be no quays required or anything of that sort?—No; the fishermen could get ashore in any place.

35211. And are there many young, strong men about the place who would be able to take up that work?—Yes.

35212. And willing?—And willing, if they had the means to do it.

35213. And they are good boatmen?—Oh, yes, very good.

35214. Do you know if they ever applied to any men with money for boats and lines, agreeing to pay them back by degrees?—I am not aware that they did.

35215. I suppose there are no large boats big enough for the ocean fishing?—No. I have one, but the way I put out so much money on the salmon fishing, and did not do anything with it, I was not able to get herring nets to try it, but I am very willing.

35216. Have you a boat yourself?—Yes.

35217. Is that the boat we saw out in the bay as we came in?—Yes.

35218. What is the length of keel?—Thirty feet.

35219. It is one of the ordinary east coast boats?—Yes. She was built at Loch Carron.

35220. Is she big enough?—Big enough; she was at the herring fishing before I got her.

35221. They are having much larger boats on the east coast now?—Yes; but she is big enough for this coast.

35222. Don't you think that it would pay to salt the cod and ling, although there is no market for the fresh fish?—Yes, I am quite sure of it; for twenty-four summers I was curing cod and ling, and it paid me well.

35223. Of course, you would make a much better wage if you had a market for the fresh fish, but still you could make a wage with the salt fish?—Yes. I have sent 4½ tons of dried fish away, and I used to get £18 and £18, 10s. a ton.

ARGYLL.

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BUNESSAN.

Neil Matheson.

35224. Why didn't you persuade some of the young men to go to that work after you stopped it yourself?—The majority of them are getting so poor that they cannot get stores and material and boats to put up all that is required.

35225. Are the lobsters getting scarcer about the shore?—Yes.

35226. How do you account for that?—There are too many fishing them.

35227. Do you keep close time?—No.

35228. You never did here?—No; that is what is spoiling them, fishing through the summer.

35229. Why don't you arrange amongst yourselves to keep close time?—It was not put in force.

35230. Although one might keep close time others would not?—Yes.

35231. And could that fishing be now prosecuted with profit—could one make wages upon the lobster fishing round the south end?—It has kept them thus far.

35232. You would wish to get some land now; would you be able to take up a good-sized croft?—I could manage to keep four or five cows; I would not want a bigger size than that.

35233. Did you make any application to the factor when there was a vacant croft?—I many a time asked a croft, and did not get it yet.

35234. I suppose there is keen competition for a croft when there is a vacancy?—Yes.

35235. There are more crofters than crofts?—Yes.

35236. You heard those who have land complain that the rent is very high?—Yes, the rent is too high.

35237. Even supposing you think the rent too high you would wish to get one of those crofts?—Not at the same rent.

35238. You think as rents go upon the crofts on this estate, fishing is the more profitable of the two?—I would prefer land; I am getting too old for fishing. I was twenty-four years paying rent for one end of a house. It was built so close to the shore that the tide came in, and I had to thatch it and keep it in repair, and pay £4 rent for the bare house. Then I got the whole house for £5. At last the rent was raised to £8, the bare house.

35239. To whom did you pay the rent?—To Mr Campbell, the factor.

35240. You don't stay in that house now?—No, I had to leave it.

35241. You had not a bit of land about it?—No, I had not; just a wee bit garden that would raise a barrel of potatoes.

35242. Who has it now?—Mr M'Niven.

35243. What does he pay for it?—He has a big farm, and the house goes with the farm.

35244. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Did you not mention something about Ulva?—I had the fishing there for the last eight years.

35245. Do you know the island of Ulva?—I do.

35246. Do you recollect it when it belonged to the M'Quaries?—I don't remember that.

35247. Are there many people on it now?—Only four shepherds and two or three cottars.

35248. Was it not once a very populous island?—I have heard it said there were eighty families on it.

35249. Were those families all removed against their own consent about the same period?—I heard that, but cannot speak to it.

35250. Is that very long ago?—About thirty years ago.

35251. Was it the father of the present proprietor who did it?—It was the present proprietor.

35252. Is Ulva a fertile island?—It was once a good island, but it is not very fertile now; it is grown with weeds, rushes, and ferns.

35253. From whom did Mr Clark purchase it?—I don't know, but I think it was the M'Quarries.

35254. *The Chairman.*—You said the lobster fishing had fallen off very much; if you ceased to fish lobsters for a year or two, would the lobsters increase again and be as numerous as ever?—Yes.

35255. Would it be a good thing if the Government enforced the law for a close season for lobsters?—It would be well for the fishermen if the Government would put some restriction upon the fishing. They are carting them in the summer, and half of them die before they reach the market. If they were not fished at that time these fish would be useful.

35256. What use do you put your big boat to at present?—When I am fishing lobsters that boat is my home.

35257. But you say you are now becoming too old?—Yes, but I am still fishing.

35258. Suppose, instead of repairing to the land, you became a fish-curer, and let your boat to four or five of the young men of the place, could you not make some money in that way?—I believe I could. I know the fishing grounds well, and if I had a crew and sufficient nets and boats, I could make a good living.

DUNCAN CAMPBELL, Labourer, Oban (69)—examined

35259. *The Chairman.*—Have you been chosen a delegate by anybody to come here to-day?—No.

35260. Have you a personal grievance which you wish to state?—Yes. In Martinmas 1846 my father and my grandfather and I were in Knock-na-feannaig. I made improvements in that place by the directions of his Grace of Argyll in 1843. I went on with the improvements until 1846, and in that year Mr Campbell, the factor, came. I built the house at my own expense. In 1854 a tenant came in, and six of the crofters were dispossessed of their holdings, and their places given to the one man. The six were dispossessed of their crofts for the sake of this one man who took their place. One of them is here, Donald Macdonald.

Duncan
Campbell.

35261. Has this got anything to do with your own case?—I was left without a place, and my father got a house from Mr M'Intyre. I then went to Colonsay to look after some employment. I got six years' employment from Lord Colonsay, and Professor Mackinnon knows that.

35262. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Since you left here you were back again upon this estate, but without any land?—Yes, for four years.

35263. And you are now living in Oban?—Yes.

35264. And I suppose you and your people before you were in the place you speak about for a long time?—Yes, my forefathers were there, and my father was put out for the sake of this man, and also the rest of the five tenants.

35265. And some of your relatives are on the estate still?—Yes.

35266. I think you stated you were on the land eight years after Mr Campbell came to manage the estate?—Yes.

35267. And yourself and five others were removed to make room for this man?—Yes.

35268. Who was he?—Mr M'Niven.

35269. Had he anything to do with the management of the estate?—No; he came from Islay. He was draining the estate; he has made his

ARGYLL.

BUNESSAN.

Neil Mathe-
son.

ARGYLL.
BUNESSAN.

Duncan
Campbell

fortune. The Duke did not know anything of this. The late factor, I think, reported to the Duke that the people were in arrears. It is not the Duke's fault.

35270. But there was no such thing as arrears in your case?—No, not a shilling.

35271. And after you were removed you had no home except for the kindness of a neighbouring farmer?—That is so.

35272. What is it that you wish?—I would desire to get the land my ancestors had, if that were possible; if not, if I could get a portion in any other part of the estate.

35273. And you would be quite willing to take it and able to take it?—Yes.

35274. Even supposing it is as highly rented as some of those crofters say it is?—At the same rent that M'Niven is paying.

35275. How did it come about when you were not in arrears, and you a Campbell, and the factor was a Campbell, and the proprietor is the head of the Campbells?—The chief.—

35276. How did it happen that you were dispossessed in favour of a M'Niven?—I don't know.

ALEXANDER M'INTYRE, Proprietor and Farmer, Ardalanish (60)—examined.

Alexander
M'Intyre.

35277. *The Chairman.*—How long have your family been settled in this country?—For the last 300 years.

35278. Have they been settled on your own property for that time?—No; they were born and bred on Ardalanish.

35279. Have they held land under the Argyll family for 300 years?—During that period.

35280. Are you now extensively engaged in farming?—Solely.

35281. Have you got any farms now which have been given to you during your lifetime, or have you inherited them all from your forefathers?—I cannot say that any of them were inherited. I only succeeded my forefathers.

35282. In the whole of them?—In the whole of them.

35283. Have any of them been increased in your lifetime by the addition of crofters' holdings?—Not since I occupied any part or portion of them.

35284. Have you held your farms in lease?—Yes.

35285. Have you any statement to make about the condition of the poorer class of the tenants in the country; is there any opinion which you would like to give?—When I left home I had no intention to be examined, but whatever questions you will be pleased to ask directly, I will try to give an account.

35286. You were born and bred in this country?—Yes.

35287. And you have long known the condition of the poorer tenants on the property?—Thoroughly—too well, some of them.

35288. And you have a sympathy and regard for them?—Certainly.

35289. What is your opinion of their condition now compared to what it was when you began life?—I consider they were never worse off than they are in the present year. Last year was a serious year to all who had any farms in their possession. The mortality among the sheep and cattle was very great, consequently the tenants must bear that.

35290. But that refers to two particular years; irrespective of these two years, over the whole course of your recollection?—This year particularly was the worst that I recollect since I was born.

35291. Do you think the poor tenants are better able to pay a higher rent now on account of the rise in the price of stock than they were thirty or forty years ago?—I believe not. When I compare my own vouchers, I know that I stand more in arrears than I did about twenty or thirty years ago, owing to the mortality among sheep and cattle.

ARGYLL.
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BUNESSAN.
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Alexander
M'Intyre.

35292. You have heard it stated that the tenants are much more highly rented now than formerly?—The valuation shows that clearly.

35293. And that especially a rise took place in the year 1876?—I am not very sure that I know the date.

35294. It was stated that the last rise was in 1876?—I cannot exactly give any definite answer to that; I had not an interest in that.

35295. Do you think that the crofters are suffering in consequence of any reduction in the area of their crofts in consequence of land having been taken away from them?—I believe some of them ought to be very thankful it was taken from them, because it would be ruination to a good many of them.

35296. Do you think they are not capable of managing their crofts?—For the want of means, and rents are considered there very sharp. Of course, if times were good, they would be able to pay the rent; and the price of wool at present is very low, and formerly it was a great help to all the farmers.

35297. Do you think it would be any advantage to the crofters generally if more hill pasture was given to them?—Yes, at a more moderate rent.

35298. Then do you think that the particular evil under which they suffer is the high rent?—Partly. If any one is sharply rented and losing by a farm, he has not the same interest in it as if he were accumulating some wealth.

35299. Do you think it would be any advantage if they had security of occupancy—if they had leases?—I heard it to-day distinctly described that they would not take any leases on the present rental. But I heard one individual say he was paying £18, 10s., and if he had the croft at £13 he would take a lease.

35300. Did you think that was a reasonable statement?—I think when he tries to live at a rent of £18 he ought to be more comfortable at £13.

35301. Have the rents of your own farms been increased during your lifetime?—Greatly increased.

35302. If farms such as you have were out of lease at this moment, would the proprietor find tenants to take them at the same rent?—Perhaps double that; it would be in the power of the proprietor and the one who would be so foolish as take them. But that would not pay the party. That shows that my rent is too high.

35303. But supposing a farm was out of lease, or supposing a tenant died or went away, and the farm was to be relet to a new person, would they find it easy to let it to a new tenant?—I believe it could be let at the same rent even at the present date, so far as I see. I don't see any changes on that. All the vacant crofts to have big rents, and farms equally so.

35304. If it be easy to relet farms at the present rents, does not that prove that farms are not over-rented?—I mean to say, which is very clear, that a present tenant would not give the present rent of his farm although it was out of lease in the morning, so far as I understand.

35305. *Professor Mackinon.*—Can you tell me anything about the condition of the people in this place when they had a greater amount of the land in their own hands; do you think they were better off then?—I think they were more independent and better clad.

ARGYLL.
BUNESSAN.
Alexander
M'Intyre.

35306. Did all these crofters hold their land from the proprietor, or were they sub-tenants of tacksman round about?—Very few had leases from the proprietor on this property long ago; it was only large and extensive farmers, such as Scoor, Fiden, and I believe long ago Ardtun. I think these were the farms that were held under leases.

35307. Were the crofts held directly and paying rent to the Duke, or held from a tacksman, and paying to him?—I am not sure as to that long ago.

35308. They all hold direct from the Duke of Argyll now, and pay rent to the chamberlain?—No, not all.

35309. Are there still some sub-tenants?—Yes, a few who do not pay a penny at all. They are independent.

35310. Can you tell me how it happens that there is such a very large number of people without any land at all upon this estate?—The want of means. They are very poor, and what they have is perhaps not their own lawful property.

35311. Those are very poor who have no land at all?—They are uncommonly poor.

35312. And the distress among them this year was especially great?—It was; of course, they got relief from London, Edinburgh, and Glasgow.

35313. And that relief was very much required?—It was, and did a great deal of good. At the time of planting potatoes they got a good many seed potatoes which they all planted—and they suited very well,—sent by his Grace the Duke of Argyll.

35314. There was a large number of people who left the estate and went abroad to foreign parts?—A great many long ago. They were in good circumstances then, and they left this country for Canada.

35315. And from the accounts they have sent home they are much better off than those who remained behind?—50 per cent. better.

35316. You have been a member of the School Board since the Education Act came into operation?—Yes.

35317. Comparing the present state of affairs with old times, do you say the education of the people is improving?—I do not consider that in the rural country the Education Act has made any improvement. It has levied a great deal of assessment on all the ratepayers of the parish. Children now do not attend very regularly, and must have a compulsory officer to cause them to attend, and before they would attend of their own pleasure.

35318. Are there not a greater number of children receiving education now than when you were a young man?—According to law, they must attend now.

35319. This place had very good schools in the old times?—Very excellent, even at the present day we are considered to have the best teachers in Scotland here.

35320. And there was a large number of people living on the estate in your early recollection who were good scholars, and pushed their way in the world by their scholarship?—Yes, who showed very brilliant in their colleges.

35321. And is that practice still more or less continued?—There is not so many of them as there used to be.

35322. The school rate is pretty high?—Very high indeed.

35323. So that you do not consider the new administration altogether an advantage to this parish?—I never took the view of it that it was a good thing for this parish.

35324. But still I suppose the children are in greater numbers every year attending school?—Yes.

35325. And you have very good schools?—Very good.

35326. *The Chairman*.—You said his Grace had sent down a large quantity of seed potatoes to the people?—Yes, in the month of April last.

35327. And that was very useful to them?—Most useful; it was a very great boon to them that.

35328. Do they give promise of a good crop?—I never saw the potatoes more promising than they are at present.

ARGYLL.

BUNESSAN.

Alexander
M'Intyre.

DONALD CAMERON, Schoolmaster, Creich (41)—examined.

35329. *Sheriff Nicolson*.—How long have you been teacher here?—I know the parish nineteen years, but I am not in my present place so long as that.

35330. Are you well acquainted with the people all through the parish?—I know them pretty well in the Creich district and the south side; I am not so well acquainted with Ardtun.

35331. Are you acquainted with the places of the people who have given evidence here to-day?—Not with the places of all of them; I know the places of some.

35332. So far as you are able to judge, and are acquainted with the circumstances, do you think they have exaggerated their grievances or not?—They have just stated them as I have always known them state them.

35333. Have you a croft yourself?—No, I have no land.

35334. Have you observed any change in the circumstances of the people since you came to reside in Creich or in the island?—No, I see scarcely any difference; not any noticeable difference.

35335. You don't think they are getting poorer?—I hear a greater cry about it; I hear the cry about being poor more for the last year or two than before.

35336. Do the children attend school pretty regularly?—Yes, when the weather admits of it.

35337. Are they much prevented by the weather?—A good deal.

35338. Are there any of them at a distance?—Yes, and some have to cross an arm of the sea.

35339. They must be pretty often prevented?—Yes, in the winter time especially.

35340. Does the compulsory officer do his duty?—He pays a visit occasionally to the school, and enforces the clause in so far as it can be enforced.

35341. Has it ever been enforced?—Well, parties were summoned to Tobermory, and defaulters were often brought before the board.

35342. And was there any punishment inflicted?—I never heard that there was any actual punishment.

35343. Did it cause any improvement in the attendance?—Yes, it had the effect of making the attendance better. But it would require to be repeated before it would have any permanent effect.

35344. Who are the members of the School Board?—The chamberlain is one, Mr Pitcairn, Teroran, Mr Campbell, Mr M'Intyre, and Mr Campbell, the minister of the parish.

35345. How often have they meetings?—I could not say, but whenever there is any special business bringing them together a meeting is held.

35346. Where do they meet?—In the board room, Bunessan.

35347. Do they pay due attention to the state of the schools, and yours in particular?—Whenever I complain they pay due attention. I never knew them fail to attend to a complaint.

35348. Have you any scholars learning the higher branches?—There are some in the special subjects; there are some good scholars.

ARGYLL. 35349. How many have you learning Latin and mathematics?—Four or five have been attempting that, but they have not been regular. They only took up that subject when they were about past school age.

BUNESSAN. Donald Cameron. 35350. Are there fewer than there used to be learning those branches?—No, I have more in the specific subjects every year than formerly, although the average attendance is getting a little less.

35351. Do you find any difficulty in giving instruction in those branches, in respect of the time and accommodation?—There is a little difficulty; the teacher is so much hampered by the standard work of the school that he cannot give as much attention to the extra subjects as he would like to do.

35352. Has there been any case of any one desirous of being instructed in those branches to whom you could not give the necessary time?—No, I just have the class, and any one whom I think qualified to take up the subject I allow to join the class; that is, after he is out of the standard work; or if he can manage his standard with ease along with Latin, I allow him to join the class.

35353. Are there any gentry in the neighbourhood who take an interest in the school?—Not outside the School Board; none in the neighbourhood of the school.

35354. Do any of the members visit the school except at the time of inspection?—Yes, they visit and inspect the school sometimes, independent of Her Majesty's inspector.

35355. *The Chairman.*—Is there any private examination of the school by the members of the School Board, and offering of prizes?—That has been done several times.

35356. Do you think it has a good effect upon the school?—It acts as a stimulus.

35357. I understand the proprietor has been in the habit of sending prizes to the schools on this estate?—I don't know anything about that. I have a sort of recollection that I got a little in that way; but it came indirectly to me, and I was told it was given by his Grace.

35358. Who gave the prizes?—The prizes that have been given have been given by the School Board. No other prizes have been given that I recollect of in my time.

35359. Do you think the value is taken from the assessment, or is it the members of the School Board who give it?—I cannot say; I never inquired.

35360. But there are prizes given?—There have been; not every year, but it has been done sometimes. I remember two or three times.

35361. *Professor Mackinnon.*—To what part of the country do you belong?—Ardnamurchan.

35362. You were brought up among a crofting community there?—Yes.

35363. Had you a school before you came to this parish?—No; I got my first school in this parish.

35364. And from this parish you went to South Uist, and then came back here again?—Yes.

35365. So that you know in a general way Ardnamurchan and South Uist. Comparing the crofters in South Uist and those here, which of them do you think are easier in their circumstances?—I think they are better fed and better clad, and better housed here than in Uist.

35366. Their crofts are larger?—I cannot speak as to that, but the land I think is better.

35367. There is a very large number in your district without any land at all?—A good many.

35368. Do you draw quite a perceptible difference between the condition of the children of those and the children of the larger crofters?—The attendance of the cottar class is not so regular, and their intelligence is not quite up to the average of the crofter children, nor their clothing.

35369. Do you attribute that to their poorer circumstances?—That is my impression.

35370. There was exceptional distress last year?—Yes, through the potato crop having failed and the grain crop not being so good.

35371. Was that felt more severely amongst this cottar class?—Yes, no doubt.

35372. The lower you went, the more severely the pressure was felt?—Yes, and the absence of employment.

35373. The attendance at the schools has improved very much since 1873?—Yes.

35374. And the comforts of school life altogether have increased?—Yes.

35375. There are better schools in the parish now than the one you had in Uist some years ago?—Yes.

35376. More comfortable altogether?—Yes.

35377. And the salaries of the teachers have increased too?—Yes.

ARGYLL

BUNESSAN.

Donald Cameron.

DONALD MACDONALD, Crofter, Lee (82)—examined.

35378. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—What have you to say?—I began farming in 1834, and I never heard a complaint scarcely against the Duke or factor until the end of 1846 or 1847. I was acquainted with three factors, and I paid rent to two of them. When I got the land it was in a place where there were no removals or evictions then unless it would be for being a bad neighbour, or not paying rent, or being a smuggler. There was one from Creich made an example of, and two defied the chamberlain to give up distilling whisky, and I got the croft one of them had. All the grounds and houses were included, and I was to begin draining and begin to build a house; and I built a new house there, and all the crofters were at the time building their own houses. They were getting no assistance. I had to send a man and boat to Lismore for lime, and I built the house in the year 1838, and a barn and byre. Now the house was good, and Alexander Campbell is living opposite here. Lord Clyde's father was lodging with Mr Campbell the whole of the last years he was in Mull; and the very kitchen he had in that house was his room. His daughter came for him then, and took him to Edinburgh; and he lived only about six months after he left this country. After this I was removed from that place where I built the house, and was obliged to leave my sash windows, twelve panes in each, and I was removed to Ardachy, and those people were emigrating, and I had to buy two common windows; and then I began to drain in Ardachy and improve the ground, and some of the houses too. I made about 340 drains of Scotch measure in Ardachy. The first two or three years I was there I was buying meal for my family, because the manure was taken to another farm, and the ground was ploughed down by the man who went away with the manure. But the last two years I was selling meal. Then I was removed in 1859 to Lee, the upper part of Ardtun, over the hill. I was working the two worst crofts on the estate. My son and other men began to drain there, and he has made 400 odd drains there, and a lot of blasting. It is twenty-four years now since I was removed, and another croft was promised me when I was removed—a croft better than the two I have, especially in those bad and wet seasons we had.

Donald Macdonald.

ARGYLL. 35379. Were you removed four times altogether?—Oh, no; only twice.

BUNESSAN. 35380. Did you get anything for the house you left?—Not a single sixpence.

Donald Macdonald. 35381. Did you get anything for the drains you made in the second place?—No; his Grace the Duke of Argyll does not know what we were suffering; he does not know we were ploughing ground to him without wages or meat, except the lunch at noon—bread and cheese and a glass of whisky, or perhaps a bottle of beer—a glass of whisky or two. My eldest son, who died lately, was in Ardachy ploughing, and other crofters with him, another day, with a pair of horses. The ploughing was not finished, and I was pointed out, and my eldest son went the second day, and was there all day without a morsel for himself or horses except what his mother sent.

35382. What rent are you paying just now?—You speak about the drains; I was drain measurer in Ross, and the drains were opened, and there was £1, 11s. laid out upon my own croft for opening the drains. We had to close them with stones ourselves, and I had to pay 11s. of interest. I was five years before I was removed in 1852. £2, 15s. I paid in five years for the 31s. laid out. In another case—and I never heard a murmur before that against the family of Argyll or the factor; but in Suie there was a man of the name of Macdonald, and he was evicted, and the croft given to the parish schoolmaster, who was in Bunessan. There was some murmuring about that; but when he left, another man, Alexander Livingston, came in, and it was £3, 1s. 8d. that was laid out upon his croft, opening the drains and closing them. And then the chamberlain had no clerk at the time, and the sheriff officer was here, opposite here living; so an old clerk and he had the rent taxed, and showed me before my eyes-rent 18s. for the £3, 1s. 8d.; 6s. in the pound, but mine came to 7s. 8d. I was then removed to Lee, and a croft was promised me, and I never got it.

35383. Where are you stopping just now?—Just at the place where I was—Lee.

35384. Have you a croft there?—Two small crofts.

35385. But you say you never got a croft?—Not the one that was promised me. I had overstock when I left Ardachy.

35386. Your complaint is that one croft which was promised you was not given to you?—No; my complaint is the high rent. £7, 10s. was my rent when I went there. In the year 1862 it was raised to £58. There were eight crofts in that.

35387. What was your share of the rise?—£7, 10s. was the principal rent, and it was raised from £32 to £58. Now I have not a word to say against Mr Wyllie as to favouritism or partiality, but about the rent.

35388. What did Mr Wyllie do in 1876 when all the others were put up?—It was then the rent was raised.

35389. I thought you said it was in 1862?—That was the first rent—from £32 to £58. Now in 1876 it was raised from £58 to £87.

35390. What is your own share?—My share is £18, 10s.; with assessment, £20, 1s. 6d.

35391. For two poor crofts?—Yes; and it is not rent altogether, but the bad ground. I had no potatoes for the last five or six years, but the year 1880, except a few.

35392. Did you get any of the seed potatoes that were going?—Yes.

35393. And you will have a good crop this year?—It is better, and it is the dry weather that makes it better.

35394. You are complaining of your heavy rent?—Yes; we have no complaint against the Duke, factor, or ground officer.

TOBERMORY, ARGYLL, FRIDAY, AUGUST 10, 1883.

MULL.

(See Appendix A, LXXXIV.)

TOBERMORY.

Present :—

Lord NAPIER AND ETTRICK, K.T., *Chairman.*
Sir KENNETH S. MACKENZIE, Bart.
DONALD CAMERON, Esq. of Lochiel, M.P.
C. FRASER-MACKINTOSH, Esq., M.P.
Sheriff NICOLSON, LL.D.

JOHN M'CALLUM, Solicitor, Tobermory (62)—examined.

35395. *The Chairman.*—Do you appear as a delegate from the people of Tobermory ?—Yes.

John
M'Callum.

35396. Have you a written statement which you desire to put in ?—Yes.

35397. Would you have the kindness to read it ?—‘*Statement by John M'Callum, Solicitor, Tobermory.* The estate of Tobermory, formerly the settlement of the Society for Extending the Fisheries and Improving the Sea Coasts of the Kingdom, was commenced and established in 1789, and sold by the Society in 1842 to David Nairne, Esq. of Drimkelbo, who purchased it and the estate of Aros at about £33,000 ; and by him in 1845 at the same price to Alexander Crawford, Esq. of ‘Aros ; and by his heirs in 1856 at the same price to Farquhar Campbell, Esq. of Aros ; and by him in 1874 to Alexander Allan, Esq. of Aros, the present proprietor, at £98,000. The estate of Aros, belonging originally to the late Hugh M'Lean, Esq. of Coll, marched with Tobermory ; and he was the first landlord that coveted the privileges of the settlers by getting the Society's factor to advise them to sell him a large portion of the hill grazing to add to his domain of Drumfin, modernly called Aros House, valued at the grazing of twelve cows, for which he agreed to pay £12 a year to the Society. This was done against the remonstrance and resistance of the settlers, who turned off the men who were sent to form the marches of this acquisition. The estate was laid out and planned by the Society to accommodate sixty settlers, who came and settled there from the adjoining district with from eight to twelve acres of reclaimable land for crops at from 3s. to 7s. 6d. per acre, the grazing of two cows on the hill or moor at 5s. each, and a horse at 20s., with building ground in the village for dwelling house and offices at 6d. per foot of frontage in lower village, and 1d. or 2d. per foot in upper village, and back garden and right

ARGYLL. ' to cut peat in the mosses at 2s. 6d. per year, as the copy printed regulations produced will instruct. (I can lay one of these printed regulations before the Commissioners). About the year 1828 the most of all the lots were taken up; and a number of additional parties wishing to settle there, the Society, against the advice of their factor, Mr Maxwell— instead of taking lots for these off the hill, taking advantage of the clause in the lease reserving to the Society the right of subdividing—resolved on dividing the existing crofts into two. At this time the Society owned the island of Calve covering the harbour of Tobermory, and was given out in crofts to the settlers, the latter having right to cut the sea-ware thereon for 2s. 6d. annually; but Mr M'Lean of Coll, the proprietor then of the Aros estate, also acquired the island from the Society, and let it to one tenant for £45 yearly. The rent now is £100 yearly. Till about the year 1840 they had one hundred and twenty crofts in Tobermory, with the privileges in the hill subdivided also; and when more settlers applied after 1840 the agents were instructed to leave the settlement intact, and grant no more lots to settlers. Shortly after the Society sold the estate in 1843, Mr Nairne, the purchaser, sold his highly improved estate of Drumkelbo in Forfarshire, and bought Aros and Tobermory, to try his agricultural experiments on them. The price had to be borrowed, as the heir to the purchaser of Drumkelbo disputed. The purchaser did not pay, and they entered in litigation in the House of Lords, brought down a civil engineer of the name of Blackadder to value the crops, instead of a valuator acquainted with the usages of the country and value of its land for grazing, &c. He raised the rent of the croft lands from 3s. to 7s. 6d. per acre to 20s. and upwards per acre; and of the croft land of about ten acres held by me for £4, 9s. to £13, 5s. of rent. Mr Nairne besides stipulated that I should pay the 6½ per cent. payable by him to Government in payment of capital interest in twenty one years,—I considered it rather hard that I should have to submit; I had an affection for the croft; I am a crofter's son, and I was a crofter, and my heart was in it; and from affection I was induced to adhere to it,—alleging that the more rent crofters were made to pay, the better they would work; and as the settlers held on leases of thirty years or a life rent which had expired, they were advised that the law would not protect them in possession at the old rent. Though it was a hopeless undertaking, some of them remained and submitted, but the most of them had to quit, in consequence of the exorbitant rents, the croft lands which had been reclaimed off the hill and brought into cultivation, and fenced and dyked by themselves without any compensation, the dykes being still standing. Mr Nairne attempted to meddle with their grazing on the hill or common, but this privilege being in connection with their tacks of their building ground of ninety nine years, renewable for ever on payment of a year's rent, the settlers turned their cows on to the hill, when he drove them off, and latterly he desisted from interfering with them. He, however, fenced that portion of the hill and moss below the public road lying between the croft land and the old lodge, which he used for his own purposes, and attempted to erect a sod dyke round a portion of the hill next the Baliscate crofts. There is a clause which had a great effect in the action, a clause of reservation to the Society—that is that in certain events they would be allowed to take the hill for certain purposes—that is improvement. We considered that, and I think every unprejudiced person considered it would be impossible for a locality such as this, which has now become an important town; but instead of that we were quite disappointed in our action before their Lordships in the Court of Session. Their Lordships believed that if a man merely put a fence round a portion

John
M'Callum.

' of a hill for sheep, that was an improvement. We did not consider that
 ' an improvement. Sheep were not contemplated when these regulations
 ' were made ; and we were disappointed with ourselves and the Court of
 ' Session ; and now we are before your Lordship and the Commissioners.
 ' But a settler of the name of Peggy Macdougall succeeded in getting the
 ' workmen to cease the erection. He also evicted crofters at Scribruadh
 ' near the Poors' House, and converted these into a farm for his friend, a
 ' Forfarshire innkeeper of the name of Mr Petrie, to whom he let the Mull
 ' Hotel here. There were perhaps about twenty crofters evicted to
 ' accommodate this lady, who was a favourite. When the estate was sold
 ' to Mr Crawford in 1848, this gentleman considered that the settlers had
 ' as good a right to their croft lands and grazings, &c. as he had himself,
 ' and indeed granted feu rights to some of them with these privileges ; and
 ' if all the settlers had been properly alive to their interests, they should
 ' have taken titles from him. Mr Crawford allowed 20 per cent. down of
 ' the rent assessed by Mr Nairne and his engineer Blackadder. Captain
 ' Hugh M'Lean and one Duncan Cameron were the only two who availed
 ' themselves of Mr Crawford's lenient proprietorship. Captain Campbell,
 ' in 1856, became the purchaser, and carried on the letting as left by Mr
 ' Crawford, only he was advised, as he told a committee of the settlers who
 ' waited upon him as to the hill grazing, that he had the best legal advice
 ' in Scotland and England that he had a legal right to the hill grazings,
 ' and that he would act up to that advice, and the settlers should act up
 ' to theirs ; and at the close of the interview the agent for the settlers
 ' expressed regret that he and his clients had to fight, but hoped they would
 ' be able to fight as civilly as they could. They were immediately served
 ' with sheriff summonses of removing, which were successfully defended on
 ' the plea of want of jurisdiction, the pursuer having been found liable in
 ' expenses. Then came a declarator and interdict against all the settlers,
 ' numbering upwards of one hundred and twenty defenders, termed "an
 ' army of martyrs" by their Edinburgh counsel, to have it declared that
 ' the lands of Tobermory and Baliscate were the property of the pursuer,
 ' so far as the defenders could not instruct a valid title to the same, the
 ' conclusions of which were latterly restricted to the question of cows
 ' grazing on the muir or common, and the right to cut peat in the mosses.
 ' I can produce the documents in the action if desired. The defenders, the
 ' most of whom had no written title, having by reference to the regulations
 ' and rental of accounts and descriptive rentals of the Society with the Act
 ' 1449, cap. 18.' Precious Act !—

35398. *The Chairman.*—I understand this to be a memorial with which you are entrusted by certain parties of whom you are the delegate, and I accept it as such, but if you introduce a number of spontaneous remarks into it, you appear to me to vitiate and alter the character of the memorial. You will be at liberty, after finishing the memorial, to make any remarks you think proper. I may also say that I would advise you not to introduce any remarks reflecting upon any individual. I heard you a short time ago allude—although I did not perfectly understand it—to a lady or a woman as a favourite?—Well, I think I was quite right.

35399. You may be right, but I beg you will avoid it, because I cannot allow any woman to be spoken of as the favourite of anybody?—I did not look upon her either as a man or as a woman ; but she was a favourite, in my opinion.

35400. It is not a question of your opinion, but of the Commissioners' opinion. Will you be good enough to continue reading the memorial?—I took every care I could, and I hope your Lordship will sympathise with

ARGYLL.
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TOBERMORY.
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John
M'Callum.

ARGYLL. me, because I was conducting this law plea twelve years, and cannot help having some feeling. But I think landlords are public persons, and I am entitled—
TOBERMORY.

John
M'Callum. 35401. I must stop you again. If you will give me the memorial I will read it myself?—I should be sorry to give your Lordship the trouble I will read it myself. ‘The defenders, the most of whom had no written title, having by reference to the regulations and rental of accounts and descriptive rentals of the Society with the Act 1449, cap. 8, made out a valid right of lease to their building lots and privilege of cows grazing and peat cutting before the Inner House of the Court of Session, with expenses on an appeal from the Lord Ordinary, who decided against them. Captain Campbell appealed to the House of Lords, but their Lordships affirmed the decision of the Court of Session, with expenses. The settlers then thought that they would have been allowed to possess their grazing and cut their peats in peace, but they were mistaken, and they were obliged to raise an action of declarator and interdict against Captain Campbell to enable them to exercise these privileges. Their agent selected a representative pursuer, Donald Gillies, but shortly after the action was instituted Captain Campbell's local agents influenced Gillies to withdraw from the action. The settlers' agent got him to agree to repudiate this withdrawal, but Captain Campbell's agents got over him the second time, and the action was latterly prosecuted by a man of the name of Angus Henderson, settler in Tobermory, a seaman. The words of the tack are:—
“Moreover the said _____ and hisforesaid shall have a right by his
“tack to pasture one cow during the summer months season, viz., from
“the 12th day of May to the 11th day of November inclusive yearly, on
“such parts of the said Society's muirlands as shall not be set off in lots
“for cultivation or enclosed and improved from time to time, subject to
“the power reserved by the Society in their minutes of the 22nd day of
“November 1792, for enclosing and improving the muir ground, and
“taking away the summer's grazing for cows in the events therein
“mentioned.” Captain Campbell, the proprietor, had commenced and did enclose with a wire fence the best portion of the hill for sheep grazing, while the question was *sub judice*. This ground lies on this side of Lochnamian, which he afterwards drained of its waters, where the cows on common went to in the heat of the summer days. He further attempted to dyke and enclose the upper portion of the hill, where the settlers were in the habit of grazing their sixty horses; but having been interdicted, he did not proceed any distance with the dyke; and the Court of Session having interpreted the improving the muir to mean the fencing of it off for sheep grazing as Captain Campbell had done, and not the letting of it as agricultural lots to additional settlers, as the settlers construed it, and as the Society undoubtedly intended it, he was allowed so to fence off portions of it; and his successor, Mr Allan, in the first year of his possession, finished and completed the dyke. Captain Campbell had commenced round the horse grazing and added it to his neighbouring farm of Lettermore, and added a greater portion of the hill to that fenced off by Captain Campbell, till the extent of grazing in the hill for the settlers at 5s. per cow is reduced to a mere nothing, and is indeed valueless, and let to all and sundry. The settlers are also deprived of their peats, and merely allowed to cut these at inconvenient places, wherever the landlord or his factor or manager or ground officer chooses to point out, and on this reduced portion of hill upwards of 120 cows graze. After the action was decided in the House of Lords, some of the settlers, against the advice of their agent, assembled and broke down the fences around the ground taking off their grazing on the

' hill by Captain Campbell. They were wrong in taking the law into
' their own hands, and on the evidence of the police officer before the
' sheriff substitute they, principally women, were convicted of rioting,
' though they did no rioting (unless the rejoicing over the fall of the fences
' and the freedom to their cattle could be called rioting), and sentenced to
' ten days' imprisonment. It must, however, not be forgotten that the
' offending settlers did not get the benefit of the fact that Captain Campbell
' had no right to erect these fences—particularly while the question was
' *sub judice*—and that it was an industrial settlement that was contemplated
' by the Society in their minute and not a sheep walk, the adaptation of
' Highland lands thereto and for deer, and high rents, having been of
' recent discovery or occurrence. The letting has, since the Society sold
' till to-day, been in a most dilapidated state. During Captain Campbell's
' reign there was only one feu granted in the village, and another for a
' combination poorhouse of about two acres for £24 yearly, the pastoral,
' not mentioning its agricultural, value of which in a most secluded,
' remote, and damp locality, would not be more than 1s. 6d. or 2s. 6d. an
' acre; and for a court house on the top of a hill in the outskirts of the
' town, instead of being built in the centre of the lower village where the
' new Free Church has been transferred to by Mr Allan, the present pro-
' prietor, from its former site in Mr Caldwell's lands. The croft land is
' now let to "Tom, Dick, and Harry," at the exorbitant rent of 20s. and
' 30s. an acre and upwards, in numerous instances, being light Highland
' soil not worth more at best than from 7s. to 10s. per acre. What was
' very remarkable as to the original settlers in Tobermory was that from
' their having a small stake in the country as householders or proprietors,
' none of them have become chargeable to the Parochial Board as paupers,
' though one or two of them in late years have had to submit as they were
' deprived of there privileges; while there has been since the passing of
' the recent Poor Law Act a great influx of poor disabled cottars and others
' who were evicted from the neighbouring lands of Mull, Ulva, &c., that
' has tended to press hard on the original settlers and the Poor Law
' Boards. Previous to 1848, and the failure of the potato crop, and con-
' sequent introduction of the poorest of the country cottar population,
' Tobermory was a valuable nursery for seamen. Some of the houses of
' these original settlers having become almost valueless from having been
' stripped of their other privileges, are being bought up by the proprietor,
' rebuilt in cottages of two rooms, and let at a rent of £8 per annum—
' rather a heavy rent when the poor, road, police, burgh, and water rates
' are added thereto, or sold under a feu of 2s. per foot of frontage for the
' lot that only paid formerly 1d. per foot of 30 feet frontage, or 2s. 6d.
' yearly. The first sale of property made by the present proprietor, Mr
' Allan, was the smithy and smith's house, both of one story, at Ledaig,
' with the bare ground on which it is built—a single house or run about
' 30 feet long—to the sister of the then smith, since deceased, who wished
' to secure it for her brother, the other smith, and who, according to the
' landlord's own purchase, had to pay for her whistle and affection for her
' father's bothy in the shape of £160 for the building (not worth more
' than the half or third of that sum), and 2s. per foot of 30 feet frontage
' or more, amounting to £4 or upwards of feu-duty for the ground.
' Should feuing and letting proceed at this rate the fanciful price of
' £98,000 may be recouped; but how this rate of feu is fairly to be paid
' is more than can be seen at present in a place without any trade or
' industry whatever except a distillery—if that can be called an industry.
' This proprietor, with the assistance of our police commissioners, of whom
' he is chief, is constructing or has constructed an extensive water and

ARGYLL.

TOBERMORY.

John
M'Callum.

ARGYLL. ' drainage scheme, without even consulting or getting the consent of the
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TOBERMORY. ' rate-payers, at a cost of from £5000 to £6000 if not £7000, fully more
 ——————
 John ' than the original price of his estate of Tobermory altogether, with a view
 McCallum. ' to make it a resort for summer tourists or others in search of health from
 ' our centres of population ; but how far this may succeed is quite pro-
 ' blematical. One thing that will be accomplished by the drainage scheme
 ' is that the soil from it will find its way to the only bathing ground we
 ' have, if it does not return to the village again ; while there was not a
 ' better drained place than Tobermory before, with a superabundant supply
 ' of the finest spring water from innumerable springs, if these drains and
 ' springs were kept properly. Several of these wells used by the inhabitants
 ' have had their waters sunk into the new drainage pipes. Tobermory
 ' derives its name of "Tobarmhuire" from a mineral well superstitiously
 ' termed "St Mary's Well." The north side of the village of Tobermory is
 ' built on the estate of Mishnish, formerly belonging to Colonel Donald
 ' Campbell, who feued the portion next the shore of it at 2s. per foot of
 ' frontage, with croft land in about sixty lots of about two acres each on
 ' the finest plot of arable land in Mull, with the privilege of cow's grazing
 ' on the hill, for £5 yearly rent and right of cutting peat. Three or four
 ' of these were, in 1840, feued to Mr Nisbet, the factor, procurator-fiscal,
 ' bank agent, &c., for his house, and other two for land connected there-
 ' with. Mr Nisbet was also factor for the Tobermory estate, forming the
 ' settlement of the Society, and the north portion of these crofts was, in or
 ' about the year 1848, to the extent of about twenty crofts taken from
 ' the householders and crofters and added to the farm of Erray, then rented
 ' by the deceased William Robertson, Esq., sheriff substitute of the
 ' northern district of Argyllshire, and residing there for a year, by rent of
 ' £30, what the crofters paid £5 each for, or £100 per year. These
 ' crofters were then also all deprived of the hill grazing, which was let to
 ' a flesher in town, and is now added also to the farm of Erray along
 ' with the farms of Ardmore and Reraig. Reraig, formerly let to nine
 ' tenants in three crofts, three in each croft, with the hill in common,
 ' with six cows each, twenty-five sheep, and a horse, at £15, 5s. rent each,
 ' or £137, 5s. yearly in all ; Ardmore, to eight tenants in two portions,
 ' four tenants in each portion, at £120 yearly rent, reduced by Mr Caldwell
 ' to £90—stock six cows, twenty sheep, and one horse each, the hill in
 ' common. Other four of the remaining crofts were rented by Mr Sproat,
 ' writer, then clerk to Mr Nisbet, the factor, &c., and now also his successor
 ' in the offices of factor, solicitor, procurator-fiscal, bank agent, clerk and
 ' treasurer to the road trustees, secretary to the Tobermory Combination
 ' Poorhouse, &c., and on part of one of which he has feued and built a dwell-
 ' ing house, offices, and garden. Mr A. M'Donald feus a croft, and Mr
 ' M'Lachlan, Badenoch, another. The croft rents now without the hill
 ' grazing is reduced to £4. The farm of Erray, enlarged as stated, was
 ' after Mr Robertson's death let at a higher rent to Mr M'Lachlan,
 ' Mingary, Ardnamurchan, along with the farms of Ardmore and Reraig
 ' at £440 yearly ; and when Mr M'Lachlan gave it up in 1880 it fell into
 ' the proprietor's hands, like many of the lands in Mull at present ; and it
 ' has been let this year to Mr M'Kill, the tenant of the Tobermory distillery,
 ' at the reduced rent of £300, who has taken upon himself—whether with
 ' the proprietor's consent we cannot say—to, not only place a gate on the
 ' walk to Rhunagaul lighthouse made for the inhabitants, but also to put
 ' up a card prohibiting dogs, and shutting up every other road and access
 ' to his lands or their shores, which were formerly used and walked upon
 ' by the inhabitants and strangers resorting to the place without let or
 ' hindrance, and certainly without any injury to these or to the stock and

' cropping thereon or detriment to the owners; and we have no doubt Mr M'Kill, in his great anxiety for the protection and security of his letting, would have these equally as well protected if he had allowed these to be used as they were, as parties will get access to the shore through his lands in spite of all his barriers. The inhabitants of Tobermory are thus hemmed in on all sides like a city besieged; while if they had retained their crofts, so far as not required for feuing, they would have been as they were at one time a healthy and happy community, and would not only pay three times more rent to the proprietor, but be able to take from the ground double what the large holders will ever be able to take. If the proprietors expect parties to feu their ground, or to get the place to become a resort for strangers, they can scarcely expect this unless these strangers, if not the inhabitants, are trusted to use these roads and walks. The ground on the top is offered for feuing at the rate of £8 per acre and £5 the half acre—very handsome for such a sequestered spot in Mull—and, though the village has been made a police burgh under the Lindsay Act a few years since, we were amused if not annoyed to observe in one of the charters granted of recent feus, a whole regiment of regulations for keeping the roads free of obstructions and sundry other police regulations and provisions. While the proprietor seems to overlook the burgh commissioners are now in full authority to look after the town, which has since their appointment been in a most disgraceful state, the contractors for buildings being allowed to use the streets and roads as they choose, with whole streets torn up from end to end for receiving the pipes for the works to the great inconvenience of the inhabitants, while they should have been restricted to certain portions, and to have these closed up as they proceeded. There is another very objectionable clause as to what is termed casualties in the feuing, though this is by a recent Act declared to be unlawful—a clause binding the feuar on the entry of heirs and singular successors for one year to the payment of double the above not inconsiderate feu duty; while the other proprietor has, according to the Act, an obligation to pay a certain defined sum in addition to the said feu-duty at the expiry of every fixed period of fifteen or twenty years. The object of this we cannot see, but likely our Edinburgh lawyers will be able to enlighten us not regarding the utility but probably the absurdity of the clause. Is not the yearly feu-duty in all conscience quite sufficient, and what superior office does the superior discharge for his consideration, or equivalent that he gives for it? Merely I believe that he has the privilege of collecting this with his feus and rents. I need not remark that while all lands and heritages are now liable to be assessed for public burdens payable equally by landlord and tenant, though formerly paid principally by the landlord, yet feu duties on the rather peculiar plea that they are not property, or its fruits, are not so assessed. Then if they are not property or the fruits of property it would be interesting to know what they are. Certainly they are no myth, though the value to the feuars is very questionable. There is also a superiority payable out of the lands of Buliscate, part of Mr Allan's estate of Tobermory, of £53 to Mr Caldwell of Mishnish, as singular successor to the late Colonel Donald Campbell, and £35 to the Duke of Argyll out of the lands of Tobermory, besides a year's rent of certain of these lands at the entry of an heir or singular successor to these superiors which is exacted.' I had not time to make my statement as full as I could have wished, but I endeavoured to make it as much to the point as possible.

35402. I understood you to say you appear here as the representative or delegate of parties at Tobermory?—Yes.

ARGYLL.
TOBERMORY.
John
McCallum.

ARGYLL. 35403. In what form were you elected—at a public meeting?—At a public meeting.

TOBERMORY. 35404. By whom is this statement drawn up?—By me.

John M'Callum. 35405. Was it written in your office or by yourself?—By myself.

35406. Has this statement been submitted to the people of Tobermory?—I have not the least doubt they are all aware of it.

35407. Will you have the kindness to answer me that. Has the statement been read to the people or approved of by them in any form?—I believe the settlers of Tobermory are all aware of this statement, and I challenge them to contradict it.

35408. Don't challenge, if you please. I ask you a simple question, which I shall be obliged if you will answer. Was this document read in a public meeting or adopted or approved by the people of Tobermory, or is it a fair and natural expression of their views?—I think it a fair and natural expression of their views, particularly the Society's settlers.

35409. I ask you that question particularly, because it is usual for memorials presented by delegates to be signed either by the delegates themselves or by the electors. This memorial is not signed by anybody?—There was very little time for anybody to sign it, but I may mention that I was agent for twelve years in this matter, and was confided in by these settlers, and naturally I ought to know their minds very well.

35410. I don't at all dispute that it may be a very fair statement of their affairs?—It was a very arduous undertaking.

35411. The statement enters very fully into all the features of the case, and it also embodies a good number of reflections upon the decisions of the local authorities, the Court of Session, and the House of Lords; and upon these points I shall not ask you any questions; but I should be happy to get at a distinct impression of the amount of damage done to the parties interested, and of their present condition. Would you have the goodness to tell me first of all what remains to the people of Tobermory?—Their houses. I stated that they have been able to make out a title to their houses. If they had not been able to do that the conclusion of Captain Campbell's summons would have taken them away entirely. A great many of them had not written titles.

35412. How many occupiers are there now interested in the estate of the original company? How many occupiers are there now living on these lands?—A great many strangers now occupy these lands—as many as of original settlers.

35413. But of the original class?—All I can say they hold any right to is merely the houses they built.

35414. But how many crofters are there, as it were, or small occupiers of the original stock and class?—I cannot exactly tell.

35415. Would there be more than one hundred families or heads of houses?—Not so many crofters, but 120 stances are there still. But they can make very little of the houses when they are deprived of their crofts.

35416. How many crofts do you think there are still?—I cannot exactly say how many.

35417. I would like to get a kind of idea of how large or how numerous is the class of persons who are suffering under these alleged wrongs; do you think there are seventy or eighty families of the original class of people?—Probably sixty crofters, but then you must take along with that that they have these settlements still. I was going to produce to your Lordship the regulations.

35418. You think of the original class of crofters there are about sixty left in possession of their houses?—I beg your Lordship's pardon; there

ARGYLL

TOBERMORY

John

McCallum

may be 120 of them or their successors in these houses; the houses are there to speak for themselves. Mr Allan has built additional houses to the original 120, and he has knocked down a few of them.

35419. Of the crofter class?—I don't know what class.

35420. But do the houses look as if they were intended for elegant residences, or are they houses adapted to the crofting class of people?—I should say adapted to the crofting class of people. They are sensible enough houses—cottages of two rooms and perhaps a mid-closet.

35421. So that there may be more than 120 houses, and perhaps of these there are sixty with crofts still attached?—Yes, at the increased rent I stated.

35422. What is the rent for the stances of the houses where there is no croft?—Under the Society in the upper village it was a penny a foot for the back feus and twopence a foot for the front feus; that would be about 2s. 6d. at a penny a foot, and 5s. at twopence a foot in the front street.

35423. But as I don't know the area the houses occupy, I cannot make the calculation?—I stated that there were thirty feet of frontage.

35424. What would the rent of one of these original stances be? They do not pay any rent for the house itself?—For the building stance.

35425. What would it be about?—2s. 6d. in the back part, and on the front street twopence a foot, or 5s. a stance. There might be a little difference in the length of frontage, but it would be very immaterial.

35426. What is the size of the croft attached to these original stances?—The size when there were only sixty settlers was about nine or ten or twelve acres—that is before the subdivision took place.

35427. And what is the area of a croft now?—I have my croft undivided, but those that have divided crofts will have two or three or four acres.

35428. What is the rent charged for these at present?—I have a croft—I was unwilling to take land, but I was obliged to take it for my horses, because the horses' grazing was taken away.

35429. But not speaking for yourself for the present, but rather for the common run of poor people, what are they paying for their little crofts of two or three acres?—I suppose about the same as myself, and I pay £12 for the croft—for the privilege of two cows on the hill which I make no use of, for this reason that there is no grass on the hill.

35430. May I take the liberty of once more asking you if you can tell me. Take the case of three acres as an average croft; what rent would a tenant be paying for such a croft as that?—He would pay at least £1 an acre, and in some instances 30s. an acre.

35431. For a croft of three acres might I say £4?—I know a croft that has gone as high as £3 an acre.

35432. What would be a sort of average? May I say a croft of three acres would be £4 or £5?—I know a croft which is only two acres which is rented at £6, and my croft is 30s. an acre.

35433. That would be £4, 10s. if it were three acres?—Yes.

35434. What extent of hill grazing, if any, is now left to the people?—The way I form an idea of that is by the grazing of the horses—the grazing of about 60 horses, equal to 160 cows, was taken off by the dyke Mr Allan finished.

35435. Might I ask you whether you can state to me in general terms how many acres the present hill grazing or common pasture extends to—what remains?—I would say it cannot be more than a fourth of the original hill at any rate.

35436. What was the original area?—I never counted the acres.

35437. If I cannot ascertain that I should like to ascertain how man

ARGYLL.

TOBERMORY.

John
M'Callum.

cattle of various kinds are now pastured upon the common pasture!—I believe there are one hundred cattle at least, and about, I believe, eight or nine horses.

35438. How is the number regulated? Is a specific number appropriated to each holding, or does anybody put on what he pleases?—I believe it is indiscriminate; everybody puts them on as he pleases. There has been no respect paid to any householder, because if there was any preference given I should have got my father's croft, and I did not get it.

35439. You say there is a sort of indiscriminate right of pasturage exercised, which I presume to be rather to the prejudice of the poorest members of the community?—It is to the prejudice of the original settlers.

35440. By persons holding feus sending cows indiscriminately upon this remaining pasture?—I believe they take advantage of the letting as well as the rest. I have stated that I have grazing and two cows in connection with my croft, but not in connection with my house.

35441. Do you think any person of a superior class holding a residence on a feu ever sends cattle on to this common pasture?—Well, unless your Lordship calls me a man of a superior class, I don't suppose they do.

35442. I certainly recognise you as a person of a superior class, but you told me you were in possession of one of the original crofts?—Yes, but not the one I originally held.

35443. But you are in possession of one of the original crofts, and you are in that respect belonging to the original class. What I want to know is do any of the persons recently introduced without any share in the original crofts send their cattle upon this common pasture?—I believe some of them do, but I cannot really say.

35444. Then, in fact, the original settlers upon this place—on this peculiar ground—feel it a very great hardship that they have gradually, either in course of law, or in the indiscriminate exercise of proprietary right, been deprived of the area of their ground and the right of common pasture?—Yes, keenly and intensely.

35445. As I felt myself under the necessity of asking you not to mix up your personal views and remarks with the statement in the memorial of those you represent, I think it is only fair that I should ask you now to make any statement which you still desire to make, but it must be done at moderate length?—I have nothing further to remark, only seeing I have been entrusted with this case since I came here, I may say that I am acquainted with the phases of the working of these lands, and that I might probably give an opinion as to what the remedy should be.

35446. Yes, you are at perfect liberty to state the remedies you would advise?—I must say, I feel a good deal of diffidence in giving an opinion, because it is a very important question; but at the same time I have found during my experience that if we had had valuation of rents by competent judges during the proprietorship of Mr Nairne and Captain Campbell, the law plea would have been avoided. ‘*Opinion as to Remedy as between Landlord and Tenant.*’—(1) Valuation of rents by competent judges. (2) Mode of set. Would recommend club farms as best adapted to the nature of Highland lands, with six to eight tenants with the lower ground divided, with house and other accommodations and the hill in common. A stock of half blackfaced sheep and cattle. (3) Fixity of tenure. Formerly actions of removing required to be called in court forty days before Whitsunday term, but by a subsequent Act passed for landlord expediency in eviction, it is merely necessary to have the action served forty days before the term of removal, similar to the intimation that a master has to give to a servant to quit his service, or a servant to a master that merely requires to shoulder his chest and carry it home or to his next

employer. Two or three years at least before the set is to terminate, intimation should be given by the party wishing the set to cease, and the landlord bound to pay for unexhausted improvements by the tenant, and the tenant, if inclined, to be allowed to purchase his holding. Formerly on the island of Tyree, when a tenant emigrated or quitted his holding, the incoming tenant purchased his right of holding, and the arrears owing to the Duke were paid therefrom. (4) To simplify the titles for sale and transmission of land. The most of the settlers of Tobermory neglected or never thought of getting a written flag of title to their land; and as regards the right to their cows' grazing, as this was not included in the deeds of those who procured charters for their lots, they were better off under the regulations and rental conferring this right and the rights to their lots and houses; and as these privileges were not included in the charters, their Lordships could look at the four corners of that deed for their rights. In course of the action a whole batch of stamped printed lease forms (such as I now exhibit), printed on vellum or parchment, were among other documents recovered under a fishing diligence from Mr Nisbet the factor, which should have been filled in and handed as titles to those requiring them in the upper town or village, as intended by the Society; and the settlers in the lower villages, which was intended for merchants' shops and stores with feu charters, encumbered at the time with a sasine; but as the expense of a charter and sasine would be as much as the fourth of the value of the lot and buildings, this title was not taken by many, but unites the action or title by possession regulations, and entry on rental was made out as I have stated. Instead of dispensing with the sasine altogether, it was made lawful for an Edinburgh notary to take it in his office in Edinburgh; but subsequently it was made optional for a purchaser to have himself seized or not, a tardy reform, in spite of the Edinburgh lawyers. The leases are for ninety-nine years, renewable, given on payment of an additional year's rent or ground annual. The titles of land might be simplified, if distinction of heritable and moveable were dispensed with, and property, whether heritable or moveable, simply termed property as they actually are, and the law of the land quite sufficient to govern the usage of land and all other property, and the mode adopted in our colonies adopted, which could be made up with as little if not less trouble than is required to furnish an establishment game or dog licence. Generally—a total repeal of the landlord's hypothec, the game laws, and the law of entail. I was at one time, before the land question was mooted in Ireland lately, of opinion that if a tenant got a nineteen or twenty-two years' lease of his land, a practical, not an amateur or a fanciful, farmer would be able to contract with his landlord at a reasonable rent to improve and reclaim his ground the first seven years, commence to reap some benefit the next seven years, and recoup himself the last seven years; but the competition with foreign countries staggered me in my belief in this, and induced me to be of opinion that if a tenant got two or three years' notice to quit or enter into a new arrangement with his landlord, or fixity of tenure and compensation for permanent and unexhausted improvements, he would be in a safer and better position than with such a lease as I have described. I consider it quite unnecessary, if not a crying evil, to be under a special law to a landlord, and that it would be quite sufficient to be under the common and statute law of my country. I am coming further to be of opinion that tenants are now endowed with so much intelligence, and bear such a share of public burdens, that if possible the landlords should be gradually bought off at the intrinsic value of their interests in the land, and the tenants allowed the opportunity of becoming purchasers of

ARGYLL.
—
TOBERMORY.
—
John
M'Callum.

ARGYLL. ' proprietors of their holdings ; and that if pauperism and lunacy did not disappear neither would they be so rampant among us, as there would be no landlords wishing to send their cottars and small tenants a little from home, to return again upon them and tenant rate-payers as paupers.
TOBERMORY. ' Along with this I would advocate a national poor law, instead of having so many parishes as little kingdoms within a county and counties within a kingdom or state, with expensive staff of officials and expensive questions of disputed settlements, and no inducement for landlords to send their cottars or small tenants off their hands. It was better for Highlanders that they never heard of poor laws.' I think that is all I have to say ; at the same time it is a great consideration, seeing that landlords now want us to emigrate, and say we are an incumbrance and in the way.

35447. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You have been asked by the Chairman to state your remedies for Mull, and you have stated these at considerable length. What remedies do you suggest for the state of matters at Tobermory ?—I would suggest if it were practicable—but the landlord will interfere likely—a return to the old settlement as one of the most practical settlements I ever saw ; for this reason that it was instituted by a combination of landlords of whom the Duke of Argyll was one ; and we lived under the regulations then as comfortably as any people could have done.

35448. You say you are a native of Mull?—Yes, of Tobermory.

35449. And you have lived all your days here?—I was about five years learning a little of my profession away.

35450. I suppose you know the modern history of Mull?—Tolerably well ; I have known it so well that I have despaired of it at last.

35451. May it be said that great changes have taken place within the last thirty or forty years in the ownership of the land?—Yes.

35452. Have these successive changes tended in any way to benefit the class of smaller tenants or crofters?—Not in any instance I am aware of.

35453. Has the tendency not been with every successive change and with every improvement or alleged improvement, rather to curtail the old privileges and position of the smaller tenants?—Entirely.

35454. Have not a great number of people been removed against their will, or compelled by force of circumstances to leave the island within the last thirty or forty years?—A great number ; I recollect a great number since I was a boy, and particularly in the island of Mull. On the lands of Glenforsa there are about nine miles of glen, which was inhabited by the best tenantry in Mull, and they were obliged to leave for the factor who took the land there, a Mr M'Quarrie. From Morinish there was also a great number sent away to clear the land for a man of the name of Cameron. The land was then owned by Mr M'Caskill.

35455. In these cases can you say whether the removal of those people benefited in any way the crofters who remained behind, or was it not rather for the purpose of making large tacks?—It was for the purpose of making large tacks, and because it was more handy to get the rent that way than from the crofters.

35456. When the small people were put away, it was not with the intention of enlarging the crofts of those who remained?—No. When I came here to practise my profession I happened to be at Tyree, and at Kennoway there was a tenant sent out, and instead of the croft being given to some deserving crofter it was added to the farm of Mr Campbell of Balfinish.

35457. At the time of Sir John M'Neill's Report the proprietor of Ulva stated it was with very great pain he had removed 350 people out of Ulva, leaving between 100 and 200 ; and he thought that was a proper

population to remain upon the island. Is it, or is it not the fact that these remaining people were sent away by the same proprietor?—They were all sent away.

35458. Have you seen the evidence of the proprietor given before Sir John M'Neill?—No, I never read anything about it, but I speak from my own experience. I was secretary to the Emigration Commissioners here in 1848, and there was a man from Ulva here who was sent away, not by Mr Clark—Mr Clark did not send any away—but by the Emigration Society. The people were sent away by the Emigration Society and the Poor Law Board. Mr Crawford was proprietor at the time, and the people were sent away by the Poor Law Board.

35459. Do you think from your knowledge and experience that the confining of crofters and driving them off their land into places like Tobermory has a tendency to increase pauperism?—Undoubtedly, and it has increased it in Tobermory. They not only became perhaps themselves, but they have made paupers of the poor settlers who were there before them, and who were formerly independent.

35460. Has everything done by the proprietors—except the one gentleman you have named—of Tobermory since it was sold by the Society had a tendency to diminish the rights of the settlers step by step?—Yes, and I believe there is a diminishing of the hill just now. I forgot to mention in my statement that there were only seventeen who had acquired the right previous to 1800; and that I believe the present proprietor by his fencing off in the way he is doing and commencing to rear rabbits on his own estate, is beginning a system which will have the effect of depriving them of the hill entirely; that is what it leads me to believe.

35461. When were rabbits introduced?—Only this year, I believe. Mr Allan has upon his own home farm a number of them, but not upon Tobermory, as far as I am aware. But I believe he has commenced them, and I for one have no affection for them.

35462. Is there any other species of game complained of, if rabbits can be called game?—Not on this estate.

35463. Is there any forest at all in Mull?—I believe Colonel Gardyne has a deer park, and I believe he has one of his farms with deer and sheep, but I am not aware of any other.

35464. Has he put up a proper deer fence?—I think he has, but I don't know whether the farm part is fenced.

35465. Are you satisfied that the paper you have given in to-day truly represents the feelings of the people of Tobermory—the settlers?—Yes.

35466. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie*.—I think you stated that as a remedy for the grievances of Tobermory, you think the terms of the early settlement should be reverted to?—Yes.

35467. You have also mentioned that the present proprietor of Aros and Tobermory has paid a very large sum for that property—in view of the early price, an exorbitant sum?—I should say so.

35468. He paid that price, I suppose, for the rights which the Court of Session had decided to belong to that property?—Well, I suppose so.

35469. If he paid this price for those rights, and those rights are to be restored to the people of Tobermory, who is to be the loser, the law having sanctioned the purchase of those rights?—Well, I think the proprietor, like an engineer, is entitled to know the ground he goes upon before he buys it.

35470. But apparently he did know, because the law had declared it?—He ought to have satisfied himself.

35471. But he was satisfied?—I go a little further, and I don't think what the law endorses is all that the landlord has to look to. I think

ARGYLL.
TOBERMORY.

John
M'Callum.

ARGYLL. when he buys a subject he must look to the intrinsic value of it and to the conditions of let, and when there are parties upon it, to what their rights are.

Tobermory. John M'Callum. 35472. But, in point of fact, we live under the rule of law, and he purchased certain rights which the law has sanctioned. You propose to restore these rights to the people. Should the State pay him for those rights, or should he be the sufferer?—I don't think the State should go and pay him such a fanciful price as that; but if he found that he could not enjoy this estate at its proper price, then if we can do without him—as I am becoming of opinion we can do without landlords—he could get the intrinsic value of the estate, not what he might call it or what he might be inclined to give for it, but the intrinsic value of the estate. I would pay the intrinsic value for a croft if I was going to take it.

35473. The law has given him certain rights, and you propose the law should take them away; do you propose that the law should take away those rights without giving him compensation?—I was asked what was best suited for Tobermory, and I gave my opinion upon it, but probably I did not consult what the law has done when I gave that answer. I may add, that if we returned to the former settlement, we would expect to get the land at its real value according to valuation. We consider the landlords have too much freedom—particularly one landlord. If we had the wisdom of a dozen we might perhaps get justice, but when we are at the mercy of one it is not so. I may say also that there are some very good and kind landlords; but it is too bad that the ownership of the land should be at the caprice of one man. I believe, if matters were mended, it would have a tendency to reduce pauperism and lunacy, which is rather a rightsome thing at present.

35474. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Is there a large number of cottars in and about Tobermory—people who have houses without land?—There are some. What I understand to be cottars are those on farms for working the farms; but all those in this place have rights except, I believe, a few on Mr Caldwell's estate, who have been there a long time back, and who occupy the houses, and pay something like 5s. a year. I don't think they have any title; but they have a good bit of garden and a house.

35475. Is there any considerable number of such persons who were formerly in the occupancy of land of which they have been deprived—in or near Tobermory—people who had crofts and are now without land?—Yes, there are several. I asked the factor once if the rents were not too high, and he said they were, but that when a croft was empty there were so many coming forward to take it. I argue from that that the landlord should be a man of some mind; that he should say 'You shall go thus far and no further,' and that when he does not do that he forgets his position.

35476. Is there a large number of crofters or cottars in this parish who are desirous of getting more land?—I believe there is a regular hunger for land.

35477. And is there land which could be given to them for that purpose in the neighbourhood of Tobermory, without depriving the farmers who now occupy it of their farms?—I believe if Tobermory was provided with the wants of its own people it ought to be quite sufficient for it—that is, of those that require accommodation to their houses there; and I think those who have cottars on their land should just retain them. Perhaps in connection with that, I may mention that my opinion is, that we ought to have a general poor-law, instead of having so many parochial systems here and there; because, if it is a national defect it ought to be nationally administered, and at far less expense and trouble; and for this reason that if such a law had existed, Mr Clark of Ulva and other proprietors would have had

no inducement to send their people to the next proprietor, or the next parish. Under the present system, the consequence is that these paupers return upon him and others tenfold, under our poor laws—they gain no settlement when they are away—and if we had a general poor law, there would be no inducement to landlords to send them away. It was fear of paupers that made Mr Clark send his crofters away. I have heard it said that if the people had not been sent away by him, they would have sent him away. I believe they would pay their rents by the lobsters on the shores.

ARGYLL.
TOBERMORY.
John
M'Callum.

JOHN M'KINNON, Carpenter, Tobermory (83)—examined.

35478. *Mr Cameron.*—Are you a delegate freely elected by the people you represent on this occasion?—Yes.

John
M'Kinnon.

35479. Were you elected at a public meeting held for the purpose?—Yes.

35480. What district do you represent?—The crofters of Tobermory.

35481. Were there many people at the meeting at which you were elected?—Plenty.

35482. Have you any written statement prepared which you wish to submit to the Commissioners?—No, only the charter of the British Fishery Society.

35483. Are you able to state verbally what the wishes of the people are who sent you here?—I told the people at the time that they had nothing to say here, only what I had to say myself in reference to my croft.

35484. I understand you have come here to represent a personal matter of your own, rather than as a delegate for the people?—Yes, I have nothing to do with any person but myself.

35485. In that case will you state as briefly as possible what you wish to remark about yourself?—I was apprehended and put into prison when I stood for a croft, after having it manured in the spring time. I was detained in prison for ten days, and the croft was ploughed ready for sowing when I was liberated.

35486. Why were you put in prison?—As I believe, I had a right to the croft as long as I could pay for it.

35487. At whose instance were you put in prison?—Mr Nairne's.

35488. By whose order?—by the sheriff's?—It was by Sheriff Robertson's order.

35489. Why did Sheriff Robertson put you in prison?—I was on a certain occasion going up to my croft, and found a party there engaged in ploughing it. I took hold of the reins that were leading the horses, and took the horses away with me out by the side of the gate that led to the croft. I asked the parties who ordered them to go into my croft, and they told me it was Mrs Petrie, the old innkeeper here.

35490. What year was this in?—I am not sure, but I think it was about thirty-seven years ago.

35491. Do you complain of the action of the sheriff in sending you to prison, or of the action of the person at whose instance the sheriff committed you to prison?—I am blaming the sheriff entirely for my being committed. Two days after this occurrence Mr Nairne, the then proprietor, sent two horses and his own ploughman down to plough my croft.

35492. Had you received a legal summons of removal previous to that?—I did, direct from Edinburgh.

ARGYLL. 35493. Do you consider that the sheriff went beyond the law?—I believe I had a right to hold on to the croft as long as I could pay for it.

TOBERMORY. 35494. What gave you that belief?—My charter.

John McKinaon. 35495. Did your friends recommend you to lodge an appeal against the decision of the sheriff?—Plenty people were asking me to proceed direct to Edinburgh to lodge my claim with the lawyers.

35496. Would not that have been a more satisfactory proceeding than waiting thirty-seven years for a Royal Commission?—I am glad that you did come to make your acquaintance.

35497. Have you any remark you wish to make on the general subject of the crofts?—Nothing further than that if the crofts are restored to the people, good and well, and if not I have my cow's grass.

35498. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—What connection have you with the Charles Livingstone mentioned in the charter you have exhibited?—It was that party who built the house.

35499. What connection have you with him? Did you marry his daughter, or what?—I bought it.

35500. This charter is a ninety-nine years' lease which has not yet expired?—Yes, it was to be renewed then.

35501. Were you put out of your croft at this time—did you lose it?—I never got it back again. I would get a croft from Mr Nairne if I would sign a paper, referring to certain rules and regulations.

35502. But you preferred to stick by the old charter from the Society?—I preferred that.

35503. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Were there many crofters removed from this parish in your recollection?—Yes, it is known that there were. There are very few upon the old standing; there are only two in Tobermory at present of the old standing.

35504. How many were there in your recollection?—One hundred and twenty-seven.

35505. Are you quite correct when you say there are only two now remaining as succeeding these?—Only two in possession of crofts.

35506. There are only two in possession of crofts in place of 127, is that correct?—Only two in the original holding.

35507. Are there any farms in this parish on which you remember to have seen crofters, and on which there are none now?—Yes, Ardmore, Penalbanach, Latheron, Sorn, and Ballochray—all these farms were occupied by crofters.

35508. Have you any recollection how many were upon each of them?—I think that Sorn was allotted to four crofters. There were three or four on the farm called Latheron, on the Mishnish estate; and there were eight in Ardmore.

35509. And are there any now?—No, none.

35510. Do you remember what was the condition of the people at that time; were they very poor?—They were well off with Mr Stewart—in very good circumstances.

35511. Who was Mr Stewart?—The late factor.

35512. Where were those people sent to from the various places you have mentioned?—Some came to Tobermory, some went to Glasgow, and some to America and all parts. Some of them are at present in Tobermory.

35513. To whom did Sorn belong?—John Stewart; he owned all the land beyond Ardmore in that direction—all to the march of Quinish.

35514. What is the distance between this and Sorn?—Five miles.

35515. Were there a good many crofters living between this and Sorn in your early recollection?—Only in the places I have mentioned.

LACHLAN KENNEDY, Crofter and Carrier, Dervaig (33)—examined.

ARGYLL.

TOBERMORY.

Lachlan
Kennedy.

35516. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Have you any written statement to make?—I have.—‘Our grievances may be said to have commenced when the late Mr Forsyth bought the Quinish estate in 1857. Before collecting the second half-year’s rent we received intimation that our rents were to be raised. In the course of a few years it was raised a second time, so that now we pay fully £1 more rent for our crofts than we did when he got possession of the estate, besides being deprived of other privileges which we then possessed. There were at that time twenty-seven crofters in Dervaig possessing in common the hills of Monabeg and Torr, which enabled us to keep fifty-six cows, one bull, and twenty-eight horses. Mr Forsyth, shortly after entering on possession of the estate, called a meeting of us at Dervaig, at which meeting he asked us to hand him over the Monabeg for the purpose of improving it, promising to restore it at the end of three years. We could not at the time see our way to refuse this seemingly reasonable proposal. We trusted him with full confidence on account of the implicit faith rightly placed by us in his predecessors in this estate. It may be mentioned that this agreement was never committed to paper. During these three years Mr Forsyth got all the ploughable ground on Monabeg turned. At the end of this period he requested half a dozen of us to appear before him at his own residence at Sorn (five miles from Dervaig), which was done. But now he had another proposal for our consideration. Instead of restoring the Monabeg on the previous terms as we expected, he would only do so on condition that we should take it on a nine years’ lease at a yearly rent of £80, besides spending annually £19 in improving the soil with lime. This offer was refused, and we regarded it as tantamount to denying our rights to Monabeg, which turned out to be the case. Two years after taking possession of Monabeg for improving purposes, Mr Forsyth took from us the hill of Torr, without compensating for it in any other manner or altering our rents; and now, as Monabeg was at this time in his own hands on afore-mentioned conditions, we had no place for grazing our cattle and horses. Having got us into this fix, Mr Forsyth, seeing our straitened circumstances, sent his manager with the proposal that he would buy our cattle. Those among us who had no alternative gave him our cattle at his own offer, which was far below the current prices, as stirk sold by some of us the same year fetched prices equal to that given by him for our cows. It may be mentioned that one of us, who had wintering for one cow but no summer grazing, craved a summer grazing, and was told by the factor to cut her throat. After being deprived of Torr hill we tried to dispose of our horses at the first market, but the day being extremely wild, dealers were prevented from attending. We were thus compelled either to give our horses away at a mere nominal, or make a further attempt to get grazing from Mr Forsyth. We chose the latter alternative, but were sadly disappointed. We next day went to Sorn, saw Mr Forsyth’s factor, and made our request, to which he answered by telling us to go and drown them, showing at the same time how we were to do it. As the last and only resource, the horses were turned loose on the neighbouring farms. Naturally some of them wandered to Mr Forsyth’s grounds, where two of them were afterwards found drowned in ditches and other two were found badly cut as with knives. One of Mr Forsyth’s shepherds was strongly suspected as being the perpetrator of these deeds. With the loss of our horses the crofts became of much less value to us. We could

ARGYLL. 'no longer manure them in a proper manner, and consequently their produce decreased. At that time each crofter could have four or five bolls of meal off his own croft yearly, while at present such a thing is unknown among us. The expense of working our crofts, in so far as we are compelled to engage horses for ploughing, harrowing, and carting manure, is considerable. One of our small crofts, will take between 30s. and 40s. to the said work. Peats we have to carry these 1½ mile on our back, or pay 1s. 3d. for each cart, which the most of us cannot afford.'

35517. Who is the present proprietor of Quinish?—It is the late Mr Forsyth I refer to.

35518. Where did Mr Forsyth, who bought the estate in 1857, come from?—As far as I know, from Dunach.

35519. To whom did Quinish belong before Mr Forsyth bought it?—The laird of Coll.

35520. You were quite happy under the laird of Coll?—Every person was.

35521. What was your rent in 1857?—It was my father who was in it then.

35522. What was he paying to the laird of Coll?—A little above £3.

35523. What was the rise which was first put upon the croft?—I cannot be sure.

35524. What are you paying now?—£4, 10s.

35525. Do you pay any taxes?—Yes, very heavy.

35526. There were at that time at Dervaig twenty-seven crofters; how many are there now?—Thirteen.

35527. What became of the others?—Some left, and others became poor and left the place.

35528. Do the present thirteen crofters possess the whole of the lands that the twenty-seven had?—No.

35529. Who has got the land?—It is divided about.

35530. To other crofters or to a big farm?—The most of it is given over to large farmers or to larger farms, and the present crofters have a little of it, but none of the hill.

35531. But they have some of the low land?—We have part of the crofts.

35532. Apparently fourteen have left, how many of the fourteen crofts are now divided—the low land?—The laird has got a part of the crofts that were in possession of the party who left; and the minse has got a part of them, and the crofters have a part, and the industrial school has a part.

35533. What was Monabeg? Was it pasture ground in the time of the twenty-seven crofters, and has it since been improved?—It was ground that was allotted for the people of Dervaig to put one cow upon it.

35534. And as I understand your paper, at the time Monabeg was taken from you and promised to be restored, no reduction of rent was made?—The rent was not reduced.

35535. Was it a valuable part of your crofts the land of Monabeg?—Good land; we were all pleased with it.

35536. And very convenient for your stock?—Quite close.

35537. When the landlord offered you a nine years' lease at £80 and to improve the soil, I suppose you never wanted the land to be improved at all?—When he took it into his own hand he promised we would get it back in three years, and that the land would be much more improved than the way we had it.

35538. But you were not charged any more rent?—There was no

mention made of that; we all understood we were to get it back as we had it before with the crofts.

35539. Was it of far more importance for you to have the land as it was originally as part of your croft than to pay £80 a year for it as it was improved by the landlord?—It was far better as it was while we had it at first than with the improvements, as some of the ground has not as yet yielded any grass.

35540. So that in point of fact he spoiled the pasture, and was wanting to put a rent of £80 upon you?—The ground was spoilt.

35541. What kind of place was the hill of Torr; was it an outrun for stock?—Yes, it was a common for the horses.

35542. I suppose being deprived of Monabeg, you were rather straitened for grass?—Certainly we were.

35543. And the story you tell in this paper about giving the cattle at their own offer far below the price was a necessity forced upon you by the proceedings of Mr Forsyth?—No, but we had no other market at the time; we had no place to put them when the hill was taken from us.

35544. What was the name of the crofter who went and asked the summer grazing and was refused by the factor?—Duncan Livingstone.

35545. Who was the factor to whom you refer?—Mr Blair.

35546. Where is he now?—He is dead.

35547. Where was the market held to which you sent your horses, and at which no dealers attended in consequence of the storm?—At Salen.

35548. And the weather was so stormy that no dealers appeared?—There was not such a day since then until now, with thunder and lightning and rain.

35549. Was it at this period when you were in these straits, first having to sell your beasts and latterly your horses, that the other tenants had to give up their holdings?—Some of them gave up their holdings at that time, and some of them remained as they were.

35550. Are the people distressed to this day for want of Monabeg and Torr?—There are not poorer people in Argyleshire.

35551. Was it a bad day for Dervaig when the laird of Coll sold it? Yes, all the world knows that.

LACHLAN M'QUARIE, Shoemaker, Salen (73) assisted by ALEXANDER FLETCHER, Fisherman, Salen (64)—examined.

35552. *The Chairman.*—Have you a written statement?—Yes. ‘*Some Particulars in the case of the Crofters and Cottars of Salen, on the Estate of Glenforsa.*’—At a numerously attended meeting held in the Temperance Hall, Salen, on the 7th of August, Mr Robert M'Lachlan in the chair, it was resolved that the undersigned should draw up a statement and present it by the hand of one of us, to the Royal Commission at Tobermory. Perhaps the best statement will be a record of what the several said to the purpose of laying their grievances before Her Majesty's representatives. By way of commencement it was asked first, “How many of those present had enough of land?” and on a show of hands being called for, there was not a hand raised. Then it was asked, “How many are there who have not enough of land?” and the response was all hands up. It was then asked how many there were on the estate of Glenforsa who had enough of land to live on, and the answer was “two.” The question was then put, “How has it come about that there are so few holding land enough, and so many having too little?” The answer was, “That the

ARGYLL. — TOBERMORY. — Lachlan Kennedy.

Lachlan M'Quarie an' Alexander Fletcher.

ARGYLL.

TOBERMORY.

Lachlan
M'Quarie and
Alexander
Fletcher.

" people had been cleared off excellent and extensive lands and the evicted
 " sent hither and thither over the face of the earth, some settling in Salen,
 " some in Tobermory, some in Glasgow, and many in foreign lands." As
 " an illustration of the wholesale nature of the eviction, the following list
 " was given of townships cleared on the one island of Ulva, premising that
 " in 1841 the island of Ulva had a population of 859, or somewhat more
 " than 200 above the present population of the whole *quoad sacra* parish of
 " Salen :—from Ormaig, 7 families ; Cragraig, 9 ; Kilvicewen, 6 ; Eolusary,
 " 4 ; Glaenagallan, 4 ; Ballighartan, 4 ; Beannas, 4 ; Cuilinis, 5 ; Abas,
 " 5 ; Sorata, 7 ; Achanatutha, 4 ; Tairi-nan-Ardraidle, 3 ; Upper Ardeallam,
 " 2 ; Lower Ardeallam, 5 ; Blar-nan-Corr, 2 ; Salen Buadh, 2 ; total, 73
 " families. Some of these evicted families were first removed from sufficient
 " farms to smaller ones, then they were reduced to a house and grass for a
 " cow or two, then to nothing at all, and when they would not clear off
 " altogether some of them had the roofs taken off their huts. When one
 " of them asked Mr Clark for a house, the answer given was "No; I am
 " not the father of your family." In another case there was a very sick
 " woman with her daughter in one of the houses which Mr Clark wished
 " to pull down. Notwithstanding the critical condition of the woman, he
 " had the roof taken down all to a small bit right over the sick woman's
 " bed. On other occasions he went and pleaded with the inmates to go, he
 " giving biscuits to the children as inducements. One of the inducements
 " offered in another case was that the parties appealed to would get good
 " treatment in the Tobermory Poor House, as he (Mr Clark) was a member
 " of the Parochial Board. By one means or another he got the people
 " away, now one lot, and then another lot of them, according as he was able
 " to stock the land. Some poor people got permission to build huts
 " on a point which no one else thought worth having. By way of making
 " the place look nicer, they planted some trees ; but as that went to give
 " them a more permanent feeling and appearance, he actually pulled up the
 " plants, and ultimately sent the people away too. Lachlan M'Quarie
 " (64 years), residing at Salen, and one of our delegates, had three different
 " removals from better to worse, and from that to the other side of the Sound
 " of Ulva. He remembers having seen seventy-three crofters in the island
 " of Ulva, and there are now only the proprietor and his three shepherds
 " besides two or three cottars. After the failure of the potato the present
 " proprietor (Mr Clark) cleared off the crofters from about the half of the
 " island first, and put sheep in their place ; and as his stock was increasing
 " he gradually cleared off the rest of the crofters till he had all the island
 " cleared, with the exception of one small place, Ardglass, where he allowed
 " three or four to put up huts for themselves to remain there for a little,
 " but it was not very long till he sent them after the rest. He (Lachlan
 " M'Quarie) rented a croft himself in Ormaig at £13 rent ; another came,
 " offered more, and got that croft. Some time after he got a small croft
 " in another place, Cragraig. In a short time again he was warned out of
 " there also, and on refusing to leave his house was stripped by a policeman
 " and sheriff officer along with the proprietor and some of his working men.
 " Being then homeless, having a wife and three young children, he had to
 " take the couples (being his own) that were on the house, carry them to
 " the shore, and put up a hut for himself there, about six yards above high-
 " water mark. Being a lobster fisher also, he had intended to have stayed
 " there for some time, and support his family at that calling ; but was not
 " above a week there when the proprietor came riding to him, and said he
 " was vexed for the young children and was afraid they would catch cold,
 " and he could only reply in astonishment to the proprietor, " Why then,
 " " if you are so anxious about them, did you strip the house above their

“ ‘heads?’” He then offered him a house at Coalas at £3 rent, which (glad for the time to get anything) he accepted, and lived there solely by fishing for three years, when he was again glad to leave of his own accord. He also remembers the proprietor closing up with stones the only good well near him and the rest of the poor people living there, because it was on his (Mr Clark's) ground at the roadside leading to his house. He also remembers a poor woman being at this same well one day, when she, terrified at seeing Mr Clark coming, ran away and left her kettle at the well, which Mr Clark took hold of and smashed to pieces. Another poor woman left her body clothes to bleach by the same roadside, and on Mr Clark coming the way he saw them and tore them in pieces. In these and similar ways he succeeded only too well in clearing the island of its once numerous inhabitants, scattering them over the face of the globe, as already stated. With reference to the clearances on the Glenforsa estate, it is but proper to state that they were all effected before the present proprietor came into possession. But the lands were nevertheless cleared, and the people now remain without. By way of example, we can give the names of—well, of a dozen of townships which were cleared right away one after another, without leaving a living, with the exception of one. Alexander Fletcher, shoemaker, 73 years, residing at Salen, and one of our delegates, remembers having seen (1) 11 crofters in Leitir, 6 in Corachaiddh, 1 in Pennygown, 1 in Cuocubuntand, 3 in Rohill, 3 in Gaydale, 1 in Croich, 1 in Kilbeg, 1 in Callachly, 6 in Torlochan; total, 34 in Glenforsa estate. He also remembers having seen (2) 8 crofters at Tishnish, 2 at Corrynaheucha (parish of Salen), and (3) 14 between Killechronan and Kellan Mill, parish of Salen. All these were then in good circumstances but now are all in the hands of the proprietors, with the exception of (1) a single farmer in all that ground, who has Pennygown, Corachadh, and Rohill. Number 2 is entirely in proprietor's (Mr Guthrie's) hands. As also number 3, in the hands of Mr Parr, the proprietor, with the exception of one small croft at Kellan Mill. So well populated were these places that he (A. Fletcher, delegate,) remembers seeing seven weddings in one day at Salen, and now for the past several decades there has scarcely been one in a twelvemonth; he remembers the time when there would be not less than 800 bolls of meal ground in one year at the mill of Kellan, and now there is no use for a mill, and not a boll made there. Everything has been to reduce the number of the people, in many cases by means which certainly were anything but creditable to humanity. There is some employment given about, but the wages are only 2s. a day, and with the exception of what grows with those who have a bit of garden, everything has to be bought. Even the milk, which should be plentiful in the district, is deplorably scarce, and those who have cows have to pay for fodder and for bad pasture. And now, when there would seem to be some hope that better times are coming, and the big farms are falling into the hands of the proprietors, the majority of the landless people are so poor that even were lands offered them they could not stock crofts without assistance, and they are not very clear as to how the assistance could be obtained. We understand that money is got for drain-making, for fencing, and the like, and possibly poor people on the security of the stock or of the landlords, might have money from Government, until they were able to repay the loan. We can only hope that the Royal Commission's report to the Government and Parliament will lead to the formation of a plan by which the lands now waste will be placed at the disposal of the people now without, and that some way of helping them to stock and crop their farms will be devised.—DUNCAN FLETCHER,
ROBERT M'LACHLAN, LACHLAN M'QUARIE, ALEXANDER FLETCHER.’

ARGYLL.

TOBERMORY.

Lachlan

M'Quarie and
Alexander
Fletcher.

- ARGYLL.** 35553. How many crofters are there in the township of Sale?—Perhaps six.
- TOBERMORY.** 35554. Are all the crofts alike, or are they of different sizes?—No, they have only a garden, with the exception of four.
- Lachlan M'Quarie and Alexander Fletcher.** 35555. How many have land?—I cannot say; there are more than four.
35556. How much land have you?—Only the house, both of us, and a wee bit garden.
35557. How much do you pay?—Three pounds, and I have to keep the house up too.
35558. Who built the house?—One who was in it before I was there.
35559. When you came into the house did you pay the previous tenant anything for it?—No, the proprietor had it in his own hand when I entered.
35560. Did you pay him anything?—I paid him rent; the house is his own yet.
35561. Did the proprietor lay out any money on the improvement of the house?—Not an article.
35562. How large is the garden—a quarter of an acre?—It will only raise about two stones of potatoes.
35563. Is it as big as this room?—About that.
35564. Is the house slated?—No, thatched.
35565. Is it a black house?—Yes.
35566. Do the other tenants pay £3?—Yes, every one of them, except those who have a long lease; but we cannot get grass for a cow.
35567. But you are a flesher by trade?—No, but there is a namesake of mine a flesher; I am a shoemaker.
35568. Have you a shop in which you work?—I work in the house.
35569. How many apartments are there in the house?—Three.
35570. Is it better than a common cottage?—I keep it as well as I can; it is looking pretty well.
35571. It is a little better than one of the common houses of the country?—Yes.
35572. What do the other cottars pay who have no land?—Every one of them the same; there are only four houses altogether there.
35573. How much do those pay who have land?—None of them have land.
35574. I thought you said four of them had land?—No, they have no land, but a bit garden; they have no cow's grass.
35575. Do none of them keep a cow?—No.
35576. Do none of the cottars of Saleu keep cows?—Yes, we are in Glenaros, on Mr Fletcher's property.
35577. What do the others pay who are in Colonel Gardyne's property?—They have mostly two cows, and others have nothing but houses.
35578. Do Colonel Gardyne's crofters keep cows?—Some of them two.
35579. When they keep two cows, how much do they pay?—They pay for the grazing of the cows £2 each.
35580. And how much for the house?—I cannot tell about the croft what they pay, but the factor is here. But Colonel Gardyne is a good landlord after all; he never put any one away without cause.
35581. It is said here that there was a call for those who had land enough and there was no hand raised, so that there was nobody there who thought he had land enough: what would they consider enough land?—Sufficient to keep two or three cows.
35582. What would you consider a proper-sized croft?—I should say what would keep about four cows and a horse, or the like of that.
35583. Any sheep?—Yes, about twenty or thirty sheep along with that.

35584. So that you consider four cows, one horse, and twenty or thirty sheep would be a comfortable croft?—Yes, we were living by that before the land was taken from us. ARGYLL.
TOBERMORY.

35585. Was there hill pasture attached to Salen before?—Yes.

35586. When was that taken away?—About forty years ago by the M'Quarrie and factor. Lachlan Alexander Fletcher.

35587. Has it been broken up and cultivated?—It was a moor, and it is a deer forest now.

35588. Then you live upon the border of a deer forest?—I am not far from it.

35589. What is between you and the forest?—About half a mile.

35590. How is that land occupied?—Colonel Gardyne has it.

35591. Does he graze sheep upon it?—He may do what he likes with it.

35592. What does he do?—He would have game and everything rather than any person in Scotland.

35593. Do deer come down to near your house?—There is a fence eight feet high, so that the deer cannot come out now on the crofters' side, but at our side it is open.

35594. Then the deer don't do anybody any harm?—Not now since the fence was put up.

35595. Who put up the fence?—Colonel Gardyne.

35596. Did the crofters assist him?—No, he did it himself; it cost about £2000.

35597. Did it give the crofters any work to put it up?—Yes, he let it to one who put it up at so much a rood.

35598. How long has this deer forest existed?—Three or four years or more.

35599. Is it all fenced round?—No, it is open at the side of Loch Buy.

35600. Is it all devoted to deer, or does Colonel Gardyne feed cattle among the deer?—He feeds some sheep.

35601. When Colonel Gardyne made the forest, was it a sheep farm?—Yes, the same people had the grazing ground along with the crofts, for cattle and the like of that growing up, and he took that from them and gave them another bit below, and they are paying too dear for all that is in it.

35602. When the forest was made, he put the sheep out?—He did.

35603. Was it a large sheep farm?—Yes.

35604. What rent was it paying when he took it?—The same rent that they paid before and more, because he gave them this bit of ground for the cattle and all the people were sent away before that.

35605. Then the ground occupied by the deer was all in possession of the small tenants?—Yes.

35606. It was not one large tenant?—Yes, there was a large tenant, Dr M'Lean, Callochy.

35607. Then the forest is made up of farms and the common pasture of the crofters?—Yes.

35608. Could the land near the crofters be used again, if any of it was given back, for grazing cattle?—It could, but there is no land for potatoes or anything of that kind; it is coarse ground—most of it is wood. It is good enough for sheep or cattle or horses.

35609. Could a piece of it be given back to the crofters without spoiling the forest?—No, I don't think it.

35610. Could he put the wire further back?—Yes, he could lift the wire altogether and give it as it was before. I mind of seeing no police-

- ARGYLL. men in Mull, and no gamekeeper, and no machine but the one belonging to Colonel Campbell.
- TOBERMORY. 35611. Were there any carts?—No.
- Lachlan M'Quarrie and taken away from the people?—Yes.
- Alexander Fletcher. 35612. You complain that all the common pasture and grazing was
—Yes, except a few; they could not go further, and they stopped there.
35613. And that the people have been all scattered over the country?
35614. (*To M'Quarrie*).—Was this deer forest belonging to Colonel Gardyne all made up out of a large sheep farm, or out of sheep farms and the pasture of the small tenants besides?—It was for sheep and cattle; it was not for farm purposes, it was not arable ground.
35615. There was no arable ground in it?—No.
35616. But was the pasture ground which was taken in occupied by one farmer or by small tenants also?—The half of it, a while ago.
35617. But at the moment when the forest was formed, was all the land in the hands of one man?—In Colonel Gardyne's own hands.
35618. How long had it been in his own hands before he made the forest?—*Alexander Fletcher.* Four or five years.
35619. And when he took it into his own hands was it all one sheep farm, or had it been divided?—It had been in his own hands; the tenants had scattered thirty or forty years.
35620. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Who occupied the land which is now deer forest before Colonel Gardyne bought it?—Captain M'Quarrie.
35621. Was it when he gave up the place that Colonel Gardyne took it into his own hand?—No, Lord Strathallan got it.
35622. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Who wrote this paper?—A man in the town where we had the meeting. It was Duncan Fletcher, a working man; he has a croft.
35623. Did he draw it out unassisted?—We had to tell him.
35624. But he put it into this form?—Yes.
35625. There is something curious here about a well; do you know about the well?—Yes.
35626. Do you recollect when it was running?—Yes.
35627. And do you recollect when it was shut?—Yes.
35628. Do you know that wells are always mentioned with respect in the Bible?—Yes.
35629. Don't the people now-a-days look with respect and reverence on a well?—Not the same as before.
35630. It is the country people I am speaking of?—I am aware.
35631. Was it considered a very improper act that this should be done to the well?—Yes, because there was no other place to get water.
35632. What was the notion of the few people who were left as to this closing of the well?—That it was a piece of inhumanity.
35633. Whose property are you on now?—Mrs Fletcher's.
35634. Are you comfortable in your present circumstances?—Yes, except that I have not a cow's gss.
35635. (*To M'Quarrie*).—Do you recollect when Ulva belonged to the M'Quarries?—Yes.
35636. They had it for a long time?—Yes, the chief had it a long time, and the M'Donalds of Staffa had it after that.
35637. Were the people comfortable in the time of the M'Quarries in Ulva?—They were; they never complained.
35638. Were they comfortable in your time?—Yes.
35639. It is a pretty fertile island?—Yes, it raises potatoes and oats.
35640. Is there much crop grown in it now?—Nothing at all, except what the laird has himself.

35641. Is there not a great deal of land which was once under the plough or under cultivation now lying waste?—Lying waste, full of brackens and everything.

35642. Where did Mr Clark come from?—From Elgin, as far as I understand.

35643. Does he speak Gaelic?—He can speak it now, but he could not speak it when he came first.

35644. Do you belong to the old family of Ulva yourself?—Yes.

35645. Of the people put away, were there a great many M'Quarries in the island?—Yes, a few of them, but not a great many. They went away before; they were sent away at first.

35646. What were the other common surnames on the island?—M'Donald, M'Kinnon, and M'Neill.

ALEXANDER ALLAN, Proprietor, Aros and Tobermory (38)—examined.

35647. *The Chairman.*—Have you got a statement to make?—I wish merely to make a few remarks on the document that was prepared by Mr M'Callum with reference to my estate. I wish to point out a few inaccuracies in his statement. The grazing of the hill which has been reduced still contains 1030 acres of good grazing land—I believe, about the best grazing land that I have—and I am told by competent authorities that it is capable of grazing 200 cattle. There are only at present upon it ninety-seven cattle paying a rent of 5s. per head, six horses paying 30s., and two horses which are free. We allow the owners of these two horses as a privilege to graze on the hill for nothing. Since I came into possession of the Aros estate the crofts have not decreased in any way, but have increased. The only farm that was in the vicinity of Tobermory, and which was suitable for conversion into crofts, I converted into crofts, and the rents of the crofts remain unaltered since the day I came to Mull. The cottages which were referred to, which I built, and which are said to contain only two rooms, contain mostly four rooms; a few contain three, but on an average they contain four rooms each. For these cottages and a quarter of an acre of land at least, they pay £8 a year. The cottages cost me from £120 to £150 each. A statement was made that the grazing is given to all and sundry; but that is a mistake. There is a ground officer, whose business it is to see that no cattle graze on the hill except those which are allowed, and that the grazing is given to those who, according to the finding of the Court, have undoubtedly right to it, and also to those who rent crofts. There are fifty crofts on the estate, of which forty-three are rented at over £1 and seven at £1 and under. There were some remarks made as to a piece of my farm being given over to rabbits. The whole extent of the ground is only 400 acres, and it is entirely surrounded by a rabbit-proof wire netting—a fence so high that the rabbits cannot climb over it, and so close that they cannot go through it—and therefore the rabbits can inconvenience no one; that farm is in my own lands against my will. These are all the remarks I have to make, but if your Lordship or any of the Commissioners wish to ask any questions I shall be glad to answer them as far as I can.

35648. 1030 acres remain as common grazing ground for some of the people of this place. What is the class of people who in virtue of the decision of the Court have a right to graze?—There are only eleven, I think, or twelve; but I cannot very well describe them.

35649. Are they original holders in the settlement, as it were?—I think

ARGYLL.

TOBERMORY.

Lachlan
M'Quarrie and
Alexander
Fletcher.

Alexander
Allan.

ARGYLL. they are ; but the right goes not with the party but with the house, and as the house changes hands the right goes with it.

TOBERMORY. 35650. Do they generally belong to the poorer class of people ?—No, I don't think they can be said to belong to a very poor class.

Alexander Allan, 35651. Do the ninety-seven cattle all belong to those eleven or twelve ?—Oh ! no.

35652. On what principle are the others admitted ?—Those who rent crofts have a right to graze, say, some one and some two cows. I may mention that, according to the original charter that was granted by the Fisheries Society, the right was only from Whitsunday to Martinmas, but I allow them to graze if they choose the whole year round.

35653. What was supposed to become of the ground during the remainder of the year ?—It was supposed to lie idle, I imagine.

35654. The ninety-seven cattle pay a rent of 5s. per head ?—Yes.

35655. Upon this ground ?—Upon this ground.

35656. What do you think would be the market value here for the grazing right for a cow for a year, supposing a crofter or any person hired the grazing from a farmer, equivalent to the grazing on this ground ?—I should imagine they would pay £2 or £3 ; but I don't know much about farming, and cannot say.

35657. Then there are eleven or twelve persons who have a right of grazing at 5s. a head ?—They have, in connection with their houses.

35658. And you allow a certain number of other persons to graze at the same price ?—Those persons who rent crofts.

35659. At the same price ?—At the same price.

35660. There are none others except those who rent crofts, I think ?—On one occasion, I think, we allowed one or two widows to graze, but I don't think that is the case now.

35661. But there are no feuars in the sense of persons of superior station who graze ?—None, unless they rent land. Any one who rents a craft has a right to the grazing of a cow.

35662. Are here many feuars who happen to rent crofts and who don't belong to the crofting class at all ?—I should not say there are very many. The crofts are rented mostly by all and sundry ; some are labourers, others artizans, and some shepherds ; a craft is not a means of livelihood, but a means of producing luxury, a means of producing extra comforts for the family.

35663. Were you yourself the purchaser of the estate ?—My father purchased it, but he died within ten days after the purchase.

35664. By the time he purchased it all these gradual reductions of the area which it is stated formerly belonged to the settlers or crofting people had been effected ?—Not all ; I took in a piece at Loch Manial, a piece of good arable land, which I am at present cropping.

35665. What is the extent of that ?—I cannot say ; I have not had it marked so as to see properly.

35666. Is it ten or a hundred acres ?—Nearer a hundred than ten.

35667. That forms part of your own home farm ?—No ; it forms part of Drumfin, which was let until last year, but I have it at present in my own hands.

35668. Was that a portion of the hill grazing, or did you include crofts ?—It was a portion of the hill grazing ; I think there were no crofts on it. It was rather far away from Tobermory for crofts. There is no suitable land for making crofts round about Tobermory ; all the suitable land is given in crofts. But I made an offer some years ago, which is still open, to allow any one who wished to take in a piece of the hill ; and I offered

to supply draining and fencing materials, and give the land on a term of years at a nominal rent; but no one has accepted the offer.

35669. What hill was that?—A portion of the hill that is used for grazing, but which practically cannot be grazed, as it is mostly cut up into peat mosses.

ARGYLL.

TUBERMORY.

Alexander Allan.

35670. But you say, in general, since your family came into possession of the estate there has been no alteration of the number or area of the crofts as far as the arable land is concerned?—They have been increased largely.

35671. No diminution, but a large increase?—That is so.

35672. You appropriated to that purpose a farm or a portion of a farm?—The whole of a farm.

35673. Had that farm been a sheep farm or an arable farm?—The addition was made within twelvemonths after my arrival, so that I remember very little about it. I should think it was mostly arable ground, with possibly a few sheep.

35674. Have the crofters who took possession of that farm built houses upon it?—No, they live in Tobermory.

35675. And enjoy the land as allotments?—Yes.

35676. Have you found that they pay you as good a rent as could have been realised if the land had been let as a farm?—As nearly as I can judge, the rent I get from those crofts amounts to £20 more than the farm paid, but that £20 goes to meet the cost of the subdivision. I have certain expenses to go into.

35677. And is the rent as regularly paid as it would have been by a farmer?—Every now and then one crofter or so falls into arrear, but I may say the rent is very well paid.

35678. You have built a good number of cottages, and those cottages are let at a rent of £8 per annum for those of four rooms?—They are mostly four-roomed cottages. There is only one two-room cottage, and it is given to two widows, who pay no rent at all.

35679. The four-room cottages, which pay £8 per annum, have about a quarter of an acre of land?—Yes, some more or less.

35680. Do you find there is a great demand for cottages at that price?—Not a very great demand for houses at £8; I have one or two let at a small rent—I think one at £6—and there is more demand for the cheap ones.

35681. Are the cheap ones smaller?—They are smaller.

35682. How long have these £8 cottages been built?—About three years, I should think.

35683. The rent has always been on the same scale?—Yes, except one block of four cottages that have a good deal more land attached to them, and after the water was brought in and various improvements made, I think the rent was raised to £10.

35684. Do you pay the water rate, or do the tenants pay it?—A portion is borne by the proprietor and a portion by the tenant.

35685. In the case of your cottages being vacant, there would be no difficulty in re-letting them at these prices?—Not very much. There is not great demand for £8 cottages just now. I have one standing vacant.

35686. Were there any rabbits in the country at all before you introduced them in this enclosed piece of ground of which you have spoken?—Oh! yes.

35687. It was not the introduction of a new animal then?—No, there were some on the place that I enclosed.

35688. Have you enclosed it in any degree as a warren for the purpose of profit, or entirely for the purpose of sport?—Mostly for the purpose of profit.

ARGYLL.

35689. A warren?—Yes.

TOBERMORY.

35690. How does it answer?—I only commenced it six months ago, and I am not able to judge yet.

Alexander Allan.

35691. Upon the property which you possess here, had there been in former times, before it was acquired by your family, a large crofting population?—I don't think the crofting population could have been any greater than it is just now.

35692. You don't find traces of old buildings or old cultivation on the land?—Over on the banks of Loch Forsa I believe there were crofts, and there are none now; that is, on the extremity of the estate there are traces of crofts on the hill—here and there an old house.

35693. Is there any difficulty in letting land in large farms just now?
—Yes.

35694. Do you think it would be desirable or profitable to recur with discretion to the old system of re-letting a portion of the large farm to small occupiers?—The expense would be very great. I tried the experiment in one case. I had a farm which drew £550 a year in rent, and I subdivided it into two farms at a cost of £1386, and now the two farms combined only draw £520—one £360 and the other £160. The combined rent now is £520, while the previous rent, before the expenditure of £1386, was £550.

35695. But if the farm had been retained as one farm, perhaps the value of it might have been still reduced?—It would have been reduced undoubtedly.

35696. But I was rather thinking of crofters than small farmers. Do you think it would be possible to transfer crofters' families to portions of large farms, and with some encouragement allow them to establish themselves and form crofts of a reasonable size, paying say £15 or £20 of a rent?—I question if a family could live with any degree of comfort upon such a small piece, and the expenditure on the subdivision fence and houses that would require to be built would be very great.

35697. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Are the eleven feuars having grazing on the field here, of whom you have spoken, entered in the valuation roll as paying the 2s. 6d. of feu-duty?—There are a good many houses in Tobermory which pay feu-duties of about that amount. Those eleven may be amongst them, but there are others besides the eleven.

35698. Do you know what sort of value the houses of those eleven feuars are given at in the valuation roll? Are they houses worth £5 to £10 a year?—I should not think quite £10; more like £5, I should imagine.

35699. *Mr Cameron.*—How many cows are each of these eleven persons allowed to graze?—One cow each, I believe.

35700. On those 1030 acres?—Yes.

35701. So that the rest remains available for any purpose you wish to devote it to?—Yes, but it is actually used for grazing.

35702. What size of crofts were those new ones which you formed out of the farm?—I should say from three to five acres.

35703. What rent do they pay?—Twenty-five shillings on an average for the best land.

35704. Have they grazing besides?—They have grazing for a cow for 5s., in one or two cases they had the privilege of grazing two cows at 5s. each.

35705. But you don't as a rule allow more than one cow for each family?—Not as a rule; it is not asked.

35706. Supposing those people did not reside in Tobermory, what would the additional cost of fixing them upon this land have been—that is, if you

had to build a house for them?—Houses can be built at various prices. I find it almost impossible to build suitable houses under £120.

ARGYLL.

TOBERMORY.

Alexander Allan.

35707. So that in that case these people, if they were put there and required to reside there, could not have paid the same rent; they would have required to pay more rent than they do now living in Tobermory?—Yes, if the proprietor had built a house for them.

35708. They would have to pay more rent, or the proprietor would have to lose the interest on the cost of building the house?—Exactly.

35709. Do you think if they had not lived in Tobermory you would have been able to carry out that experiment?—I would not have wished to do it if it had involved building houses on the crofts, because the crofts are so small that a family could not exist in comfort simply from the produce of the croft; they require other occupation besides.

35710. Most of the crofters here obtain other occupation?—All. I don't know of one instance of a crofter on my estate who trusts to the croft as a means of livelihood.

35711. I suppose the occupations are very varied; you could not specify them particularly?—Labourers, joiners, masons, and some of them shopkeepers.

35712 Any fishermen?—There are very few fishermen here; one or two.

35713. Yachtmen?—One or two do go as yachtmen in summer, and I think there are a few sailors.

35714. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—I want you to explain a little about the people who have the right of grazing on the 1030 acres. You have said there are eleven?—I believe it is eleven. It was originally seventeen, but they have dwindled down, and I think eleven is about it.

35715. They have the right by decree of the Court of Session to graze a cow?—The house has.

35716. You have fifty-seven crofters altogether, have you not—fifty paying over £1 and seven paying £1 and under?—Fifty altogether; forty-three and seven.

35717. Do you include the eleven in the fifty?—I cannot say. Possibly some of them may rent a croft.

35718. Are those crofts that you speak of held by those fifty upon the land that was originally feued by the Fisheries Society, or are they beyond it?—I think they are on the land; so far as I know about the boundaries of the British Fisheries Society's land, I believe they are on it.

35719. Some of the people have complained that the pasture is rather stinted. Does not it appear to you if the eleven people have a right of grazing on the 1030 acres, you may, by multiplying the number of cattle grazing, really do away with the privilege they have?—No doubt of it, if the number was multiplied to too great an extent.

35720. You think then that it would be wrong to multiply the stock to such an extent as to deprive the eleven of their pasture?—I believe I am bound to give the eleven the grazing of a cow.

35721. And with the ninety-seven cattle and eight horses you consider there is quite sufficient pasture on the 1030 acres?—I believe there is pasture for almost double that number.

35722. In the full sense of the decree of the Court of Session, you think there is sufficient grazing?—I am told the animals are uncommonly fat and in good condition on that grazing. The grass is very good.

35723. You were asked about the difficulty of letting farms; may I ask, when you succeeded to the property, whether the tenants upon the estate at that time are there now, or are a good number of them gone?—They have all gone.

ARGYLL.

35724. Did some of them go even before their leases were expired?—Yes, two of them.

TOBERMORY.

35725. Have you any objection to state why they went?—They asked to be allowed to go, because they said they could not pay the rent.

Alexander Allan.

35726. These rents were not fixed by you but by your predecessor?—Yes.

35727. There are some complaints, I believe, about your forbidding some of the tenants from burning heather; is there any such thing?—No. The tenants have the right to burn, I think, one-tenth only, according to the lease. I wish that no more should be burned, and I wish that no more should be burned in one special place than is arranged by the lease. My desire is that the young heather should not be burned, but that the old heather should, and I believe my wish would agree with a good farmer's idea of proper burning.

35728. Do you see that done yourself, or do you allow the tenants to do it?—I have seen it done in person, and my gamekeeper is always there.

35729. No doubt it is done during the proper seasons for burning. Suppose it wet in a particular year and no burning took place, would you increase it next year, and allow double the quantity to be burned?—That would depend to a great extent on the amount that seemed to require burning. If there was a large amount of thick heather requiring burning, I would; but if it was young heather, I should think it advisable not to burn it.

35730. You have laid down a rule that no more than one-tenth should be burned, and beyond that you reserve it in your own discretion?—I believe the lease says one-tenth.

35731. Supposing one year may be wet during the legal time for burning heather, and that nothing was burned, would you next year burn not one-tenth but one-fifth?—I don't think that it would be a right thing to do; it would not be advantageous, I believe.

35732. Has it not happened some years that no heather has been burned?—I don't think so.

35733. Have you received any complaints from any of the tenants on the subject?—Only one.

35734. Did you make inquiries when putting that stipulation into your lease to ascertain the general custom about the quantity to be burned?—No; the clause was put into the lease as in previous leases; personally I know nothing about whether it was a right thing to do. I believe it was a customary clause.

35735. It was transmitted to you, and you adhere to it?—Precisely.

35736. Apparently some of the people don't seem to be very well pleased with the estate management; will you explain why, as it is obvious to persons who are only here for a day that you have done a good deal for the place?—I cannot understand it. I know of no district of Scotland where the people are quite satisfied. I have done my best to please my tenants, and I am not aware of any dissatisfaction; no complaints are ever made to me.

35737. Do you reside here always?—Ten months out of twelve.

35738. And you are always accessible to any of your tenants who wish to make any complaint?—Yea.

35739. *The Chairman.*—I understood you to say that you considered the eleven or twelve original houses have a right to the grazing of one cow at 5s., but that you allow a great number of other persons to exercise the same right for the same sum. Do you consider yourself under any obligation at all in connection with the tenure of the land to allow the other people to graze cows for 5s.?—Not as regards the other people. Their

claim goes with the croft, and any year it might be taken away, or the rate might be increased if I chose.

35740. In fixing the rental of a croft do you take into consideration the 5s. privilege of grazing?—Most unquestionably.

35741. I wanted to know whether that was a gratuitous gift which you gave to the tenants?—It goes along with the croft, and it is of value to the croft, seeing that the grazing of a cow is worth more than 5s.

35742. The real value of the grazing of a cow is taken into consideration in fixing the rent of a croft in a moderate degree?—It is.

ANGUS M'INNES, Mason, Tobermory (66)—examined.

35743. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Do you appear here as a delegate for any people in or about Tobermory?—I was elected at a meeting which was held here the other night.

35744. Who were the people who held the meeting?—The town's people.

35745. What did they ask you to represent to us here to-day?—How their crofts were with the loss of the hill.

35746. What have you to say about them?—The croft that my father held, 32s. was the rent paid for it, and latterly it rose up to £5.

35747. How long ago was 32s. the rent?—Sixty or sixty-one years ago.

35748. How often was the rent raised until it came to £5?—Never till then.

35749. When was that?—Thirty-six years ago.

35750. Who was the laird then?—Mr Nairne.

35751. Has the land become more valuable since 1821?—I don't think it has.

35752. Are not the cattle that can feed upon it more valuable?—Yes, for those years, but not formerly.

35753. Has the size of your father's croft been diminished?—My father was deprived of his holding along with other eighteen people, and one lot made of the whole.

35754. What was done with the people from whom the lots were taken?—They spread away to all parts.

35755. Did your father remain?—Yes.

35756. Was no land left to him?—No.

35757. How did he live after that?—On his wages.

35758. Do the people here who have no land get constant occupation?—No, there is no work.

35759. Is there any work at all about Tobermory?—Very little.

35760. Is there no work on Mr Allan's property?—There are four or five employed from one end of the year to the other.

35761. Is there no occupation for men about the town in connection with the steamboats and other shipping?—Little will that make to them for all that is in the town.

35762. How do they live who have no trade as you have?—Some of them are very poor.

35763. But how do they live?—I cannot make out what living they have got. I know how I live myself.

35764. Are there any regular fishermen here?—There are some here who make a little by fishing.

35765. What kind of fishing?—Some fish lobsters and others fish herring.

ARGYLL.

TOBERMORY.

Alexander
Allan.

Angus
M'Innes.

ARGYLL.

TOBERMORY.

Argus
M'Innes.

35766. What kind of boats have they?—Large and small.

35767. Have any of them big boats with which to go to Barra and Stornoway to fish?—There is one.

35768. Is there only one in the whole town?—I don't think there is any other that does go but the one.

35769. Does the owner belong to the place?—He was not born here, but he is living here.

35770. How did he make money to buy his boat?—I think he made it at the fishing.

35771. Is he a man of extraordinary talent?—I don't think he is any thing above others, but he is a good fisherman.

35772. Are there any other men in Tobermory who could do the same—I am sure there are.

35773. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Did your family after your father was dispossessed of the croft, never get the croft again?—The family did not get a croft, but five years ago I got one.

35774. Are you complaining now that the rent of it is too dear?—It is dear, besides the rent we had before.

35775. What is the size of the croft?—I am sure there are two acres.

35776. And you have a right to graze any stock on the hill?—Yes.

35777. What do you keep?—Two cows.

35778. Anything else?—A follower.

35779. Do you complain of anything but the amount of rent; do you complain that your croft is too small?—There is no doubt but what the croft is too small and that it is dear; but what can a person do?

35780. You come to us to make a complaint; what would you like done?—To reduce the rent.

JAMES BEATON, Master Mariner, Tobermory (66)—examined.**James Beaton:** 35781. *The Chairman.*—Have you been a seaman all your life?—Mostly.

35782. Did you ever live on the land?—Yes, until I went to sea.

35783. Had your father a croft?—My father and grandfather had.

35784. And had you a croft when you were young?—I had.

35785. Did you pay rent?—I did.

35786. How did you lose your croft?—I never had any. It was put into the lot when I went to sea; they were deprived of the croft.

35787. That means that you were deprived of it?—I was, because I was the legal heir.

35788. But you were not yourself in possession of it at that time?—No, I was not; I was away at sea.

35789. What was done with it?—It was put in with the lot.

35790. Was it added to a farm?—It was added to a lot.

35791. To another crofter's lot?—Exactly.

35792. To make it bigger?—Yes.

35793. Did your family leave it on account of a rise of rent or anything of that sort?—They left because they were deprived of it.

35794. Have you made long voyages?—I have.

35795. All over the world?—Yes.

35796. And now what do you do?—I am just living on the old property.

35797. Here at Tobermory?—Yes.

35798. Do you rent a house?—I am a feuar.

35799. Are you one of those who have right to pasture on the hill?— ARGYLL.
I am.

35800. Are you one of the eleven who have a right, or are you one of the others?—I don't know whether I am one of eleven or one of ten or James Beaton, seven; but I have a right to grazing on the hill.

35801. How much do you pay for the grazing?—Two and sixpence a head for the cattle, if I put a cow there; and if I don't, I don't pay for it.

35802. You have a croft?—I have.

35803. How much do you pay for it?—£7.

35804. For how many acres?—I don't know, but I believe there are two acres of arable ground in it and about three acres of common pasture, such as bogs, rocks, and heather.

35805. Have you made any improvements upon it?—I have drained it. But the proprietor gave me tiles, and put them in the ground for me.

35806. And do you pay him interest on that outlay?—No, he never asked me for any payment.

35807. Did you build the house yourself?—I built the house; it is an old feu.

35808. How much is the feu-duty?—One penny per running foot of frontage and eighty or ninety feet back.

35809. Are there many men going out of Tobermory on long voyages—seamen?—A good many.

35810. Are there more or fewer than formerly?—Not so many as used to be.

35811. What is the reason of that?—That I don't know.

35812. Does a seaman get better wages now than he used to do when you were young?—They get better wages now.

35813. And do they go in a better class of vessel?—I went to sea at 8s. a month.

35814. How old were you?—Twelve years of age.

35815. When you were eighteen or nineteen your labour was worth more. How much did you get then?—I got a man's wages then.

35816. How much would that be?—About £2, 5s. a month.

35817. What would seamen as good as you were then get now?—It might be about £2, 10s.

35818. And is the class of vessels better or is it the same class?—No. They were mostly sailing ships when I went to sea, and now they are mostly steamers.

35819. Is that more comfortable?—Well, steamers almost suit anybody; anybody could do in a steamer.

35820. Are the seamen better treated than they used to be?—As to that I cannot say. They were well treated and well fed in my young days—as well as they are at present, I think.

35821. But still the people don't go to sea more than they did?—I cannot say.

35822. Are there as many fishermen out of this place now as there were when you were young?—Not one-half.

35823. What is the reason of that?—I don't know; I cannot answer that question.

35824. Is there any complaint here about the want of piers or about a harbour, or have they everything they require in that respect?—No, they have no complaint about the pier that I am aware of. The piers are good, and they are improving every day. They are improving since I was a boy.

35825. Who has made that improvement?—The proprietors.

ARGYLL. 35826. That is Mr Allan?—He did not make any improvements on the piers, he never got a chance; I believe he would if he had a chance.

TOBERMORY. 35827. It was his predecessor, the former proprietor, who did it?—It might be the superior, Mr Caldwell, who made the improvement on the pier. He built the new pier.

35828. You have been told by the people here?—Quite so.

35829. What do you think the people have on the whole to complain of?—I believe all the complaint the people of Tobermory have is the raising of the rent and the deprivation of pasture.

35830. Was the pasture very much larger when you were young?—Yes.

35831. Twice as big?—Not exactly, but nearly.

35832. What has become of the other half of the land; who is holding it now?—It has been added on to farms to enlarge them, and made use of to add it to additional crofters—those that took up three or four crofts. Some of the hill pasture and peat mosses was put into them.

35833. Have the people here any difficulty in getting peats?—No, they have a right to peats; the feuars have a right to the peat cutting, and nobody can object to them.

35834. And those who are not feuars, can they go and cut peats?—If they do they have no right to do it.

35835. Are they charged money for it?—Not that I am aware of.

35836. Do they use sea-ware on the land here?—Yes.

35837. Do they pay for that?—No, that is Crown land, I suppose—the foreshore. Anybody can go and take sea-ware now, but we used in former times to pay 2s. 6d. for it.

35838. Who was it that abolished that?—I don't know really whether it went to the Fisheries Societies or not; if it did not go, then it went to the factor.

35839. Who was it that relieved you of the obligation to pay the 2s. 6d.?—It dropped down dead; it was not asked.

JOHN MACDONALD, Master Mariner, Tobermory (45)—examined.

John Macdonald. 35840. *The Chairman.*—How long have you been resident at Tobermory?—Nineteen years.

35841. Are there many of the young people going to sea from here?—A good number.

35842. You perhaps heard the previous witness saying there were not so many as there used to be; is that your experience?—There are not nearly so many.

35843. What do you attribute that to?—I don't know; mostly all the young people at one time went to the sea, and now a great many of them don't.

35844. Is it owing to their finding it easier to get profitable occupation elsewhere; is there more work going, so that there is less necessity to go to sea?—I don't know indeed what is the reason for it; some of them thought they would get on better at other work than at sea.

35845. But do the people generally dislike the profession of the sea; are they averse to it?—No, I don't think it.

35846. What is your opinion of the condition of seafaring men compared with what it was when you were younger; do you think they are better off now or the contrary?—Their wages are better, and they are better fed.

35847. And is the class of vessels in which they go to sea more comfortable and superior?—The vessels are far more comfortable and superior than they were thirty or forty, or even twenty years ago—the accommodation is better.

35848. The seafaring class as it now exists are better paid and better treated than they were?—They are better paid and have far better food than what they had before.

35849. Is there anything here connected with the harbour of Tobermory that you can suggest that could be done for the place, or do you possess everything necessary for trade?—I don't see that anything could be done; the only quay where anything is wanted is in the possession of Mr Caldwell, the proprietor, and he charges heavy dues. It is a profitable investment for him, and I think it is he who ought to make any addition to it. The steamboat pier is rather small, but the other pier is ample.

35850. Do you consider the charges at the pier are unreasonably high?—Well, I think they are paying him very well at any rate.

35851. Did he build the pier?—He did.

35852. Then he may have built it at some risk?—It was a certain profit, the trade was good at the time and increasing.

35853. Is the trade still increasing?—Yes.

35854. Are there any fishing boats of a superior class belonging to this place?—There are very few fishing boats belonging to the place.

35855. Has the place any natural advantages for fishing?—No.

35856. Is it not worth considering as a fishing station?—Not as a fishing station. It has been tried, and proved a failure. It is too far from the herring fishing ground, and any other fishing is only a little at certain seasons of the year.

35857. As we had not an opportunity of examining you previously we would like to hear your opinion about the encouragement which could be afforded to fishing on the island of Skye. I would like first to ask you where you think on the island various harbour works might be judiciously undertaken—where could small harbours be formed for the encouragement of the fishing?—There are several places on the west side of Skye where harbours are much needed for fishing boats, but not for anything else.

35858. Is there any place in Skye where harbour works of a more important character could be profitably undertaken?—No.

35859. Portree and other places offer sufficient natural advantages for a harbour?—Yes; they have ample accommodation for any trade there is already on the east side, but there are several places suitable for fishing stations on the west side.

35860. I was rather speaking of large harbours at present; but you say there are several places on the west side of Skye where shelters might be made for fishing boats?—Yes.

35861. What is the kind of work that it would be necessary to make?—It would need to be a place which would shelter their boats so that they would not be under the necessity of hauling them up, and where they could keep a better class of boats. They can only have small boats at present, which they can haul up every night; and they would need small piers to shelter them, to enable them to keep larger boats.

35862. Almost all the Skye boats are hauled up every night?—The most of them on the west of Skye.

35863. I suppose you contemplate a better class of boats?—A rather better class of boats, so that they could go a longer distance to the fishing, and with more safety.

35864. What size of boats would you recommend?—For the cod and ling

ARGYLL
TOBERMORY.
John
Macdonald.

ARGYLL. fishing boats of about twenty-four or twenty-five feet of keel. That is the principal fishing upon the west side of Skye, combined with the lobster fishing.

TOBERMORY.
John
Macdonald.

35865. Would these boats be decked?—Not at all.

35866. They want boats of twenty-four or twenty-five feet of keel for the home fishing; but would the Skye people, if they had larger boats, not go to Barra and to the east coast?—I believe they would, or follow the fishing on the west coast of Scotland or Ireland.

35867. To greater distances?—Yes, if they had bigger boats; but very few of them are able to get these.

35868. What class of boats would these be?—They would need boats of from thirty to fifty tons for that fishing.

35869. How many feet of keel would that be?—From thirty-five to forty-five or forty-eight feet of keel.

35870. In fact, the kind of boats used on the east coast and in Shetland?—Yes.

35871. Then they would require two classes of boats?—They would.

35872. One of about twenty-four or twenty-five feet of keel, an open boat; and the other a big decked boat of thirty-five to forty-five feet of keel?—Yes.

35873. If they had boats of that kind they could prosecute their fishing with advantage?—They could to the same advantage as people from any other part of the country, and to better advantage, because they could always use them in winter when they were not at the herring fishing.

35874. Would the boats of twenty-four or twenty-five feet of keel be hauled up on shore?—They have to be at the present time.

35875. But it is not desirable to do it?—No. It is a tremendous labour, and sometimes they cannot very well do it when they come in at low water. Having only boats of from seventeen to eighteen feet keel, they haul them up, but with larger boats that would be very difficult.

35876. Is the larger class of boats, between thirty-five and forty-five feet of keel, hauled up?—Not unless for the winter.

35877. It always lies out?—Yes, unless it is laid up for the winter.

35878. What kind of works would it be necessary to make on the west coast of Skye in order to protect and shelter boats of these two classes?—For the larger class there is ample natural harbours, at a distance though; but there is no fishing near hand, and they would have to come home with the boats. There are ample natural harbours on the west coast of Skye; it is principally harbours for the middle class of boats that would be needed.

35879. For the boats of twenty-four and twenty-five feet of keel?—Yes.

35880. But the larger boats of thirty-five or forty-five feet of keel would be used as herring boats at one time of the year?—Yes, on all occasions.

35881. Supposing that these brought home their herrings to Skye, to the native place of the fishermen, would they require a pier to land the fish, or could the fish be taken out of the large boat and transported on shore by a small boat?—Yes, or the piers for the small boats would do for the big boats to come alongside of at high water.

35882. That would be sufficient?—Quite sufficient.

35883. What kind of works would it be necessary to form to shelter these boats of twenty-four or twenty-five feet of keel?—It depends greatly on the formation of the place. In some places they would need to be more extensive than in others. Some of the places, where the shores

run out shallow to a considerable distance, would need a long projecting pier, in order to give two or three feet of depth at low water of spring tides.

ARGYLL.

TOBERMORY.

35884. You don't speak of a pier parallel to the shore, but of a pier standing out at right angles?—Yes, or from the side of the bay, or may be with a little turn at the end, so as to be a protection from the sea.

John

Macdonald

35885. Of course, the length of this would vary according to the ground; but can you give me any idea how much they would generally cost—£1000 or £5000?—Very few of them would cost £1000. A few would cost £1200 or £1500, where the water was shallow, and they would require to be carried out a considerable distance.

35886. Do you think that a great deal of good might be done at several places on the west coast of Skye by the erection of piers which would not cost more than from £1000 to £1200 at least?—It would be a great benefit to the place, and to several other places besides the west of Skye.

35887. Can you indicate the names of the places where you think such piers would be particularly useful?—Poltiel, Uig, Stein, Soa, Tarskavaig, and Torrin, and at the north-east of the island at Stenschol or Kilmoluraig.

35888. Which is the best of the two?—Kilmoluraig is the best sheltered. In all the places I have mentioned piers could be easily built.

35889. Is there any place you wish to mention, at Rasaay for instance?—I don't think there are any needed there; they have natural harbours there.

35890. In Rona?—No; there are good natural harbours there also.

35891. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—On the east side at Point of Sleat?—There is no fishing population there except at one place, and it would not be easy to make a fishing station there. There is a good harbour at Ardvasar, close to Armadale. At the end of Sleat it would be very difficult and costly to make a shelter. There is no need for a pier at Isle Ornsay; it has a good natural harbour.

35892. Suppose such shelters were built by the Government or other agency, how would you propose the piers should be kept up or maintained?—Get the fishermen of the place to keep them up. If these piers were substantially built, there would not be any necessity for keeping up for a long time to come. The places are pretty well sheltered as it is, but they are not fit to leave boats at for the night.

35893. If such places were built, would the fishermen be disposed to pay some reasonable dues?—I believe they would.

35894. But the people have not got the class of boats you spoke of. How do you propose that they should be supplied with boats?—In all these places I don't think they would have great difficulty in getting the middle class of boats.

35895. How about the higher class?—It would be impossible for them to get them without assistance.

35896. If there were these good shelters, do you think fish-curers would come to these stations and provide boats, and let them to the men, as they do in Shetland and other places?—I don't think they would, for there has not been any extensive herring fishing on that coast in the early part of the season yet, and it has been very uncertain the times it has come. It comes in some years, and there may be no fish again for a number of years after; the herring fishing is very uncertain there. The fishing would principally be for lobster and cod and ling; that is the only fishing they could prosecute with certainty.

35897. But if the men had these large boats, would not they go to a

ARGYLL. distance, and have the fish cured in other places?—They would need to do that.

TOBERMORY. 35898. *Mr Cameron.*—Are there any places on the Long Island where harbours or piers might be made with advantage?—Not many. The east side of the Long Island is the only place where they make any fishing, and there is any number of natural harbours there—far more than ever will be needed. There is one place on the west side of Harris which is very much in need of a pier—the island of Scarp. There are about thirty families there who are in want of accommodation.

John Macdonald. 35899. Do you think the people of Skye would take advantage of these piers and harbours if they got them? Do you think they would be much more inclined to fish than they are now?—I believe they would.

35900. With regard to the disposition of the people towards fishing, do you observe any difference between the Skye people and those on the Long Island or Lewis; are they more or less inclined to fish?—The fishing ground is nearer to the people of Lewis than to those in Skye.

35901. How far would they require to go from Skye to get good fishing ground?—It varies in some places. In some places it is convenient, but it is only a narrow strip along the shore. The best places I know for cod and ling is about Loch Eynort, but they have been all turned away.

35902. Do you consider the west coast of Skye preferable to the east coast?—There is more fishing ground; more open sea. The places I have mentioned are near the fishing grounds, and where there are no right harbours. On the east side of Skye they have good shelter.

35903. Do you think there are any places in Skye where it would be worth while for a fish-curer to go and establish a station, or would the fishermen require to repair to some other station and fish from there?—For the herring fishing they would.

35904. But for the cod and ling fishing?—The fish-curer would come there if the people were on the spot to begin fishing; but they were not allowed—the proprietors would not allow them to sell their fish to anybody else.

35905. But for the cod and ling fishing the curer would not require to establish himself there, but only to come and buy the fish?—Yes.

35906. That would be much simpler than in the case of the herring fishing?—Yes.

35907. And the people would dry their own cod and ling?—Yes, but then there is a great deal of the best fish that go for no use for the want of communication to get them fresh to the market.

35908. So that as things are at present they could only deal in dried fish?—That is all; or lobsters.

35909. I suppose on the east coast of Skye they can send them by steamer to Stromie Ferry?—Yes.

35910. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Don't you think, if the people were inclined to prosecute the fishing, they would require these piers before they could do so?—For the cod and ling fishing. They would need piers of some description, so that they could get a better class of boats.

35911. We had in it evidence last Monday from Captain Swinbourne of Eilean Shona that he worked the fishing from Loch Poltiel, and sent smacks from there to Harris and along the west coast of the Long Island without any more pier than there is at present, and as I understood him he was successful?—He had three vessels at the fishing. He had a schooner of about 160 tons, and the "Moidart" of 80 tons, and the "Pilot" of 50 tons; but he came back with his fish salted, and only sent them ashore there to dry.

35912. He salted them on board the smacks?—Yes, at Rockall and

North Faroe and Iceland, and only landed at Peltiel for the benefit of the fine beach. ARGYLL,
TOBERMORY.

35913. But if he could land, why could not the others land?—It is easy landing there for one day, although you could not keep your boat for a season there without hauling it up every night. They can generally land. But what is wanted is a place where they could leave their boats without hauling them up above high-water mark. John Macdonald.

35914. You said the piers if properly built would not need much repair; were there not piers at all the stations which were established by the British Fisheries Society?—Yes.

35915. And have they not all gone to pieces?—Most of them have; but most of them were not built with regard to the fishing. Most of them were built to suit the interests of individual proprietors, and in exposed places, where they were not to be of use to the fishermen—in fact, where there were no fishermen.

35916. But a pier does require a certain amount of looking after to keep it up?—Yes; but where I suggest piers might be built the places are partially sheltered. There was a pier built on the island of Rum by Dr M'Lean, who came there about forty-eight or forty-nine years ago, and that pier has had scarcely any repairs since, and there has hardly been a stone fallen out of it; and the place is pretty exposed too. The pier is built of nothing but dry stone.

35917. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—When we were at Barra we saw a great number of vessels there, numbering 300 or 400, and every one of them we were told had come from the east coast. Was not that so?—Well, there were four or five or six belonging to Barra itself.

35918. There is nothing to prevent the people of Skye or Long Island fishing there like the east coast people except the want of boats and harbours?—That is all.

35919. Supposing these larger boats were got somewhere, and that these piers were put up, would the people of Skye and Long Island be able to hold their own with the people from the east in fishing?—I think so.

35920. And would not it be a source of great wealth to the people themselves if that was carried out?—Certainly it would.

35921. Would it not prevent many of them going away to earn wages as labourers in the south?—It would.

35922. And there would be a certain fishing almost all the year?—There would be fishing, such as cod and ling, when the herring fishing could not be prosecuted.

35923. Do you think that the supply of fish has fallen off so far as the sea is concerned? We have heard of localities where it is falling off?—I think it is.

35924. *The Chairman.*—Do you think that the lobsters are abusively treated by being fished the whole year round? Do you think they are wasting them and exterminating them?—No.

35925. Do you think lobsters are just as plentiful as ever?—I think they are, hereabout. I could not say what time ought to be close time for them, for they are in spawning season all the year round. There is not a day in the year but you will get lobsters ready to spawn.

35926. But is there not a legal close season?—There was some few years ago some talk about it; but I don't know whether it was put in force or not.

35927. Even supposing they are spawning all the year round, would it not have been better to keep up their numbers, and give them rest for four months? Fewer would be got, but then the whole number would not be so seriously diminished?—I don't know that it would do any good

ARGYLL. 35928. You don't think there ought to be any close season for lobsters?—TOBERMORY. I don't think there would be any benefit to the lobster; most of the lobster fishermen I hear speak about it say it would not.

John Macdonald. 35929. We heard an old fisherman in Bunessan who said they were nearly exterminated, and if there were a close season they would be renewed. Do you hear that talked about?—Not by the fishermen.

35930. *Mr Cameron.*—Are there not some lobsters spoiled when caught in hot weather?—There are, during carriage to the market. I have known some fishermen who had a large box sunk at low-water mark of spring tides, and who put all the lobsters they caught during these months in those boxes, and only sent them away when the colder weather came.

35931. Did they feed them?—Occasionally.

35932. What did they give them to eat?—Fish, and they gained in condition while they were in the boxes.

35933. Are those boxes expensive?—No; one of the parties that I saw was a carpenter himself, and he got a kind of drift wood to make boxes, and I don't think they would cost more than £1, 10s. or £2. That man said the lobsters gained considerably in condition.

35934. Did any one follow his example?—One or two. I know a man named M'Leod in Harris who tried it.

**JOHN CAMPBELL, Crofter's Son and Soldier, residing in Greenock
(51)—examined.**

John Campbell. 35935. *The Chairman.*—Have you been elected a delegate by anybody? I am informed by the villagers of Dervaig that my name was sent three weeks ago to the secretary as their delegate, and the only one who was appointed.

35936. Do you know Lachlan Kennedy?—Yes.

35937. Was he chosen a delegate?—A sub-delegate; they said he would come along with me to supplement anything I had to say.

35938. As you are the second witness from Dervaig we cannot undertake to read the whole of your statement aloud, but we will receive it, and hear you verbally on any subject you wish to speak upon.—Well, I can scarcely touch upon any particular subject unless you read the paper.

35939. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—We heard a statement from a delegate to-day already?—Ah, but it had no bearing scarcely upon the point; I was the only one specially appointed to come here.

35940. *The Chairman.*—We cannot undertake to have this paper read aloud, but it will be received by the Commissioners and considered afterwards. You can tell us in general terms what are the complaints of the people. Is there a complaint about the hill pasture being taken away?—That is one of them, and there is a special complaint about the laird claiming the houses which the people consider are their absolute property,—absolute because their fathers built them with stone and lime at their own expense; and M'Lean of Coll, the laird of the estate when the houses were built, told them they would be theirs for ever by paying 13s. 4d. to him—that is, the house and garden. The garden would be about a quarter of an acre or so.

35941. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Is there a village?—A village of twenty-six houses.

35942. *The Chairman.*—The promise was that the houses should be

rented to them at 13s. 4d.?—That is the information we have from our parents; and they state they had it from theirs.

35943. Are they slated?—They were not formerly, but most of them are now.

35944. What rent is charged for them now?—Twenty-six and eight-pence.

35945. Are there crofts attached to all these houses?—A croft was attached to every house when the village was started, and rent was paid for the croft and hill pasture. The hill pasture was capable of grazing two cows and a horse for every house; and it was the common property of the whole village.

35946. Has the whole of the hill pasture been taken away?—The whole by the present laird's father, who purchased the estate from the Macleans.

35947. When was that?—It was about 1857 when this transaction took place.

35948. Has the arable land been diminished?—No, the arable ground is chiefly the same as it was then.

35949. When the hill ground was taken away were the rents reduced?—No, they were increased; they were increased about £1 from 1857 to the present day.

35950. What is the rent now?—One, which was £3, 14s. for fifty-seven years or so, is now £4, 16s., increasing by 2s. or 3s. since 1857 until it comes now to £4, 16s.

35951. The complaint is that the hill grazing was taken away and the rent increased?—Yes.

35952. Have there been any strangers brought in and put among you?—No; properly speaking, there have not; but some of these houses, when the old people died, the present laird or his factor sold them to parties from the outside—people not belonging to the village formerly, and who had no right in the village.

35953. Strangers have been brought in and put into the vacant crofts?—Yes; there is a man in the village who never had an inch of ground in it before, and he owns three of the crofts.

35954. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—How many people are in the village altogether?—There are twenty-nine houses, and the original number was twenty-six. Three houses have been built since the village was started.

35955. Were you born there?—Yes, and my mother before me, and my grandfather also.

35956. When did you enter the army?—In 1852.

35957. Are you still in the army?—I am still a reserve man, and will be as long as I live.

35958. Have you a pension?—No, but I will have in a couple of years. The people complain bitterly of the taking of the houses from them.

35959. This document you have produced represents the feeling of the people?—Yes. We had a meeting the night before last, and were three hours talking the matter over, and I did my utmost to embody the feelings of the people in the paper. There are a number of the people here prepared to support what I have stated in the paper.

35960. Is the paper written by yourself?—It is.

35961. *The Chairman.*—What is your occupation now in Greenock?—I am an iron-ship worker to trade, but these last three years I have been unable to follow my occupation on account of the disease in my foot; and I am only labouring.

35962. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Are there any men in the army from Dervaig but yourself?—In the time of the Crimean war there were seven

ARGYLL.

TOBERMORY

John

Campbell

ARGYLL. of us out of that locality in Her Majesty's service, and four of us went up the Alma, and I am the most insignificant of the whole. We went through the whole of the Crimean war. Three of us again went through the whole of the Indian Mutiny. In Afghanistan we were represented by one of our number, and he was killed in the last battle. That is the last belonging to our place who was in Her Majesty's service.

35963. What regiment was he in?—The 79th and 92nd. I was in the 79th at first, and transferred to the 92nd in India.

35964. In what regiment was the poor man who was killed in the last battle?—It was Allan Macdonald who was killed at the last battle at Candahar. We have no less than fourteen war medals, a star, and twenty-one clasps in our village.

35965. But notwithstanding all these services you have been ill-used in the matter of your possessions?—We complain bitterly that we cannot get these houses which our forefathers paid for. The people went and came, and paid these houses without let or hindrance until this proprietor got hold of the estate, when he induced the people to sign an instrument, which they would sooner cut off their right hand than sign now.

35966. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Did you use to have a good many men in the army from the island of Mull?—I cannot speak for the whole island, but I remember four Waterloo men in my own parish.

35967. Have you ever heard that there was any particular benefit given in former times to men who enlisted?—Never in our place that I heard of.

35968. Is there any difficulty in recruiting men for the army?—No; but there are no men in our parish—nothing but sheep and game.

35969. Does the recruiting sergeant ever come to Mull?—I never saw one. We generally found our way to the army. We went because others came home, and we saw them dressed in the kilt, and when we saw that our heart went into it. I went to Edinburgh to enlist, and others followed me.

35970. Have you any idea how many men from Mull are in the army just now?—I cannot say, but I don't think there is more than one belonging to our parish. I am not aware of any at all; but in my time there were seven of us out of that wee spot—one in the navy and six in the army.

35971. Do you know any gentlemen, officers in the army, from the island of Mull?—Not belonging to Mull properly.

35972. Was the army ever popular in the island of Mull?—I could not say, but there was this feeling, that they would like to be in one of the Highland regiments. The old Waterloo men came home and told stories, and the young men would be delighted to be connected with the army.

35973. Is it less popular than it used to be?—I think so.

35974. Why?—Because of the way the people are crushed down now. All their life is crushed out of them.

35975. Is not that the more reason why they should better their position by going into the army?—Formerly, when people had more to come and go upon, young men lived more with their parents, and now no one can keep a child, they cannot keep themselves, and it was an easy matter in those times. In those times the young men came home in winter time and went away in spring, and now they cannot do that. In the crofts of Dervaig there are about two acres of arable land, and the biggest croft in that island has been turned over for the last eighty years, and that has impoverished it. The people have neither plough nor horses nor anything. The old people have to carry peats nearly three miles. The old men complain of the peat carrying, but they must do it.

[**JOHN CAMPBELL**, age fifty-one, son of a late crofter in Dervaig,

' delegate from the crofters of Dervaig, in the parish of Kilninian and
' Kelmore, on the estate of Quinish, island of Mull, states,—That
' the true nature of our statement be thoroughly understood, we deem
' it necessary to divide our say into two parts. The first part em-
' braces our history from the creation of the village about eighty years
' ago or so up to about 1857 or so, and the second part will bring
' up the history from the latter date up to the present. During the
' first fifty-seven years or so of our history we had a garden, a croft, a
' house, and a piece of land capable of grazing twenty-six horses and fifty-
' two cows or so—in other words, two cows and one horse for each house—
' for the sum of £3, 14s. 6d. or so on an average yearly, as rent for the
' whole. This was under the M'Leans of Coll. Our houses were built
' by and at the sole expense of our forefathers. Everything rolled on
' smoothly during this long period on both sides; no complaints, no cause
' for the lairds, factors, and tenants pulling together. About the year
' 1856 we found ourselves out of the hands of the Coll family into that of
' an individual calling himself James Forsyth, Esq. of Dunach, a total
' stranger to us. In the spring of 1857 he sent a message to our village
' that he wanted to see all the heads of our families in Sorn, at his house
' on the adjoining estate. We attended; he informed us that he was
' going to give us new titles to our holdings in Dervaig; that he intended
' to improve our condition or circumstances, if we would sign the paper
' that he presented to us. Unwilling to question him, we signed a paper
' that we were agreeable to accept of the new titles (as we thought). He
' assured us that we would be better off under the titles that he was going
' to give us than we were before. In a short time after this we received
' our new titles in a printed form. His very first step in the direction of
' improving our condition or circumstances took the shape of a demand
' that he wanted a portion of our moor for three years, for (as he said) the
' purpose of improving it for our benefit. To agree to his demands meant
' the loss of some of our cattle; rather than offend him, we handed over
' the portion of our moor that he wanted. At the end of the three years,
' instead of handing us back this piece of land as he promised, he wanted
' about £40 rent for it, over and above what we were paying formerly.
' To make a long story short, we saw at once that we had not a gentleman
' to deal with; it flashed across our minds that this was the same individual
' who cleared off about thirty-seven families off an adjoining estate before,
' and who did not consider it a sin to compel the poor unfortunate people
' to hand over to him such of their cattle as he wanted, and that on his
' own terms; and to prove that he was sailing under his true colours
' towards us, he made his cowherd gather our cattle into a corner on a
' certain day, sending a message to us at the same time that he wanted us
' at the spot where our cattle was gathered by his orders. We went and
' met him. He told us that he wanted to buy our cattle. He tendered
' his offer, under the circumstances. We handed over our cattle to him at
' his own offer. We could not help ourselves; we had no means to keep our
' cattle till the drovers would come round. Such is a sample of the
' improvements that we received at the hands of James Forsyth, Esq. of
' Dunach. Were it not that he took leave of this world and all that is in
' it, no one can say where his improvements would end. His son, our
' present laird, completed what his father left undone in a masterly style.
' He has carried out his father's design to a fraction as far as the manage-
' ment of the estate is concerned, not forgetting our new titles to our hold-
' ings. Between father and son, our holdings are at the present day about
' 22s. or so more than we paid to M'Lean of Coll when we had two cows
' and one horse; to-day we have neither cow nor horse, and yet we pay on

ARGYLL.
—
TOBERMORY.
—
John
Campbell.

· ARGYLL ' an average about £4, 16s. or so, for what? for about two acres of the
 ——————
 TOBERMORY. ' worst land in Scotland, stony, shallow, and of a very inferior kind,
 ——————
 John ' turned over for the last eighty years, and so constantly it is not capable
 Campbell ' of paying the labourers who turn it over, far less yielding anything for
 ' the rent that our laird exacts from us. We consider it our duty to
 ' bring before the Commissioners the kind of laws that we are compelled
 ' to work under. Before doing so, it may not be out of place to mention that
 ' we have the following named officials engaged in the farming line of
 ' business on lands that were occupied by crofters less than thirty years ago;
 ' and what is rather singular, not one of them was in the farming line
 ' formerly. Our catalogue embraces the parish minister, police inspector,
 ' poor inspector, sanitary inspector, collector of rates, registrar, and post-
 ' master. Some way or other we never hear any complaints on the part
 ' of the above individuals against our lairds. Our parish minister has a
 ' croft that belonged to the village formerly in his possession; our laird
 ' is chairman of the Parochial Board, and another laird is chairman of the
 ' parish School Board. We cite a few instances or cases to show the kind
 ' of crop we as ratepayers reap at the hands of our local government. In
 ' the first place, our first School Board saddled this part of the parish with
 ' a new school that cost about £1000 sterling, and all the children attend-
 ' ing the costly school at present are only about fifteen; the rest of the
 ' children in our locality are receiving their education in a school that is
 ' entirely under the control of our parish minister. This school was built
 ' about thirty-two years ago specially for the use of girls only, and free of
 ' charge of any kind or fees. Some way or other, it is now open for boys
 ' as well as girls; fees are charged, but on a lower scale than the public
 ' school. How this change came about we don't know; we always under-
 ' stood that the terms on which the teacher in our public school was
 ' engaged was that he was to receive the fees and Government grant along
 ' with a certain amount of salary. The fact that our public school is with-
 ' out a teacher at present suggests the very pertinent question, Has the
 ' opening of the school under the parish minister anything to do with his
 ' disappearance? Possibly the chairman of our School Board can answer
 ' this question better than any of us. We think it rather strange to see
 ' the children belonging to the Established Church in one school at reduced
 ' fees and the children of other denominations attending the public school.
 ' Whether the fact that the late teacher was a Free Churchman, and the
 ' present schoolmistress of the other school is a member of the Established
 ' Church, has had anything to do with it or not we cannot say. Our
 ' school and Parochial Boards are entirely in the hands of our betters, and
 ' may go a certain length to explain how our interests are looked after. A
 ' poor unfortunate who finds himself under the necessity of applying to
 ' the Parochial Board for relief has to accept such relief in the shape of
 ' goods, and should the quality be plaster of Paris, there must be no
 ' grumbling. We pay our rates in coin, and we think that those receiving
 ' relief should get it in cash. Our inspector of poor holds many appoint-
 ' ments. He will not give outdoor relief to any one in our village who
 ' occupies a house in it unless all interests are surrendered to him first.
 ' Not long ago a poor man, who was what we call well-gathered, took ill.
 ' Some way or other the inspector stepped in, procured medical attendance,
 ' nursing, &c., for this poor man, and was very attentive till the man died,
 ' when the inspector sold some of the poor man's effects by public auction
 ' on the street, acting the auctioneer himself. Whether this was done in
 ' his official capacity as inspector of poor or not we cannot say, but we
 ' have every reason to believe that this man was not in receipt of parochial
 ' relief at the time he took ill. We have no doubt that he can give a satis-
 ' factory account of this business, but we think it strange that he should

' be acting the part of a broker or commission agent between our laird and
 ' a purchaser of this poor man's house. We know that he has been acting
 ' in this capacity in more than one case. Keeping in view the fact that
 ' our laird claims absolute right to our houses, we cannot understand how
 ' our inspector of poor meddles with these things unless he and our laird
 ' are in partnership. We consider that everything of this kind of work
 ' should be done above board. We cite a parallel: an old maid bordering
 ' on ninety years, and who finds herself under the necessity of applying
 ' for outdoor relief, has been told to walk into the poorhouse or want
 ' relief. Surely this poor old woman was equally as well entitled to
 ' receive relief as the other poor man's case that we have cited. It may
 ' be explained that this old woman would not part with her interests; this
 ' may account for his refusal to assist her, but does it justify it? Lately
 ' an old man applied for relief; before getting it he had to surrender his
 ' interest in his house. No one under the sun understands this sort of
 ' work but our inspector of poor and our laird. Although our population
 ' are decreasing daily, our poor rates don't follow suit. This may be
 ' explained by the fact that Tobermory many years ago became a harbour
 ' of refuge for many that were evicted from different places, including
 ' Ireland, leaving it at the present day a seat for propagating paupers. With-
 ' out public works or any other of a general kind, many of the inhabitants,
 ' through no fault of their own, are thrown on our pauper roll. Within
 ' the last sixty years or so our parish has lost 327 families of the crofter
 ' class, leaving upwards of forty townships empty at this moment. Out of
 ' twelve estates, eleven are without crofters; the twelfth, the Torlaisk, has
 ' adopted another method of getting rid of its crofters—thirty-two of them
 ' have been crushed out of their holdings to enable the estate factor and
 ' others to extend theirs. Volumes could be written in connection with
 ' these clearances of a character that would not reflect much credit on
 ' those who were the sole cause of them. Although our lochs, rivers, and
 ' streams teem with salmon and trout, and our glens, bens, and straths
 ' abound with game, we cannot shake hands with any of our old
 ' acquaintances in the passing by on account of game, trespass, fishery,
 ' and criminal laws; all other laws are almost a dead letter in our parish
 ' excepting our laird and factor laws. If any of us want a trip to
 ' Edinburgh on the cheap, we have only to look at either loch or glen and
 ' away we go. We are obliged to put up with too many laird laws. We
 ' cannot see how we can better ourselves unless we break the law of the
 ' land. We have several kinds of grievances growing among us; years
 ' ago a party came among us stating that his object was to make our con-
 ' dition known to the public of Britain. Without the slightest hesitation
 ' on our part, we told him all about our circumstances; fancy our surprise
 ' to find our village reported by him as dying a natural death, with the
 ' rider that we could not die too soon in the opinion of the writer. It
 ' may interest the outside world to know that at this moment our locality
 ' has no less than fourteen war medals, a star, and twenty-one clasps stand-
 ' ing at our account as honours earned by our sons out of the Crimean,
 ' Indian, and Afghanistan wars. We are accused of borrowing other
 ' crofters' grievances; we solemnly declare that our grievances set forth in
 ' this statement are pure Highland grievances, as pure as the heather on
 ' our hills. We are accused of sleeping under the same roof with cows
 ' and pigs; we don't deny that some do so, but we don't admit that this is
 ' a reason for clearing their bens, glens, and straths of their natural crop—
 ' Highlanders—who have a better right to them than any other under the
 ' sun.]

ARGYLL.

TOBERMORY.

John
Campbell.

ARGYLL.

LOCHALINE.

LOCHALINE, ARGYLL, SATURDAY, AUGUST 11, 1883.

(See Appendix A, LXXXV.)

Present:—

Lord NAPIER and ETTRICK, K.T., *Chairman*.
 Sir KENNETH S. MACKENZIE, Bart.
 C. FRASER-MACKINTOSH, Esq., M.P.
 Sheriff NICOLSON, LL.D.
 Professor MACKINNON, M.A.

CHARLES CAMERON, Crofter, Acharacle, Ardnamurchan (65)—examined.

Charles Cameron.

35976. *The Chairman.*—Were you elected a delegate?—Yes.

35977. Have you any statement to make?—I have.—‘We have to complain that our rent has been raised from £54 to £100 per annum at the expiry of our lease in 1864, by our present proprietor. In 1874 our rent was raised £8 more for additional hill pasture. Under the present proprietor we have no claim for houses built or other improvements in the event of our leaving. We get no wood for fences or houses about the farm unless paid for; no improvements on our land in any form. Our stock of cattle is four cows and one horse to every lot. The farm is divided into six lots, but there are only five tenants; two of them have three lots. Our stock of sheep is 300. In 1840 a part of our best pasture was taken from us—about 120 acres. Our rent was at that time £71 per annum, as our rent book can prove. We get no work on the estate of any kind.’ Signed by CHARLES CAMERON, and by four others.

35978. Are all those who sign the statement crofters?—They are all crofters.

35979. Have they each a separate croft?—It is something of the nature of a club farm.

35980. Who is your proprietor?—Mr John James Dalgleish of Ardnamurchan.

35981. When did the Dalgleish family acquire the Ardnamurchan estate?—Twenty-eight years ago.

35982. To whom did the property belong before 1855?—To Sir Thomas Miles Riddel, late of Suinart.

35983. When the rent was raised from £54 to £100 per annum, was any improvement made by the proprietor in the way of draining, fencing, or otherwise?—There was nothing done except what we did ourselves.

35984. Were there no tiles given or materials advanced by the proprietor?—None.

35985. What reason was given by the landlord for this sudden advance of rent?—There was no reason given; but if we could not pay the rent we would have to go.

35986. What extent of ground was given?—About fifteen acres of moss land; it was entirely uncultivated land. I wish to say that this piece of land we got before belonged to us originally; and although we got it back at that time we had to pay £8 additional.

35987. Was it a part of the 120 acres which had been taken from you?—It was another portion altogether.

35988. You say, ‘We have no claim for houses built or other improvements in the event of our leaving:’ have you built any improved houses?—We built houses ourselves, but we got no wood or anything from the proprietor.

35989. Were the houses you built stone and lime slated houses, or black houses?—The walls were of stone and lime, and the roofs thatched.

ARGYLL

LOCHALINE

Charles
Cameron.

35990. Stone walls built through and through with lime, or only pointed with lime?—They are built all through with lime.

35991. How much stock is each lot on the farm calculated to keep?—Four cows and one horse on each lot; and there are 100 sheep on the hill held in common by the crofters.

35992. Does the lot keep the four cows and one horse, or have you to buy any winter keep?—The lots are not sufficient to support the summing we have; we have to buy a lot of food for our cattle in winter.

35993. What is the rent of each lot?—£18.

35994. Does that include the share of the hill pasture which is held in common?—Yes.

35995. The rent for the club farm on the hill is not paid separately, but is paid in connection with the arable lot?—Yes; the rent is paid altogether on the one lot.

35996. How long have you had this club farm for the sheep?—We have held it a long time. I have been there sixty-five years, and my father was there before me.

35997. It has been in the form of a club farm all that time?—Yes, ever since I remember.

35998. Have you got on well on the farm, and lived peaceably together?—Yes, we have always agreed very well.

35999. Has the whole stock got a common mark, or do the sheep belong individually to the crofters?—There is one mark for all the sheep.

36000. The sheep belong to all the tenants in common?—Yes.

36001. Do you appoint a manager to buy and sell, and manage the affairs of the common stock?—We do not.

36002. The whole of you meet together and manage it yourselves?—I should explain that there is one chosen to go and sell the stock, and whatever he gets we are all agreeable to it.

36003. What may be the gross amount of the sale of stock and wool on the farm in a year?—We generally get as much for the wool as pays for the smearing of the sheep, and sometimes a little over, according to the state of the market; and we sell perhaps thirty or forty lambs and a few aged sheep at the end of the season.

36004. What has been done with the hill pasture that has been taken from you; was it added to the farm, or is it in the hands of the proprietor?—There were other eight crofters put on to the land which was taken from us.

36005. Where were these crofters brought from?—They were shifted from another part of the property.

36006. Are there any cottars in the township?—We have only one man as a cottar, and he is a tailor.

36007. The number on the holding has not been increased for many years; what becomes of your younger sons and children?—They all have to go away when they are able to earn anything, and they help their parents to pay the rent.

36008. Would you be in favour of dividing the crofts into smaller portions, or do you think they should be left as they are?—We do not wish the holdings to be made small; what we complain of principally is that the rent is exorbitant.

36009. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—What is the acreage of your arable land?—I cannot tell the acreage, but I sow a boll and a half of oat seed, a little barley, and five or six barrels of potatoes.

- ARGYLL. 36010. What is the return from the oats you sow?—I make as much of it as feeds the horse; and I buy corn for it in winter time.
- LOCHALINE. 36011. Is the boll of this country six bushels?—Yes.
- Charles Cameron. 36012. *Mr Fraser Mackintosh.*—In the time of the Riddels were you in a comfortable position?—Yes.
36013. Since the large increase of rent was put upon you, have you been pinched in your circumstances?—We have.
36014. Are your prospects for the future of a gloomy character?—Yes.
36015. Are you well acquainted with the property of Ardnamurchan?—Yes, very well acquainted.
36016. Is the population of Ardnamurchan as great as when you were a young man?—The population has not decreased very largely. On the north side, where the land is boggy and not good, the people are still there; but from the south side, where the land is good, the people were removed.
36017. Have a number of people in your time been removed from the good part?—Yes.
36018. In whose time was that done?—Sir James Riddel, Bart., late of Sunart, put away some, and also the present proprietor.
36019. What became of most of the people who were put out by the present proprietor?—They were removed down to narrow and small places by the shore; some of them have a cow's grass, and some of them are simply cottars.
36020. Can you point out anything which has been done by the present proprietor's family for the benefit of the crofting class?—I know of nothing.
36021. Are there parts of Ardnamurchan—the south parts—very well suited for good crofts, able to sustain all the population on the estate?—The south side would be very suitable.
36022. And could support the present population in comfort?—Yes.
36023. Do you know how long the Riddel family were proprietors?—A long time before I remember.
36024. Do you know how many of the name of Riddel were possessors of the Ardnamurchan estate?—Sir Thomas's father; and Sir Thomas himself came afterwards.
36025. Have you never heard that there were Campbells in Ardnamurchan?—Yes; but I don't recollect the time.
36026. What is the condition of people of your class upon the estate; are they poor, or are they comfortable?—They are very far back in that respect; the houses are very bad.
36027. And your condition generally is unsatisfactory?—Our condition is very unsatisfactory.
36028. Have you a family yourself?—Yes.
36029. Are they out in the world?—They are all young, except one daughter.
36030. Are you obliged to go outside your farm for the purpose of earning anything?—Every place where I can get anything to do I go to.
36031. Is your rent in part made up of what you earn abroad?—Yes, that and what my grown-up daughter is able to give me.
36032. Does she help you?—Yes; she is in England
36033. She regularly assists you?—Yes.
36034. May it be said that part of the money that your daughter earns in England goes to help to pay your rent?—Yes, and to support me

DUNCAN MACNAUGHTON, Crofter, Acharacle, Ardnamurchan (55)—
examined.

ARGYLL
—
LOCHALINE
—
Duncan
Macnaughton.

36035. *The Chairman.*—Did you hear what was said by the other delegate from Acharacle?—Yes.

36036. Do you agree with all he said?—Yes.

36037. Have you any other statement to make of your own?—No. We were both born in the place; but he is older than me. He is the oldest of the club farmers in the place.

36038. When was the club farm established?—The other delegate's father and mine came to Acharacle in 1823 or 1824. We were born on the farms, and have occupied them since our fathers died. The stock on the farm have always had the same mark ever since it was established. The crofters never had any separate stock; the stock has always been together, and we have kept a shepherd all along.

36039. Is the hill pasture—the club farm—fenced all round?—No.

36040. Who marches with you—a farmer or the proprietor?—Farmers on both sides.

36041. Do you live on good terms with the farmers?—Very good.

36042. What kind of stock do you keep—the same as the farmers?—The same kind.

36043. What kind is it?—Blackfaced.

36044. Do you think your stock is as good as the farmers'?—Just about the same.

36045. You think you get as good prices as the farmer?—We generally do.

36046. Are there any other club farms on the same system in your part of the county?—There is a club farm which keeps a sheep stock on one side of us, and two farmers on the other.

36047. Do you know how long the system of club farms has existed in the country, and who originated it?—I cannot tell.

36048. Did you ever hear that it had been introduced by the Breadalbane family?—No.

36049. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Were there six shares in the club farm in 1824?—Yes; in former years there were eight shares.

36050. Were there eight shares when your father came?—Yes.

36051. Who held it before that?—One farmer had it before.

36052. Did your father belong to the place?—Yes.

36053. And eight of them agreed to take the farm together?—Yes, until it was divided into six.

36054. And now it is into five?—Yes. There were two men came who took three lots, and Cameron and I and another man have the other three.

36055. Are the two tenants who have the three lots complaining the same as you?—Yes, they have the same complaint; but Cameron and I have been the longest there.

36056. But they have a larger share of the farm, and are of course better off?—They have the same houses—stone and lime houses thatched.

36057. But they have a larger profit on the farm?—Yes, they have a share and a-half—more than I have. They pay half of the rent of the club farm; we pay the other half. We got a reduction of 10 per cent. last year, for two years, but that will end at Whitsunday first. That is all the reduction we have got.

36058. Charles Cameron said your houses were very bad; what kind

ARGYLL. are they?—The other crofters and cottars' houses are built with turf, but we have stone and lime walls.

LOCHALINE. 36059. Cameron also said that part of your land was given to eight crofters?—The land was taken from us in 1856.

Dunearn Macnaughton. 36060. What is that piece of land called?—Ardshealoch.

36061. What kind of houses have they?—Ardshealoch House is dated.

36062. But are there eight of them?—No.

36063. There are eight crofters now, are there not?—These don't belong to our place at all; they are at a separate place. They have no sheep at all, and only two cows.

36064. Who got this land of Ardshealoch which was taken from you?—Dr Howie was tenant at that time.

36065. Who is in it now?—One of the name of Mackenzie. There are nineteen of the hundred and twenty acres under plantation. That was done by Sir James Miles Riddel.

36066. *The Chairman.*—Was there any of the money subscribed in England for the relief of distress distributed in your part of the country?—Yes, to fishermen who lost boats, but not to others.

36067. There was nothing distributed in the form of seed or corn or potatoes?—Not last year. There was seed given by the proprietor, but we had to pay for it. There were some poor cottars who could not pay, but there was little given to them. We had to pay it at Martinmas.

36068. *Professor Mackinnon.*—What was the rent that was paid in 1824?—£71 between eight.

36069. When was the first piece of ground taken from you?—About 1840.

36070. Who took it from you?—The proprietor, Sir James Miles Riddel.

36071. What was done with it?—It was planted.

36072. The whole of it?—Nineteen acres; and then the other was let to Dr Howie.

36073. To a large tenant—not to crofters?—Yes.

36074. It was Sir James Riddel who did this?—Yes.

36075. Did he take any rent off you?—Yes, the rent was reduced from £71 to £50.

36076. When was the next change?—Mr Dalgleish came in in 1856, and our lease was to 1864 from 1856. We paid £54 per annum to Mr Dalgleish until 1864. The lease then expired and he raised the rent to £100.

36077. And had you a lease then?—No, we could not get a lease then.

36078. When was the rent raised to £108?—1874.

36079. It was raised to £100 in 1864 and to £108 in 1874?—Yes; we got a bit of hill pasture in 1874.

36080. And £8 was added for that?—Yes.

36081. So that you are now paying double for the same piece of ground you originally had?—Yes; £100 from 1864 to 1874, and £108 since 1874.

36082. What would you consider a proper rent for the share of the farm for which you pay £18?—We only paid £9 a piece without the hill pasture when Dalgleish came in, and we would agree to give £12 or £13—£3 more than Sir James Riddel got.

36083. You think that is quite sufficient?—Yes.

36084. Do you think that corresponds with the rise that has taken place on crofts and farms generally all over the country?—Yes, every one

at the expiry of their lease—crofters or whatever they were—had their rents raised. ARGYLL

36085. But the rise you would agree to you think would be quite sufficient?—Yes, I think so. LOCHALINE

36086. Is there any work going on in the place?—No.

Duncan

36087. What work do you do yourself in addition to crofting?—In general in spring we go out to the smaller crofters and plough; and we may get a day's work now and then with somebody.

Macnaughton

36088. But you don't leave the country to earn money to pay the rent?—No.

36089. And your father was in the same condition?—Yes; he was a mason to trade, and generally went out to work.

36090. Was your condition until the last rise of rent more or less comfortable?—Not much comfort. Since our rent was raised we have suffered very much.

36091. Before your rent was raised?—We were comfortably off.

36092. So that if your rent was reduced to £12 you would expect to be more comfortably off?—Far more so.

36093. You get no outside aid for the payment of your rent?—No.

36094. So that it cannot be said of you as of your neighbour, that it is English money that pays your rent?—No, I have no sons or daughters; I am not married.

36095. There are none of you in arrears?—No, I am not aware of there being any arrears.

36096. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You are not married, and therefore have only yourself to support?—Yes, except a sister.

36097. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Are there any fishermen in your district?—We are a good piece from the sea.

36098. But are there any fishermen?—No.

36099. But you spoke of fishermen having got assistance?—Yes, at Loch Shiel—salmon fishermen.

36100. How do these cottars support themselves if there is no fishing to go to?—Sometimes they sell oats, straw, and hay for their rent—those that have no cows.

36101. Are there many of them that have no cows?—Only four.

36102. What district are you speaking of?—Acharacle.

DUGALD M'GREGOR, Cottar, Ardtornish (67)—examined.

(See Appendix A, LXXXV.)

36103. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Are there many persons living at Ardtornish?—There is no one living there just now except the proprietor and his servants.

Dugald
M'Gregor

36104. Are there any other persons near Ardtornish in your own position?—They have houses in the village of Lochaline, and work for the proprietor.

36105. Who sent you here?—I was elected by the people of the village.

36106. It is by the villagers of Lochaline that you have been elected?—Yes.

36107. What did they wish you to say?—They complain about the land having been taken from them, and of their being put into this place.

36108. Are you speaking for the people of Ardtornish or of Lochaline village?—I speak for neither the one nor the other; but they sent me to

ARGYLL. say that I myself was upon Ardtornish and was removed to Lochaline by process of law. I now occupy a small place, and make my living as I can working anywhere.

Dugald MacGregor. 36109. Have you come here to speak for yourself, or for the people living in the village here?—I came to speak for myself.

36110. What have you to say for yourself?—I don't wish to say much altogether, but I am willing to answer any questions that may be asked.

36111. How long is it since you were turned out of your croft at Ardtornish?—Forty years.

36112. Who owned it at that time?—Sheriff Gregorson.

36113. What was the extent of your holding?—A croft and a cow.

36114. Have you been left in the house?—I was removed altogether when the property was sold.

36115. Was that forty years ago?—Yes.

36116. Was it then that Sheriff Gregorson bought the property?—Sheriff Gregorson's father had it before Sheriff Gregorson.

36117. Who removed you; the person who purchased the estate or Sheriff Gregorson?—It was Sheriff Gregorson.

36118. You spoke about being removed when the property was purchased; who purchased it?—Patrick Sellar.

36119. Was it Patrick Sellar who removed you?—I got the notice of removal from Sheriff Gregorson at the time when Sellar bought the estate, so that the estate was to be cleared for Mr Sellar when he came in.

36120. Where do you live now?—On the estate of Lochaline.

36121. How did you make a living when you had a croft and a cow?—I was a weaver to trade, and I was working at my trade and the croft at the same time.

36122. How have you made your living since you lost the croft?—For the last thirty years I have been working as a labourer for Mr Smith, the proprietor of Ardtornish.

36123. Have you given up the loom?—Yes; when the people went away the loom ceased.

36124. Are you getting good wages as a labourer?—I get 2s. 6d. a day as a labourer, but I have now ceased to work—this year.

36125. You have not liberty to keep a cow?—I have not asked the proprietor for a cow's grass.

36126. Are you able to purchase milk?—I buy milk.

36127. In old times did you get much produce off your croft?—I could get as much produce off my croft as would very nearly keep my family.

36128. Meal or potatoes?—Both together.

36129. How much meal were you making off the croft?—I could get two bolls of meal off the seed of the croft, and I planted four bolls of potatoes.

36130. What did you pay for that?—£3 a year.

36131. When you were removed did you get work immediately?—Yes, but not on this property; it was over in Mull.

36132. Did you get a house there?—No; my family was here on this side.

36133. How long were you in that homeless state and obliged to go away for work?—At the time I was removed I was not married.

36134. You are complaining of what happened forty years ago; what do you wish to-day?—I would like to be the way I was before, if it were possible; that is, I should like to have a croft and my cows back again as before.

36135. Did you not say you had never asked Mr Smith for that?—

I do not live on Mr Smith's property now. I had a house from him so long as I was in his employment; but not being in his employment, I have had to get a house on the Lochaline estate. I was removed from the house when I ceased to work.

ARGYLL.
LOCHALINE.

36136. *Mr Fraser Mackintosh.*—How many proprietors of the name of Gregorson have there been at Ardtornish?—The father bought the estate, and the son sold it.

Dugald
M'Gregor.

36137. Was the father, the first Gregorson, a writer or lawyer in Oban?—He was the sheriff in this district; he was not a lawyer in Oban; his nephew was a lawyer at Oban.

36138. How many people were turned off from Ardtornish when you were sent away?—I cannot tell the number just now. There is a written statement to be read here to-day.—*'Statement of Grievances by Crofters and Cottars in the district of Morven, Argyllshire. Lochaline.'*—Our principal grievances are as follows:—1st, That we have been removed from lands occupied by ourselves and our forefathers, and that we have been huddled together in this miserable village; and through that and several other causes we have been reduced to great poverty; and were it not for the kindness of the late Mr Smith, and of his son, the proprietor of the adjoining estates of Acharn and Ardtornish, who, for more than thirty years, gave work to as many of us as he could, we do not know how we could have existed. We consider it a great hardship that we cannot get any land to cultivate, although abundance of good land, formerly under cultivation, is going waste at our very doors. This land from which some of us have been evicted about seventeen years ago, we are sorry to see going back again into a state of nature, and overgrown with heather and rushes. We feel very much the want of milk for our families. Many of us would be very glad if we could get a cow's grass even without arable land at a reasonable rent which we could pay. The rent for a cow's grass, without any arable land, charged by the late proprietrix is £3 a year, which we consider an intentional discouragement against any one aspiring to the dignity of keeping a cow. We know that the want of good milk, such as most of us have been accustomed to in our younger days, has a deteriorating influence upon ourselves, and more especially upon our children. We are aware that a certain medical gentlemen in another part, while being examined before the Commission, recommended cheap beer as a substitute for milk. The use and introduction of such a substitute for milk in rearing our offspring we, and we are sure all Highlanders, will repudiate with scorn. We look upon such a suggestion as an insult to us; and we cannot perceive why we should be deprived of the means of having a supply of good milk, so that the proprietor may obtain a few pounds more rent. 2nd, Our next grievance is in regard to fuel. Under former proprietors, the poorest of us had the privilege of cutting peats on the hill as near hand as we could find them; but now we are prevented from doing this, and compelled to go to the top of the hill to cut them. The poorest and most destitute of us dare not gather a few tufts of heather to keep up the fire in case the game be interfered with, or be put to the least inconvenience. Our Lord and Saviour said, "How much more valuable is a man than a sheep?" But our landlords say, "How much more valuable is, *not even a sheep*, but a game bird than a man?" In consequence of the above restrictions as to fuel, we are at all seasons of the year under the necessity of buying coal, and in this remote district, so far situated from the coal centres of the south, coal is a luxury which some of us can ill afford. As an instance of the petty tyranny exercised over us regarding these matters, we wish to refer to a case which happened about two years ago, when a man

ARGYLL

—
LOCHALINE.Dugald
M'Gregor.

' belonging to our village, who is both a cripple and in receipt of parochial aid, was found on the road with a bundle of heather for his fire, and was unmercifully deprived of his heather by one of the estate gamekeepers and shoved along the road. We therefore consider it a great grievance that we, being loyal subjects of Her Majesty, living under what we are taught to believe to be the glorious British Constitution, living in a country which is supposed to be the best governed country in the world, should be left so much to the mercy of landed proprietors, and, still worse, their factors, that we can scarcely call our souls our own. We cannot reconcile all the boasted freedom to be enjoyed by all Her Majesty's subjects alike with what we know to be the truth in our own case. From our experience, we are more inclined to believe with Lord Macaulay, that the country, and Scotland especially, has the worst constitution in Europe, at least so far as the land laws are concerned. We therefore trust that Her Majesty's Commissioners shall take our case into consideration. 3rd, Evictions. We specially beg to direct the attention of Her Majesty's Commissioners to the miserable condition of this district compared to what it was forty or fifty years ago. The population of the parish at that time was over 2600. At last census it stood at 828. Fifty years ago, with such a large population, £11 sterling per annum from the collection at the church door was sufficient for the support of all the poor and destitute people within the district, and now, with a population of 828, the poor rates amount to over £600 a year. These facts we leave to the consideration and wisdom of the Commissioners, as we consider they require no comment from us beyond showing the benefits conferred upon this district by what the Duke of Argyll calls in scientific language "economic conditions," and that we are not to be bamboozled by his Grace's scientific conundrums. The first eviction which took place in this district happened between fifty and sixty years ago, when the late Miss Stewart evicted all the tenants in the township of Ferinish, Mangostell, Barr, and Innemore, numbering in all twenty-five families. The second eviction happened between forty and fifty years ago, when the tenants of several townships on the estates of Acharn and Ardtornish received summonses of removal from the proprietors before they sold the estates to Mr Patrick Sellar of Sutherlandshire. There were forty-eight families evicted at this time, so that the loss of population sustained by the parish must have been considerable. There was another cruel and very harsh eviction which took place in this district about seventeen years ago. When the late Mrs Paterson came into possession of the estate of Lochaline, there were in the townships of Achabeg and Knock a well-to-do crofter population, consisting of between twenty-five and thirty families. The families, owing to some whim of the proprietrix, were evicted wholesale, notwithstanding the oft-repeated remonstrances of the late Dr John M'Leod, then minister of the parish. The crowbar and faggot were here, let us hope for the last time in the history of the Highland peasant, brought into requisition to demolish the dwellings of men whose forefathers occupied the land long before Mrs Paterson came into the district, or had the means which gave her the power of buying the land and turning out the people. There was yet another eviction on the estate of the late Lady Gordon of Drimnin, and as this was a peculiarly hard case, which took place only about fifteen years ago, we feel in duty bound to refer to it as showing how completely the Highland crofter is in the power of his landlord, and however unscrupulous the landlord may be in the present circumstances there is no redress. The circumstances are as follows:—About forty years ago, when the sheep farming craze was at its height, some families

' were removed from the townships of Aulstan and Carrick on Lady Gordon's estate, as their places were to be added to the adjoining sheep farm. The people were removed on to the most barren spot on the whole estate, where there was no road or any possibility of making one. They had to carry all manure and sea-ware on their backs, as the place was so rocky that a horse would be of no use. Notwithstanding all these disadvantages, they contrived through time to improve the place very much by draining and reclaiming mossy patches, and by carrying soil to be placed on rocky places where there was no soil. During the twenty-five years they occupied this place their rents were raised twice. Latterly, with the full confidence of their tenure being secure, they built better houses at their own expense, and two or three years afterwards they were turned out of their holdings on the usual six weeks' notice, without a farthing of compensation for land reclaimed. In justice to the present proprietor, Joseph Gordon, Esq., we wish to state our conviction that such an injustice would not have been permitted on the estate since he came into possession, as we regard him as a kind and considerate landlord to the few crofters on his estate. It has often been advanced by landlords, factors, and others that the Highland crofters are lazy and do not improve their holdings; but where is the inducement to improvements under such circumstances as we have here related? and as the Commissioners are well aware that this case is not a solitary instance, as it is quite common in every district throughout the Highlands, that if a crofter improves his holding he has to pay for it by having his rent raised, or his holding being given to the first man who offers more rent on account of such improvements. 4th, The remedy which we in this district would respectfully suggest for the improvement of our condition is, that the land which is lying waste on every side of us, that is to say, the townships of Achabeg, Keil, and Knock, at present in the hands of Mrs Paterson's trustees, and entirely out of cultivation, should be divided into suitable lots; that the trustees build suitable cottages on such lots. We consider they have a right to do so, seeing the proprietrix caused all the houses to be destroyed seventeen years ago; that these lots be let to us at a reasonable rent, such rent, in cases where the landlord and tenant cannot agree, to be fixed by arbitration, or such other arrangement as the wisdom of Parliament may see proper. While much preferring to have the State as our landlord, and while thoroughly convinced that the land question shall never be properly settled until it is settled on that basis, we should still be glad, in the meantime, to have matters settled on the lines indicated above; that is, a re-allotment of the land in suitable portions, security against arbitrary evictions, compensation for improvement in case of removal, a fair rent, and arbitration in case of disagreement between landlord and tenant. We have heard this statement read, and we agree with all it contains.'

36139. Have you heard this statement read before?—I heard it read before.

36140. Was Mr Gregorson the proprietor of Acharn as well as Ardtornish?—Acharn belongs to Mr Smith.

36141. Did Mr Gregorson sell Acharn to Mr Smith?—Sheriff Gregorson sold the whole estate of Acharn and Ardtornish to Mr Patrick Sellar.

36142. According to this paper, forty-eight families were evicted from the two estates of Ardtornish and Acharn?—That is so.

36143. In fact, the whole estates were cleared?—Yes.

36144. What was the object of clearing them?—Acharn was bought by Mr Sellar; the people and he could not agree about the leases, and

ARGYLL.

LOCHALINE.

Dugald
M'Gregor.

ARGYLL. on that account they were removed. At that time Ardtornish was in the hands of Sheriff Gregorson, and there were not many crofters on it.

LOCHALINE. 36145. Were you yourself upon Ardtornish or Acharn?—I was on the estate of Ardtornish.

Dugald M'Gregor. 36146. Did Mr Sellar himself remove anybody?—Mr Sellar evicted the tenants of Acharn himself after becoming proprietor of the estate.

36147. How many of the forty-eight families were upon Acharn?—There were only four crofters on the estate of Ardtornish, and the remainder on Acharn.

36148. In point of fact, was it Sellar and not Gregorson who put them out?—Sheriff Gregorson removed four from Ardtornish.

36149. Were the rest removed by Sellar from Acharn?—That is so; two or three years before that.

36150. What became of the forty-eight families of the two estates?—Some of them were removed south to Glasgow and the large cities; a few of them got shelter here on the Lochaline estate, and the rest went wherever they could get a place to go to.

36151. And the remainder were allowed to remain upon these two estates ultimately?—There were a few poor cottars who remained upon the estate, but the rest were evicted because they had no means of removing anywhere.

36152. Are there any crofters or cottars now living upon these two estates?—There is just one croft on the estate at present.

36153. Is Mr Smith, who bought the place from Mr Sellar, alive?—He is not living, but his son is in possession of the estate just now.

36154. What connection have the Sellars with Ardtornish now?—One of them is married to Mr Smith's daughter.

36155. Is Mr Smith married?—Yes, it is my opinion that he is.

36156. Was the land, of which these families were dispossessed, in Acharn and Ardtornish, suitable for crofters, and were the crofters well off in Mr Gregorson's time?—Yes, they were very well off at the time.

36157. Who was the proprietor of Acharn and Ardtornish before Gregorson?—I cannot answer that; it was in possession of the Gregorsons for as long as I remember.

36158. Have you not heard the names of the old proprietors?—I believe the larger portion of the property, previous to Sheriff Gregorson having it, belonged to the Duke of Argyll.

36159. Is there any other Acharn in this district except one?—No, there is only the one Acharn in the district.

36160. Did you ever hear of any other Acharn?—I never heard of another place in the country called Acharn.

36161. Have you ever heard of a Stewart of Acharn?—No, I never heard of any Stewart being in this Acharn.

36162. You have been staying a long time on the estate of Lochaline?—I have been residing here, on this side of Lochaline estate, since I was removed from the croft I held on the Ardtornish side.

36163. You state that the people of Lochaline have been removed from lands occupied by themselves and their forefathers, and huddled together in this village; how old is this village?—When I remember first there were only four small houses in the village below here.

36164. You state that the people in the parish now are not able to get any land, that they are crowded in here; could Mr Smith if he felt inclined give any land to the people of the village?—There is plenty of land lying waste, if Mr Smith or the other proprietors were willing to give it.

36165. Am I correct in supposing that many of the people in Loch-

aline were not removed from lands belonging to Mr Smith?—No; there were not many of these residing on the Smith estate, the larger portion of them were on the estate of the late Mrs Paterson.

ARGYLL
—
LOCHALINE.
—
Dugald
M'Gregor.

36166. What is Mrs Paterson's estate called?—It is called Lochaline estate.

36167. Upon whose property is the village in which we are now?—It belongs to Mrs Paterson's estate.

36168. Where is the boundary between it and Mr Smith's property?—It is up about three miles from here, at a place called Kinlochaline.

36169. Does one side of the loch belong to Mr Smith and the other to Mrs Paterson's trustees?—That is so.

36170. In point of fact then, it is with the Paterson's trustees the Lochaline people have to deal and not Mr Smith, this village being on the Paterson's trustees' property?—That is so.

36171. Is there anybody here to-day representing the townships of Achabeg and Knock?—There was no one appointed specially for these districts, because there is no one residing there; the people who were there are residing in the village here.

36172. Is it consistent with your knowledge, as stated in the paper, that the late Mrs Paterson evicted from Achabeg and Knock twenty-five or thirty well-to-do crofter families?—I don't wish to take anything to do with these questions at all, as there is another delegate appointed to speak about them.

36173. What is his name?—Alexander Cameron.

36174. *Professor Mackinnon.*—There are no tenants upon the estate of Mr Smith now?—No.

36175. What is done with the estate?—It is in the hands of the proprietor, and stocked with sheep, and deer, and cattle.

36176. Is there not even a single tenant?—No, with the exception of one crofter.

36177. Do you know about that crofter?—Yes.

36178. Do you know what rent he pays?—He pays £8 rent, I understand.

36179. And that is the only tenant of any description upon the whole estate?—Yes, that is the only one I know of.

36180. What is his name?—William Murray.

ALEXANDER CAMERON, Labourer and Cottar, Lochaline (50)—
examined.

(See Appendix A, LXXXV.)

36181. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Do you appear to represent the people of Lochaline, or on your own account?—I come here on behalf of the people of Lochaline.

Alexander
Cameron.

36182. Have you heard what Dugald Macgregor told us?—Yes.

36183. Do you agree with what he said?—Yes, I agree with that.

36184. Have you anything additional to tell us?—I cannot say anything at all in addition to what Dugald Macgregor has said about the estate of Sellar; but I am prepared to speak of this estate where we are just now.

36185. Have you always lived at Lochaline yourself?—Yes, since I was removed out of my own land.

36186. Where were you before?—I was at a place called Knock, a little above the church here.

36187. How long ago is that?—Seventeen years ago.

- ARGYLL. 36188. How much land had you there?—I had a house and a croft, and the fourth share in a horse and cow.
- LOCHALINE. 36189. Any sheep?—No sheep.
- Alexander Cameron. 36190. What rent were you paying?—At first we paid a rent of £3, 10s., but afterwards it was raised to £4.
36191. How many other crofters were there?—There would be about twenty crofters.
36192. What circumstances were they in?—They were fairly well off —plenty of potatoes and meal and milk.
36193. Was there ever any destitution amongst them?—No.
36194. Who was proprietor at the time?—The late Mrs Campbell Paterson.
36195. When did she become proprietrix?—It is about eighteen or nineteen years ago.
36196. From whom did she buy it?—From the late Mr Sinclair.
36197. Had he been long in possession?—He was there since I remember.
- 36198-9. Did he raise the people's rent while he had the land?—It was Mr Sinclair who raised the rents.
36200. How long was it after Mrs Paterson purchased the property that she removed you?—Two years.
36201. Were any of the people in arrears?—I am not aware that they were a penny in arrears of rent.
36202. What was the reason given for removing them?—Because the proprietrix wished to have the land in her own hands.
36203. And is it so now?—Yes.
36204. Did you get any compensation for your houses when you were removed?—No.
36205. Who built them?—Some of the people built their own houses, and when my people came to the place they went into a house which was built before.
36206. What kind of house was it?—The house was built of dry stone, and with a thatch roof.
36207. Were they good houses?—They were good houses of the kind; we did not object to them.
36208. Were they pulled down?—The houses were all pulled down before we were three weeks out of them.
36209. Were there new houses prepared for you before you removed?—There were no houses, but we could go into the loch if we liked.
36210. What did all the people do?—Every one who was able to go away went away somewhere else, to the south or other parts; and those who were not able had to go to the village and hire houses or rooms there.
36211. Did those who emigrated abroad get any assistance from the proprietrix?—Not a halfpenny.
36212. When your houses were pulled down, what was done with the timber?—The wood of the houses was burned as firewood by the shepherds who came into the estate.
36213. Had any of you difficulty in finding dwellings for yourselves in the village?—A great many of the people went away altogether, because they could not get houses here.
36214. Had any of them to be forcibly evicted out of the houses?—No, that was not required; the people went away quietly when they got notice to quit.
36215. How many of them do you remember settled in the village?—Six or seven.

36216. Did they get work there?—They did not.

ARGYLL.

36217. Did the proprietrix give them any work?—We got no work.

LOCHALINE.

36218. Was there any work on the estate for them?—There was no work going on on the estate at the time.

Alexander Cameron.

36219. How did you make your living then, and since then?—The people, when they were removed, had a little money which they had saved, or which they got from their stock when they sold them, and shortly after that they had just to go on to the parish, and shortly after that they died.

36220. How have you made your living yourself?—When I got a house for my family in the village here, I went across to the island of Mull and worked there.

36221. Do you live here now?—Yes, I reside here now; and for the last fifteen years I have been working on Mr Smith's estate.

36222. What rent do you pay for your house?—£3, and I keep everything in repair myself.

36223. What kind of a house is it?—It is a thatched house, and it has nearly tumbled down.

36224. Are there many of the same sort in the village?—Yes.

36225. What sort of people live in the slated houses in the village?—There are some of the poor people, who receive parochial aid, who live in some of the houses, and workpeople as well, in some of them.

36226. What rent do they pay for these slated cottages?—From £3 to £3, 5s. for one room.

36227. Are there families living in one room?—Yes.

36228. Grown-up people and children?—Yes.

36229. How many families are living in a house of one room each?—Over twenty.

36230. Have you often been in these houses?—Yes.

36231. What sort of way do these people live in them?—Some of them are pretty far behind. Those who are able to work are better off than those who are not.

36232. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Was the effect of this action, on the part of the proprietrix, in depriving the well-to-do comfortable people of their means of livelihood, to bring them almost instantly to poverty?—I cannot say what was in their minds at the time, but it did very suddenly bring us to poverty.

36233. You are speaking yourself of having been in Knock; what was the name of the other township?—The township of Kill was cleared by Mr Sinclair before Mrs Paterson got the property.

36234. The statement read mentions the name of Dr M'Leod, minister of the parish; did he intercede with the proprietrix for you?—Yes.

36235. Did the people go and request his intercession, or did he do it of his own accord?—He did it of his own accord.

36236. Everything he could he did?—Yes, he went as far as possible to induce the proprietrix to let us remain in the place—to give us the arable land.

36237. What was Mrs Paterson's name before she was married?—Hardie, I understand.

36238. How did she get the property; did she purchase it?—She bought the estate.

36239. Was her husband living?—No, not at the time the estate was bought.

36240. She bought it when she was a widow?—Yes.

36241. And when she was a widow she made these evictions?—Yes.

36242. It is stated in the paper that the property is now in the hands

ARGYLL. of the trustees; who is the next heir?—We are not sure as to who the proper heir is.

LOCHALINE. 36243. How long ago did Mrs Paterson die?—Four or five years.

Alexander Cameron. 36244. To whom do you pay this large rent of £3 for the room?—I pay it to the trustees of Mrs Paterson.

36245. Did you say there was £3 or £3, 5s. paid for a single room?—Yes; but that is not paid to the trustees, it is paid to landlords who had built houses in the village.

36246. Do you know of any case where the occupants of a single room are paying rent direct to the trustees of the property?—There are some living in one room who pay rent to the trustees, but not such a high rent as that.

36247. Can you mention the names of people occupying a single room who pay rent to the trustees?—Alexander Campbell, Widow Angus Cameron, and Widow Hugh Cameron.

36248. Are you quite sure, from your own knowledge, that these three people only occupy a single apartment, and are paying their rent direct to the proprietor?—Yes, I am perfectly sure of that, because they live just beside me.

36249. Have you anything else to say with regard to any other property except this one?—I have nothing to say about any other property.

36250. Supposing this estate of Lochaline were to change hands again, and that the proprietor were willing or disposed to allow people like yourself, who were once upon it, to go back, would you be prepared to take a croft such as you had before, and work it as you did at one time?—I would be very glad to get it. I think it would be to my benefit also—that is, if I could get it at a reasonable rent.

36251. I suppose there is no great trade in this village of Lochaline?—No, there was scarcely anything doing until about a year ago, when the new pier was commenced, and the road leading across to it.

36252-3. Is there anything in your mind so likely to relieve the people of this village as to allow people like yourself to re-occupy the land, which is described as lying waste in the neighbourhood?—I can think of nothing better than that we should get the land which we had before.

MALCOLM M'LACHLAN, Mason, Barr (49)—examined.

(*See Appendix A, LXXXV.*)

Malcolm M'Lachlan.

36254. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Have you a statement to make for the place which you represent?—I have.—‘Barr. The crofts of Barr are situated on the western shore of Lochteagus, an arm of Lochsunart, which penetrates about three miles inland in a southerly direction. These crofts are on the estate of Glenmorven, now in the hands of Miss Beattie’s trustees. The whole of this estate, with the exception of a few worthless patches held by crofters, is one large sheep farm, presently occupied by Captain Shaw, son of Sheriff Shaw of Lochmaddy. Our grievance is that the small spots of arable land held by us is becoming quite worthless through overcropping. It is now about eighty years since our fathers settled in this place, whither they were removed from good land to make room for sheep. They reclaimed the land, such as it is, from being a miserable patch of bog. The water is carried away by open drains, which must be dug very deep. We would improve the land by stone drains, but, as we are tenants at will and can be removed at any time, we are prevented from making many

' improvements. Our summing is two cows with followers, and we pay a rent of £7 sterling for that and our miserable patches of land. The produce of our crofts will not feed us more than three months of the year. We plant five barrels of potatoes and four bushels of corn ; but the land is so much exhausted that it will not yield a good crop. We want to get as much land as we can make a living by, which if we get we are able to stock. There is nothing to be made by herring fishing in this district now, as owing to the way the fishing is prosecuted on the west coast it never comes into Lochsunart. We get work for about fifty days throughout the year from Captain Shaw the farmer ; we are paid at the rate of two shillings a day. We have also to complain of having to live in very bad houses, which if we are to live here any longer we should like repaired or rebuilt. We consider our rent is excessive, and would beg respectfully to draw the attention of the Commission to the rents we pay and to our summing, which, taken along with the quality of the arable land we hold, we consider that no capitalist farmer in the Highlands pays the same rent in proportion.'

36255. You don't remember the time when your people were removed to this place; but did you not hear where they came from ?—We were removed from other portions of the estate ; but I am not a native, and don't know.

36256. To whom do you pay your rent where you are now ?—To the farmer.

36257. Captain Shaw ?—Yes.

36258. Who drew out this paper ?—I wrote a portion of it myself.

36259. Who wrote the other part ?—The rest of the statement was written by themselves.

36260. I suppose the land upon which you are now is very bad ?—It is exhausted by overcropping.

36261. Do you remember yourself when it was good land ?—It has been continually cropped for the last eighty years.

36262. So that it has been bad land ever since you remember ?—Yes.

36263. You say the rent is too high ?—Yes.

36264. The summing is two cows with their followers ; how many followers may a cow have in this locality ?—Only a calf and a stirk.

36265. You have no horses ?—We had one horse each fifty years ago, but it was taken from us at that time.

36266. Have you sheep ?—No.

36267. You pay £7 for the two cows, two stirks, and the patches of arable ground ?—Yes.

36268. And you pay not to the proprietor but to the tenant, Captain Shaw ?—Yes, it is to the farmer that we pay the rents.

36269. You say 'we get work from about fifty days,' are you obliged to go to work during any of those days ?—There is no special time, but we are very thankful when we get the work. We must attend to the sheep-shearing or cutting down brackens or any odd work about the farm.

36270. If you should have better employment elsewhere, would the tenant ask you to render service to him ?—I think we would be allowed to get better work anywhere else.

36271. So that you are quite free to earn money anywhere else at any time ?—Yes.

36272. Only better employment is not going ?—No.

36273. The houses you say are very bad ; is it from the proprietor or the tenant that you would expect assistance in putting the houses in good condition ?—It is from the proprietor we would expect the better houses.

ARGYLL
LOCHALINE
Malcolm
M'Lachlan.

- ARGYLL. 36274. Do you know if the tenant is bound by his lease to give you these crofts?—I am not very sure, but I think it is in the lease.
- LOCHALINE. 36275. Your opinion is that he is not able to remove you?—Yes, I am of opinion that he could not remove us, but I cannot be sure.
- Malcolm M'Lachlan. 36276. Was there any improvement made upon any of the houses in your own time?—No, there was no improvement made, so far as I remember.
36277. You mean there was nothing done at the proprietor's expense?—There was nothing done at his expense.
36278. Do you think if you had these crofts—although you think the rent too high—as they are, upon leases, you would improve the houses and the crofts?—Yes, we would.
36279. How do you plough the land?—It is all done with the spade, and we have to carry all the manure or sea-ware on our back.
36280. Are you near the shore?—Yes; we are pretty near the shore.
36281. And is there plenty of sea-ware?—There is plenty of sea-ware.
36282. And you have liberty to take as much of it as you please?—Yes.
36283. You plant five barrels of potatoes; take an ordinary good year, within the last twelve years, how many barrels would you lift when you planted five?—I am not able to answer that question.
36284. Can you give an opinion?—I would rather not say anything about it, as I am not sure.
36285. How long have you been in Barr?—I don't live there.
36286. Were you present when you were elected by the people of Barr?—Yes.
36287. Was the meeting held at Barr?—They came to my house, and asked me specially to allow myself to be elected.
36288. They came the whole way from Barr?—Yes.
36289. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—How many persons are there in Barr?—There are four families.
36290. Did the four heads of families all come over here?—There were two came over as delegates from the others.
36291. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Barr is on the estate of Glenmorven?—Yes.
36292. Is that a large estate?—Yes, it is pretty large.
36293. How long is it since it was cleared of the people?—It is about sixty years ago.
36294. Do you know who it was that cleared it—who the proprietor was?—Miss Stewart.
36295. Is Glenmorven in the parish of Morven?—Yes.
36296. Do you know if there were a great many people cleared off?—I cannot exactly give the number of people, but I know there were a good many.
36297. Do you know that from hearsay—from older people than yourself, or from seeing the remains of small crofts and houses?—I know it because it was stated by people who were there, and who were put out of it.
36298. What became of the people who were put away in this manner?—Some of them got removed to another portion of the estate, and others had to go away to other places—any place they could get with houses.
36299. Can you mention how many crofters there may be now upon the estate?—So far as I know, about twenty-six all over the estate.
36300. It is said in the paper 'the whole of the estate, with the ex-

'ception of a few worthless patches held by crofters, is one large sheep farm?—do you know that of your own knowledge?—Yes.

36301. *Professor Mackinnon.*—The paper says: 'The whole of the estate with the exception of a few worthless patches is held by one farm.' The farm you mean is Captain Shaw's?—Yes.

36302. Do you know the farm of Inniemore?—Mr Smith is in it.

36303. Do you know Carnacalloch?—Yes.

36304. Do you know about Achanasaul, Rumone, Bunavullin, and Glenmorven Cottage?—Yes.

36305. And you still adhere to the statement in the paper that the whole of this estate, with the exception of a few worthless patches held by crofters, is one large farm?—No, there are these.

ARGYLL.

LOCHALINE.

Malcolm
M'Lachlan.

ALEXANDER MACDONALD, Crofter, Bunavullin—examined.

36306. *The Chairman.*—Have you been chosen by the people as a delegate?—Yes.

Alexander
Macdonald

36307. Have you a written statement?—Yes.—'Bunavullin. This township is also on the estate of Glenmorven under Beattie's trustees. Our grievances are—(1) That we have too little hill pasture for the summer grazing of our cattle. Our summing is two cows and one calf, which must be sold when a year old for want of grazing. (2) Our arable land is so small that we cannot provide fodder for wintering our beasts. We have to buy for them, which we consider a great hardship, as there is plenty of good land close beside us very suitable for us if we could get it at a reasonable rent. (3) The extent of arable land held by each of us is about $1\frac{1}{2}$ acre of very inferior land. We pay a rent of £6, exclusive of taxes, which we consider far too high. We cannot get a day's work on the estate from one year's end to another, but have to go about here and there where we can get work. Our houses are built too near the sea-shore, and in winter time are very damp because of the sea spray. There is a piece of land adjoining us between Glenmorven shooting lodge and our crofts, which if given to us we are willing to pay a fair rent for it. We have no special complaint against either the proprietrix or her factor, but we wish to have more hill pasture and our crofts enlarged. We are able to stock more land if we could get it. We have at present three horses, but owing to our restricted grazing we cannot keep but inferior animals. Our delegate will be glad to answer any questions.'

36308. The first complaint is that you have too little hill pasture. How long has this township of Bunavullin existed?—At least forty years, so far as I know.

36309. Were there any people in the place before that, or were they brought there?—They were brought there at that time, or a little previous, and houses were built about that time.

36310. To whom did the place belong?—To Miss Stewart.

36311. Where were they brought from—from other places on the same estate?—Some of the people who came there were on the estate previously in another place.

36312. By whom was the land of Bunavullin occupied previously? Was it crofters' land, or a sheep farm, or what?—Previous to the time the people came there it was occupied as a large farm.

36313. When the people were brought there they were given some

ARGYLL. arable land. Were they also given any hill pasture?—We have just now all the hill pasture we had at the beginning. The people were sent there as labourers.

LOCHALINE. Alexander Macdonald. 36314. You were sent there forty years ago. Have your crofts been subdivided, or are there the same number of crofts as there were at first?—So far as I know or recollect, the crofts are just as they were at the beginning; they have not been subdivided.

36315. The summing is two cows and one calf, for which you pay £6?

—There are two cows and a calf, and we have a horse among every three.

36316. You complain that you are paying for two cows, and that you cannot support them; how much have you to pay for the winter keep of a cow?—I bought myself last winter £2 worth of feeding for my cattle. There may be some of the others who have bought more, and there may be some who have bought less.

36317. How many cattle had you during the winter? Had you two cows and one follower?—Two cows and one follower.

36318. And you paid £2 for fodder. Did that include the keep of the horse, if you have the part of a horse?—That includes all the fodder I have bought together.

36319. Does the horse all belong to one person, or do you go shares in the horse?—We go shares for the horse.

36320. Do you keep the horse alternately, or how?—One of us feeds the horse alternately when it is our turn; but the horses are not generally housed; they are allowed to live outside.

36321. Do you buy corn for your horses, or do you give them your own corn?—We feed them with our own corn so long as it lasts, and after that we have to buy.

36322. You complain that the houses are built near the sea-shore. When people were brought to Bunavullin, who built the houses for them?—The proprietor built the houses.

36323. What sort of houses are they? Are they all slated houses?—They are slated houses.

36324. And have they been slated houses from the beginning, forty years ago?—The houses were slated when built.

36325. Did you ever hear how much each house had cost the proprietor?—No.

36326. Are they good, substantial houses?—The houses are reasonably large, but there is only one room.

36327. Do you mean that there is a kitchen and one room, or only one room, which is a kitchen and everything else?—There is only one apartment.

36328. Is the apartment divided by the beds being put across the middle?—The arrangement of the beds, or how they are placed, is left to ourselves, but they are generally placed along the wall.

36329. I am to understand that there is really only one room, and that the way the beds are placed does not make it into two rooms?—Yes, that is so.

36330. Are there any cases in which two families are living in one room?—No; each family have one room to themselves.

36331. Is there any loft above?—Yes.

36332. Do people sleep in the loft?—Yes, a bed can be placed in the loft, but we have to use the loft as a barn. It was intended for that.

36333. Are all the houses alike?—Yes, all very much alike.

36334. About what size is this one room?—The houses are from 12 feet to 14 feet each way.

36335. Have the people ever built any additions themselves to these

original houses?—They have built no additions to the houses behind. They could not do that, because the byres and places for the horses were built at the back.

36336. Have you ever turned a byre into a room, and built another byre?—No.

36337. Why were the houses built so near the sea coast?—It is my opinion that the houses were built so near the sea that they might take up as little room as possible.

36338. You say there is a piece of land adjoining you, between Glen morven shooting lodge and the crofts, which would be convenient to you. How is that piece of land at present occupied? Is it occupied by the farmer?—It is occupied by a large farmer.

36339. It is not occupied by the shooting lodge?—No, it is not occupied by the proprietor of the shooting lodge.

36340. Is it arable ground, or is it rough pasture?—Previously the land was mostly all arable, and it can very easily be turned into arable land again.

36341. Is it land which is useful to the farmer for wintering his stock?—No doubt the land is perhaps very useful to the farmer, because it is lying very near to the sea.

36342. Is the farm well provided with low-lying land in other places?—On the side on which we are situated the farm goes from sea to sea—one branch of the sea goes in at one side, and the Sound of Mull goes in at the other side. On this side there is not much low-lying ground, but there is plenty on the east side of the farm.

36343. Can this land which you want be taken from the farm without doing it a material injury?—It is my opinion that, although that portion were taken from the farmer, he would have sufficient ground. He has a very large farm, and would have sufficient ground otherwise.

36344. Would you pay rent for it if it were taken from the farmer?—I think we are paying dear enough with that land along with what we hold at present, because we have not sufficient grazings for the cows.

36345. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie*.—Did your crops suffer from the gale of last October?—Not to any great extent.

36346. Is £2 your average expenditure year after year in food for cattle?—It depends very much on what sort of winter it is. One winter is perhaps less severe than another; and if a winter is very severe, we have to buy more. Last winter we had to give our cattle meal.

36347. *Professor Mackinnon*.—How long have you yourself been at Bunavullin?—About fifteen years.

36348. Where were you before that?—On Lady Gordon's estate—Drimmin.

36349. Had you land there?—Yes.

36350. Are there people in that place yet who were there fifteen years ago?—No.

36351. What became of them?—They were removed. Some are in Glasgow, and some in other places on the adjoining estate of Ardnastaig.

36352. Who keeps the place now?—It is occupied by a large farmer.

36353. What was the condition of the crofters in that place?—They were fairly well off.

36354. What was the size of the croft which you had yourself?—I cannot exactly tell the amount of the acreage.

36355. What stock did you keep?—I kept five cows.

36356. A horse?—We had no horses.

36357. Sheep?—We had a few sheep.

36358. Why were there no horses; was the place so rough that a

ARGYLL.

LOCHALINE.

Alexander
Macdonald.

ARGYLL. horse could not work it?—The place was so very rough and the ground so soft that horses could not work on it.

LOCHALINE. — 36359. Of all the places round about you, is it that farm of which you spoke that you think most suitable to enlarge your holdings?—Yes, that is the only place.

36360. And you think it is very suitable?—Yes; it is quite close beside us—just marching with our present crofts.

36361. Would it increase the arable land as well as the grazing land?—Yes.

36362. And if you got it, is that what you would do with it?—Yes. As our crofts are so small, we would convert what was convertible into arable land.

36363. Do you think you or your neighbours would be able to provide the necessary stock if you got such a bigger croft?—I think we have plenty of stock already although we got the land. We would like to keep the two calves, because we have the two cows.

36364. You would like to have the two cows with followers?—Yes, we would like to have the followers along with the cows.

36365. And you think your rent just now is high enough to cover the extended holding?—Yes, we do.

36366. So that you have sufficient stock at present?—Yes.

36367. And you think you have also sufficient rent?—Yes.

36368. So that you could quite easily enter into possession if you got the ground upon these conditions?—Yes.

36369. Even that croft would not support a family? Is there any other work going on? What work are you engaged in in addition to the croft?—No, very little, unless the adjoining farm will employ lads and lasses now and again.

36370. How do you occupy the time that is not taken up by the croft?—We just go and work wherever we can.

36371. Do the people go away from home to work for wages?—Yes, they sometimes get work on the adjoining estate, and perhaps go home to their own house at night.

36372. And that, along with the crofts, is the way they earn their livelihood?—Yes.

36373. And even supposing you got this addition, you would still have to continue working, only you would be better off?—Yes, only we would expect to be better off.

36374. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—There are ten people you say in Bunavullin?—Yes.

36375. Have they only got one room each?—Yes.

36376. Are the houses all in a row—stuck together?—Yes.

36377. So, supposing a man had six or seven of a family, he must put up with one room?—Yes.

36378. Do they pay the rent direct to the landlord or to the principal tenant?—They pay their rent to the proprietor; they have nothing to do with the tenant.

36379. *Professor Mackinnon.*—There is one John Stewart represented in the valuation roll as paying £15. Does he occupy only one room?—John Stewart does not pay any rent, if he does not pay the feu for the house. He is quite in a different condition from those I have spoken about, so far as the arable land is concerned, but his stock goes on our hill, of which he is entitled to a share.

JOHN MACDONALD, Shopman in the Clothing Trade, Glasgow (36)—
examined.

ARGYLL.

LOCHALINE.

John

Macdonald.

36380. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Are you connected with this locality by birth?—I am.

36381. Were you born here?—Yes.

36382. What place?—On the estate of the late Sir Charles Gordon, in Drimnin.

36383. Did your father possess any land upon that estate?—Yes.

36384. What rent was he paying?—I cannot tell.

36385. Was he in possession of what we call a croft?—Yes; it was, I believe, held as a club farm.

36386. He would not have been paying £30 of rent?—Not so much.

36387. What was the name of the township where the club farm was of which your father had a share?—Oronsay.

36388. Is that the island?—It is.

36389. Was the whole of Oronsay one club farm?—It was one club farm the whole of it.

36390. And have you been told how many crofters were in the farm?—Yes, there were first six, and afterwards there were only four, so far as I can remember.

36391. Was your father one of the four?—My father was not. He died, and my mother had to give up the land.

36392. How long is it since you left the district?—Nearly twenty years now.

36393. Have you kept up your interest and communication with it during that time?—Always.

36394. What became of the people of Oronsay?—One of those who was in Oronsay was the last delegate, another is in Glasgow—he removed to Glasgow—and two or three are on the adjoining estate of Mr Dalgleish, Ardnamurchan.

36395. The club farm was abolished, and the people had to go?—Yes.

36396. Who has it now?—A large farmer.

36397. What is his name?—Donald M'Master.

36398. Where did he come from?—The upper end of the district here. He was a shepherd formerly on Mr Smith's estates.

36399. Is he a native of Morven?—I believe he is; I believe he was born in this parish.

36400. Since you are speaking about Glenmorven estate, from whom did Sir Charles Gordon purchase the property?—It belonged, I believe, to M'Lean. That was the name of the proprietor before Sir Charles Gordon bought the estate.

36401. Is it an estate of considerable size?—It is not a very large estate. It is just now in two farms and the home farm, I think, and a few crofters.

36402. Speaking generally, was there not a considerable population in Drimnin at one time?—There was, I believe.

36403. You have heard that, and have seen it perhaps yourself?—I remember myself quite distinctly that there were a good many people about the places mentioned in the statement. I remember that there were seven or eight families, not saying I am altogether correct, but so far as I can remember.

36404. In your time were the people scattered out of the estate?—In the time of the late Lady Gordon.

36405. Sir Charles Gordon's widow?—Yes.

ARGYLL. 36406. To whom does the estate belong now?—To Mr Joseph Gordon.

LOCHALINE. 36407. Her son?—Her son.

John Macdonald. 36408. It is now all occupied as two farms?—There are two occupied by farmers, and there is another in the proprietor's hands; and besides there is the home farm attached to the big house.

36409. You were old enough before you left to observe matters?—I was seventeen when I left the district.

36410. Were the people you used to associate with in comfortable circumstances in the class you belonged to?—They were fairly comfortable.

36411. Did any of them go away of their own accord, or did circumstances compel them to go; were they evicted or starved out?—So far as I know, there were few of them went away of their own accord. It was altogether a matter of 'must' with the majority of those I know.

36412. Were the places in Oronsay from which they were removed suitable for the people of the crofting class?—It was not very suitable when they went there, but they made it suitable.

36413. Did they keep a mixed stock of cattle and sheep?—They didn't keep many sheep, but they had five or six cows.

36414. In your young days you never suffered from want of milk?—I believe I did.

36415. How was that?—Because when my father died my mother had to give up the land, and cows, and everything, and after that she was dependent on what milk her neighbours would supply her with.

36416. But those who had crofts did not suffer from want of milk?—I don't think so.

36417. I believe you can give some information about the estate of Glenmorven?—I wish to give an explanation in regard to the statement that the whole of that estate is one large farm. The people wish to adhere to that statement, because there is practically only one farm on the estate. Captain Shaw has the whole of that estate. There is not another farmer on it besides the crofters, and the crofters have, with very few exceptions, the remnants and useless pieces, such as Bunavullin and Barr, which would be of no use, or very little, for any other purpose.

36418. Had you access to the valuation roll of the county of Argyll to see the returns made for the estate?—I have not consulted the valuation roll.

36419. You were merely taking what you have heard the people say?—Yes, and what I know myself.

36420. But although there may be some question whether or not the whole estate is in one farm, I suppose there is little doubt but that the great bulk of it is in the hands of large sheep farmers?—Yes, I believe that. Perhaps Mr Smith, the proprietor, pays rent for a certain amount of the estate, but then he cannot be called a farmer, because he does not farm it himself. There is no resident farmer except one.

36421. Will you tell us about the people who were on the estate, were there a great number there in your younger days?—I don't believe there were many people evicted from that estate. That estate has preserved the people who were on it originally better than any other.

36422. The crofters who remain are as numerous in comparison as on any other estate in the neighbourhood?—More so.

36423. Have you any further remark to make with regard to that statement?—No, not particularly; but I wish to state particularly that there is only one farmer on the estate.

36424. Did you know the late Dr M'Leod of Morven?—I did; I knew him from hearing him preach in my young days.

36425. How many parishes does the district of Morven comprehend ?
The district is all one parish.

36426. Has there not been a very great decrease in that place during
the last forty or fifty years ?—Nearly 50 per cent.

36427. Did you ever hear it stated that it was a source of great
grief to Dr M'Leod that so many of the people were obliged to leave ?
—Yes, I have heard it stated, and I have read it.

36427.* Are you aware that he over and over again interceded in
vain to prevent these depopulations ?—Yes, I am aware of that.

36428. I suppose I need not ask you whether Morven is not considered
one of the most fertile and traditionally one of the most interesting parts
of the Western Highlands ?—I believe it is considered that.

36429. May I take it for granted that you and the others connected
with the district feel great grief at the present state of matters ?—Certainly.
When I come from Glasgow, whenever I have a holiday, I feel it very
much to see bare walls where the people used to be in pretty comfortable
circumstances, and whom I remembered quite well myself.

36430. You have heard what the crofters' delegates state about the
poverty of this place we are in ; is it consistent with your knowledge
that there is considerable poverty ?—I know they have not stated it
nearly so bad as it is.

36431. Are you aware that recently one of the trustees of the property
came to reside here, and has been giving some work ?—I am not aware
of that.

36432. Don't you know that a pier was erected ?—Yes ; but I don't
know whether any of the people were employed at that pier or not.

36433. Or roads ?—There may or there may not, I don't know.

36434. Do you know what were the circumstances under which this
village was formed and stances given for houses ?—I cannot tell. It has
been pretty much the same way ever since I remember. There have been
no improvements except the pier itself, so far as I see.

36435. Have some of the young men who came out of Morven in
former times not got on very well in the world ?—Some of them have
in other countries, and perhaps in Glasgow and the south. They always
get on as well, I believe, as people who came from any other district at
any rate.

36436. We have had before us to-day the cases Acharn, Ardtornish,
Glenmorven, Lochaline, and Drimnin—is that the whole district comprehended
in Morven ?—No, it is not.

36437. What more is there ?—The estate of Glencrepisdale and
Laudal.

36438. Do these belong to one proprietor ?—Yes.

36439. Who is the proprietor ?—Mr Newton.

36440. Is there any one here from there ?—No ; but I am quite willing
to answer any questions about it.

36441. Have the people been cleared out there ?—Yes ; there is
scarcely any person there but shepherds.

36442. Has that been done within the last forty or fifty years ?—Yes,
partly ; but there have been no evictions recently, because there was
nobody to evict.

36443. But they must have been evicted at one time ?—At one time,
certainly.

36444. I don't recognise among the names of the present proprietors
any single person who seems to have been originally connected with the
district ?—The Stewarts, I believe, have been connected with this district
for a long time,

ARGYLL.

LOCHALINE.

John

Macdonald.

- ARGYLL. 36445. These are the only ones?—I think so.
- LOCHALINE. 36446. In the changes which have taken place have the interests of the crofting population been in any way considered?—I don't think so; I cannot see any signs of it.
- John Macdonald. 36447. Coming along here from Ardnamurchan, there seemed to be some nice large farms and plenty of sheep?—Yes.
36448. These have been looked after?—Yes; they have been pretty well looked after: they seem to be comfortable enough.
36449. You have considered these matters. Will you now, in one word, suggest what remedy would meet the present state of the crofting population in this district?—I think I would be very much inclined to take the same view as they have taken themselves in the statement.
36450. More land?—More land, certainly; they have no land at all.
36451. Fair rent?—Yes.
36452. No disturbance as long as they pay their rent?—Yes, and so long as they conduct themselves in a proper manner.
36453. Do you concur in these statements as the true remedy?—Yes, I do.
36454. And the only remedy?—Yes, in my opinion.
36455. Some people propose free emigration; what do you say to that?—I think there has been far too much emigration for this district at any rate. If there is much more emigration, there will be no one left at all.
36456. What will then happen?—When I come from Glasgow I shall have no place to go to.
36457. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—How long was Oronsay a club farm: you say the tenants made it comfortable, how long did they possess it?—I believe for about twenty or twenty-five years.
36458. What was it before that?—It may have been—a little of it—arable before that; but I know when the people went there they had to do a great deal of work.
36459. And it was held by a single tenant before that?—It was never, so far as I remember or so far as I have heard it stated, in the hands of a large farmer until Mr M'Master got it.
36460. But the eight tenants went there; they were not born there?—They went at the same time.
36461. They didn't go to vacant ground, they must have gone to ground occupied by some one; was it occupied by one or two or three?—By two or three, I believe. But they had to reclaim the land themselves.
36462. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Do you know these houses which are described as having only one apartment?—I know the houses.
36463. With just one apartment?—That is all.
36464. And there are two or three in the village of Lochaline that pay direct to the trustees; I suppose you know that?—I have heard it stated in evidence.
36465. And there are others who pay to whom—to their neighbours?—To whomsoever the property they are in belongs.
36466. And the witness stated that they were the highest rented?—Yes.
36467. Their neighbours charge higher rent than the trustees do?—Yes; that was stated.
36468. Do you know, from the circumstances of the people generally, that if they got this valuation of their holdings they would probably be able to take possession of them?—I have no doubt some of them would; but whether they could all do so or not is a question.
36469. But you believe that some of them could?—I am certain they

could. They would be assisted by their families in Glasgow ; they are ARGYLL.
all in Glasgow.

36470. And I suppose those who are away take such an interest in LOCHALINE.
those who are at home that they would assist them ?—Certainly.

John
36471. Suppose a family with some means to get a piece of vacant ground now long out of cultivation, upon what terms would you propose that it should be given to them ?—Yes, on reasonable rent, with a reasonable security that they would not be turned out when they improved the place, and that their rent would not be raised to any excessive extent.

36472. Supposing you were to give a lease of twenty years or over, would you make it the same rent from the first year to the last year, or a graduated rent ?—I think where land has been out of cultivation for fifteen years, the rent should be less at first, until the people got two or three crops out of it.

36473. How would you suggest that the rent should be fixed ?—In the case of the landlord and the tenant agreeing themselves about it, I think that would be a very good way. In a case where they could not agree, I should suggest that it be left to be settled by somebody outside—probably one appointed by Government for the purpose, or something of that kind.

36474. And such an one would fix the rent and the mode of its apportionment for that piece of ground ?—Yes.

36475. And the length of the lease ?—Yes.

36476. Houses would require to be built ?—Yes ; there are no houses now.

36477. How would these houses be built ? At whose expense ?—I should say at the expense of the proprietor ; that is my opinion. Certainly the people may be charged as usual, perhaps, some interest for the money laid out, along with their rent.

36478. We have heard it said that when houses were built in that way by the proprietors, they were often dearer than if the people themselves had engaged to build and got assistance, and afterwards got compensation in the event of change ?—I have no doubt in the case of a person being able to build, that would be the best way ; but in the case of a man not being able to build, I think it might be settled the other way very well.

36479. That the proprietor should undertake the expense, and charge a reasonable interest ?—Yes, charge a reasonable interest. I don't think any one would go against paying more rent if he got a good house.

36480. Is there any portion of the estate more than another suitable for cultivation ?—This place in which we are just now is very suitable, perhaps, for two or three miles, it is about the best land in Argyll.

36481. This country is very beautiful, but you don't say it is more fertile than Kintyre, for example ?—I think if you go out and take a look through this place just now, you will see some very good land, and land suitable for crofters.

36482. Do you think it is as fertile as Kintyre ?—I don't know ; I never was there.

36483. *The Chairman.*—I am perhaps not mistaken in supposing you have taken some interest in the preparation of these memorials ?—You are not mistaken, my Lord.

36484. You are cognisant of what they contain ?—Yes ; I have read the statements.

36485. For Barr and Bunavullin ?—Yes.

36486. A statement which has been referred to is this—‘The whole of this estate, with the exception of a few worthless patches held by the crofters, is one large sheep farm.’ Now, I find in the valuation roll four

ARGYLL. holdings specified—one of £75, two of £25, and one of £48?—I don't know where they are.

LOCHALINE. — John Macdonald. 36487. Do you think these holdings are correctly described as 'worthless patches?'—I could not say. There are one or two farmers on the estate; I don't know what amount of ground they occupy. I know there are one or two.

36488. In the valuation roll the area of land is not given, but the rental is given, which is a pretty good test. There are four farms—£75, £25, £25, and £48—to which I have alluded. Do you consider it is probable that these holdings are correctly described as 'worthless patches?'—I don't know that. That may have been overlooked in the statement; it is possible it may have been. I cannot say anything as to that.

36489. I think it right to add that the gross rental of the estate, irrespective of shooting rents, is £733, and that the one farm alluded to is £430 rental, leaving a rental of £303 which has no connection with it? —There are, I believe, altogether twenty-three crofters on the estate. It is the only estate in this district that has, in any way at all, got a crofter population. These two or three places may have been overlooked in making out the statement, but I don't know whether they are fairly valued or not.

36490. My object is, if possible, to eliminate from this memorial, which may in the main be correct, some expressions which, I think, are ill-advised and inaccurate?—We have no wish that anything inaccurate should appear at all; I have not, so far as I am concerned.

**WILLIAM HENDERSON HARDIE, Managing Trustee on Lochaline Estate
(51)—examined.**

William Henderson Hardie.

36491. *The Chairman.*—Have you any statement you wish to make connected with anything that has occurred here to-day?—Yes, I would like to make some explanations. With regard to the statement that was read on behalf of the crofters, I am perfectly certain it was worded in a way that no crofter in Morven would understand, and I take it for granted it must have been the production of Mr Macdonald who gave evidence last. He stated in connection with the property I have charge of that the people were summarily evicted. Now, I can give my testimony to the contrary. The people got notice that they would require to leave their holdings in March of 1865, but an arrangement was made with them that they would be allowed to retain their holdings not only till Whitsunday but to the year following, that they might have an opportunity of seeing what they could turn their attention to. Intimation was made in March 1865, and they were allowed to remain until 1866. With regard to stating that they got no compensation, their sheep stock was taken over by the proprietor at a valuation. The houses belonged to the proprietor, and it was understood that when one tenant entered a house it was valued for him, and any depreciation upon the house he had to make good; the house belonged altogether to the proprietor, so that they could not expect any compensation. One statement was made that the proprietor deprived them of the privilege of cutting peat. That, I am happy to state, I can deny. What was put a stop to, and what every proprietor would put a stop to, was the cutting of turf on the surface of the rock, baring the rock. But to this day they can cut peat to their heart's content, although certainly we will prohibit them cutting the turf and baring the ground. It was

also stated—I do not know whether I heard correctly or not—but the impression was conveyed, as has been conveyed in letters which have appeared in the country newspapers—that the proprietor by the use of the crowbar and faggot turned people out of their houses, which is quite contrary to the fact. It was also stated that the ground now, compared with what it was when the crofters sat upon it, is comparatively useless; whereas if you turn to the valuation roll when the property was bought and the valuation roll as it now stands, it is now paying a taxation on several hundred pounds more. With regard to stating that the people are in poverty in this parish and badly off, for this part of it I can say there is no district in Scotland where any man who is able to work is better off with regard to wages; and I think even if Mr Macdonald was here, if he was jimp of milk at his birth, he would get more than he had then. I may say that, after Mrs Paterson got possession of the property, she rebuilt workmen's houses and slated them; whereas formerly the most of the houses were dry-stone houses with turf roofs—thatched roofs. And since the property came into the possession of the trustees by Government order we have been able to build a pier at an expense of £3000, and a roadway which has cost above £700. We have also opened up a freestone quarry, and are offering feus to the public; and if there is anything which the Commissioners can recommend that the trustees can carry out we shall only be too glad.

36492. You first stated that the people were not summarily removed. I did not understand the expression of the word summarily to mean that they were instantly removed, or at the end of forty days, but that they were removed altogether against their will; however, whatever meaning the expression has, I understand the people were allowed upwards of one year to prepare themselves for the removal?—Yes.

36493. How many persons were removed with this warning of one year—how many heads of families?—I cannot say. I take for granted that what they say is correct.

36494. Were you acquainted with the country at that time yourself?—No.

36495. Suppose there were about twenty heads of families, what was the object of this wholesale clearance of the people?—So far as I can understand it was a disadvantage to a sheep farm to have little bits of corn exposed where the sheep were all going round.

36496. Did it ever suggest itself to the minds of the managers or proprietors at that time that a fence might have been put up?—It might have been, but the buildings themselves were of so little value—none of those crofters' buildings were valued above £8 or £10.

36497. The reason of their removal was that their presence was inconvenient to the neighbouring sheep farmer?—Not only that, but they were not employing themselves in any occupation, such as fishing or that, to bring them in a livelihood.

36498. They were removed from their little farms in order that they might obtain profitable employment for themselves?—Those were not little farms, but crofts.

36499. What sort of average value do you suppose they were?—Between £3 and £4, I suppose, except one part of the property where there was a sort of club farm.

36500. Had they any hill pasture attached to them, those small crofts?—Not the small crofts. The club farm had the whole arable and hill ground too.

36501. You state that it was an erroneous statement to say they were removed without compensation, and the form of compensation which you

ARGYLL.
LOCHALINE.
William
Henderson
Hardie.

ARGYLL.

LOCHALINE.

William
Henderson
Hardie.

say was given to them was that their stock was taken over at a valuation?—I said that no compensation could be expected for the houses when they belonged to the proprietors.

36502. But you did state, as an advantage which was given to them, that their stock was taken over at a valuation?—The crofters had no stock except their cows.

36503. And it was taken over?—No, but I sold the sheep stock.

36504. But you do not state that as any form of compensation?—No.

36505. Had they liberty to sell the sheep stock in any form they pleased?—Yes.

36506. You said they had no claim of compensation on account of the houses, but you also said that they were bound to make good to the proprietor any depreciation in the value of the houses which might occur during their tenure; did they on leaving their houses pay to the proprietor any compensation for injury to their houses?—On looking over the comprisement book, I did not come upon any cases where the houses had been improved.

36507. I understood you to say that they were bound to pay the proprietor compensation for any depreciation of value the houses incurred while they were there?—Yes.

36508. Did they on leaving the place pay the proprietor any compensation on account of depreciation?—I say I did not see, in looking over the comprisement book, any improvement they made upon their houses.

36509. Did the proprietor build the houses originally?—The houses belonged to the proprietor. I cannot say how they were originally built.

36510. You do not know whether it was by the proprietor or tenant?—From any books I have seen that belonged to the former proprietor, I should say he gave money for them to build houses.

36511. But you did not find any evidence that the people who left paid the proprietor any indemnity or compensation for their own removal?—No.

36512. As I understand your statement, the people were removed for the benefit of the sheep farm, and you may say for the benefit of the estate?—And for the benefit of themselves.

36513. But the people were not made the judges of their own benefit?—They were not asked in the first place.

36514. What I want to arrive at is this, the people were virtually and substantially removed for the benefit of the estate, in order that this sheep farm, or some other part of the estate, might be more profitably administered and held; in removing the people did the proprietor, in consideration of their number and poverty, and the difficulty of obtaining other places, make them any allowance or gratuity?—Not to my knowledge.

36515. Do you know what became of them at all?—Some of them removed to Glasgow and other centres of industry, and some of them removed to the village here.

36516. You say the people were partly removed for their own benefit, in order that they might become more industrious, or have a profitable employment in the future, did the proprietor pursue these people with any care in order to assist them in their future amelioration?—I am not aware.

36517. Those that settled here in the village, how were they dealt with?—There was abundance of employment for them.

36518. What was the nature of the employment given them at that time?—I understand Mr Smith, Ardtornish, employed every man he could get in the neighbourhood.

36519. They were maintained by the assistance of a neighbouring pro-

proprietor?—They were getting work from him, if they did not get it upon the property.

36520. With reference to the peat, it is stated, I have no doubt correctly, that they were not prevented cutting peats, but prevented cutting sods and spoiling the surface of the ground; have the people now convenient access to the fuel here?—Yes, as much as they ever had.

36521. Do they make any payment, or do they cut them freely?—They make no payment, but there is very little peat used now.

36522. It is stated that workmen's houses have been rebuilt upon the place. We heard to-day something of the rents paid for houses here. What are these new houses which were rebuilt, do they belong to the class of thatched houses or are they slated?—These are not houses in the village, but houses used by shepherds and ploughman living on the property.

36523. The houses which have been rebuilt here were not rebuilt for the benefit of the class of persons evicted, but for the benefit of the dependants of the sheep farmers?—Yes.

36524. But there are a good number of cottages here, and some decent cottages; have they not been rebuilt of late years?—No, there has been no house built in the village for several years.

36525-6. Are you acquainted with the rents which are taken in the village here on the part of the proprietor or feuars?—From 25s. in the village, to £3, I think.

36527. A pretty good cottage with two rooms and closet we were told would be rented for about £3, that would be a superior class?—There is no superior class in the village.

36528. You mean there is no superior class of cottage in the village?—No.

36529. But if there is a good substantial house with two rooms and closet, compared with the cottages we have been in the habit of seeing, that might be called almost a superior house?—The most of the thatched houses in the village are just one apartment, and are rented at 25s. to 30s. a year.

36530. By one apartment do you mean really one room or a room divided by some sort of partition?—Just one room.

36531. Are there many families living in a house really of one room?—One family.

36532. But is it a common thing?—Yes.

36533. Without a loft over the room?—Without a loft.

36534. It was also stated to-day that there were in some houses single rooms let to families; are you aware of any house in which there is more than one family living in a room?—No; I know some of the villagers at present have lodgers.

36535. They take in lodgers?—Yes.

36536. Would they take in lodgers in a single room?—Yes.

36537. You mean that a family occupying a single room take in lodgers besides?—I believe some of them do.

36538. Have you any idea what they charge?—No, I never needed to inquire.

36539. These are not, I suppose, houses belonging to the estate?—Yes, but we have nothing to do with them doing that.

36540. Is there any supervision or estate regulation about taking in lodgers?—No.

36541. We heard to-day that as much as £3 was given per annum for a single room?—In one of the slated houses.

36542. But that was not stated to be on the estate?—The trustees bought it; it was in the market, and the trustees bought it.

ARGYLL.

LOCHALINE.

William
Henderson
Hardie.

- ARGYLL. 36543. Ana hold it?—Yes.
- LOCHALINE. 36544. Without any control as to the number of persons or families occupying it?—Yes.
- William 36545. Turning to a more agreeable subject; would you tell us about Henderson the pier which has been constructed at an expense of £3000? Constructed Hardie. by the proprietor?—Yes.
36546. And, with reference to the class of persons employed in building, it gave, I suppose, employment to the local people?—Yes.
36547. As well as to skilled labour?—Yes.
36548. With what view was this large outlay particularly made—what trade is it to serve?—It was a great disadvantage shipping the stock of this district. It had to be travelled to Corran.
36549. Then it has reference to general trade, export and import, not particularly to fishing?—There are no fishermen living here; the people never devoted any of their attention to fishing.
36550. There are charges taken at the pier?—Yes, by sanction of the Board of Trade.
36551. Is there any hope that there will be a remunerative return for this large outlay?—We look to that in the way of developing the estate, and if feus are taken up it will help to give a return for the money. The pier has been let for three years, and it gives about 2 per cent. of a return.
36552. And with the hope of a better return?—I should hope so.
36553. What is chiefly exported from here—did you say stock?—Stock and wool.
36554. Cattle?—Yes.
36555. And increasing?—Yes.
36556. You mentioned roads; have there been roads created in the vicinity and on the estate at the expense of the proprietor?—Yes, there was a road made to the pier at an expense of about £700.
36557. Available for the general use of the people?—Yes.
36558. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—You mentioned a comprisement book in which there was entered the value of the houses occupied by the crofters who were leaving?—Yes.
36559. Was that value entered in the view of giving them compensation if they improved their houses as well as of making them keep them up to the point?—Yes.
36560. Do you know if they ever got any compensation for improving their houses—do the books show it?—The books show that very rarely, if ever. I do not recollect of an addition to the value of a place which had been made during the holding—to the house; a few shillings generally for a broken window or injured door.
36561. Were the houses valued when the people went away?—Yes.
36562. And the value compared with the entries in the comprisement book?—Yes.
36563. Do you know how they stood?—The comprisement book was in the management of the former proprietor.
36564. And how did the valuations stand when the parties went away—were they less or more?—They averaged from £7 to £10.
36565. But compared with the entries in the comprisement book, did the valuations vary at all at the time when the people were removed?—I said they averaged from £7 to £10 in the comprisement book.
36566. Is that the old value taken over from the old proprietor or the entry made at the time of the removal?—The old proprietor.
36567. They were valued at the time of the people's removal again?—No such system was carried out by the present proprietor. But that was

ARGYLL.

LOCHALINE.

William
Henderson
Hardie.

to show that the houses entirely belonged to the proprietor, even in the time of the former proprietor. There is another thing I wish to state, that wherever there is labour required for a property, crofter labour is of less value than the labour of parties living solely by week's wages, for this reason, that at the time their services are of the most value to the employer they require to leave to go to attend to their own crofts; it makes an immense difference to an employer of labour that he can command the labour at the time when it is of most value for his purposes. And another thing, within the last twenty or thirty years there has been so much improvement made in working land with regard to even cutting hay or corn, or gathering it in, with horse rakes and so on, that the great advantage is to economise hand labour and make use of implements to lessen the cost as far as possible of working the land.

36568. *Professor Mackinnon.*—How long was the estate in the hands of the present family before these clearances were made?—It was bought in 1863, and they left in 1866.

36569. And even although the people remained on the estate, there was no work carried on by the proprietor at the time to occupy them?—I cannot speak of what work was carried on.

36570. Has your statement that the labour of a common labourer is of more value than the labour of a crofter, any point with reference to the administration of the estate?—I am stating what I find in my experience in working here and the labour I employ.

36571. I wanted to know whether it had reference to the past?—No.

36572. It did not enter as part of the theory of clearing the crofters out?—I am not concerned with that, and cannot state anything connected with it.

36573. But as matter of fact, there was little or no work to employ these men?—They could not have been in want of work, for there is no party who has lived in that village for, I may say, thirty years that ever needs to lose a day's work.

36574. From the proprietor of the estate?—Of this estate or the adjoining estate. You perhaps may not understand sufficiently that there are no houses except a few that were built by Mr Smith from which he could get his labour except from this side of the loch.

36575. The people who were removed from this estate, those of them that remained in this place,—was there after they were removed, in the years immediately succeeding, work provided for them on the estate itself?—I cannot state anything about that.

36576. Do you know the amount of work which was being carried on on the estate at the time?—I cannot say; I was not acquainted with the estate.

36577. So far as you know then, they might or might not be employed upon the estate?—They might.

36578. You stated that the places from which they were removed are paying hundreds of pounds of rent now more than they were before; are you able to give us the rents of the dispossessed crofters?—You will find it in the valuation roll for 1865.

36579. You are not able to give it?—I could get it from the valuation roll.

36580. And was it after making a comparison between that and the actual rent paid by this ground now that you made the statement?—Yes.

36581. It is paying now hundreds of pounds more?—Yes, about £300.

36582. Have you any idea of the rent paid before?—About £2130.

36583. And it is paying now £300 more?—Yes.

36584. That is 27 per cent. or so in seventeen years; do you think the

ARGYLL.

—
LOCHALINE.William
Henderson
Hardie.

rents of the large farms has not increased above 26 or 27 per cent?—Perhaps they may, and perhaps they have increased to an extent that they have not been paying the occupants, as I know has been too often the case within the last ten or twelve years.

36585. Do you think it would be unreasonable that, had the place been left under crofters for the last seventeen years, the £300 additional might not have been realised from them?—I cannot say what improvements they might have made upon it within that time that would have raised it. It is merely a supposition one could make.

36586. You have no idea of the amount of money spent upon the ground, with buildings and everything else, within the last seventeen years?—No.

36587. And you are not able to form an opinion whether, if the same amount of money was spent upon the ground, and if left in the hands of the crofters, it might not fairly have been expected to yield £300 more rent than seventeen years ago?—No, I cannot say. There is one thing I can say, the stock is of much more value now than it was then.

36588. Supposing that the same amount of money was spent upon it under a crofter population as was spent upon it within the last seventeen years, buildings, drains, and everything else, would it have been unreasonable to look for £300 of rise on a rent of £1100?—I cannot form an opinion upon that.

36589. What was your reason for saying that the ground now was worth £300 more?—The statement said that the ground was in a worse state now than then.

36590. You don't know the general rise of rent in that number of years?—No.

36591. Of the one-roomed houses in the village some belonged to the estate and some to feuars?—Yes.

36592. And houses of one apartment are let by the estate and by feuars?—Yes.

36593. And in some of those let by the estate, a family who has only one apartment is allowed to sublet to a lodger?—No restriction.

36594. Is there any great competition for those one-roomed houses when one of them becomes vacant?—I think there is a demand for rooms in a slated house much more than in a thatched house. Parties always ask whether they can get a room in a slated house.

36595. With respect to houses which the crofters possessed, you stated that in the comprisement book they were entered at from £7 to £10 when the estate was bought?—Yes.

36596. I suppose the estate was throughout in the hands of the proprietor between this time and the dispossession—that there was no change of tenant in any of these places?—I cannot say as to that.

36597. You don't know of a second value being put upon a house?—No.

36598. Was the tenant taken bound to keep up the house always?—Yes, he had to leave it in the same condition that he got it—pay the depreciation of it.

36599. Of that thatched house?—Yes.

36600. Built without lime?—I am talking about the things conducted by the former proprietor, not under the present management.

36601. But were these arrangements practicable?—Their houses are very difficult to keep up.

36602. Could a man keep up without depreciation a thatched house of dry stone walls?—It is quite possible to keep it up, if he bestowed enough of labour upon it.

36603. So that it would never grow old or fall?—Well, if he required wood for the support of it they would require to renew it.

36604. Would it not require sometimes to be rebuilt?—I never heard of them having been rebuilt.

36605. Perhaps because you had experience for only three years?—I never heard of them being rebuilt when in the hands of the former proprietor, and I have looked over the comprisement book for thirty or forty years.

36606. Do you think it would have been entered?—Yes, he was a very particular man—even a broken window was entered.

36607. *Mr Fraser-Macintosh.*—Would you tell us how long the estate is to remain in trust?—I think that is a question no person has anything to do with.

36608. My object is with regard to a resident proprietor; that is more advantageous than for it to be in the hand of trustees?—The proprietor is resident—the principal proprietrix is resident. We are managing the estate for the beneficiaries, and they live here.

36609. The proprietrix is living here?—One of the proprietresses.

36610. It does not appear who she is, that is why I ask?—The trustees are the proprietors.

36611. You do not feel at liberty to mention how long it will be under trust?—How can I tell the thing I don't know, and no one in the world knows? It depends upon contingencies.

36612. You have given us a full and frank statement about the estate so far as you know it; have you ever heard the statement made with regard to property, 'I can do what I like with my own'?—Yes, but I don't believe that.

36613. Have you heard the other statement that property has its duties as well as its rights?—Yes.

36614. And which of these do you go upon?—Property has its duties as well as its rights.

36615. I may take it for granted in this case that the rights of property were exercised when these people were put away?—Yes.

36616. Take the alternative now; what in the nature of duty was done by the estate for those people?—I tell you I can give no information about it further than I have done.

36617. Is there any use in beating about the bush; is it not the fact that those people were removed solely and entirely because they were in the way of sheep?—Certainly not.

36618. If not, what other reason was there?—It would have entailed very considerable expenditure upon the proprietor to have built houses and put up fencing to have carried out any system of farming.

36619. That is what I say, the people were in the way. The proprietrix did not choose to spend that money, and therefore they must go and make room for the sheep; is not that so?—I have given you all the facts I can.

36620. You stated, in answer to his Lordship in the chair, that it was to some extent for the benefit of the people themselves, that they might be more regular and more industrious in their work; might I ask you what particular occupation in the world was pointed at by those in charge of the estate at the time that those people should turn their attention to?—I cannot give you information that I do not possess myself.

36621. If the estate wished to benefit them and turn them into fishermen, did they provide them with any accommodation to pursue that calling, or did they give them anything to do whereby they could exist upon the estate?—I do not understand how you are continually putting questions to me which I cannot answer. I do not possess the information.

ARGYLL.

LOCHALINE.

William
Henderson
Hardie.

ARGYLL.

LOCHALINE.

William
Henderson
Hardie.

36622. I do not wish to press you unduly, but you yourself have volunteered to come forward and give explanations?—And I have given you all the explanations I possibly can.

36623. But I am afraid you must answer some questions. If you cannot answer them that is enough. Practically, was not the effect of the removal of those people off the estate to relieve the estate of their support and maintenance in all time coming?—It would not have been a burden upon the estate any more than upon the rest of the parish.

36624. Is that your answer to my question? If you find a person go on some years following a certain profession, the pursuit of agriculture in their own way, and you of a sudden put a stop to that which they have been accustomed to, what is the result with these people; can they at one moment turn their attention to another profession?—I was not aware those crofters had a profession.

36625. Had not they the profession of agriculture?—I was not aware they had land in their possession except a garden and a cow's grass. I don't know what profession you call that.

36626. They said themselves they were happy and contented with their lot and made a living?—They were always that, and yet periodically they were in great destitution, and every now and again, as Dr Macleod told me himself, subscriptions had to be got up to assist them.

36627. And that being the case, the estate thought the best thing for them would be to deprive them of what they had?—I cannot say what the proprietor then thought. I am merely giving you the information I have. I cannot state what the proprietor thought when I was not made aware of it.

36628. The rental of the estate has increased, has it not?—Yes.

36629. The people have been swept away, is that not so?—I hear.

36630. The people have been swept away?—There is some of them in existence yet; you have seen them.

36631. They have been swept off the estate?—There are some of them hailing from Lochaline village yet. You have had delegates here living in that village; they are there yet.

36632. Living in that village?—I don't know where you have swept them away to, but there are some of them there still.

36633. Was it for the benefit of the crofter people that the pier was built?—It is for the benefit of the whole district. It was urgently called for.

36634. By the owners of sheep and cattle?—By any party who had to land in a small boat.

36635. Was not it in reality just a mere pecuniary speculation for the estate; you thought you might get feus let, and draw dues?—If you think it a good speculation, 2 per cent. for some years, I don't know, but I believe that ultimately it will be advantageous both for the estate and district.

36636. Have you been getting any feus taken off?—Yes.

36637. What rate do you charge?—Various rates.

36638. Is it per acre or foot?—There is no sum stated; no hard and fast line.

36639. You have heard some of the delegates state that they would like to get some of the land back?—Every one does that.

36640. Have you thought of the propriety of indulging them in any way in that light?—So far as I have got the management of the property, I have to carry out the system that is being carried out.

36641. That is, matters must be carried out on the policy previously laid down?—I could not think of encumbering the estate by raising money

that might not prove remunerative, and for which trustees might be called in question. Trustees cannot act in the same way as an individual proprietor.

36642. That is exactly why I wanted to know how long the trust might subsist?—Well, if you or any other gentleman were to offer a good price for the property, we might bring the trust to a termination before long.

36643. It can be sold?—Yes.

36644. You stated you had some conversation with the late Dr Macleod, minister of the parish, in regard to the people?—Yes.

36645. How long is it since you have been resident here?—Two years; but I have been acquainted with the district for a good many years.

36646. Did Dr Macleod ever remonstrate or express any regret that the people generally in this parish had been removed?—All ministers must take an interest in keeping their flocks together.

36647. I am afraid the flocks you look after are not men?—I think I take as much interest in my workpeople as any farmer or proprietor has ever done.

36648. Are the quarries likely to give steady employment to the workpeople?—They certainly are, and I hope they will be developed and give employment to a great many more.

36649. How long are these open?—This season.

36650. Do they look as if they were to carry out well?—Yes; it is the best and only stone in the district.

ARGYLL.

LOCHALINE.

William
Henderson
Hardie.

JAMES THOMAS SHAW, Farmer, Barr, Mongastell (31)—examined.

36651. *The Chairman.*—Do you desire to make any statement with James Thomas Shaw. reference to anything that has passed here to-day?—I wish to make a statement with regard to the four crofters. I took them over along with the farm when I entered three years ago.

36652. Which crofters do you allude to?—The four crofters at Barr. This man Malcolm M'Lachlan who spoke to-day is not one of those crofters, and is not on the estate. He said I paid the crofters 2s. a day for their work. I give them that when they are working at home. I give them 2s. 6d. when they are away from home. He said they had two cows each and a stirk and calf. They have two stisks and two cows. He said I only give them fifty days' work. I cannot be quite sure how many days' work I give them, but I give them so much that some of my neighbours cannot get them; they are so much employed by me on the farm. He spoke about their houses. Their houses are good. They are small, but very well made, and they have two apartments in each.

36653. What is the distinction which you draw between employment at home at 2s. and employment away from home at 2s. 6d.?—When they get work close to their own houses, they can come home at night, and they get their 2s.

36654. And they get 2s. 6d. when they are obliged to pass the night away?—Yes.

36655. Where do they pass the night; at the farm houses?—Supposing I take them to another part of the farm, they have to get lodgings wherever they best can.

36656. The farm then is so large that they would not be able to walk home at night from some parts?—They would, but it would take them a considerable time.

ARGYLL. 36657. In fact, when they get 2s. 6d. a day do they work longer hours than when they get 2s.?—No, the same hours.

LOCHALINE. 36658. But only in consideration of having to provide lodgings they get James Thomas an additional sixpence. In giving these wages is that all the wage, or do Shaw. they get any food?—They do not get food.

36659. Am I to understand that for an able-bodied man at this time 2s. is the ordinary wage of this part of the country, or do they get less because they are living upon the farm?—They get the wages they were getting when I entered the farm, that was the agreement with them. I took them over on the same terms.

36660. How long is your lease?—Four years to run.

36661. But how long was it when you took it over?—Seven years.

36662. Then they made an engagement in fact that they were not to get any higher wages for seven years?—Yes.

36663. Is that disadvantage imposed on them perhaps considered in their rent; is their rent made easier in consideration of the fact that they bind themselves to labour without an increase for seven years—do they get any advantage in exchange for this disability?—No.

36664. I would ask you to consider; do you think it is quite right to bind working people over to abdicate all chance of an increase of wages for seven years?—There was no special bargain made with them as to charges, but that they were to be taken on by me on the same terms as I found them there.

36665. What is the rent that they pay?—£7.

36666. Are you bound in your lease not to exceed that rent, or is it open to you to deal with these people exactly as you like?—Exactly as I like.

36667. Are you bound towards them not to raise their rent above £7?—No.

36668. So they are bound towards you not to get any more wages, but you are not bound to them not to ask any more rent; I do not mean to say you would do it, but you have no obligation not to get any more rent?—No, I have no obligation.

36669. Are they bound in consideration of their position on the farm to give you any work at particular periods—harvest work?—There was no special bargain made as to that.

36670. But do you practically exact that description of work from them?—If they have no other work on hand, I expect them to attend at my work.

36671. At harvest, for instance?—Well, I have no crop to harves.

36672. The harvesting then of sheep—at clipping and smearing times—they would be expected to attend then?—Yes.

36673. Would they get extra wages then, or still 2s. and 2s. 6d.?—They would get food.

36674. Is it not rather the custom of the country at clipping and smearing times not only to give food but to give something additional in the way of wages?—If they work extra hours, not otherwise.

36675. If your people work extra hours you would give them additional wages?—I would.

36676. I want to understand exactly the terms on which those people are, as it were, turned over to you by the landlord; do you stand in the position of landlord in all respects to them, that you can raise their rent or remove them from the land?—I believe I do.

36677. But you have not done so?—I have not.

36678. Do you find you get on well with them—that they are contented?—Yes.

36679. Have they any unusual advantages which compensate them for those low wages by being on the farm or in connection with the farm?—
They have not to go away to other districts to seek for work.—
ARGYLL.
LOCHALINE.

36680. You give them very nearly constant employment?—I have James Thomas done so.

36681. Have you ever employed them because you did not like to see them unemployed—in order to keep them working?—I have employed them on one occasion rather than send for workmen to another district, for particular work I had to do on two occasions.

36682. Although you might perhaps have employed the other people more advantageously?—Yes.

36683. Have you employed them in surface drains?—Sheep, draining, and closed drains.

36684. Have they any sheep?—No.

36685. Do they ever, besides the cows that they regularly keep, ask for additional grazing from you?—One of them did.

36686. What is the price which you or any farmer would ask for the privilege of summer grazing for a cow, from a cottar or labourer?—It depends on the grazing that the cow or animal might be put on, whether low or high ground.

36687. We will suppose the cow went upon the high ground for summer grazing, what would the price be in this part of the country?—There has been no instance of that in my experience.

36688. Then upon the better pasture or low ground?—Nor upon the low ground either. This one cottar who had the one beast, I did not charge him anything.

36689. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—If these cottars of yours can find employment at 3s. a day here, would they be prohibited?—No.

36690. They might go if they liked?—Yes.

36691. They are not bound to work to you for 2s. if they can get better wages elsewhere?—No, except at clipping time.

36692. They are bound to work to you then?—Yes, and lambing time.

36693. *The Chairman.*—You have no power to call upon them to work for you whenever you like?—No.

36694. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Supposing the price of labour fell, do you feel you would be bound to give them the same wages all through your lease?—No, I would not consider I was.

36695. If you could get cheaper labour elsewhere?—Yes.

36696. Do you know why your sub-tenants did not come themselves today?—No. They were quite at liberty to come.

36697. Do you think they felt themselves at liberty to come?—I don't see why they should not.

36698. You are on perfectly good terms with them?—Yes, and always have been.

36699. What is the distance they would have had to come?—Thirteen or fourteen miles.

JOHN CAMERON, Schoolmaster, Lochaline (52)—examined.

36700. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—How long have you been here?—Eighteen years. John Cameron.

36701. You came as one of the General Assembly's teachers?—Yes.

36702. Has there been any difference in the population since then?—Yes.

- ARGYLL. 36703. In what respect?—The population is less now.
- LOCHALINE. 36704. Has that affected your labours as a schoolmaster?—Not so much now, because I am differently paid; I am better paid now than I was before, owing to the new Act. It did not affect my emoluments, but it affects the number.
- John Cameron. 36705. What used to be your attendance when you came first?—The first year I have seen a weekly attendance of ninety-two—that is the highest weekly average I ever had.
36706. And now?—Now the highest weekly average will be about thirty.
36707. And is that as good an attendance as can be expected under the regulations of the new Education Act?—Not quite so good.
36708. If all the children were attending, how many would you have?—Probably an average of twenty-seven on the year.
36709. But a weekly average?—Thirty-five or thirty-seven.
36710. Do you know exactly the decrease of the population since you came?—I could not exactly say.
36711. Have many families gone away since you came?—Yes.
36712. Did they go all at one time, or has it been gradual?—A good many went away at one time, as far as I recollect, and a number came to the village, and those who could not be accommodated there went somewhere else.
36713. How long ago was that—I suppose the removal we have heard of?—Yes.
36714. Did you know those people before they were removed?—No, it was the year before I came.
36715. What were their circumstances when they were removed to the village?—I could not say, they did not appear altogether empty; indeed most of them had a little money, so far as I could understand, arising from the sale of their cattle. And some were better off; they had larger farms which they had left—twenty-eight pounds.
36716. I suppose the village has increased in size since then?—There has not been a house built since that, so far as I recollect.
36717. And has the condition of the inhabitants of the village improved, or otherwise?—I cannot say what it was previous to that.
36718. But within the last eighteen years?—I cannot see any difference.
36719. You don't think they are in a worse position?—No, I don't.
36720. Do they all find employment?—Yes.
36721. We have been told that there is a number of families who occupy one room; was that the case when you came first?—I am not aware of it.
36722. Were you sufficiently cognizant of the way in which they lived at that time to be able to tell us how they lived?—I could not say there was any more than one family in one room.
36723. And now are there not a good many?—I cannot say there is more than one family in one room. There may be an exception; a young man may have married, and brought in his wife temporarily.
36724. I mean a whole family occupying one apartment; are not there many families in that condition?—A good many, I think.
36725. What is the cause that there are more in that position than there were when you came first; what has made it necessary?—Because the houses have been allowed to fall into disrepair. The roofs are off the old houses.
36726. What kind of houses are they?—The feuars' houses are fairly good; and those of the proprietor, the people have to make them decent themselves. They have to keep them up, I suppose, themselves.

36727. Are you personally acquainted with any of those in which a family occupies a single room?—Yes, I know a family or two who occupy one room. They have generally a room and a closet.

ARGYLL.
LOCHALINE.
John Cameron.

36728. Are there any vacant houses in the village?—With the exception of one, I think not.

36729. Why is that one vacant?—Because it could not be let.

36730. Do you know to whom it belongs?—Yes, it belongs to Mr M'Callum, writer, Tobermory.

36731. Is that the gentleman who appeared before us yesterday at Tobermory?—I don't know.

36732. Are there two writers of that name in Tobermory?—I don't know.

36733. What rent does he charge for the house?—I don't know; I know what he was asking.

36734. How much?—£4, 10s

36735. For one room and closet?—That is what I understand.

36736. Then even in Lochaline that is considered rather too high a rent?—Yes, it is.

36737. Do the children attend fairly well at your school?—Yes.

36738. Does the compulsory officer do his duty?—We have no compulsory officer.

36739. Is there a sanitary officer?—Yes.

36740. Does he do his duty?—So far as I know. That rests with the Board of Supervision.

36741. Do you know whether there has been any disease in the place arising from the people being crowded?—No. There was a case or two of measles lately.

36742. Does the School Board of the parish look after your school to your satisfaction?—Yes.

36743. Of whom does it consist?—Colonel Cheape, Mr Gordon, Captain Shaw, Mr Elliot, and Mr Robertson.

36744. Do any of them visit the school occasionally?—Sometimes.

36745. How many other schools are there in the parish?—Three.

36746. Are they all placed in the most convenient situations?—I think so.

36747. How many is your school fitted to accommodate?—Fifty.

36748. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—You stated there has been a decrease in the population in your time; do you know what the condition of the population is to-day, such as remain, compared with what it was when you came?—Of the population at that time, there are very few now living, with the exception of some labourers.

36749. But is there more or less poverty now than there used to be?—There are more paupers, I think.

36750. And those who are not paupers, are they better or worse fed and clothed than they used to be?—I think they are equally as well fed and better clothed. They may have been quite as substantial formerly, but they appear better clothed.

36751. And they are as well fed?—I think they are, so far as I am aware.

36752. How do you account for the increase in the number of paupers?—I admit that some of those poor people when they left their crofts were getting old and frail and a number of them came to the village, and they became objects of parochial relief.

36753. And you think, if they had retained their crofts, their friends might have supported them?—Possibly so.

36754. At this present moment you are passing through a phase of pauperism which will disappear after a time?—Very soon, I believe.

- ARGYLL. 36755. *Professor Mackinnon.*—What part of the country do you belong to?—To Ardgour.
- LOCHALINE. 36756. So you know the condition of life in Lochaber?—Yes.
- John Cameron. 36757. And you were for a while in Caithness?—Yes.
36758. Was there a crofting community in Berriedale?—Yes.
36759. Of the three districts where was the most comfortable and substantial set of people—crofters?—Ardgour in my time.
36760. The next?—I cannot speak as to the crofters here before I came. I know no crofters in the parish, and can't say.
36761. Do you anticipate a greater decrease in the population in Morven?—I hope not.
36762. You think it has reached a minimum?—I think it has taken a turn.
36763. And do you expect an increase?—I expect an increase on this particular estate.
36764. And that the progress will go on, and that the people will get better clad and fed in the future?—Yes, so far as labourers are concerned; I cannot speak as to crofters.
36765. It is as to the labourers you expect there will be an increase?—Yes.
36766. You expect there will be more work and an increase of labourers?—Exactly so.
36767. We have heard of labourers sometimes, when they had steady wages, saying that they preferred to be crofters, even when they would scarcely have the same steady employment; do you think that is the feeling of the labourers here?—I believe it is.
36768. To what do you attribute that feeling?—I cannot exactly say.
36769. But the feeling exists?—So far as I am able to judge myself.
36770. I suppose you would not care to give your own opinion as to the relative merits of the two, whether you would sympathise with the feeling of the man who would prefer to be a less opulent crofter rather than a better paid labourer?—I would not be inclined to do it.
36771. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You said just now there was a prospect of more labour being had here, and stated pay to labourers?—Yes.
36772. But is it not the fact that the class of paupers almost entirely springs from the labouring class when they got old?—I am not aware of that.
36773. What class do they generally come from, those on the roll?—I believe they come both from labourers and crofters.
36774. Do you know of any case of a crofter coming on the poors' roll who was allowed to retain his croft?—No, I cannot charge my memory at present with it.
36775. I quite admit there may be people, once crofters, now paupers?—That is what I meant.
- 36776.—As you have known the crofters in your early days in your own native district, and as you have known the family life of the labouring people here for the last twelve years or so, which would you consider the preferable condition of life in which to rear up a family?—I would like to know whether he was a crofter with four cows or one cow.
36777. Just as you know them?—Two cows then—I would prefer a crofter in my own day with two cows to a labourer of the present time.
36778. *The Chairman.*—You said you were satisfied with the management by the School Board—with your relations with the School Board; but you were asked a question whether the members of the School Board ever visited the school except on official occasions; did I understand you to say that they never looked in?—They might have come in, but they have never visited me by surprise or in that way.

36779. But have individual members of the School Board shown a kindly interest in the progress of the children?—Oh, yes, speaking to me they have done so.

ARGYLL
LOCHALINE

36780. But have they come in to hear the lessons while the children were being taught?—Not in my school.

John Cameron.

36781. And yours is a public elementary school?—Yes.

36782. Would you feel it an encouragement to you in your work if persons of superior station and official position occasionally looked in to see how you were getting on?—Not a bit.

36783. You don't want them?—No; I endeavour to do my duty conscientiously, and I do not care whether they come or not.

36784. Are there any prizes given in the school?—No.

36785. Nor is there any examination held excepting the examination of the Government inspector?—None whatever.

36786. Neither in secular instruction nor in religion?—Not now.

36787. Do you think it would be any advantage to the children that there should be prizes given and a kindly extra examination?—I certainly do think that prizes should be given.

36788. You would not object to the members of School Board and others coming in order to give prizes?—By no means, the oftener the better.

36789. Perhaps I may have conveyed an erroneous impression to you in a previous question; I did not mean to ask whether you wanted other persons to come in to see how your own teaching was conducted?—That was the impression it made upon me.

36790. I meant to convey the impression, to see how the children were getting on and to show a kindly interest in their progress?—Certainly I do not object to that.

36791. What you would object to would be a critical inspection of your own method?—Yes.

36792. You would have no objection if members of the School Board and others endeavoured to encourage the children by giving prizes?—Not the slightest.

36793. Do you think that would be agreeable to the parents of the children?—Certainly, that is my impression.

36794. Is it ever done in this part of the country?—It has not been done for the last ten or twelve years. It formerly was done when there was a Presbyterial examination.

36795. There was a more kindly interest taken in the schools in that direction?—Yes, every year.

36796. You are surrounded by proprietors here; do the proprietors not come in?—At last examination there was Mr Sellar, M.P. for Haddington.

36797. Last year?—Either last year or the year before. It was at the Government inspection he came.

JOSEPH CLEMENT GORDON, Drimnin—examined.

36798. *The Chairman.*—Do you wish to make any statement?—It was stated that the houses and improvements were not paid for when the tenants left, which is not correct, as I have documents in the house to prove that. I hold the receipts for the houses and improvements. They were all paid for. The houses were paid for when they left. There were three tenants, and all three were paid for their houses; and the improve-

Joseph Clement Gordon.

ARGYLL. ments were done by my mother's money. She borrowed money, and the people were paid wages for these improvements.

LOCHALINE. 36799. What was the name of the place?—The island of Oronsay. That is the only thing in the evidence I have to say anything against. They were paid for by Government money.

Joseph Clement Gordon. 36800. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—They were done by the tenants themselves, and paid for?—Yes.

[ADJOURNED.]

ARGYLL. LISMORE, ARGYLL, MONDAY, AUGUST 13, 1883.

LISMORE.

Present:—

Lord NAPIER and ETTRICK, K.T., *Chairman.*

Sir KENNETH S. MACKENZIE, Bart.

C. FRASER-MACKINTOSH, Esq., M.P.

Sheriff NICOLSON, LL.D.

Professor MACKINNON, M.A.

CONNELL CONNEL, Crofter, Balnagowan (77)—examined.

Connell Connell. 36801. *The Chairman.*—Have you been elected a delegate?—Yes.

36802. What do you wish to say on the part of your people?—That our land is too highly rented; and it has been increased of recent years on the property on which I live—that of Mr Fell. Our peats have become exhausted, and we are obliged to buy coals, which costs us £5 or £6 a year.

36803. How many holdings are there in the township?—Four.

36804. Has it always been a crofter township, or only recently established?—It has been there for a very long time; my father and grandfathers were crofters there before me.

36805. In those days were there more holdings or fewer than there are now?—There were neither more nor fewer—just the same as now; the township was divided into four parts.

36806. Since your grandfather's time has any of your land been taken away from the township for hill pasture or arable?—No, none.

36807. You complain of the high rent, and of the increase of rent: what was the rent when you began life?—When I first paid rent after my father, twenty-four years ago, the rent was £18, 19s.

36808. What rises of rent have occurred in your time?—There has been no increase in my time.

36809. What increases were there in your father's time?—I cannot tell what the increase of rent was in my father's time, but it was raised: There was a great deal of smuggling going on in the Highlands in those days, and barley brought a good price, and rents were increased in consequence, and they have not been taken down since.

36810. What stock do you keep?—Three cows and a horse, which I feed in winter, but have to send out to graze in summer.

36811. Have you any young cattle?—Two calves and a stirk.

36812. Any sheep?—Two sheep.

36813. And how many acres of cultivated ground?—It has never been

measured in my time ; but, so far as I know, there are twenty acres altogether, including pasture.

36814. How long is it since the peats failed ?—Thirty years at least.

36815. There has been no increase of rent in your time ; there has been no diminution of the area of your croft ; and the peats failed more than thirty years ago, and you have been sitting in the farm yourself more than twenty years. I fail to understand exactly what your complaint is ?—Our complaint is that we have to buy coals instead of the fuel we had formerly when we paid the same rent as now.

36816. Have you had a lease ?—No.

36817. During the twenty years that you have been paying rent yourself has the price of stock increased ?—The prices have gone up and down in that time.

36818. But with an inclination upwards ?—There were times when they fell as much as they rose.

36819. Has the proprietor done anything for the improvement of your house or farm offices—has he made any expenditure ?—No.

36820. By whom was the house built—your father ?—My father built it. At that time all the tenants built their own houses.

36821. Who is your proprietor ?—Mr Fell.

36822. When improvements are made in the houses does the proprietor make them ?—I don't know his practice, because as regards myself there have been no such improvements made.

36823. Have you ever applied for improvements to the proprietor ?—No.

36824. Has any draining been done upon your land ?—No ; it is not a place for draining—hard, rocky land.

36825. Is there any regulation on the estate providing for compensation for improvements ?—I believe that, where such improvements were made, the tenant paid the half ; but I cannot speak certainly, as I have made none myself.

36826. Have there been any arbitrary evictions or removals in your township or the townships round about in your recollection ?—There have been no evictions from any township, so far as I know. There are others who can tell better than I can as to other places with which I have no personal acquaintance. There has been nothing done in my time at this end of the island.

36827. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Has the proprietor ever offered you a lease ?—No.

36828. Have you ever applied to the proprietor for a reduction of rent ?—We have complained to the factor about it.

36829. How long since ?—We have never, until now, laid our heads together to do so ; but each of us has always complained for himself to the factor of the highness of the rent.

36830. Have you complained ever since you were in possession of the place twenty-four years ago ?—No.

36831. When did you begin to complain ?—Perhaps we complained every time that we paid the rent—complained that there was too much of it to pay.

36832. Have the four occupiers in this township any pasture land ?—No.

36833. Is your arable holding held in common, or does each crofter hold his own ?—Each has his own land surrounded by a dyke.

36834. You say you put your horse out to graze in the summer ; how much do you pay for it ?—About £2, 10s. for the half year.

36835. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You said you had about twenty acres

ARGYLL.

LISMORE.

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Connell.

ARGYLL. altogether; can you distinguish between the arable and the pasture?—It varies accordingly as the ground is suitable.

LISMORE. — 36836. May you, if you choose, turn over the whole of the twenty acres?—No.

Connell Connell. 36837. How much is arable?—I cannot give any estimate of the extent of it. There is a good deal of it quite unfit for cultivation, being very rocky.

36838. Is there half of it that cannot be turned over?—No, not quite so much.

36839. How much do you pay in a year for coals?—Sometimes more, sometimes less—about £4.

36840. Are you obliged to buy food during the year for any of your animals besides the horse?—No, my crop is for the feeding of the cattle in winter.

36841. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—What class of cattle do you keep?—Highland cattle. It is always Highland cattle we keep here, but not always the same as they used to be. If they were the same as they formerly were they would be of very little worth.

36842. You say the breed has improved?—Oh, yes; and I believe I may say they get fresh bulls every year.

36843. Do any of the larger farmers keep improved stock—shorthorn crosses?—I don't know that any of them keep any other stock but Highland, and they are good cattle.

36844. What is the selling price of a stirk this year?—I don't know until I see it.

36845. Is your own condition as good as it was in the time of your father and grandfather?—Scarcely.

36846. How were they better before?—I was young then, and the world was not giving me so much care, and therefore I lived better.

36847. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—What would you consider to be a fair rent?—If the price of the coals were deducted from the rent I would be content. We use between seven and eight tons of coal in the year, and, when the price varies from 15s. to 18s. a ton, it comes heavy upon us.

DUNCAN M'DONALD, Crofter, Port Ramsay (73)—examined.

Duncan M'Donald 36848. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—By whom were you chosen to come here?—They wanted me to speak with respect to the estate—that portion of it upon the south end of the island under the Duke of Argyll, and held by one farmer.

36849. Whom do you mean by 'they'?—My own choice. I have seen three lairds on that estate. When I was a young man there was a laird who was an object of praise for his conduct towards his tenantry and the poor. When that man died the estate was bought by another who promised well, but he remained a good proprietor only a very short time. He deprived us of our peat ground. Then, it appeared, it was his intention to put stock of his own upon the whole estate. The property consisted of six or seven townships. There have been over 400 or 500 souls there; and over the whole tract now there are only three shepherds and a manager. He exacted some conditions—I do not know properly what they were—from his tenantry. There was a field of ryegrass, green, and he was sending us away one after the other, and he himself gathering stock which he placed upon every place as it became vacant. I don't know for how many years he insisted upon grass being

in those places, instead of its being arable land. When he got the whole place under grass instead of under crops, then he stocked it all, and the people were all away by that time. Those who had the means to take them to America went there, and some went to the large towns. The poorest became labourers to him at 1s. a day for the men, and 6d. for the women, and they were paid each Saturday by a sort of meal. If they would not go to work for him on these terms, he threatened to pull down the houses of the poor people about their ears. I didn't mean a different quality of meal when I said 'a sort of meal.' It was oatmeal; only one year, when there was a want of oatmeal, he got barley meal and ground it down.

36850. What year was that?—About thirty or thirty-two years ago.

36851. Was that the time of the potato disease?—Yes. I have seen some of these people who formerly had crops and cattle, and butter and cheese, and milk afterwards, in those years, going with their barley scone to a good well which was beside us when we were building, and take their meal—barley and water—and it grieved me sorely. My father and brother and myself were boat builders—building boats for those who required them, bringing sea-ware ashore, and other things. We built boats for the district round about. Latterly, nobody upon the estate required a boat.

36852. Was the scarcity in any degree due to the failure of the potatoes?—Yes, to a certain extent, but not the whole extent. I have seen a great quantity of potatoes exported from this place when people were here. I have seen 120 tons sent out two of the townships in one year to Liverpool, and leaving a sufficient amount for the people of the place.

36853. Was that before the potato disease?—Yes.

36854. Who were your proprietors?—The first proprietor that I remember was the one who was so good to his tenantry—David Campbell. They called him Combie. The next who came was Cheyne, from Fife-shire. He died leaving the place all under stock of his own. The property was in the possession of Mrs Cheyne for several years after her husband's death, but after his death a tacksman named Stewart got the place. At the death of Mrs Cheyne the property was bought by the Duke of Argyll. The present tacksman is Mr Paterson. Since the Duke bought the property it has always been under one tacksman.

36855. Is the whole of the Duke's property in Lismore now in the hands of one tacksman?—There would be one-half of the township or so in the hands of three or four crofters at one time; afterwards the whole estate was under one farmer.

36856. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—What was the name of the town you were in yourself?—Kilchairan village.

36857. Can you give the names of the different towns that were cleared?—Yes; Run-na-fiart—or I might call the first two townships Run-na-fiart and Fiart itself; Achananad, Balagrundle, Creaganach, Gortcharrain, Achanaacroigh—but I think that last place has still people on the one-half of it; and Killeen.

36858. Did Mr Cheyne raise the rents before he turned the people out?—I cannot say. It was this stocking of the land which was laid out in grass that was injuring us.

36859. He compelled you to leave out a certain quantity in grass and put stock on it, and thereby impoverished you?—He compelled us to leave out a certain portion of the croft in grass each year. He himself put stock upon it, and so the arable ground of our croft was continually

ARGYLL

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LISMORE

Duncan
M'Donald.

ARGYLL. reduced, and then he sent us away. I am not aware that he raised the rent.

LISMORE. 36860. Did that action tend to impoverish you so that thereby you had to part with your stock?—There is the marrow of the whole matter. We had about that time four sheep, and under one of the conditions we were deprived of them; and then we were not allowed to keep a pig, and things of that kind which contributed to pay our rents.

36861. Was that the policy pursued by Mr Cheyne—first to impoverish the people, and then to turn them out on the world?—That was it.

36862. Is it the present Duke of Argyll who bought it back?—It was the present Duke. I have nothing to say with respect to him. The administration of the property remains as it was when he got it; he has done a good turn to us on our isle here—he has built a pier.

36863. Are you aware that this place at one time belonged to the Duke's family?—I never heard.

36864. At the time when the Duke purchased the property did you, or the other people, make any application to be restored to your old places?—No, I could not stand the place; I had to flee away from it. I was not sent off, I had to flee away. The very customers to whom we supplied boats were not allowed to come and purchase boats from us. I made no application anyhow. It is about twenty-eight years since I left the place.

36865. Are you aware that any other person who might have wished to remain in Lismore tried to get back?—I am not aware. There was a man appointed to come forward—a Mr Black from Oban—but he has not come, else he might have spoken on the matter. He and Mr Cheyne were at law for about two years in respect to his own place. Whatever his rights might have been, he was endeavouring to assert them. The people of the place used to say that if he had been as wealthy as Mr Cheyne was, he would be put out.

36866. Did Mr Cheyne's action give a great blow to the population, from which they have never recovered?—I can say those magnificent dales, once cultivated, are now being covered over with useless weeds and moss, as if the land itself were to say, 'I shall return to my original 'state.'

36867. Were there any other cases of a similar kind, although not of such magnitude?—No.

36868. *The Chairman.*—You mentioned the names of a number of townships that have been cleared in Mr Cheyne's time. Can you give us any idea of the number of families there were in them at the time?—I might give a pretty close guess. The place was allotted out into crofts of such a size that each tenant kept four milk cows—six and eight was the average. In addition to this stock that I mentioned, Mr Campbell, the good proprietor, allotted out parks in certain districts, where the tenants were allowed to keep young stock and farrow cows, and they might have perhaps six queys there, some stirk, and a horse or two, and a place to summer and winter them. They were in the habit of preserving one-fourth of the place during the whole three months of autumn without pasturing upon it at all, so that it would afford good pasture ground in winter. And this good proprietor, again, sent a fresh bull every second year to these tenantry, and improved the stock, so that it can be seen to the present day. The stock were so improved that the cattle dealers, as they came down, specially fancied the cattle of these townships.

36869. Did Mr Cheyne's clearances begin before the potato famine?—Yes.

36870. Are there any crofts left upon the Duke's estate now?

How many crofts are there in Achnacroish?—There is the one-half of Achnacroish and also Killean in the hands of small tenants. I cannot say how many there are in Killean. Some of the crofts have been made larger upon these places.

36871. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Did Mr Cheyne give you the grass seed to lay down in pasture, or did you buy the grass seed for yourselves? —I believe he commenced by giving them the seed grass. He gave them seed grass in the first years whatever, so far as I can remember.

36872. Did he pay you or make any allowance to you in your rent for the sheep he grazed upon your grass?—Well, you know he was sending them away, and then he was putting stock upon the ground.

36873. Do you know how long it is since he first began to send them away?—It is my opinion he began to send some of them away before the potato disease, but I cannot speak with certainty. I believe the clearing was going on thirty years ago.

36874-5. *The Chairman.*—When Mr Cheyne grazed his stock upon the ground which he had made them turn into pasture, did he graze his stock on their pasture the whole year, or for only part of a year?—It was left under grass for two or three grass crops, which were taken off it. It was cut, and I believe these belonged to the tenants; but it was after that that it was thrown out into pasture, and he was putting stock upon it, as he was bringing the stock into the country.

ALEXANDER BUCHANAN, Labourer, Killean (60)—examined.

36876. *The Chairman.*—You wish to make an explanation?—The last witness did not explain exactly about the grass. When Mr Cheyne commenced to remove the tenants, he made them lay out a piece of arable land for a year under grass, what the tenant should have had under cultivation; and he made the tenant sow this piece every year with rye grass; and after he got the whole arable land under rye grass he sent the tenant about his business, and took all to himself for stock. That was the reason for his making them sow it under grass, that he might send the tenant about his business and take the croft to himself; and he did so until he had the whole estate cleared except a part of Achnacroish and Killean.

Alexander Buchanan.

36877. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Did he make them also pay the full rent?—Yes, the full rent.

36878. *The Chairman.*—Did the tenants get a crop of hay?—I cannot say for that.

36879. He made the tenants prepare the ground for the sheep farm?—Yes, and sow it down with grass.

36880. And then sent them away?—Yes, one by one, until he had the whole estate to himself.

36881. Did he begin this process before the potato famine?—I believe he did. I think the potato disease commenced about 1848 or 1849.

36882. 1846, was it not?—There might have been symptoms of it then.

36883. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Are you one of the tenants?—No; I am on the estate of Captain Campbell.

36884. *The Chairman.*—Where did Mr Cheyne come from?—Fife-shire, I think. He was an advocate. He had Woodcockdale, in Linlithgowshire, I think, and another estate in Fife-shire.

36885. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You were never upon his land?—No, but I recollect it.

ARGYLL

LISMORE

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ARGYLL.

LISMORE.

Alexander Buchanan.

36886. Do you recollect what he did creating a great deal of sensation at the time?—Yes, when I was young the population in Lismore was 1800. The parish schoolmaster we had told me, a year or two before he died, that when he came to Lismore the population was, I think, 1650, and now it is not much more than 637.

36887. That would be in 1821?—I think 1816.

36888. *Professor Mackinnon.*—He would have come in 1816, but the first census would be in 1821?—Perhaps so.

36889. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Is Lismore as fertile as it was?—Equally as fertile, to give it justice, as it ought to get.

36890. Do you know whether any of those who were dispossessed ever represented the propriety of repopulating a part of the estate?—It would be of no use, because the present tenant—Mr Paterson—has a lease, and during his lease the Duke would not do that.

36891. Has it been under the same family ever since the Duke got it?—Yes. There was one Mr Stewart, at one time a Dumfries farmer, but it is since Mr Paterson took it that the Duke of Argyll bought the estate. Mrs Cheyne had the estate for a good number of years, and then it was bought by the Duke of Argyll.

36892. When did the Duke buy it?—Not many years ago. I don't know the exact number, perhaps seven or eight.

36893. Has the Duke ever visited the estate?—Often; once every year almost, although he has not been here this year yet.

36894. Has he shown any attention or kindness to the crofters who remained?—Well, he does not encourage great improvements, so far as I know.

36895. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Are you able to say how many years were allowed the tenant in Mr Cheyne's time to convert his croft from an arable croft suitable for himself to a grazing croft suitable for Mr Cheyne?—Maybe two years, until he got the ground in order for himself.

36896. Was the preparation going on at the tenant's expense?—At the tenant's expense.

36897. For the good of Mr Cheyne?—Yes, and sometimes he sent the tenant away and took hold of everything. I had an uncle who had a croft, and he might be £10 or £15 in arrears. He was getting old and of a religious disposition, and Mr Cheyne was always bothering him for arrears, and he sent horses and cattle to Mr Cheyne, and he never got a farthing back, although they would have brought a good deal more than the amount of his debt.

36898. Was it a general rule that Mr Cheyne himself took the stock of those who went away?—I could not say; but he took the stock of those who were in arrears.

36899. And those who were not in arrear he allowed to make market where they could?—Yes, I believe so.

36900. Are any of those who were on that estate still in Lismore?—Yes, but I cannot say whether any one of them is to speak to-day. Some may have gone to America, but not very many, I think.

36901. Do their relatives at home ever hear how they are prospering?—They are doing pretty well, I believe.

36902. And what became of those who went to the large towns?—They are working away as best they can—some of them doing well, and some indifferently.

36903. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Are there any crofters on the place where you live?—Yes, there are a number of crofts in Killean on the Duke's estate. I had a croft in Ballyveolan, with my brother, but I am not in it now.

36904. Did you give it up willingly?—I cannot say. I was in a manner forced to give it up, because I was an old bachelor, like a great many others; I don't know whether you are one or not. There was a disagreement in the family, and the factor was helping me. The factors are the greatest evil in this country—our landlord we seldom see—although he is a fine man, Captain Campbell. But we have a bad law in Lismore with regard to crofts. A poor tenant has here to build his own house and paper it, and do everything, and he may be removed next year, because there is no lease; we are all tenants at will. For instance, I built a new house, byre, and everything, and perhaps I would get a few cabers to put upon it; the next year, if I had to leave the house, people would be sent to see what it was worth, and I would have to pay the difference and march; and dykes the same way.

36905. You are referring to the Ballyveolan estate?—Yes, and that of almost every other proprietor in Lismore in my young days. I don't know exactly how they are now.

36906. What is your occupation now?—Labourer.

36907. Where do you work?—With Mr M'Intyre, the lime merchant.

36908. Constantly?—Yes, I am happy to say, constantly.

36909. *The Chairman.*—Does he give you good wages?—Pretty good, as good as what are going in the country, and I am willing to have it as it is. Work is not easy to get in this island.

36910. Do you work by the piece?—No, so much a week, a day, or year.

36911. What are the current wages at this place?—About 18s. or £1 a week, less or more.

36912. Would it be possible to give work by the piece, or would the nature of the work not allow it?—Sometimes they did work by the piece in the quarry where I am, but not now. The people are as well off working by time as on piece work. I believe they are as happy, and it is as good as if we were on piece work.

36913. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Is 18s. quarrier's wages or that of labourers?—That is the wages here, and it is more in some places.

36914. Is 18s. the ordinary wages for general work?—Farm labourers don't work by the day or week. I don't know how much the farmers give the labourers; but when I had a farm I used to give 2s. 6d. or 3s. a day for their services during harvest; I never employed labourers at any other time of the year.

36915. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Have you a house of your own?—I am in lodgings.

36916. That is because you don't marry?—Yes, it is my own fault.

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DUGALD CARMICHAEL, Labourer, Balamaillachean (34)—examined.

36917. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—How many crofters do you represent?—I only came into the place at last term; we were put out of the place in which we were.

36918. How many people chose you to come here to-day?—I was chosen at a general meeting here to speak with respect to the condition of the whole place.

36919. What special means had you of becoming acquainted with the condition of the people?—I am the son of a tenant, and I have been at tenant's work all along, and I am able to speak of that ever since I remember.

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LISMORE.Dugald
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36920. Was your father removed from one place to another?—No; my father was forty-six years in the place, and he died; but my mother was evicted from the place at the last term.

36921. Where was your father?—Park.

36922. And your mother?—The same place.

36923. And she was evicted at last term by whom?—Mr Fell.

36924. Why—because she was a widow?—Yes, she is a widow.

36925. But was it because she is a widow that she was sent away?—I am not aware of any other reason; there were no arrears.

36926. Is that a regulation of the estate?—Yes, it is; this year at any rate. None of the widows this year or last year, after they were removed, got a house upon the estate of Mr Fell.

36927. Has that been a practice in this island?—No, it was not the practice; and others who built their own houses—the whole of them—the regulation has been made that unless you pay so much for them, you will be turned out, although you might not have any means whatever,—the worth of a hen.

36928. What have they to pay the money for?—For the houses.

36929. Do you mean rent?—Yes.

36930. How much have they to pay?—According as they think the tenant is able to pay—some 5s., some more; you could not expect a poor woman to be able to pay very high rent. But although she might have to beg for it, pay it she must, or go she must.

36931. When did your father die?—About four years ago.

36932. And how long was your mother left in the croft?—Four years after his death.

36933. And was there any reason given for evicting her at the end of four years?—Not so far as I know; I didn't hear any reason given.

36934. Were you able to work the croft for her?—Yes, and I am working at the corn there yet. We have potatoes and corn in our own hands yet, and I am lodging here.

36935. And have you got any other croft?—My brother has got another one, but I have not.

36936. Have any other people been treated in the same way in the same place where you lived?—Yes, there was another widow treated in the very same way this year.

36937. How long was she left in possession before she was evicted?—She was only one year in possession during her widowhood.

36938. Where does the proprietor live?—Carlisle.

36939. He is a clergyman, is he not?—Yes.

36940. Of the Church of England?—Yes.

36941. What else have you to tell?—The first thing which I have been requested by the people to state is, that there are three fresh water lochs in Lismore, and there was a mill upon each. Now, fifty years ago, these three mills were in working order, and each of them ground three times as much as the one mill now grinds for the whole place. There is only one mill now. Now, since place was added to place, and since the holdings were taken from the people, there is only room for shepherds to work; there is no farm work going on in the place for young men.

36942. Did you hear the last witness tell how he got good wages?—It is very good for the man who is able to get that work, but it is only one in twenty who gets that kind of work. This kind of work commenced since I remember first when Mr Fell got possession of the property. He ejected a widow who was in possession of the mill at the time—that is the mill which is now in working order—some ten years ago, and she would not get a house upon the estate when she left. Again, there were three

tenants in that same place called Firefour. These three were sent away, and they would not get a place upon the estate; it was made into one lot and given to a farmer—a tenant. The reason given for clearing these townships was that there was fever in the place, and one family got their death in consequence of the fever, and then the other two were turned away; and the place was offered to that other tenant at a reduction of some £7 or £8 last year. He would not take it at that reduction, and it was he who came and got my mother's holding. There is another township beside that again called Balucrachdagh. The tenant in one of these lots died last winter, and the widow was ejected at the term, and she has not a house upon the estate yet. This is the widow whom I mentioned formerly. She was not in arrears of rent, and she had a family who could keep up the place, just as our family could have done my mother's place. Then the people specially complain of their bad houses. With respect to the houses, if the proprietor expended any money upon them, interest was laid upon this outlay, which would virtually become an increase of rent, for it never was taken off. Then, if the tenant himself expended anything on it he did it at his own expense, and was not to get any compensation for it; rather the other way, for if the house had deteriorated meanwhile he had to pay the difference.

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36943. Has the landlord given any assistance to people in building houses at all?—In some cases he has provided half the expense and the tenant the other half; but, when the tenant removes, he gets nothing for the other half—the property becomes entirely the landlord's. We have had frightful storms here for the last two or three years, which injured the crofts of the tenants very much in this district, especially upon this estate of Mr Fell. Some of the tenants down by the sea-shore had the potatoes taken out of their very beds by the sea. Mr Fell gave a little reduction upon the rent; and one man who was not able to pay the rent for that year, the full rent was charged against him without any abatement being made, and interest as well. Then, upon the last place, my father built a slated house. The proprietor paid half of the expense and we paid half the insurance money, the proprietor paying the other half. I expected some indemnity when we left for this half. We also built a barn last year, and the proprietor provided a roof. We ourselves did the mason work and added £7 more, and the proprietor did the rest. Now, instead of getting any indemnity at all for our outlay on this building, the proprietor is going to insist upon a valuation of the buildings, and make us pay the difference between their present value and their value when put up. Now, when my father entered upon that croft, there was no grass seed sown. It was a soft place, and there were peats there, and the whole estate had the right to cut peats there—so much had ground for every cow. My father began to drain this place, and the people who were cutting peats there were obliged to cease cutting them. Some of the place is still undrained bog, as any passing man can see. Now, my father entered upon a lease, and I asked that I should get the lease, in order to see that the terms of the lease were adhered to when I was leaving the place, and I was told that the lease was lost; that it was not to be found.

36944. Who told you that?—Mr M'Intyre, the ground officer. There was no copy made of the lease.

36945. What was the extent of the lease?—The first lease was for nineteen years, and that lease was drawn out in form, and at the expiry of the lease there was only a written agreement between the proprietor and my father that the tenure was in terms of the previous lease. I believe that the second lease was only for eleven years.

- ARGYLL.** 36946. Were there four years of that lease to run when your father died?—No; two years.
- LISMORE.** 36947. So your mother was left two years beyond the term of the lease?—Yes.
- Dugald Carmichael.** 36948. Was there no change in the agreement made for these two years?—No. Now, about nineteen years ago, when Mr Gregorson was factor, he made certain laws in Oban, and he sent two factors round here with them, stating that any person who would not submit to these statutes would get notice to quit.
36949. Were those rules printed?—Yes, they were printed, and the people were signing them; but there were no copies left with the people. One of the conditions of these rules or statutes was that the cultivation was to proceed by rotation—oats, potatoes, oats, ryegrass, pasture; and if we brought in any new ground we were only allowed to take one crop of oats off it. Now, this is one of the chief grievances that the people here have, that they are not allowed to take two oat crops off such a piece of ground, because they are not near enough to the market town to sell their corn and live chiefly by their stock.
36950. What was the extent of your father's croft?—I could not say; I think about one hundred acres.
36951. What rent did he pay?—£100.
36952. That is not a croft, but a farm. At one time there were three crofts in it. After my father's lease was out it was raised to £100, the very man who has it now having competed for it and raised the rent; but it was reduced to £90, because the house was built upon it, £10 being taken off in consequence. The ground was cultivated at that time without any grass seed; there was no grass when we went in; and under this new regulation they would not allow us—the factor and proprietor brought an interdict in Edinburgh to prevent us—to plough any more than a certain amount, the rest to be left out in grass. We were not allowed to sow under oats, except a certain amount, which was measured out to us, and where there had been one crop of oats before we were obliged to plant the place with potatoes or leave it vacant, and, as everybody knows, potato seed was very scarce last year. My grievance is that I was not allowed to sow more oats; and I would have planted more potatoes if I had had more seed.
36953. But your grievance is not that of a crofter, but that of a farmer?—Yes.
36954. Was it in your father's time that what had formerly been three crofts was made into a farm?—No; a tenant had it before my father. Then we asked the laird if he would give us one of the places that had become vacant if he should remove us out of the place, and he did not give us any of them, nor would he give us any reason why. He did not tell us if he had anything against us.
36955. Why did the crofters choose you to represent them when you are not a crofter?—I am just looking out for a croft and a wife at the same time.
36956. I suppose the reason why they chose you was that your mother had been evicted although not from a croft, and that you were able to state their views to their satisfaction?—I could not say, but I was appointed in the meeting. The chief grievance that the people who elected me impressed me with was, that they are made to pay interest for any outlay by the proprietors in improving their houses. This increases their rent, and makes it impossible for them to keep by their holdings; for the rent is getting dearer and dearer, and never getting cheaper.

36957. *The Chairman.*—Do I understand you rightly when you state that if a tenant or crofter builds a house and offices himself, and the proprietor contributes nothing, and the crofter goes away, he has to pay the proprietor for any depreciation in the value of the buildings as assessed?—I answer yes to the general question; but I know of no case where the total outlay was made by the tenant. It is in the case of a divided outlay that the complaint is—where the proprietor provides about half, and the tenant by labour or outlay the other half; and the complaint is that when the tenant is being removed a valuation is made upon the whole property, and the tenant pays for any depreciation.

36958. Both upon the proprietor's share and his own?—Upon the whole property.

36959. And if during the course of occupation the tenant improves the quality and condition of the buildings does the proprietor compensate him?—No, that is not the way we proceed. The mode of procedure is this: the factor comes round once a year or every six months, and he sees something needing improvement in the buildings, and he sends a person from Oban to make the repairs, and charges me with these when I am paying my rent, say, at the next term, and then at the end of the tenancy a valuation is made, and I am made to pay the difference in value between the property at the beginning and at the end of my tenancy.

36960. But if the difference is for the better and not for the worse?—I have not seen a case where that would hold. We built our own barn only last year, and we are asked to pay 10s. for deterioration in the twelvemonth.

DUGALD BUCHANAN, Quarryman, Balnagowan (50)—examined.

36961. *The Chairman.*—Are you a delegate?—I am not a delegate appointed by other people. I wish to come and state my own case about how I was dealt with long ago. But those who ill-treated me are all dead, and I don't know whether you will allow me to proceed with my case.

36962. Oh, yes; proceed.—I fell into some arrears about eighteen years ago, and the factor deprived me of my holding.

36963. What estate were you on?—It was upon Mr Fell's estate that this occurred, just about the time he entered upon possession. I believe the actual perpetrator of the deed was Mr Haig. The factor came and asked me for my arrears, and I told him I could not pay them at the time, but if he would give me some assistance in fencing at the back of the croft, I would endeavour to pay them as soon as I could. My horse, unfortunately, failed at the time, and was worth nothing at all; and I believe that was the reason why the factor had no patience with me in my arrears. Then, immediately after I was dispossessed, he wanted to fence all round to make it a grazing park for sheep. The laird had to bear plenty of expense on that account. The laird sent from Oban for me, and the ground officer and myself went across. The proprietor made me sign a paper to arrange matters with the ground officer in order to save expense, and I did so in the expectation that anything that remained over after the arrears were paid should come to myself. Well, the stock was rouped first. Of course, the horse counted for nothing; but I gave a bill of sale over to the factor. Then the crops were rouped, and I never got an account from the factor or proprietor with respect to

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LISMORE.Dugald
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this sale, nor do I know, to the present day, whether the proceeds of the stock and crop were able to pay the arrears, or whether there was a balance over.

36964. What was the amount of the arrears?—My grandfathers were in the place, and my father had been there forty years, and I was there for seven years after that, and the arrears altogether amounted to £13, 6s. 6d. Then, of course, there was the whole expense of valuation and additional expenses. There was the half-year's rent due at Whitsunday, which made £12, 5s. more.

36965. How many beasts were sold?—Three cows and two queys, that was all the stock; then the crops were selling cheaply in that year. During the whole time of my own and my father's tenancy the laird had no outlay whatever upon fences or buildings; everything that was done was done at our own expense.

36966. What would you consider the value of your crop in that cheap year?—The value was about £26.

36967. Do you know what the cattle sold for?—The first roup came to about forty guineas, and the second to £26.

36968. And do you state positively you never got a farthing?—Well, I got £2 twice. I had to support my family; and I would go over to the factor, and he would be busy, and would ask me to come another day; but although I should be going every day, I don't think I would get anything more.

36969. What was the name of this factor?—Mr Gregorson. I had neighbours who were treated in the same way; but they are not living now. I think the previous delegate spoke about that.

36970. Do you mean that the people were sold out by the factor, and that no account was ever rendered, and no balance paid?—We did not get justice at any rate; we were swept away out of the place. There was an epidemic or fever at the time; but I cannot state the actual facts with respect to any person but myself. I repeat distinctly that I never got an account from the factor of the proceeds of the sale of my stock and crops. I don't know that I would even have got a house had it not been for a kind-hearted tenant who came into my place. It was he who provided a house for my mother and myself, so that it cannot be said that I was indebted to the proprietor even for a house.

36971. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Although that has occurred so many years ago, do you still feel so strongly the injustice committed upon you that you have felt it incumbent upon you to come and make this public statement to-day?—Yes, I thought it was my duty when the like of you were appointed to hear such cases.

36972. *The Chairman.*—What was done with the land that was taken from you?—It was given to the Mr M'Call who had the township of Fire-four. It was then given to another M'Call, and it is now given to the farm connected with the mill.

36973. Was it given to enlarge another croft or to a separate crofter in the first instance?—It was added to the neighbouring township. Mr M'Call, who got it, did not ask or seek my place.

36974. It now forms part of the farm attached to the mill—is that a large farm?—No, it forms only about two crofts—mine and another of much the same size and rent.

36975. What was the rent of your croft before you lost it?—It was a dear rent, £24, 10s.

36976. Have you now regular employment in the quarry?—Yes, I have been working with father and son for the last eighteen years in steady employment.

36977. Can you work in the quarry in all seasons, or are you prevented by bad weather sometimes?—No, we can work only when the weather is good.

36978. Are you able to work during the frost in winter?—Yes, unless there is ice—if it is only dry frost; but if it is slippery, we cannot.

36979. Have the wages increased since you went to work in the quarry?—I worked at first by day's work, and now I work by day's wage, and I cannot compare them.

36980. How much were you able to make by day's work?—Our wages now are 18s.; under the former arrangement it was once better, twice worse. When I lost the land it was but a poor time—times were bad—and if Mr M'Intyre had not given me work I might have starved altogether; but now work is more common.

36981. If you worked now by day's work would you be able to earn more than by day's wages?—Well, I believe I like, upon the whole, the day's wage as well.

ARGYLL.

LISMORE.

Dugald

Buchanan.

ALEXANDER M'COLL, Farmer, Park (39)—examined.

36982. *The Chairman.*—There is something in the statement of thecrofters which you wish to remark upon?—The former witness accuses me of being the means of putting the farm of Park up in rent, which I wish to say is a mistake.

Alexander
M'Coll.

36983. Did you ever bid for a farm?—No, the farm was open in February and March last, and there were different offers besides mine, and I was told by the proprietor there were higher offers than mine. But this was four years ago. He accused me of being the means of raising the rent, I think, at the time of the expiry of a certain lease, which I hold is a mistake.

36984. You state you never were the cause of the rent being raised in any form?—I say I have not been the means of raising the rent in any form.

36985. Is there any other statement you wish to make?—At the meeting here there were six or seven people appointed to communicate with the Commission to-day, and I don't desire to say anything; indeed, I have nothing to say any way.

36986. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Was the farm in the market at the end of the first lease of the tenant Carmichael?—I think it was, if I remember; but I don't speak for it.

36987. You never offered for it until last November?—No, and I didn't offer until I was asked to give in the offer.

36988. Was the place publicly in the market?—It was when I made the application for it. It was in the market any way, and there were different offers in besides mine; and I was told there were higher offers than mine, although they chose me as their tenant.

36989. *The Chairman.*—Who got the farm?—I got it at Whitsunday last.

36990. *Professor Mackinnon.*—So that you neither offered for the farm on a former occasion, nor can you be said to be the cause of the widow being deprived of the place?—No.

36991. The previous tenant has a growing crop?—Yes.

36992. And will he have to remove the whole of that crop; will you take any of it?—I think the arrangement is that I take over the corn crop at a valuation; the potatoes they can take with them.

ARGYLL.

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LISMORE.Alexander
McColl.

36993. Do you pay for that fallow tract when it is not cropped with potatoes?—I happened to buy about an acre and a half at Whitsunday from the outgoing tenant. He had too much under green crop to work it, and I happened to buy it.

36994. You paid the rent?—No, I bought it; he paid the rent. I bought it, so that I might get it put in turnips. I allowed him after Whitsunday to put in his turnips, as they were not in. If I had liked I could have prevented him from turning any more of the ground after my entry; but as we had been neighbours a long time, I allowed him to put them in after the Whitsunday term.

36995. And is he allowed to draw the turnips and take them away?—He is. That was my own goodwill.

36996. But the turnip crop and the potato crop are his?—I have a portion—the portion I bought. I expect the incoming tenant is bound to take the corn crop at a valuation, but not the green crop.

HUGH CARMICHAEL, Crofter, Port-Ramsay (57)—examined.

Hugh Carmichael. 36997. *The Chairman.*—Have you a statement to make?—I don't like to go on with my evidence, because it may be that I may suffer for it; and I hear other people getting the assurance that they will suffer no injury. I wish to get that assurance.

36998. Whose land are you upon?—Mr Fell's.—*Mr Sim, factor.* I may state at once that Hugh and I have known each other for twenty years, and no harm will happen to him in consequence of what he may say. I think I have heard worse things from him than he is likely to say to-day.—*Carmichael.* I shall say nothing but the truth; but people sometimes suffer for the truth. I have held my croft in Port-Ramsay for the last twenty-eight years. There are sixteen of us. Our lots consist of two acres of arable land, upon an average, within the fence, and the cattle pasture in common outside, and we have a herd for them. We have only one cow each; and if one tenant had the whole place, he would not put on more than eight cows, instead of sixteen. We require to sell the calves, because there is no way of keeping a stirk. Every one of the cows would die in summer for want of pasture, if it were not that we hand-feed them now and again. The rent is £5 and £6 each. I have two lots myself, and I pay £10, 8s. 6d., including a small sum for interest upon improvements.

36999. Have you two cows?—Yes.

37000. You spoke of common pasture. What do you keep on it—cows or sheep?—I have no sheep.

37001. What do you do with the two acres of arable land?—We pay £4 for the ploughing of these two acres which we have in single lots, cropping them with potatoes and oats alternately.

37002. Have any of you horses?—We have no place to keep a horse; we have no place to keep even a hen, unless we send them down to the sea-shore.

37003. Have the rents of these small crofts been increased during your memory?—Not since I have lived in the place.

37004. How long ago is that?—Twenty-eight years.

37005. Has any of the common hill pasture been taken away from you?—We never had more than we have; but it is commons that we want—additional pasture.

37006. Have the crofts been subdivided, or are they as large as they always were?—Just as they were.

ARGYLL.

37007. You have two acres of arable ground and pasture for one cow, for £5 or £6, and a cow's grazing upon the common pasture. You say that common pasture does not support the cow for the summer?—Yes.

LISMORE

37008. How do you feed the cow in winter?—The cows are better off in winter; the crop feeds them then. We sometimes buy a little fodder at sales, when people are leaving their places and that.

HughCarmichael.

37009. Do you thresh your own corn, and use it for the food of your families?—Yes, and we grind whatever we have.

37010. How much of the two acres do you generally keep in potatoes?—Just the half, alternate crop.

37011. You have nearly an acre of potatoes every year?—Yes.

37012. Has the potato crop been pretty good of late years here?—Pretty good; but it goes with disease occasionally.

37013. If you have a fair year of potatoes, how long does the produce of one acre of potatoes last in your family?—The potatoes and what we make of meal altogether would not keep the family for three months.

37014. How do you support your family?—The people cannot succeed in our place without extra help. The members of the family who can work go about here and there working in order to keep the family there altogether; and some of them have grown old in the condition of bachelors, and are not able to make a home for themselves. They don't require to be sent away from the place—the place itself sends them away; they cannot remain.

37015. Do you work for wages yourself?—No, I never worked for a wage. I had a small vessel—a smack—and went about with it. Those who earn wages in this place are those who have smacks, and tradesmen; the common labourer can scarcely keep a family.

37016. Do you go with the smack?—Not for the last five years; I have not been so strong; my sons go. They are working away in it there; but they are not able to keep the place very well with it.

37017. Have you a share in the vessel yourself?—Yes; the whole of the earnings of the vessel go to keep the house. It is manned by the family.

37018. What sort of trade are you engaged in?—Lime and stone and slate and that—about all the local traffic. The railway has injured the lime traffic. They bring it to Oban by rail now. My smack, and many others, has been quite idle for the last two months. We have only made one cargo of it.

37019. What kind of house have you got? Perhaps it is better than is usual?—Yes; the houses are all in a row, under one roof, fourteen of them. They were built by the people entirely at their own expense. We built the houses upon a thirty years' lease, and at the expiry of the lease we were so foolish as to take a short lease; and at its expiry the proprietor, Sir John Campbell of Airds, charged them rent for it.

37020. Do you pay a separate rent, or is it included in the £5 or £6?—There are two of the lots still with thatched houses upon them, and the rent of these is only £3. The lots are quite as good as ours. I don't know whether the houses there were built by the landlord or by the tenants. The lots and houses, put together, in these cases are only £3.

37021. Have there been any evictions or arbitrary removals in your township?—No, we have no fault to find with him in that way. The rent itself is so large that it is sufficient to evict them; they go off of their own accord, and there have not been many applicants for the vacant places.

ARGYLL.

37022. When a person goes away is his holding generally let to another?—A neighbour may get it, or a new applicant may get it.

LISMORE.

37023. And is a man better off with two lots at £10, than with one lot at £5?—A man has to work upon it anyhow; and, if he had a young family to do some work, probably he would be better off with the double croft.

37024. Has the land become exhausted, or does it bear as good crops as it used to do when it was properly tilled?—It must be weak by continuous cropping.

37025. Where do you get your manure from?—We take it off the sea-rocks, and drown ourselves sometimes taking it ashore.

37026. Is it contiguous to your own township?—The shore was portioned out just like the crofts in Sir John Campbell's time, and it has continued so; so that we have got a part of the shore for our township.

37027. You don't pay anything for it?—No.

37028. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Whom did you succeed twenty-eight years ago?—A widow, whose family wished to leave the place, gave it up.

37029. Was it this widow's family who built the house?—Yes, it was that family who built the house.

37030. And you have no complaint to make on the score of having forfeited the house after thirty years?—No, I only express the complaint of the people that the rents are high. The children of those who built these houses are in here to-day.

37031. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You say you want pasture to keep your cows; is there any land convenient that can be given to you?—We march with crofters.

37032-3. Is there any land upon Mr Fell's estate which you might get?—Yes, there is a piece of hill pasture which the proprietor might give us if we asked him, and we are thinking of doing so. We pay £6*4* for the ploughing of these crofts, and we think this pasture would not come to so much, and it would keep some cattle too. We pay now twice the amount that we did some time ago for the ploughing of these crofts. The reason is that the big farmers have plenty of work upon their own farms, and they don't like to do the work for us unless they got more for it than the work is worth. The interest of some repairs made upon the house, amounting to about 18*s.* in each case, has been charged against us for some seventeen or eighteen years back. This is a virtual increase of rent, and we pay rates upon interest as well as upon the rent. There was also peat ground formerly, but now there is none.

HUGH CAMERON, Cottar and Sailor, Killean (45)—examined.

Hugh Cameron.

37034. *Professor Mackinnon.*—How many people in Killean pay rent?—Ten crofters.

37035. And how many families are there that don't pay rent?—About twenty-five.

37036. Is there a village?—No, they are scattered here and there, and are on the roadside, as close to the road as possible.

37037. Among the crofts?—Separate from the crofts, on the public roadside, where they don't tramp on any grass.

37038. Do they pay any rent at all?—Some of them do, but they refuse to take any rent from others.

ARGYLL.

LISMORE.

Hugh
Cameron.

37039. What is the meaning of that?—I don't know; because the houses are not worth it, I suppose; that it would be a shame to take rent for them.

37040. But don't you think the people in the houses might think it a shame to offer it?—They would be glad to offer it rather than be evicted.

37041. Do they wish these people to leave the place?—Yes, if they would go away quietly.

37042. Are you able to speak about the crofters who are on that place?—Well, I know the general run of them.

37043. Are they very comfortably off?—Indeed they are hard pushed to pay the rent; the rents are very high.

37044. What is about the rent?—They were telling me they average from £5 to £6 and £6, 10s. for each cow they keep on the croft.

37045. What is the rent of a croft now in Killean, off and on?—Those who have two cows and scant to keep them pay £10; there is one beside me and he has just one cow, and he keeps that cow comfortably and pays £7.

37046. And have they horses?—No, none.

37047. Have they sheep?—No sheep.

37048. How do they get the land ploughed?—They employ one of the large farmers to plough it in the spring time.

37049. What stock do they keep—Highland cattle?—Highland cattle generally, but some of them are sometimes not able to afford to have any kind of cattle.

37050. Does your neighbour who pays £7 work the whole year upon the croft?—No; he is a smith, and works at his trade.

37051. What do the crofters do who don't work upon their crofts?—They all work upon their crofts.

37052. But don't they work somewhere else besides?—There is no employment for them unless Mr M'Intyre, who keeps the lime quarries going, employs them. That is the only means of living in this island, quarrying.

37053. And do any of the crofters work there?—Yes, there is one Carmichael just now beside me who pays £16 of rent, and who has two cows, and I believe the place would keep three if he had them. But he had no way of living this summer if it had not been for M'Intyre, who has given employment to many persons in distress.

37054. The land is good in this place?—Very good indeed.

37055. The potatoes are excellent?—Excellent potatoes and all kinds of crops; if the land is laboured it yields a good crop of whatsoever kind.

37056. Do they sell potatoes every year?—Generally they do.

37057. Where do they send them to?—They sell them to different persons who come round and buy them.

37058. Irish people?—No, they buy them at home; the Irish never come over here. Oban people take them.

37059. Were the crops much spoiled by the storm last year?—No.

37060. Were they so good as they had been in former years?—No.

37061. In a very good year how many barrels of potatoes would a barrel of seed produce?—From twelve to sixteen and eighteen, and, if the seed crop is good, they give twenty-five barrels.

37062. Of course twenty-five barrels is a very exceptional crop, but it sometimes reaches that?—Since the new seed came here, the 'Champion' has been yielding twenty-five barrels in a good year.

37063. I suppose that will be one of the reasons why the rent is so high, that the soil is so good?—The soil is good, but it is not left to the people who are inclined to work it; there are so many independent people

ARGYLL. who want the land just now for grazing purposes that those inclined to work the land do not get the chance of doing it. If you seek a piece of the land to work it and make yourself comfortable you will be just left out.

LISMORE.
Hugh

Cameron.

37064. How do the cottars live?—Some of them are boating, and some are shoemakers, and some carpenters, and some masons, and others at different work.

37065. And some of them quarrymen?—Yes.

37066. Are many of them sailors?—Yes, there are two or three.

37067. Do they trade about the coast or go to foreign ports?—Well, I was going to foreign ports in my young days, but then I settled down and got married and stayed at home, and got a little smack, and am supporting myself and family.

37068. And do you trade about here just as Mr M'Coll did?—I work for Mr M'Intyre generally.

37069. About here?—To the Isle of Skye, and Coll and Tyree, and Morven and Arisaig and Moidart, and in all directions.

37070. Have you much steady work?—Sometimes we have no reason to complain, and at other times there is not much. The county is now going so much under grass that there is not so much demand for lime as there used to be.

37071. Have any of these cottars a garden about the house?—No. There are four houses on the estate, which were built by Mrs Cheyne for those who were on the roll; but shortly after that she was advised to take these houses, because they were thought too good for the paupers, and let them to cottars, and she then got them let and put £4 of rent on each house, and there is just a little short bit of ground, about the breadth of the house, with a garden laid out in front. The rest of the houses had no gardens at one time; and now, those who were evicted at the other end and got houses here, have become old people, and the younger ones being away working throughout the country, the gardens went down and the walls were destroyed, and never rebuilt, and still the crofters claim these gardens, and the cottars cannot get them. I made an arrangement with the under factor, and the Duke was for building me a house, and I was to get £8 from the Duke. Well, I was giving that to the factor to do the quarrying, and I was to build the house and do all the rest of the work, and yet pay a rent of 32s. 6d.; and when I asked for a garden he told me I would get a spot for a midden at the back of the house, but no garden.

37072. Can the cottars have a cow?—No; I have one on another farmer's ground.

37073. How much do you pay for grazing?—I was told yesterday that he was paying £6 of rent forment every cow that he has, and that I would have to pay likewise.

37074. He feeds her well for you in winter, and gives you good grazing in summer?—He feeds her, I suppose, as he does his own.

37075. And you are the only one of that number who has a cow?—Yes, I believe so.

37076. But I suppose there is plenty of milk in the place to buy?—No, that is the great evil. The farmer has been in the place altogether for these twenty years back, and the markets are so good that they are feeding the calves and giving them all the milk, and there is none left for the cottars.

37077. So that the calves get the milk that the children used to get?—Yes, we used to get the milk liberally to buy; if we do buy it now it is not worth carrying, just sour milk.

37078. There is plenty of land, is there not, if it were given to you?—Plenty.

37079. Are there many of these people so well off that they could take a very small croft if they got it?—The whole of them could. There are those who were evicted off the land. They were not evicted because they had no means; they had the means, as they have yet.

ARGYLL.

LISMORE.

Hugh
Cameron.

37080. And they wish to get back to their former places?—Yes, they would be glad to take the land back at a reasonable valuation—twenty families of them.

37081. How many are employed in the quarry?—Mr M'Intyre keeps, generally, from twelve to sixteen, and more if he could get them. He would get as many as he liked in spring time.

37082. They are all people of the place?—Yes.

37083. They are quite well up in that kind of work now?—Yes.

37084. The quarry has been open for a long time?—Yes, this is the third generation that is working in it.

37085. Have you a school down in your place?—We have.

37086. Do the children attend school well?—Yes.

37087. Are they good scholars?—They do generally attend the school.

37088. Do a large number of young people go south?—They all go south; there is nothing here to keep them.

37089. Do they succeed well in the south?—Some of them do. Some of them prosper very well, and some don't.

37090. Is the school so good there that they are able by their education to do well in the south?—No, there were better scholars made in my time in that school than there are now; because the rule is now that the children must stick in the school until they get to standard six, and then away they go. The teacher allows them to remain in school after that, but she don't like them to come after that. But all she is under an obligation for she teaches them.

37091. It is a lady who teaches down your way?—Yes, we had a very good teacher indeed; but she has left us now.

37092. It was not a lady who taught in your time?—It was old Mr M'Gill, the parish schoolmaster; and supposing we were away labouring or at farm service in the summer time and spring time, we could all go to school in the winter, and he would be glad to receive us.

37093. There were very big boys in the school in those days?—Yes.

37094. And good scholars?—More scholars than there are now.

37095. They don't come back now after having passed the sixth standard?—No, because the teacher don't care for them over that age.

37096. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Does the Duke of Argyll show any interest in the crofters and cottars about you?—He will just come once in the year, and he just comes ashore out of his yacht, and goes into the machine and drives right along to the end of the estate, and drives back, and gets on board the yacht, and then away he goes. We never get the pleasure to say one word to him at all.

37097. It would appear then that Mr M'Intyre is the benefactor of the place?—He is the person upon whom the whole island relies, especially the poor and working class.

37098. It might be well if he had some land of his own in Lismore? A good deal of land?—It would be a gracious thing if the like of him had the land between them.

37099. You think if the like of Mr M'Intyre had the land the poor people would be better off?—They would be, for he would take an interest in the people, and wish to see them all employed and comfortable—*Mr Buchanan.* The witness Cameron said the average produce of a

ARGYLL. barrel of potatoes in Lismore was from 8 to 16 returns. The average, to people well acquainted with cultivation as I have been, is 8 barrels. Sometimes the return is 12, 14, and 15, but that is not the average. The average, I consider, would be 8 barrels.

LISMORE.
Hugh Cameron.

JAMES WILSON, Teacher of the Public School, Baligarve (32)—examined.

James Wilson. 37100. *The Chairman.*—You wish to make a statement?—Yes; the people asked me to come and give evidence about several particulars. The first thing I have to refer to is the steady decrease of the population. The witness Buchanan has anticipated me a little, but he was quite right in his statement, and the only omission he made was that by the census of 1871 it had decreased to about 750. In the year 1881 it had decreased to 637. The decrease during the last decade proceeds not so much from people leaving the place as from the paucity of marriages, things being, on the whole, so bad that people have very little means to keep a family. The next thing to which I wanted to refer was the house accommodation, which is very bad, the houses being all thatch, and the wood-work, and such, of a very rude sort. Hardly any of the doors have locks, but, in place, any rude contrivance that the people may invent; and with a north-west gale their places are made very uncomfortable. There is also very little accommodation for the stock. As for the other things, I have to repeat the complaint of the whole of the other witnesses about the rents being too high. One man on the Ballyveolin estate wished me to give the particulars of his rent. His rent is £51, and the taxes about £3, 10s. His place keeps eight cows with their calves, and he keeps the calves a year. He has also two horses in winter and one in summer, and he sows about eight bolls of oats and plants two acres of potatoes. His house and other premises are very bad. When prices are good he can only make a living, and when prices are bad it is a very hard time for him indeed. That is about all I can say respecting the general state of the people. The people of Port Ramsay asked me to state some particulars in connection with petitioning the proprietor for a reduction of rent. Some of them came to me, and asked me to draw up a petition from particulars which they supplied to me, and I did so. They signed the petition and presented it to the proprietor or factor on the rent day, praying for a reduction of rent, and that the interest might be taken off their houses, or some interest they were charged for drainage. This was refused them, and, I believe, in pretty rough terms; and the factor set about trying to discover who it was that took the lead in getting up the petition. He came to me, and asked me if I would supply him with information. I asked what he wanted to do with it—if he wanted to put any person out of his croft who took the lead in the matter. He said ‘No;’ and I asked why he wanted the information. He said he wanted to keep his eye upon him. I asked what he meant by that, and he said he did not want to put him out of his croft.

37101. Whose property was this upon?—Mr Fell’s.

37102. What is the name of the factor?—J. Fraser Sim.

37103. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—How long is it since this petition was presented?—I think at Whitsunday 1883.

37104. *The Chairman.*—Is the accommodation in any of the houses so bad as to have any influence upon the health of the people?—I should say it is; at least I would not like to live in the houses.

37105. Has there been any outbreak of fever or any infectious disease

in the country?—Yes, during the past season there have been measles, but there has been an epidemic over the whole district. But in winter the children are very apt to catch colds, which I attribute principally to the house accommodation.

ARGYLL.

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LISMORE.

James Wilson.

37106. Do you mean that the houses are so close?—That they are so open; so many draughts; too much ventilation.

37107. That they catch cold in their own houses?—Yes.

37108. But generally we find that the common houses in the Highlands are very warm?—They don't look warm to a person who goes in.

37109. Is the fire on the floor?—I believe it is in one or two cases, not more.

37110. The houses have chimneys?—Yes.

37111. Is there no peat used in the island?—No.

37112. Is there any advantage on the estate with reference to accommodation; is more encouragement given to house building on some estates than others?—Not that I know of. My impression is that little encouragement is given to providing house accommodation. But I cannot speak positively. I know the general way in which houses are put up, which you have heard already; the proprietor paying half and the tenant the other half; or the proprietor putting up a house and the tenant paying interest for it, or rent. Some of them say it is $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. that is charged—that is on Mr Fell's estate.

37113. With reference to the rarity of marriages, is there any regulation against marriage upon any estate that you are acquainted with?—No.

37114. There is no positive discouragement shown to marriages?—Not that I am aware of.

37115. But as there is such a diminution of population, I presume there is a diminution in the number of householders?—Yes.

37116. Then surely those who remain ought to have a larger share in the land and be better off?—I cannot say very well as to how they are off. They do not look very well off, a great many of them.

37117. Is there a sanitary inspector in the parish?—I don't know.

37118. The inspector of poor probably fills the office of sanitary inspector?—Probably so; I cannot say.

37119. Has any complaint ever been made by him upon representation about the nature of the accommodation?—Not that I know of.

37120. When you state that the factor came to you for information respecting a petition for reduction of rent, why do you think the factor selected the schoolmaster?—Because he knew I wrote out the petition for the people.

37121. When he asked you to indicate the parties what did you do?—I asked him first what he intended to do, if I should give him the information.

37122. And he said he would keep his eye upon the person?—I asked if he would do the man any harm, and he said no. Then I asked why he wanted the information, and he said he wanted to keep his eye upon him.

37123. Do you think it is altogether prudent on your part as schoolmaster to make yourself an instrument and vehicle of complaints between a tenant and the landlord; I mean, do you think that the people are so illiterate that they could not draw up a petition or remonstrance of that sort themselves without your mediation?—I am in the habit of doing everything of that sort, whether it is for that purpose or any other.

37124. They are in the habit of coming to you?—Yes, it is quite the habit. I have done many things of that kind.

37125. And you lend your assistance to them?—Yes, simply to put the

ARGYLL. thing in proper form for any person who wishes it done. It is understood I am neither pulling one way nor another.

LISMORE. 37126. You simply act for their convenience and their benefit?—Yes; James Wilson. I know my business is not that of an agitator of any sort.

37127. Are you quite satisfied altogether with the management of the school; do you find the School Board attentive to their duties and anxious to give you every assistance?—They are attentive enough in every way except in the enforcement of the compulsory clause; they are a little lax in that way.

37128. Their meetings are regular?—As far as I know.

37129. Do they show any spontaneous or kindly interest in the school besides the performance of their official duty?—Yes, the local members of the School Board generally give the children a trip.

37130. Are there prizes offered for proficiency in the school?—No.

37131. Who are the members of the School Board?—The chairman is Dr Campbell, Ballachulish; the Episcopal Minister, Ballachulish; Mr Currie, hotel keeper, Ballachulish; Mr McDougall, minister, Duror; Dr Mackay, Port Appin; Mr Mackay, and Mr Alexander McColl, Park.

37132. Have there been any contested elections?—Yes, the last election was contested.

37133. What do the contests turn upon; upon personal preference or upon any question connected with religion or politics?—There was no question of religion brought to the front last time.

37134. So that it is a simple question of personal preference?—Yes. The people here divided their votes between two candidates from the island, and both these were carried. They did so in order to get the island represented by two members.

37135. You have reason to believe that the School Board as at present constituted is agreeable to the people and represents their wishes fairly?—Yes.

37136. No constraint is exercised by proprietors or farmers?—Not that I am aware of; I never heard of such a thing.

37137. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Are you a native of Argyllshire?—No, I am a native of Forfarshire.

37138. Do you know anything of the other parts of the Highlands?—No.

37139. You have never seen Highland cottages except here?—No.

37140. Are you registrar for this district?—Yes.

37141. Can you tell us anything about the proportion of births and deaths?—About seventeen births in the year. Two or three of these come from Kingairloch, a district over in Morven; perhaps about fifteen in the island. The deaths are at least equal to that.

37142. There would have to be more if the population is on the decrease and nobody leaves the island?—That is for the past two or three years.

37143. The births and deaths in your experience have been about equal?—Yes; the deaths rather have it.

37144. And when you say the decrease of the population results from the fewness of marriages it is merely a matter of opinion?—Yes, there are not more than two marriages in the year.

37145. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Are there any proprietors resident on the island?—I do not think so.

37146. Are any of the larger farmers non-resident also?—*Mr Paterson* of Kilchearan does not reside here. He has a manager on the place.

37147. Where does he reside?—I cannot say.

37148. Does the Duke of Argyll's estate comprehend a considerable portion of the island?—A good deal. ARGYLL.

37149. One-half or one-third would you say?—Perhaps between a third and a half; but I cannot say positively. LISMORE.

James Wilson.

37150. There is no resident proprietor?—No.

37151. And there is no resident tenant?—Mr Paterson is the only non-resident tenant.

37152. Does he occupy the whole of the Duke's land?—The most of it.

37153. Do you speak Gaelic?—No.

37154. Do the children mostly speak English?—Yes, they speak English fairly well.

37155. You are quite correct in stating Mr Paterson pays a very large proportion of the Duke's rental?—Yes.

37156. Do you concur in what has been stated about the good Mr M'Intyre, who has the quarries, does to the island?—Yes; I have always found him a gentlemanly man and a kind man.

37157. Do any of the other proprietors do something in the way of showing a benevolent interest in the smaller tenants, by giving sums annually?—Mr Fell, I believe, distributes money and goods among the poor occasionally.

37158. Does he do that regularly?—I think so.

DUGALD M'INTYRE, Farmer, Frackersaig (41)—examined.

37159. Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.—You are ground officer as well as a farmer?—Yes. Dugald M'Intyre.

37160. I see your name in the list of delegates; were you present at the meeting?—I was present, but I only knew this morning my name was entered as a delegate.

37161. Who told you?—Mr Livingston told me this morning.

37162. I suppose you are not prepared with any statement if you were not told?—I have no statement on paper, but I shall be glad to answer any questions.

37163. You were present at the meeting?—I was present at the first meeting, but there was a second meeting at which I was not present.

37164. Did they at that meeting discuss any complaints which they should make to the Commission?—No, it was at the next meeting they did so.

37165. Do you think the people of Lismore have reason to complain of their treatment by the proprietors?—Well, I do not believe they have so much reason at present as they had some time ago.

37166. What is their principal cause of complaint at the present time?—I believe that the principal cause is bad houses. They complain of high rents, and no doubt the place is very highly rented. In these good years, when there are good prices for stock, there is not so much complaint; but when the prices of stock fall they have reason to complain then.

37167. What size of farm do you hold?—About 400 acres.

37168. Of arable?—No.

37169. How much is arable?—Perhaps about one-sixth of it, including rocks and bogs, and waste land.

37170. Are your houses not satisfactory?—Mine are; I have new houses.

37171. On what principle were they erected?—I did part of the work

ARGYLL. myself and the proprietor did the rest. I was near about the half and the proprietor the other half.

LISMORE. 37172. Are you bound to maintain them?—Yes.

Dugald M'Intyre. 37173. Have you a lease?—Yes, I had a nineteen years' lease, and I have now a renewal of the lease for the same period. I had a nineteen years' lease when I built the houses.

37174. And you have nineteen years more?—Yes.

37175. Are the houses generally very bad here?—Most of them are very bad.

37176. Do the people themselves complain of them?—Yes.

37177. Would they erect better houses for themselves if they got leases?—I believe they would.

37178. On the same footing as you have erected yours?—Most of them would.

37179. Are leases refused to them?—No.

37180. Why do they not receive them?—Some of the small crofters do not care for it, because they consider it too much expense in drawing out a lease.

37181. The cost of the lease prevents them taking it?—Yes, some of them.

37182. And yet you think if they had leases they would improve their houses?—No doubt, it would be an encouragement.

37183. In what way do you estimate the rent of lands in Lismore; is it in relation to the stock or acreage?—It is in relation to the stock.

37184. What do you put upon a cow?—A cow's rent generally is from £3, 10s. to £5.

37185. That is winter and summer keep?—Yes.

37186. And that includes one follower?—No, that would not take any follower, nothing but the milk calves.

37187. And what do you put on the followers—year-olds and two-year-olds?—About £2, 5s. in the year; sometimes we require to make a little provision if the winter comes severe.

37188. In offering for a farm that is how you would offer—in that form?—We know the farms, and do not very often calculate upon the stock.

37189. Do you sell grain here?—Very little.

37190. Potatoes?—Some potatoes some years.

37191. Your principal sales of produce are cattle?—Yes.

37192. And sheep?—Yes, on the large farms, but not the small ones.

37193. Have you a stock of sheep?—Yes, a mixed stock of sheep and cattle.

37194. What rent is paid for sheep grazing?—Fifteen shillings for some of the half-bred sheep.

37195. Are they all half-bred sheep here?—Yes.

37196. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Have you heard what has been stated here to-day?—Yes.

37197. Do you know most of the people who spoke?—Yes.

37198. Do you think they represent the feelings of the class they belong to?—I have no doubt, some of them perhaps have gone a little too far.

37199. Are you a native of the island yourself?—Yes.

37200. And have been here all your days?—Yes.

37201. You stated in the beginning to Sir Kenneth Mackenzie that they have not now so much to complain of as they might have had, do you recollect what has been stated in the case of the Cheyne evictions?—Yes, I remember some of them. My father was a tenant on that estate.

37202. Would you say that these evictions were unreasonable in every way?—I believe they were.

ARGYLL.

LISMORE.

Dugald
M'Intyre.

37203. Upon the two estates that you are acting as ground officer for, have you any special instructions on the part of the proprietor except to look after matters in the ordinary way a ground officer has?—No.

37204. You have no special instructions?—No.

37205. Do you allow the people under you as much of their own way as is consistent with what is right?—I give them almost altogether their own way.

37206. *The Chairman.*—We have not seen much of the island, but as we drove along here I was much struck by the inferior character of the dwelling-houses of the farmers with regard to the amount of rent that they paid. I was told, for instance, there were farms there paying from £30 to £100 of rent, and the houses seemed little better than Highland crofters' houses. Do you think it would be possible for the proprietors to give some encouragement to better the buildings both for the lodging of people and stock?—Yes, some of the proprietors are encouraging the tenants. Mr Fell has put up a good many new buildings on his estate, and he is intending to put some up this year.

37207. On what system is that done; if the proprietor makes the whole outlay, what interest is charged to the tenant?—I believe he charges 6½ per cent. I do not pay any interest.

37208. When the tenant and proprietor co-operate and pay each a half, then we were told that at the end of the occupancy the depreciation on the whole was valued to the tenant, and he had to pay for the depreciation on what he had himself paid for?—No, that is only deficiency upon the houses; if they are neglected to be properly looked after, there is then deficiency charged upon the outgoing tenant, but no depreciation during the time he is in occupation.

37209. You mean that they pay then only for culpable neglect?—Yes.

37210. Or abuse of the buildings?—Yes.

37211. Are there any cases in which a tenant goes to the whole expense of the buildings?—I am not aware that there is at present.

37212. Neither on the dwelling-houses nor on the farm offices?—Not at present that I am aware of; but about twenty-five years ago my father built upon the late Mr Cheyne's estate upon his own account entirely. He had no lease, but he had the promise of not being removed.

37213. Would he have been held liable at the end of the lease for the depreciation of the offices which he had entirely built himself?—He was just charged deficiency upon the houses for anything that they require at the time to put them in proper order; not to put them like what they were when new, but he had to make a payment on account of depreciation of offices, the whole of which he had built himself.

37214. Do you mean depreciation or deficiency?—It is deficiency, disrepair.

37215. But still in connection with buildings the whole of which he had erected himself?—Yes. These were thatched houses.

37216. But had he to pay for any defect in the buildings instead of the proprietor paying him for the improvement he had made?—Yes, and he was turned out of the farm against his will.

37217. About the stock in the hands of the smaller tenants, do you think the stock would be susceptible of improvement, could they bring up a better description than they do?—I don't think so. I think the stock are very suitable for the small crofts, the stock they have.

37218. They have not any shorthorn cross?—No.

37219. You don't think they could maintain that description of stock?

ARGYLL.

LISMORE.

Dugald
M'Intyre.

—No, they would be too heavy for the crofts here; too expensive for wintering.

37220. We heard from a previous witness that there was a great diminution of the population, which he ascribed to the discouragement to marriage which the condition of the island was supposed to offer, what do you think of that?—I cannot say anything in regard to that. The only thing I can say is, that if they got married they have no houses to take up in.

37221. What becomes of the younger members of the families generally; do they emigrate permanently to the south or the colonies?—They generally go to the south to service.

37222. And remain away?—Most of them do. Sometimes they come back.

37223. Has there been any emigration from the island to America or Australia?—There was a good deal of emigration to America; but they emigrated with their own free will.

37224. And have they done well in America?—Some of them have done pretty well.

37225. Do they maintain any correspondence with their relatives here?—Yes, there were some of them back to this country a few years ago.

37226. And did they give encouragement to their friends to emigrate? Some of them did, and others did not.

37227. Is there any great reluctance or repugnance to the idea of emigration, or if a man could afford it would he be generally glad to go?—I could not say. I know they have a feeling for their native country, to stay in it if they can.

37228. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Do you think the small crofts are relatively rented about as high as farms of over £100 or about that?—I think they are fully as high as the large farms.

37229. And what one would call a small farm—£50 to £100: I see by the valuation roll there is a considerable number of these in the island—are these fully as highly rented as the larger farms, of which there are only two or three?—Just something about what the larger farms are.

37230. But you think the small crofts, relative to their size and worth, are about as highly rented or more so than the big farms?—That is my idea. I know that the best part of the land is laid out waste under sheep. The Duke of Argyll's estate is the best part of the island.

37231. That farm is very large?—Yes.

37232. About £1400 rent?—Yes.

37233. In that case, looking to the circumstances of the people here, supposing there was an inclination to split up a large farm, there would be quite a reasonable expectation that as much rent could be had for it after it was divided into crofts?—Yes; there is a good number of the small farmers able to take larger holdings if they got an opening.

37234. And some of the crofters might then take the place of the farmers, and some of the cottars could take the place of the crofters?—Yes.

37235. The people upon the east end of the place, Port Ramsay, complained that their rents were too high because the place was so bad; is it worse generally than the rest of the island?—It is about the worst part of land in the island. There are some spots very good, but upon the whole it is the worst.

37236. The land is so very good over the whole of the island that it can afford to pay a high rent?—It is pretty highly rented.

37237. You think it is fully rented all over?—I believe it is.

37238. With regard to the quarry in which so many people are able to obtain work, I hope you do not lose yourself by providing for so many of

the people who could not be otherwise provided for?—Sometimes I am only too glad to get hold of them, as I cannot carry on work without them; but in the busiest time, when I need them most, I cannot get them; they have their own work to do.

37239. Is there difficulty in getting cottars when labour pays so well; do you think there would be more population in the place if it was easier to get a cottage?—I believe there would.

37240. A man from Killean rather stated there was a large number living there without land or a cow? I suppose it is quite the case?—Yes.

37241. And he said that in the surrounding district there was not a sufficient supply of milk for people of that class?—That is on account of the land being put in large farms.

37242. If there were more substantial crofters round about the cottars could get milk for payment?—Yes; and tenants could get work done cheaper than they can at present.

37243. But the want of population all over the place makes the rate of wages pretty high?—Yes.

37244. Is it higher than in the surrounding districts upon the mainland?—It is higher than in some parts.

37245. The rate of wages is from 18s. to 20s. a week?—Well, I employ some of my men at 17s. a week; new hands not well up to their work—17s. to 19s. a week.

37246. The state of affairs one of the delegates spoke to with respect to houses evidently does not exist now; nobody builds houses entirely at his own charge?—Not just now, but I believe they used to do some time ago.

37247. As I understood, the case of your father was this; he built the steadings at his own expense entirely; he was then evicted, and he was charged for putting the dwellings into what one would call a tenantable condition for his successor?—Yes.

37248. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Perhaps there was no successor?—Yes, there was another tenant. My father offered, but this tenant offered a few pounds more, and got it.

37249. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Looking to the fertility of the place, the soil, and the general circumstances of the people all over, and supposing there was an intention to break up one of those big farms into smaller holdings, what size of holding do you think would be the most suitable in this island to break them up into?—I know upon this estate, where there are no houses at present, it would be very expensive for the proprietor to put new houses upon smaller holdings, and I think from £50 to £100 would be the smallest he could afford to make.

37250. Except with regard to the houses, there would be no difficulty in getting the same rent even supposing they were made into smaller holdings?—No.

37251. But you think making them into places from £50 to £100, houses could be erected and tenants got, and that tenants from a lower stratum would be got for the holdings which would become vacant?—Yes.

37252. There are plenty of men and capital in Lismore to take up readjusted holdings?—Yes, but not the whole.

37253. And you believe the place would keep more men, and upon the whole fully as well off as they are at present?—I believe it would.

37254. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—A farm of £100 would require hired labour?—Yes.

37255. What size of farm could be worked by a family without hired labour?—A farm of from £50 to £70.

ARGYLL.

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LISMORE.

Dugald
M'Intyre.

ARGYLL. 37256. *The Chairman.*—What do you think a fair rent for average arable ground per annum?—I believe the arable ground in some parts is up to 30s. an acre, but not taking it on an average all over. There is a great deal of waste land and rocks and so on.

LISMORE. Dugald M'Intyre. 37257. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—There is no public-house in this island?—None at present.

37258. How long since?—About seven or eight years.

37259. Did there use to be always one?—When I remember about thirty years ago there were five.

37260. Is it considered any grievance by the inhabitants to have none?—Not that I am aware of. If it were they would have told us. It was at first, when the last public-house was done away with, but not now.

37261. Do you think it is any inconvenience to strangers?—Not the want of a public-house; but I believe a temperance hotel would be better.

37262. How many policemen are there?—None in the island, but there is one in the parish.

37263. Has a policeman ever to come to the island?—Not very often—not since the public-house was done away with.

37264. Did he use to come oftener?—Yes, pretty often.

37265. Are the habits of the people generally quiet and correct?—Yes.

JOHN FRASER SIM, Solicitor and Land Agent, Oban (41)—examined.

John Fraser Sim. 37266. *The Chairman.*—For what estates are you land agent?—The two estates in Lismore which I represent are first, that belonging to the Rev. Mr Fell of Carlisle; and second, that belonging to Major Campbell of Balliveolan.

37267. Do you desire to make a statement?—I should like if you allow me. I wish to mention the fact that the people of Lismore are a people by themselves. On Mr Fell's property I draw rents from fifty-nine people, and of these fifty-seven have been born and bred in the island. I should like to mention that fact, because it explains a peculiarity in Lismore which I think hardly finds another example in any portion of the Highlands. If you take the Balliveolan property, where there are twelve tenants, only one of these has been introduced as a stranger. All the rest are aborigines of the place; and this explains to a great extent what we have heard to-day of the long tenure the people have had of the land, notwithstanding the fact that there are practically no leases in the island, with the exception of those of the larger holdings. They have their own habits, customs, and sympathies; they are clannish when they get amongst strangers; they fight a good deal amongst themselves; they have their own patron saint; and altogether the island is an island by itself. I wish to say something in confirmation of this. It has been mentioned that a petition was sent by the Port Ramsay tenants, with the view of inducing the proprietor to reduce their rents. I should like to read the reply which Mr Fell sent to me; for the petition was not presented to me at the rent collection, but was sent direct to Mr Fell at Carlisle. He says—‘I send you a letter that ‘I have received from the Port Ramsay crofters, on which I shall be glad ‘to have your remarks. If the crofters are too highly rented, I am willing ‘to have their crofts revalued. But it seems to me that they have com- ‘bined to put pressure upon me, being apparently encouraged by the sym- ‘pathy shown to the Skye crofters, whose circumstances and tenure are

' quite distinct from the crofters in Lismore. I shall distinctly resist any attempt to coerce me. I think the crofter system a bad one. Unless every crofter has another trade or occupation, a crofter living on his croft has no right to expect anything but the most abject penury. His condition is one of idleness and, of necessity, poverty. He does not even till his own ground, but, as I see from the petition, he pays some one else. The crofters' system should gradually be changed into small farms.' In a further letter he desires me specifically to mention to those crofters his wish that the crofts should be revalued. The words which he uses are—' Ask the crofters if they want a revaluation of their crofts according to what is paid elsewhere.' That is really the gist of the further letter. I took occasion to get the crofters together, and read a petition and Mr Fell's letter, and they had not a word to say. I mention this fact about Port Ramsay in particular, that those who live there are not crofters in the ordinary sense. Five of them own vessels. One of them carries 65 tons; another 70; another 30; and two others 20. There is a boat-builder there, where many of the boats required in the island and elsewhere are built. There is a shopkeeper, a retired farmer, a shoemaker, and four labourers only amongst the number, and one widow woman. These men are enterprising; they go elsewhere. Oban would not be what it is to-day were it not for the Lismore people who went there. And there is in this meeting one who has benefited himself and his country by leaving the island. In 1853 the rental of the island, on Mr Fell's estate—and I wish these figures to be borne in mind—was £1315, 15s. 6d.; to-day it is £1224, 1s. Mr Fell, the present proprietor, succeeded to the property. The £1224 is divided thus: we have five occupants of agricultural land under £5; eleven between £5 and £10; eight between £10 and £30; four between £30 and £50; one between £50 and £100; two between £100 and £200; and one at £200. And in connection with that, I might mention that I have in my possession leases adjusted between proprietor and tenant in 1863 which have not yet been signed. They have been lying twenty years signed by the proprietor, but not by the tenants. If we analyse this, we find the large farms extend to 1450 acres, and give a gross rent of £954, or 13s. 3d. per acre. If we take the detached crofts, excluding Port Ramsay, we find that of these, eight in number, there are 253 acres giving a rental of £161, 13s., equivalent to 13s. per acre; so that the crofters over the whole property, excluding Port Ramsay, are 3d. per acre cheaper than the larger tenants.

37268. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Where do you draw the line between crofters and large tenants?—£30. In Port Ramsay itself, where there are 16 crofters, the area altogether is 114 acres. There are really $3\frac{1}{2}$ acres of ground which each crofter has got to himself. There are 65 acres of common, and each crofter has got a house, slated, containing three rooms on the ground floor and a loft overhead, a cow's grazing, this croft for potatoes, and the right to cut sea-ware, and for that they have to pay an average rent of £6, 6s. 6d. If we had them in Oban we should charge them double straight off. The rent of Port Ramsay in 1853 was £83; the rent to-day is £89, 6s. 6d.; and in the interval we have spent upon Port Ramsay alone in improvements upon those crofts and the houses connected with them, £437, 11s. 9d.; so that after debiting them with £437 of extra capital we have an increase in return of about £6. It was made out to-day that a large number of the houses were erected by the original settlers there. That I take to be the fact. I hold in my hands the rental of the property now Mr Fell's, which was then Sir John Campbell's, signed W. Hastie, who was ground officer. He puts this footnote to it,—'The leases of the Port Ramsay houses being out, the houses now falling to Sir John must be looked into;' in other words, it was time to make an

ARGYLL.
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LISMORE.
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John Fraser
Sim.

ARGYLL. increase in the rent. But the rent of £83 was continued till 1853, and now after all this expenditure of £400 odds it only amounts to £89, 6s. 6d. Another fact which I think a helpful one in connection with the property is this. In 1852, when Mr Fell's predecessor bought the property from Sir John Campbell's trustees, they bought along with the property the arrears of rent amounting to £588, 3s. At November last, when I made up my account, the total arrears only amounted to £51, 5s. 3d., and the whole of this arrear has been paid up honestly and faithfully. Port Ramsay is the sea-port of this island. It has been properly described by Hugh Carmichael who was forward here to-day, and he gave a truthful account of how the thing stood; only he omitted to say that Mr Fell not merely collects the rents, but keeps the whole houses in repair. He laid out £100 in draining six acres of ground intended to be little patches of vegetable ground—kail-yards—for them, and this now is lying part of the common waste. I beg leave to mention one of these things which it is desirable now to mention. Mr Fell writes me a letter that their troubles have been laid before him. He says—‘ Let the tenants know that I will share their troubles with them. You can at any rate give them back’—I shan’t state the amount—‘ per cent. off this half year, and the future must speak for itself. I cannot form the opinion of what the tenants are able to pay, and I wish you, bearing in mind my interests, to say whether this percentage ’—

37269. *The Chairman.*—I have no objection to hear the percentage?—I do not wish to mention it, because I did not act upon it.

37270. From what I see it is a handsome percentage, but I do not see that the rest of the audience should not profit by it?—I shall tell you. ‘ Is there any material difference in the circumstances on different farms, or is one equal to another in the matter of prosperity?’ In some cases I gave the people off 50 per cent. in others only 10. I used my own discretion. I wish to point out that Mr Fell makes the interest of the tenants his own. I think I might mention also that since Mr Fell became the proprietor of this estate in 1864, he has spent £2921, 2s. 4d. on improvements upon the property. That represents buildings which of themselves have come to a very large sum. I might take leave to mention that, because I wish to mention it again in connection with the houses. Houses on large farms—and I adopt the standard of the Commission in distinguishing between large and small farms—£1660, 3s. 6d.; houses on crofts, £487, 9s.; together, £2921, 2s. As to Connell Connel, who was the first witness here to-day, he says he complained regularly almost at every rent collection. It was news to me. I have collected his rent many times, and although he often said times were hard, he never said that he wanted anything back. He said he could not mention his past rent; I think I can mention it. In 1852 his father’s rent was, in money, £14. He also supplied 80 eggs, 4 fowls, 4 chickens, one pint of seal oil, 4 hanks of lint, 5s. for wrack, 1s. 3d. per sids, 5 bolls of meal, making £5, 14s. 11d.; total, £19, 14s. 11d.

37271. In what year was that?—1852; and his rent to-day is £18, 10s.; so that his rent is lower to-day by £1, 4s. 11d. than in those days. He says there have been no improvements. I quite believe Connell persuades himself that is so; but we put a capital march fence along his farm separating his lands from the feus. We have also given him materials for roofing his house, and that has been done regularly. He described his ground as twenty acres. He really has 38·061 acres according to the Ordnance Survey, and for that he pays £18, 10s., so that he has it at about 10s. an acre. I wish to refer to this matter of the buildings. Mr Fell is willing to spend money in buildings at 5 per cent., which is not out of

Lismore.
John Fraser Sim.

the way. Again, on the other hand, the tenant has means of executing the work at a much cheaper rate than Mr Fell, the proprietor, can do. The tenant comes and says—'No, I shall not pay one half, but I shall do 'the mason work for you.' If he does, we pay the carpenter, joiner, slater, plasterer, and plumber, and build the house for him. That we consider a fair arrangement; it has wrought well; and I could point to many instances where it has wrought well. In the case of thatched houses we invariably give wood. There is a vessel loaded lying at Mr M'Intyre's place ready to be used by tenants. As to deficiencies upon houses, I think I can do no better than show you the bill of compriseisement of Park. The houses there were erected fifteen years ago, and under such an arrangement as I speak of. There were two slated houses in it. At the tenant's entry one of these was valued at £7; it is now valued at £6, 10s., bringing out a deficiency of 10s., which we look upon as a fair sum to be paid by the tenant for putting it into the condition in which it was received. The other one is much larger. It was £14 when the tenant entered; it is now £11, 10s., making a difference of £3, 10s. Then in regard to the feuces, drains, and things of that sort, we look upon the tenant as responsible to give them up in fair order. Only decay in buildings or farm improvements we look upon as a thing to be provided for by the tenant and not by the proprietor, and they are never charged anything; but in that particular case I see there is £12 debited in respect of those things along with the houses. Another matter, and you have caught me on the hip to-day, because I was not prepared for it. I thought I should be able to say something in regard to Dugald Carmichael, Balmallachean, who presented himself as a witness. In order to show how my relations stand with him, I think it is as well I should read straight off a letter which I hold in my hands from his mother, and which really gives the reason why things are as they are.

37272. *The Chairman.*—Will you kindly allow me to look at the letter? (reads). I think, Mr Sim, that a letter of this sort should not be read aloud. It is sufficient for us to know that unfortunately Mr Carmichael's relatives at that time had reason to complain of him; but I do not think it would be desirable that matters between such near relatives should be publicly alluded to or read aloud?—I beg leave to mention that the foundation of this difficulty with Mrs Carmichael, who really took up her husband's lease of the farm, was this. Her husband was a pushing energetic man. He had his faults, but he had his good qualities. In framing his will he cut off the eldest son with £20. This struck me as odd. The next phase of the matter was this. A lime work was part of the subject let. It was sublet by the father before his death to another man. As soon as the father died, the family wanted to get it back again. They got the lime work back again, and from that time to this they have not wrought it, and in consequence some of the complainers from Port Ramsay have had to go much longer for lime than had this lime work been in operation. The consequence was a family disagreement, and Mr Fell wrote to me, and said, 'I have written to Mrs Carmichael telling her she is legally in a position to carry out her late husband's will, and that I cannot allow 'things to go on with two masters and little labour, and that if I must 'interfere I must give her notice, which she will regret.' This went on from bad to worse until in January I invited Mr Fell to come down here. He came, went into the whole matter, found this son was causing all the trouble and refused to leave; and the only result was that Mr Fell, in protection of his own interests, had to get rid of her altogether. But Mr Fell wrote me again to say that if he had a small place he would let her have it. He said—'If I could have put Mrs Carmichael and her younger

ARGYLL.

LISMORE.

John Fraser
Sim.

ARGYLL. ‘son in a smaller farm I would gladly do so, but I have no such place.
LISMORE. Mr Alexander Buchanan, another delegate, mentioned that when tenants had to remove, as he had from his place in Balliveolan, they had to leave everything behind them, and get no compensation for houses and fences.
John Fraser Sim. I looked into odd papers I had, and I saw that in 1859 he and his brother were in arrears £38, and the whole of that sum was wrought out by the proprietor and tenant sharing between them the cost of the march fence which was put up by the tenants, one half being credited to them in rent.

37273. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Do you adduce that as an instance of compensation?—Yes. In my recollection we have only ejected one man on the whole of Mr Fell's property. This man I hoped to see here to-day. We turned him out of a little cottage that we erected at the schoolhouse of Achahoran. He erected the cottage at his own cost, and fixed his price in quitting it—£4—and he took it and was well content with it. One other matter, in which I feel personally very sore, is this. Dugald Buchanan, Balnagowan, brings a reflection upon my predecessor, as reputable a gentleman as ever stood in Lismore. There is a charge against him of making away with this man's means—that he never accounted for those monies.

37274. *The Chairman.*—He meant that no regular settlement had ever been come to between the landlord and the outgoing tenant?—That is so, but the inference I took from it was that Mr Gregorson had declined to account, and had kept some of the man's money in his pocket.

37275-6. I did not understand that?

37277. *Professor Mackinnon.*—He said there was over £66, and there was only £26 of arrears, and that he was kept backward and forward between this and Oban a length of time, and he never got an accounting?—Mr Gregorson died ten years ago, and we advertised for all claims against him, and we never heard of this; and I think it unfortunate that a Lismore man should bring this charge against a man who lies in an honoured grave.

37278. *The Chairman.*—We never understood there was any charge of personal dishonesty against the factor; I understand there had not been a proper settlement of the account current between the proprietor and tenant?—I am glad it is so.

37279. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—I did not understand the case of compensation of Alexander Buchanan?—He and his brother were together owing £38 of rent which they could not pay. In order to help them the proprietor said—‘I shall carry out work upon your farm, and you will contract with me to do it;’ and those men built this wall between them and somebody else. The one-half of the contract price was placed to their credit in rent, and the other half they got to themselves.

37280. In cash?—No, by no means. We follow the principle that what is good for a farm is only good if it pays its proportion. They bore half of the expense, and the whole work was done by themselves.

37281. And was it stated to-day that they had done the whole work themselves?—He made it a grievance that they went out and left houses, fences, and everything.

37282. How long after the march fence was put up?—His brother is there still. He said it was only a family disagreement that turned him out.

37283. *Professor Mackinnon.*—You told us the rent in 1852 and the present rent of the estate, would you be able to give the rent, in 1852, of the tenants under £30?—The rent of those under £30, in 1853, was £380, 19s. 7d.

37284. What is the rent just now?—£250, 19s. 6d.

37285. Does the rent in 1852 include those eggs and hens and so on?—It does.

ARGYLL.

37286. It is the valued rent?—Yes, there was a price put upon it.

LISMORE.

37287. Are you able to say that the area of the crofts in 1853 that paid £30 odds was exactly the same as the area now?—It is different. Crofts have been added to larger holdings, and sometimes two small holdings have been placed together to make a comfortable croft, the result being that while in 1853 we had tenants of £30 occupying ground to the extent of 578 acres, we have only got 367 acres tenanted by people of the same description now.

John Fraser Sim.

37288. Would you be able to say whether the crofts under £30 of rent have increased or diminished in value since 1853—those that were crofts in 1853 and the crofts now; what is the difference between now and then?—I have the material here, but I could not tell you straight off.

37289. You said there was a reduction over the whole estate since 1863?—That has been principally in the large farms.

37290. Now there is no large farmer here to-day complaining of increase of rent, but small crofters were. I understood you wished to meet that by saying there was a reduction of rent over the whole estate?—No; I meant to say that at Port Ramsay, where the only increase of rent has been, we have laid out £400, of which only a portion is charged in the shape of interest. But the large tenants have got their rents reduced in this way. The tenant says—‘I am not content with those thatched buildings, and I am willing to share the expence of making something better;’ the proprietor says—‘I am happy to meet you’—and the rent was charged at a slightly lower figure than we would get if there were no buildings on the property.

37291. Do you consider those £30 holdings and under are relatively higher or lower rented than those above them?—Lower to the extent of 3d. per acre; and looking to the quality of the land and comparing it with that occupied by the larger tenants, I am satisfied the crofters have equally good, and in most cases better land.

37292. Your judgment then as a valuator of land is different from that of your predecessor who spoke here just now?—I have facts to a certain extent to go upon. I think the question was put to him with reference to Port Ramsay.

37293. I understood the question to refer to the whole island—were the smaller crofts or the bigger farms higher rented, and he said if anything the crofts were higher rented?—I challenge that statement.

37294. Was that the statement, Mr M'Intyre?—*Mr M'Intyre.* It was of the Duke of Argyll's estate I was speaking I think.

37295. (*To Witness*).—You think the crofts are lower rented than the large farms?—*Witness.* The difference is so slight that I would not like to say; but I think, looking to the quality of the ground and comparing the places, you will find the difference to be very trifling indeed.

37296. Would you be able to tell us whether there are many without land at all upon Mr Fell's estate?—A very considerable number.

37297. How many?—Twenty-one occupants of houses who have got no land except gardens connected with them; and estimating a number of paupers, and those who do not pay rent there, there might be another dozen. There might be at any rate thirty-five families on Mr Fell's estate without land.

37298. Upon whose lands are those,—upon the big farms or the crofts?—They are dotted all over; some in Port Ramsay and others right over the whole place, principally along the public roads. In most places they pay 5s. and get it back again. We merely insist upon payment in order

ARGYLL. to satisfy them that they are sitting there and under obligation to the proprietor.

LISMORE. —
John Fraser Sim.
37299. Are you able to tell me whether there are more dotted among the small tenants or larger farms?—The larger-farms principally. Where they are in centres they are upon the larger farms. We have got upon one farm alone six of them all sitting together.

37300. Are they kept from trespassing upon the farm?—I have no complaint as to that; I fancy they are allowed to move about pretty much.

37301. You heard the complaint of the crofters about want of peat, and that this was virtually raising the rent?—That must be taken with a certain amount of caution. There was about fifteen acres of peat in the land, and this was all wrought out. The last quantities of peat taken were soft, fibrous peat, which had no good quality as fuel. That has disappeared. But if you take into account that a man has to leave his home three miles off and dig peat, and turn them to dry, and then take them three miles home, I should think he is cheaper with coals.

37302. But don't you know that the man said he actually did walk the three miles and dry and carry the peats without difficulty?—He thought so, but I don't think he would take them now.

37303. At all events he won't get them?—They are not to be had.

37304. With respect to that man about whom you spoke who was evicted eighteen years ago, have you got the books of your estate during that time?—I must have them. They will be in Oban. I will look into the matter if you wish.

37305. Can you say whether an account was ever rendered?—I cannot say.

37306. As far as I understood it, there was no personal debt against Mr Gregorson, but that the factor never rendered him an account, and he was surprised when the proceeds of the sale were £66 and the debt £26—would all the rest be expenses?—Oh, no.

37307. He never got an account?—No.

37308. But you don't know whether it was true?—I don't think Mr Gregorson could have slept in his bed if he had done the man injustice.

37309. Do you think the man went to Oban often about it?—Possibly.

37310. Don't you think you should suspend your opinion until you look into it?—Perhaps so.

37311. There are two natives of the island members of the School Board?—Yes.

37312. And they are well satisfied with that?—Yes. There has always been a fight to have two members from Lismore.

37313. The fight was territorial and not ecclesiastical?—Yes.

37314. And they have those representatives now?—Yes. There was another complaint made by Duncan Carmichael in respect of another injustice this year in putting out a widow because she was a widow. This was a joint tenancy—John and Hugh M'Gregor, which is a common thing—two brothers associated together, and yet, although their names appear together in the rent book, they actually paid their rents separately, getting only the one receipt for the *cumulo* sum. In this case the man died; his affairs were not in a good way; and if I were to show you the balance after the accounting that this widow with seven children had at her disposal you would see that it was not sufficient to meet the rent of £31, 10s. That was one reason.

37315. You mean this sum represents the whole amount at her credit?—That is so, for herself and seven children.

37316. What ages were the children?—One twenty-one, and they ran down to nothing.

ARGYLL

37317. But there was a son of twenty-one?—Yes.

LISMORE

37318. As you have alluded to the question of widows, I should like if you would state what the custom of the estate is when a man paying rent dies leaving a widow. If that widow has sons or children or near relatives able to assist her and to work the farm, what is the custom of the estate—renew her in the tenancy?—That is so. Take an instance. A man was drowned coming from Sheep Island, and his wife was left with a young family. Mr Fell put her into the place of her husband, and gave her a present of the half year's rent; and there she is to-day. Something would have been done in the case of the people complaining if the circumstances had been otherwise than they are. I gave a brother of Carmichael a piece of ground, and he and his mother are living in it, in the hope that this lad would go away, but he has not. The money is the mother's, although the lease is in the name of her son.

John Fraser Sim.

37319. There are other cases of widows holding tenancies on the estate?—These are the only two that occur to me at the moment.

37320. And you referred those matters to Mr Fell for his personal decision?—Yes. When he comes down I take the opportunity of going into these matters with him.

Mrs MARY CARMICHAEL, late of Park—examined.

37321. *The Chairman.*—What statement do you wish to make?—That I was ejected against my will; that is my chief complaint. *Statement of the Case of Mrs Mary Carmichael, late of Park, Lismore.* Dugald Carmichael (deceased), father of Neil Carmichael (also deceased), husband of the above Mrs Mary Carmichael, became tenant of the farm of Park about forty-five years ago, at a rent of £88 sterling per annum. About twenty-five acres of the farm were soft, mossy ground, which the said Dugald Carmichael drained and made fit for crop, the proprietor paying about half the expense incurred. About twenty years ago the late factor, Mr Gregorson, for reasons best known to himself, attempted to remove the above Neil Carmichael from the farm of Park, he having become tenant on the death of his father. The attempt was not successful, but, in face of the fact that the tenant had expended a large sum in improving the farm, the rent was raised to £92 sterling per annum. The tenant, Neil Carmichael, afterwards built over a mile of dykes round the farm, the proprietor again paying half the expense. About fifteen years ago a new dwelling house was erected, to which the tenant, Neil Carmichael, carted the whole of the material, and provided the stones, sand, and lime. He also paid the cost of plastering two rooms on the ground floor, and of the whole interior work of the upper flat—including partitions, doors, lathing, and plastering of walls and ceiling. Two years ago the above mentioned Mrs Mary Carmichael, who became tenant on the demise of her husband, built a barn at a cost of £30, of which the proprietor paid £10. There was a lime work on the farm, which was sublet by the tenant with the consent of the proprietor for a period of four years. The party to whom it was let kept it for five years and omitted to pay the rent for the last year, which the factor, Mr J. Fraser Sim, has promised to pay, but has not yet done so. Finally, the above Mary Carmichael was removed from the farm of Park at Whitsunday 1883, although the rent was paid up in full, the proprietor giving no reason whatever for so

Mrs Mary Carmichael.

ARGYLL. ' doing. She was refused when she applied for another farm on the estate, although there were more than one vacant at the time, and was interdicted from ploughing a portion of the farm which she considered she had a right to do in the spring of this year. She now occupies a small holding on the Balliveolan estate, which she has through the kindness of Mr J. Fraser Sim, the factor. Considering that she has been very harshly treated by the proprietor of the farm of Park, who has thus removed her from her farm which she had improved at so much cost, she begs to lay this statement of her case before the Royal Commission.'

37322. Had there been misunderstandings and quarrels in your family which made it undesirable for the factor that you should remain on the estate?—Well, there might have been a little of that. The eldest son might have been foolish at times, but he had many brothers all the world over; and what I would wish particularly would be that the laird might have given him serious advice, and caused him to be a help to me. Instead of that the only advice he would give was that he should be removed from the place against my will; and the end of it has been that I have lost my man's place.

37323. Had you a younger son who could have carried on the business of the farm possibly with you?—Yes. I have been tried more sorely than any other in the country has ever been, and that is bad enough.

37324. Who is now the tenant of the holding from which you were removed?—A neighbour of my own—M'Coll.

37325. The holding from which you were removed is held by another person who is no relation?—Yes.

37326. Does the new tenant pay a higher rent than your husband paid and than you were willing to pay?—I don't know what rent he pays, but I know this, that the thing was considered so unfair at the time that he was the only offerer.

37327. You say you have now got another holding?—My son has another holding. I was writing to the laird himself and not the factor, because he knew my husband very well, and latterly I asked him for a dwelling merely, and he would not give me that.

37328. You say in this memorial you now occupy a small holding on Balliveolan estate, which you have through the kindness of Mr Fraser Sim, the factor. You now therefore occupy another holding on a different estate?—It is my son who has it, and I live with him.

37329. What son is it—your younger son or the elder son?—The elder one.

37330. Your complaint is that you were removed from your husband's former holding without, as you think, a sufficient reason?—Yes, that is it.

37331. It is the same factor for the two estates, but you are now on a different estate?—Yes, that is quite the case.

[ADJOURNED.]

LYBSTER, CAITHNESS, THURSDAY, OCTOBER 4, 1883.

CAITHNESS

(See Appendix A, LX.)

LYBSTER.

Present:—

LORD NAPLER and ETTRICK, K.T., *Chairman.*

SIR KENNETH S. MACKENZIE, Bart.

C. FRASER-MACKINTOSH, Esq., M.P.

Sheriff NICOLSON, LL.D.

Rev. JAMES M'CULLOCH, Minister of the Free Church, Latheron,—
examined.

37332. *The Chairman.*—How long have you been minister of ^{Rev. James} M'Culloch,
Latheron?—Sixteen years.

37333. Do you appear here as a delegate?—Yes.

37334. And as representing in a manner the whole parish, or a
particular district of the parish?—The estate of Latheronwheel particu-
larly.

37335. How many different estates have you to deal with or represent
on this occasion?—Well, there are three proprietors whose whole pro-
perties may be said to be within the district, and there is a part—but a
very small part—of a fourth.

37336. What are the names of those proprietors and their estates?—
Mr Sutherland of Forse, Mrs Gunn of Latheron, Major Stocks of
Latheronwheel, and the fourth is Mr Thomson Sinclair of Freswick.

37337. Which is the largest and most important of these estates?—
Major Stocks, I believe, has the largest estate.

37338. Which is the estate with which you are most concerned and
about which you wish to speak?—The estate of Latheronwheel.

37339. Have you any written statement to present on behalf of the
people?—I have.

37340. Has that statement reference to the whole district, or has it
reference to a particular estate?—To the state of Latheronwheel. The
statement is as follows:—‘Statement of Grievances and proposed Remedies
to be made before the Royal Commissioners, on Crofters, &c., at Lybster,
on the 4th day of October 1883, in behalf of tenants on the estate of
Latheronwheel.—1. It is due to others who requested me to represent
them before the Commission, and to whose request I acceded at the time it
was made, that I should explain why it may seem as if I were neglectful
of my promise to them. After due consideration, it appeared to me that I
could best serve the several interests involved by limiting special reference
in the following statement to grievances on the property of Latheronwheel,
because I have been led to understand that delegates were appointed to
speak as to the state of the parish generally, and I am aware that other
estates are to be specially represented by delegates well qualified to
speak from personal knowledge of the circumstances peculiar to them;
while, so far as I am informed, there is no one appointed to speak
for the crofters on Latheronwheel besides myself, and it is therefore
necessary that I should endeavour to present their case more fully than

CAITHNESS ' it would be reasonable to expect one delegate to be permitted to do in
 behalf of the crofters on several properties. 2. One other remark of a
LYBSTER. ' preliminary nature I think it necessary to make is, that in the following
 statement I am not giving my own opinions, nor depending upon my
Rev. James M'Culloch. ' own knowledge for the facts, but am relating what was told me by those
 I represent at a public meeting, with the exception of a few statistics
 of acreage and rents for which I am indebted to valuation rolls and
 such like documents, while at the same time I state nothing inconsistent
 with my knowledge, and have been at some pains in the way of verifi-
 cation. The grievances of the crofters and some farmers on the estate
 of Latheronwheel may, for convenience, be ranged under six heads. I.
 Deprivation of hill pasture; II. No compensation for improvements;
 III. Insecurity of tenure; IV. Excessive rent; V. Damage to crops
 and pasture by game; VI. Extent of holdings. I. *Deprivation of hill
 pasture.*—This grievance, whether or not the greatest, is entitled to
 the first place, on account of the great number who complained of it,
 and the prominence given it by every one who complained. The ten-
 ants of the townships Brachungie, Guidabost, Leodabost, Smeral, and
 Buailtach are those who have most to complain of in respect of hill
 pasture. 1. Brachungie. The occupants of this township number
 fifteen. Their arable land averages seven or eight acres to each, with
 the addition of patches of comparatively recent improvement out of
 their own pasture, and at their own expence. Until a few years since,
 they had hill pasture called "The Brachungie Shieling," which extends
 to within a fraction of three square miles (1870 acres 3 roods 8 poles).
 Of this pasture they were deprived without their consent—that is to
 say, the factor and a sheriff officer acting on the maxim, divide and
 conquer,—visited the tenants separately, and holding over their heads
 the threat of immediate eviction, forced from them an unwilling assent
 to the spoliation. After having an opportunity to consult with one
 another, they petitioned the landlord to leave them in possession of
 their shieling, and received a reply in the form of summonses of
 ejection. It was not convenient to move, and accordingly they occupy
 now about *one-sixth* of their former holdings, including arable and
 pasture lands. It would seem reasonable to suppose that a compen-
 sation should be made for so large a part of their pasture, in the form
 of a reduction of rent, or otherwise. But such is not the case. The
 full rent is exacted as before the spoliation. And when to some the
 irritation caused by their cattle destroying the corn on a small croft,
 which is situated in the middle of a piece of common, and which be-
 came vacant, they requested the proprietor not to put a tenant into it
 again, but let them have it as part of their common pasture, their
 request was granted on condition of their agreeing to pay the full rent
 (£8) annually, valuation of the timber on the house and offices (of
 which they could get no benefit), and the value of the downlay of the
 crop, which was not to be laid down. This was taken from their
 pasture, which, with the part of it cultivated by the proprietor, brings
 in to him an annual rent of £50, while they must pay full rent and
 additions for the little croft which has been given them. It is perhaps
 not possible to give a correct estimate of the value to the tenants of
 their shieling, but when it is stated that they can keep only from one-
 half to two-thirds of their former stock, it will be seen that the loss is
 not small. *Note.*—In one case the number of cattle had to be reduced
 from eighteen to four, and of sheep from twenty to none (in con-
 sequence of the pasture being taken from them). In another case, the
 reduction was from fifteen cattle to ten and from twenty sheep to two

' or three kept at home on tethers. 2. The township of Leodabost was CAITHNESS
 ' at an earlier date deprived of its shieling, which consisted of thirty-
 ' seven acres green pasture, and 246 acres moor, in all 283 acres, part of
 ' which was very valuable. On this sheiling also a farm has been culti-
 ' vated for some time which brought in a rent of £30 annually a few
 ' years since, but somewhat less now. For this sheiling no reduction of
 ' rent or other compensation was made to the tenants. Together with
 ' the loss of their shieling the same tenants have been deprived of their
 ' common pasture to a great extent by the settling upon it of four or five
 ' crofters. These two townships with Buailtach, which had benefit of
 ' Brachungie shieling, may be said to stand in a position by themselves,
 ' and to have suffered most, inasmuch as they had shielings and were
 ' deprived of them; but the case of the other places mentioned, especially
 ' of Smeral and Achneangoul, which can hardly be said to have anything
 ' worth the name of pasture, is not less hard. It may, however, be suffi-
 ' cient to summarise the hardships arising from the loss of pasture with-
 ' out entering further into statistics—(1) There is first the injustice
 ' of paying for what they have not, as when they had it; (2) The
 ' difficulty of keeping the few beasts they have, and which are
 ' necessary to bring in the rent; (3) In some instances the curtailed
 ' holdings are as small as to make it impossible to keep a horse,
 ' and of course there follows the paying of others to cultivate the land,
 ' drive peats, and everything else for which the services of a horse
 ' are necessary. On this subject the only other observation I wish to
 ' make, is that although a reduction of rent, and a large one in lieu of the
 ' pasture taken from them, and which is bringing in rent to the proprietor,
 ' seems a plain act of common justice, no such reduction would be
 ' an equivalent for the pasture. II. *No compensation for improvement.*—
 ' The complaint in respect of this grievance embraces, making arable land
 ' of waste, draining land already arable, and repairing and rebuilding
 ' houses. For such work so necessary, but at the same time so expensive,
 ' there is absolutely no compensation for the tenant, with one apparent
 ' rather than real exception to be mentioned immediately. It is true,
 ' and it is right to mention it, that the present proprietor is wont to allow
 ' an improving tenant to enjoy his improvements without increase of rent,
 ' while he continues to pay rents and customs punctually, shows himself
 ' submissive to all that is propounded to him as the landlord's pleasure,
 ' and lives and chooses to remain in his holding, although the rule is not
 ' without exception. Notwithstanding this favourable fact, it is a hard-
 ' ship, that if a man want to remove from his croft, if he cannot submit
 ' to conditions arbitrarily imposed upon him (such as the deprivation
 ' of pasture referred to), he can claim no compensation for his money, nor
 ' remuneration for his labour expended on his holding; and that if he
 ' dies his heir can neither expect to be permitted to sit at the old rent,
 ' nor enforce payment of their means sunk in the land. And there can
 ' be no doubt that a landlord or his agent is more apt to be more un-
 ' reasonable and aggressive when it is found a tenant has no alternative
 ' but to submit or remove, such removal of course adding to the land-
 ' lord's income in the form of increased rent from a new tenant, and that
 ' a tenant in such circumstances can have no heart to do much in the way
 ' of improving croft or farm. There was a time, and it is not yet wholly
 ' a bye-gone time, when a rise of rent was the result of the tenant's
 ' improvements, even while he behaved himself in the most admirable
 ' manner. It is in the case of repairs to houses that the apparent excep-
 ' tion from the rule of no compensation holds. The case stands thus:—On
 ' becoming a tenant, one has to pay to the outgoing tenant the appraised

LYESTER.

Rev. James
M'Culloch.

CAITHNESS ‘ value of the roof, or timber ; during the occupancy he may have to replace part, or the whole of the old wood, but on leaving he can claim no more than he paid on entry, at whatever sum the appraiser values the repaired or renovated roofs ; and should, as frequently happens, the landlord have wood in the roof—“ master’s wood,” as it is called—it must retain its value, however long the roof is maintained, which value is always a first charge on the sum at which the timber is appraised. It is not only so, but crofters have sometimes to rebuild their houses without any compensation at all ; and in the best arrangement that I have heard of the tenants had to build a roof, part of the dwelling house, or the whole offices, without a shilling of compensation except for the timber ; on leaving the holding, quarrying, driving, building walls and putting on the roof all done for the proprietor. It is not to be wondered at that the houses occupied by some crofters are so wretched in appearance, and as they themselves say, neither wind nor water-tight. *N.B. Cases*—(1) A man lost £20 valuation, through having mislaid or destroyed his “ melioration paper ; ” (2) A woman who rebuilt her house not entitled to a penny of compensation. III. *Insecurity of tenure* naturally connects itself with the grievance just spoken of. Had tenants a good legal hold of their crofts and houses, they might venture to do some slight improvements, although there should be no hope of compensation beyond a reasonably lengthened occupation. But such is not the case. There are but few leases given or asked. For the proprietor it is convenient to have a written engagement, since, in that case the usual “ If you’re not satisfied, go,” is more likely to silence any complaints than where a tenant could found on his lease a plea for damages ; and some tenants having made the experiment and found the lease to be “ only good for the laird,” are not disposed to again risk entanglement in its legal meshes. Yet, of two evils, the lease or other security might be the less ; for but a very slight offence is sufficient to provoke eviction. It may be somewhat over the mark to say that the crofter who execrates the grouse, or shakes his fist at the rabbits which devour his crops, is sure to be removed from house and land ; but it is little else than a paraphrase of the words of a crofter, who, in stating his vexation and loss through these creatures, said “ And if you say a word you’re turned out.” He did not specify whether the vocable of such direful result was to be addressed to the grouse or their owner. There are not wanting, I am informed, instances which would, if fully stated, transfer such statements from the category of figurative expressions to the regions of sober history. IV. *Excessive rent*.—Of the case of the tenants who have been deprived of their pastures or shielings, it is needful only to say, that if their rent was within sight of being a reasonable one before such deprivation, it must have been unreasonably and unjustly high. And I could not ascertain that landlord or factor complained that it had been too low ; certainly the tenants did not. A different class of cases is composed of persons whose rent has been gradually increased, although nothing has been expended on the land or houses occupied by them, except by themselves. 1. A croft which began, so far as known, with a rent of 15s., some meal, peats, and a hen and eggs, is now about £13 and custom peats, not costing the proprietor one shilling during the rise of rent. 2. Another rent was raised from £10 to £12, with nothing done to account for the increase except the crofter’s own improvements. 3. A third rent is stated to have been only 30s. when the present occupant’s father entered it. In his time it rose to £9. It is now over £16, and its privilege of pasture greatly curtailed in the manner already noted. A class of crofts, different from

LYBSTER
Rev. James
McCulloch.

' the two just mentioned, consists of those which are situated nearer the CAITHNESS sea coast, and seem to have been too high rented during two generations at least. The rents are said to range there from £1, 5s. to £1, 15s. and more per acre of arable land, with comparatively little pasture. These crofts are not at all so much more valuable than others, but the rent is, as the occupants usually express it, laid on the sea; that is, the proprietor of the land reaps the benefit of the fishing without going to sea. The increase of rent on the whole property during the last twenty years appears to be about £380, or about 25 per cent. To this sum the home farm—the only very large one on the property—contributes nothing, although within the period just named improvements in draining, fencing, reclaiming waste land, and in building, at, I have no doubt, a cost of much more than £3000, it being presently let at £50 less than its then estimated rental. If the home farm is reasonably rented, and it must be assumed to be so, what can be said of the rents of the crofts on which there is so marked an increase, and on which the proprietor expended nothing?

LYBSTER.

Rev. James
McCulloch.

37341. Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.—To whom is it let?—To Dr Burn. It was valued twenty-two years ago at £300, and according to the valuation roll it is now let at £250. It does seem inconsistent with equity that crofts should be rented so high above the rental per acre of the large farms which are usually the best soil on the property. In connection with the unequal rental per acre on large farms and crofts, it is to be noted that the incidence of taxation shares with rent the same stigma of want of equity—the stronger and more favourably situated having here also the lighter burden to bear. V. *Damage done to crops by game.*—The word *game* must for convenience be allowed to designate rabbits, hares, wild-geese &c., as well as grouse and pheasants. Various notorious cases of hardships of long standing arising from this source were mentioned at the meeting referred to at the beginning of this statement. For instance, one crofter complained that he had almost wholly lost his crop of oats this season, it being eaten by rabbits, and that he had resolved he would not be at the expense of sowing corn again. Some of his neighbours had, he said, managed by nets and bells to preserve for themselves some of their crops; others, like himself, had lost very much. Another stated that for many years he could secure nothing like a crop of oats or turnips off one of his best fields. He once sowed it in prime condition with six bushels of oats, and he reaped two bushels, instead of the fifty or sixty which would have been his return were it not for rabbits. That was by much the most damaged of his fields, but by no means the only one damaged. Complaints were made, but not listened to. A third sufferer from this source says he one year valued the damage to the crop by rabbits at £6 sterling, and informed the proprietor of the loss, whose reply was, "If you are not satisfied, go." But there is no need to multiply instances. And surely no argument is required to show the injustice of exacting high rents for land, and making a profit of the vermin fed upon it. I am not in a position to give an approximate estimate of the damage caused by grouse; but have to testify that the crofters of the higher grounds complain as bitterly of their ravages as the crofters in the low grounds do of the destruction caused by rabbits. Other creatures, which tenants in other places are permitted to keep down, cause here undoubted loss, but not so much, I presume, as to constitute a grievance, although their names have been cast in with those mentioned. VI. The last grievance which I have been requested to bring before the Commission is that of persons who have *little or no land*; and their

ITHNESS
LYBSTER.
Rev. James
'Culloch.

wish naturally is that large farms should be divided into small holdings, so that each man who has a family, and who prosecutes the fishing during summer, might have land enough to occupy him at home during winter. In view of the hardships which they have to bear, and the obstacles which stand in the way of the amelioration of their circumstances, I trust the Commission will not judge unreasonable the desire of those whom I represent, viz., that Parliament shall enact a law which may enable the crofter to possess his holding without being crushed into the degradation of serfdom, which will be instrumental in restricting his rent to the actual value of his croft when well tilled, and which will tend to the enlarging of crofts, with pasture attached, to such an extent as would enable the crofter to keep his children under his own guardianship until they arrived at the years of discretion.'

37342. *The Chairman.*—In reference to taking away the hill pasture from the two townships you mentioned how long is it since the hill pasture was taken from the townships of Brachungie?—I should say, six or seven years ago; but there are other delegates here who can give the information.

37343. It is quite recent?—Yes; I think not much more than that.

37344. Quite in the memory of the present people?—Yes.

37345. What became of the hill pasture of Brachungie; what was done with it?—It forms part of a farm; the proprietor cultivated a part of the pasture. He turned off those people before he made it arable land, and in order to get it let he took their pasture and joined it to this newly cultivated farm.

37346. You call this larger common pasture shieling ground; was this larger common pasture contiguous to the arable of the township, or was it separate and at a distance?—It was not far from some of it, but from some it was pretty far.

37347. Was it adjacent to some?—Yes.

37348. How far was it from those from whom it was most remote?—I should suppose not more than half a mile.

37349. Was it enclosed?—No.

37350. No enclosure whatever?—No.

37351. Was the right of pasture upon it lotted? I mean, had each tenant a prescribed number of stock he was allowed to keep upon it, or did all the tenants run out any number of stock they pleased?—I am not able to say. I never heard any statement regarding that, but I believe the rule which regulated it was the provender they had in winter for their stock; that is to say, the size of the cultivated land would regulate the number of stock kept.

37352. The crofters seem to have kept a great quantity of stock upon this common pasture. It appears that in one case the number kept is reduced from eighteen to four?—That is the statement of the tenant.

37353. Were those cattle?—Yes.

37354. How did the small tenants manage to keep in winter such a large number of cattle as eighteen upon their arable resources?—I believe, in a case like that, many of the cattle, being hardy Highland cattle, would be out during the winter; I suppose so, though I am not sufficiently acquainted with the fact, to be sure.

37355. Do you think the crofters were in the habit of purchasing a great deal of provender in winter for their cattle?—Well, at that time, I do not know, they purchased a great deal; but that was one of the statements made at this public meeting,—that a chief annoyance arising from being deprived of the shieling is that, as a tenant expressed it, they have to scour the whole country, and (he said in his own graphic way)

by dint of paying, and prigging, and some greeting, they were able to get CAITHNESS some straw and hay throughout the country to keep their beasts alive.

37356. When this pasture and sheiling ground was taken away, was that done in connection with any re-lotting, or general change in the distribution of the arable ground, or was it simply taken away leaving the tenants as they were before?—Simply leaving them as they were before.

LYBSTER.
Rev. James McCulloch.

37357. Without any reduction of rent whatever?—None whatever.

37358. You seem to have two kinds of common pasture,—common pasture near the arable land, and then a larger portion that you call sheiling ground?—Yes.

37359. Are there any townships left which still possess sheiling ground, or has the sheiling ground been universally taken away?—I believe it has been universally taken away; there is no sheiling ground now that I know of.

37360. Is there still common pasture left in some places?—Yes, there is some common pasture.

37361. Considerable amounts?—Not a very great deal.

37362. Are the tenants allowed to break up their common pasture and make it arable? Is there any regulation affecting that?—I do not suppose there was ever need, for it is scarcely capable of being broken up; it is very rocky heather pasture that they have,—either that or peat mosses. I never heard any allusion made to that.

37363. You spoke of the high rents, and gave one or two examples of very great increases of rental,—for instance, one from 15s. to £13. Over how long a period did an increase of that sort take place? When was it 15s. and when did it become £13?—I should say the 15s. would date back about fifty years.

37364. In that case, do you know whether the holding was let on an improving lease?—I am not aware whether there was a lease of any kind; the tenant was allowed to do pretty much what he liked, if he paid his rent.

37365. But there may have been an understanding, when he got it for 15s., that the ground was to be improved during a course of years?—I have no reason to suppose that that was the case.

37366. When a tenant had a holding for so small a rent as 15s., he must have improved it very much over a term of years, to justify a demand for an increase of rent. In a case of that kind, would the tenant have felt it a hardship to pay some increase of rent?—I should think not; the hardships in that connection is the being deprived of their pastures to so large an extent, together with the rise of rent on the arable land.

37367. It is a question of degree?—Well, I suppose so; I do not think any tenant would grudge some increase of rent in that time, although it was all by his own labour that the improvements were made.

37368. The tenant would recognise that by having entered at a low rent for a term of years, he was in some measure repaid?—Doubtless.

37369. You mentioned a case of a recent rise of rent from £10 to £12; would that be regarded as a great hardship?—The tenant spoke of it as a hardship; he said he had not got a farthing's value for the £2.

37370. How long had he had it at £10?—I cannot say; I just took down the statement as it was made at the meeting.

37371. You say the rents are higher in proportion to the area of ground in holdings down near the sea; what sort of holdings are those down near the sea?—Well, some of them keep a horse and a cow, some of them two cows without a horse, and I know an instance or two where

CAITHNESS a horse and two cows are kept ; I should suppose, something like eight or nine acres.

LYBSTER. 37372. Are the men who have those holdings fishermen ?—Fishermen.

Rev. James McCulloch. 37373. What is the rent of such a holding,—keeping two cows for instance, and having a fisherman's house ?—£20 is the rent of one I looked at last night, where a horse and two cows are kept.

37374. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—What is the name of the village ?—It is not a village ; Shantry is the name of the place.

37375. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—How many acres would there be ?—I was informed it was between 35s. and 40s. per acre.

37376. *The Chairman.*—In the specific case, is the man a trader or shopkeeper ? Is he something above the rank of a fisherman or labourer ?—No. There are two brothers who occupy it ; one is a shoemaker, and the other works the farm, and they both go to sea in the season.

37377. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie* [referring to the valuation roll].—Benjamin and John Dunbar ?—Those are the two.

37378. *The Chairman.*—You spoke of there being no leases or few leases granted upon this estate ? Had there been leases granted in order to promote the improvements of the soil in the first instance ? I mean, had those tenants improving leases originally, and then, at the close of the first lease, was a lease afterwards refused them ?—A few had leases, —a very few only, so far as I am aware,—and when those leases were run out, I believe the truth is, that the proprietor did not want to give a new one, and the tenant, considering the terms on which he would get a new one, did not want to have it. Indeed, I was told quite recently by one man, that he would not have a lease on the conditions on which it would be granted. He did not mention what these would be.

37379. Do you think generally that these little farms or holdings were improved and taken in under a lease, or were they improved and taken in without a lease ?—Without a lease, I understand.

37380. Generally ?—Generally.

37381. You said that the people were anxious to have and to hold the land in connection with the fishing industry. We have had it stated to us, on the west coast frequently, that the people on the east coast did not desire to hold land in connection with the fishing industry, and that on the east coast the two industries of farming and fishing either were divided, or become divided ; is that the case here ? Do you ever hear that the people prefer to devote themselves exclusively to fishing, and to have no land, or do they prefer to fish and farm together ?—They prefer to fish and farm, undoubtedly.

37382. Have you ever considered the question yourself, whether the division of the two industries is desirable or not ?—I think it is not desirable on this coast. They are not able to prosecute the fishing to the same advantage as the fishermen on the opposite side of the Firth do. I am not able perhaps to tell all the reasons why, but I see the fishermen from the other side are able to be out when no boats can go out from this side ; and I do not see what our men would do at all during a great part of the year, if they had no land. It is only the herring fishing that is prosecuted here, generally speaking. A few small boats may go out for a time to fish cod and haddock, but that is solely or almost solely for the use of their families. The herring fishing is the fishing on this coast.

37383-4. You mentioned they did not go out in winter. Why do they not prosecute the white fishing ? Is it for the want of a proper description of boats and tackle ?—No, not at all. I have no doubt their boats are good enough. They do go to the winter herring fishing, but I do not think they have ever had much encouragement to prosecute the other fishing.

It is not done, and I do not see there is very much success when they do go out from this coast. Then our people are scattered along the whole coast, and with the exception of the harbour down at Lybster here, there is not a harbour into which they can run in case of storms, and I believe this harbour is not always accessible to them.

CAITHNESS

LYBSTER.

Rev. James
McCulloch.

37385. With reference to the ravages of game and rabbits, the people have no leases, and they are in full enjoyment of the benefits of the last Act as to the destruction of rabbits, if they can use those advantages. Have you any knowledge of what the people have done or begun to do under the new Act? Are they trying to destroy rabbits, or does the proprietor interfere with the exercise of their rights under the Act?—The proprietor would get rid of them at once. So far as my experience and acquaintance with the circumstances go, that would be the result.

37386. That is an impression you express, but do you know of any case where the proprietor has signified to the tenants that they must abstain from destroying rabbits, or go?—I am not able just now to specify any particular case.

37387. But you think the people would be afraid to exercise their rights?—It is not an opinion; I know they are afraid; and if dogs were seen chasing rabbits or going away off their own fields in pursuit of them, that is enough to create a disturbance.

37388. That is a different question from trapping rabbits on their own ground?—Well, I think, if the chasing of them with a dog off the field was an offence, trapping would be considered a far greater offence. The general impression on the part of the people who know the circumstances (some of them to their own cost) is, that if they were to interfere with rabbits by means of traps or any other way, they would be turned out of their holdings.

37389. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Are all the farmers whom you speak of employed at the fishing to some extent?—Not all. There are a very few of those on the heights who go.

37390. Then those on the heights live entirely on the produce of their own farms?—Entirely, with this exception, that some of them have to go away during part of the year to work where they can get work, such as at the slate quarries.

37391. Is the produce of their farms supplemented by the wages of labour?—In some cases.

37392. Do you know what sized farm is sufficient to support a man without his seeking for wages elsewhere?—From my own knowledge I cannot say, but on asking the men they said that the crofts should range from twenty to fifty acres.

37393. Do the crofters with twenty acres keep one horse or two?—There are very few who have twenty acres. I do not think I know any who have twenty acres of arable land. I know one, I think, who has over twenty acres, and he keeps two horses.

37394. Is it the custom for the crofters to keep one horse each, and to arrange with each other to do the ploughing?—That is very common.

37395. What is the minimum size of croft that will keep a horse?—I suppose a croft of about five acres will keep a horse and a cow.

37396. What sort of rent is usually paid for a croft of five acres?—About £5. I do not think there are many of them under £1 per acre.

37397. Would you expect the proprietor to build a house on a £5 croft?—I would expect him to help so far.

37398. What is the yearly rent a fisherman pays for his house in a village like Lybster?—I believe about £4 or £5 is common for a fisherman to pay in the village of Lybster.

CAITHNESS

37399. Without any land at all?—I believe so.

LYBSTER

37400. If the proprietor erected a house on a five acre croft, which is worth £5, would the crofter be willing to pay more rent?—I do not believe he would be willing to pay more rent, because he does not think the croft is worth £5, though he must give that for it.

Rev. James
M'Culloch.37401. He thinks it worth £5, or he would not take it?—Well, the question was put to a man at this meeting, who said he had to expend £30 of his own money in building a house, and that he would not get a halfpenny for it,—the question was asked, ‘*Why did you do that?*’ and the answer was,—‘Just because I cannot lie outside.’

37402. Could he not hire a house in the village of Lybster?—It is not always easy to do that.

37403. Do you know if the rises of rent have taken place at any distinct intervals?—I am not aware.

37404. You mentioned, I think, that the small farms are rented at a greater sum per acre than the large farms, but you referred exclusively to the home farm of Latheronwheel?—Yes, I referred to that as the only one of which I had statistics; and that is the only large arable farm on the property.

37405. Do you know the property owned by Mr Sinclair of Freswick?—I do not know any particulars regarding it.

37406. Do you know the farm of Dunbeath?—No, I cannot say I have any special knowledge of it.

37407. You do not know whether generally in the county the small tenants are rented more highly than the large ones?—I believe they are, from inquiries I have been making.

37408. Do you know if Dr Burns, who has the home farm, gives any services gratis to the population as a medical man, in addition to his rent?—I am not aware of that.

37409. He does not get the farm at a reduced rent in consequence of any services he is supposed to render to the population?—Certainly not.

37410. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You have stated that £3000 has been expended upon this farm of which you have been speaking, and the result is that the rent is £50 less than it used to be?—The fact is so.

37411. Would it not have been wiser on the part of the proprietor to spend that £3000 for the benefit of the crofters whose rents have been raised so much?—I believe the expenditure was very wise upon the farm.

37412. It has beautified the place?—It has improved the place, I should say, immensely. I did not see the farm before a great part of the improvements were made upon it, but I saw many of them carried out, and I am convinced the money was wisely spent where it was spent.

37413. An expenditure is not a wise expenditure when it is not profitable?—If one could say it was not to be profitable, it would not be wise, but one is not always able to foresee what the result of his speculations will be.

37414. You mentioned the name of the proprietor of Latheronwheel; has he been long in possession of the estate?—About twenty years. He is a Yorkshire gentleman.

37415. Was he a purchaser?—Yes.

37416. Can you give any explanation at all about the instance of the first township you referred to,—any reason why such an arbitrary proceeding should take place as to deprive the people at once of their hill pasture, and make no reduction whatever of the rent?—The only reason I ever heard spoken of was that this piece of newly-cultivated land which

was made a farm of, and a house built upon it, would not let,—at least, CAITHNESS would not let well,—without a large addition of pasture to it.

37417. With regards to the matter of the rabbits, is it your impression, from what you know of the people, that the fear of being removed is so deterrent that practically the Act of Parliament in favour of the small tenants is a dead letter so far as freeing themselves from rabbits and hares is concerned?—That is my thorough conviction. I may be permitted to mention a statement made by one of the crofters at that meeting. He said, in speaking of his own loss, that some of his neighbours had managed to preserve a part of their corn by means of bells and nets and such things. I understand, on making inquiry regarding the bells, that they are not actual bells, but old tins and pails tied to a string and suspended from a pole, with a string brought into the house, so that when the rabbits are seen at the other end of the croft the pails may be allowed to fall and make a noise. If a person was not afraid of being interfered with otherwise, I do not think he would be at the pains to erect such an apparatus to keep the rabbits away, and I am told it is not a very effective one either.

LYDSTER.

Rev. James McCulloch.

37418. You have stated that some of the tenants object to have leases in consequence of the stringency of the conditions proposed to be inserted; have you yourself ever seen any lease?—No, I have never seen a lease.

37419. Going out of the parish of Latheron, you have some knowledge of the adjoining parish of Wick?—Yes.

37420. We have seen, in coming from Wick to-day, a large population, with a great number of holdings; do you think that most of the tenants there have leases, or have they not?—I have no knowledge, but I am led to believe it is not a common thing throughout the county for tenants to have leases.

37421. What remedy have you to suggest for the grievances you have detailed in your paper?—The people themselves mention fixity of tenure, on condition of their crofts being revalued. One man said it would be ruinous to have them continued as they are, but on condition of a revaluation, they would like to have some kind of security that they could not be cast out at any time. The next point is compensation for improvements made on their houses and on their lands, so that they might better their own condition. These were the principal things; and, of course, compensation for damages done by game, which in some cases are very serious. A man told me, not at the meeting but quite recently, that he lost a good deal of his corn by having gathered it too green to preserve it from grouse. They were taking away all the corn from the stooks in the fields, and he had to gather it hurriedly, and the consequence was that he lost a good deal by that.

37422. Is the population of the parish of Latheron increasing or decreasing, or is it stationary?—The population of the parish of Latheron is decreasing.

37423. Is yours the only Free Church in the parish?—No, there are four.

37424. What is the attendance in your own district?—The average attendance is about 500 or 550.

37425. With regard to the fishings, I gathered from what you said that the Caithness side of the Firth could not compete so well with the Banff side. It is not so well suited for fishing?—That is my opinion, though I could not perhaps account altogether for that.

37426. For one thing, on the other side there is a greater fishing population already gathered; is there not?—I believe so.

CAITHNESS 37427. They are nearer the markets?—Yes, and they have harbours too.

LYBSTER. 37428. Would it not really be necessary to incur a very considerable expenditure before the fishing upon the Caithness coast could be conducted with any very great advantage to the population?—I think it would be necessary to incur a good deal of expenditure.

Rev. James McCulloch. 37429. The people themselves could not do it?—That is out of the question.

37430. With regard to this place where we are now sitting, in Lybster,—the property of a very wealthy man,—could any encouragement be given to the fishing? could it be very much developed?—I think so. There is a pretty good harbour already, and it could be made much better and larger.

37431. Is there any local authority in the village of Lybster, or any one having charge?—I am not aware there is any local authority. The Parochial Board is the only authority.

37432. And it is more a sanitary authority than anything else?—Yes.

37433. Have any of the people in this place thought of petitioning the Duke of Portland to do anything in the way of developing the resources of the place?—I do not know.

37434. I understand he has reduced the rents in some cases?—I do not know; I am not so familiar with Lybster.

37435. With regard to the four names you mentioned, who seem to be the heritors in your district, do any of them live within your district?—Major Stocks has a residence, but he does not reside here except during the shooting season.

37436. None of the others have residences?—Mr Sutherland of Forse has a residence, but never resides here.

37437. Practically, the whole of the proprietors are non-resident?—Quite so. Mrs Gunn of Latheron resides on the estate of Swiney, so she may be considered resident, though not on her own property.

37438. Do any of these proprietors show much interest in the people, generally speaking? Do they show any benevolent interest by contributing sums annually in the way of donations for charitable purposes?—I am not aware. I know assistance has been given in the way of seed corn free during the last two years, when there was great need, by Mrs Gunn; and I believe Major Stocks procured seed corn so as to suit his tenantry, but of course they had to pay for it.

37439. What I want to come to is this, are the people generally looked after by the proprietors, and is there such an interest as you as a minister of religion think should be felt by the proprietors towards the people?—I think not. I cannot affirm that.

37440. That, I presume, is a drawback to the happiness and prosperity of the people?—A great drawback.

37441. Judging by what we have seen to-day between this place and Wick, there has been a great deal of land taken in and reclaimed within the last fifty years?—A great deal.

37442. And principally, I should say, by what may be called the crofter class?—Yes. On some properties they have more encouragement than on others, and more help given them in the way of doing it.

37443. It cannot be pretended, then, that the people of Caithness are by any means other than industrious, if they had opportunities and facilities given to them?—I should certainly say they are industrious, if they had opportunities.

37444. And they are so still, notwithstanding what has occurred?—Oh, yes. There are a good many who perhaps spend a good deal of their

time during the winter idle, having nothing to occupy them. They can- CAITHNESS not fish, and I suppose they have to be idle necessarily.

37445. Do you think many of them are compulsorily idle?—I believe so. I believe, if they had crofts, they would be very glad to occupy themselves upon them.

37446. And if they had what is commonly called fixity of tenure, they would improve their dwellings and improve their enclosures?—I certainly think they would.

37447. And tidy up all their surroundings?—Yes, I have no doubt of that.

37448. Have you observed that upon certain estates in Caithness there appears a marked difference in the surroundings of the small houses compared with what they are upon other estates?—I am not sufficiently acquainted with the rest of the county to be able to speak very definitely. Of course there is an appearance of comfort about the small places down towards the middle of the county, and towards Thurso and Wick.

37449. Suppose you are driving from Lybster to Wick, is there not a perceptible difference in the external appearance and surroundings of some of the houses as compared with others?—Certainly.

37450. *The Chairman.*—Is there any sporting rent upon these properties? Is the shooting anywhere let to tenants, or do the proprietors themselves shoot?—Of those I have mentioned, the only proprietor who has the whole moors in his own hands is Major Stocks. The shootings on the estates of Forse and Latheron are all let, and partly on the estate of Dunbeath.

37451. And the shooting rights of the tenants extend to the crofters' arable as well as the moors?—I understand that to be the case.

LYBSTER.

Rev. James
M'Culloch.

GEORGE SINCLAIR, Crofter, Latheron (55)—examined.

37452. *The Chairman.*—Are you on the estate of Forse?—No; I was born and brought up on it.

George Sinclair.

37453. Whose estate are you on?—The estate of Latheron—Mrs Gunn's.

37454. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—You appear here as a delegate for the Latheron people?—No, from the upper end of the estate of Forse, where I was born and brought up, and from which I was evicted.

37455. When were you appointed by those people?—I was appointed at the first meeting we had at Latheron, close upon two years ago.

37456. Is Forse contiguous to Latheron?—The march comes within a hundred yards of my door.

37457. Was it people from Forse who elected you?—Yes, people from Forse.

37458. How long did you live in Forse?—I lived in Forse till I was thirty-one years of age.

37459. So it is twenty-five years since you left it?—Yes.

37460. What statement have you to make on behalf of the people of Forse?—I have a statement to make that they were evicted twenty-five years ago. Five families were evicted in one day in the upper end of Forse.

37461. Who was the proprietor?—Mr Sutherland—the present Forse.

37462. What was the ground for removing them?—He raised the rent,

CAITHNESS and when he raised the rent he wanted them to put up new houses at their own expense, and they could not do that.

LYBSTER.

George
Sinclair.

37463. What was their rent?—Their rent was £13, and then he raised it to £18.

37464. Was it on account of their not being willing to pay that £18 that they were removed?—No, not at all.

37465. Then was it raised again from £18 still higher when they were removed?—No, he wanted no more; but he wanted to clear them out, and he said he would get the whole tenants cleared.

37466. Had they not good houses before?—They had houses that would do as they were, but he wanted them off the place. He wanted them to put up new houses at their own expense.

37467. What kind of houses had they?—Divot roofs and what they call Highland couples—the cattle and themselves going in at the same door. They lived all under the same roof, only there was an old sail between the animals and the fire.

37468. And he wanted them to build better houses?—Yes, if they would do it themselves.

37469. Was there any other ground of complaint against the people?—No ground.

37470. Had they been cultivating their lands?—They did cultivate them. It was because they cultivated the land that he put the rise on them. That was what they got for cultivating the land.

37471. Had they made improvements?—A great deal of improvements, but some of them did not.

37472. Were there only five crofters removed?—There were five removed in one day. There were eight removed, but there were five removed in one day; the roof was off, and they had to go.

37473. Who got their crofts?—He had them for three years in his own hand, and no one offered for them.

37474. How is the place occupied now?—It is occupied now, I believe, at less rent than the tenants were paying then.

37475. As a farm?—It is in two farms now.

37476. What was the name of the place where you lived?—Stemster, Forse, in the parish of Latheron. They had no place to go to unless they went to the churchyard that was near. They stopped in the barns, but they were evicted out of the barns after that.

37477. Where did they go to?—Some went to the parish of Halkirk, and most of them turned to be paupers after the little money they made out of their subject was gone.

37478. Were there any other evictions made at that time?—There were made in all one hundred and five evictions about that same time from that same estate. That was about the beginning of it. There were one hundred and five upon the estate evicted.

37479. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Do you mean families?—Yes, crofters and cottars.

37480. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—By the same laird who is there now?—Yes. There is most of it under sheep. There is one place where thirty-five were evicted for one farm.

37481. What is the name of that farm?—The farm of Rumster.

37482. Is there a higher rent being paid now than was paid before?—No, I do not believe it is higher now. The tenants were giving more rent.

37483. To what part of the world did all these one hundred families go, do you know?—I believe most of them went to be paupers; I attended the funerals of a good many of them from the poorhouse, and they just got nothing but the funeral of an ass.

37484. Then the representations you have been asked to make here are CAITHNESS,
not on behalf of the present crofters of Forse, but in respect of what has
been done there?—The present ones have put me in as a delegate.

LYBSTER.

37485. How many have been left there?—There are very few of the
old ones. There are some down at the fishings below the road. There
are a few of them still in it.

George
Sinclair.

37486. But they have no grievance of their own which they wish you
to represent?—They have grievances of their own. The land is three
times rented owing to the sea. It is on the sea they put the rents. They
pay the rent for the sea, not for the land.

37487. Are you the only person here to represent them?—No, there is
another to represent them.

37488. Is he living on the property of Forse?—No, he is not. He was
put off twenty-five years ago. He was one of those one hundred and five
who were put out. His aunt was evicted that same day she was on her
deathbed. She was put out by the police and the sheriff officer under the
factor, and was for eight days under a sail, and then she was taken away,
and about two months afterwards she died on another estate.

37489. These are interesting facts, but have you nothing to say in
regard to the present crofters?—Their grievance is that the rent is too
high.

37490. What is the rate of the rent per acre?—I cannot tell. There
are those here who can tell about it.

37491. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—In what part of the parish of Latheron
is Forse estate?—About the centre of the parish.

37492. Is it far from where we are just now?—About one and a half
miles south from where we are.

37493. Is it a large estate?—It is two and a half miles in length and
seven miles long.

37494. What was the meaning of those extraordinary evictions that
took place on the estate? What was the object in doing it?—I believe it
was owing to his father-in-law and his wife. They were Irish, and he had
to give in to their way. There was an old man who died—I believe he
was a pauper—and they came in and told Forse that he was dead.
Shepherd, his father-in-law, was there, and he said—‘Yes, George, that is
right; that is the way they should go.’

37495. Are you quite correct in saying there were 105 families? Do
you mean heads of families?—Yes, I mean all smoking houses—cottars
and small places.

37496. How many heads of families of that class may there be upon
the estate now?—Well, there are very few on it now except what are at
the fishing. There are none but two that were put out, but they are lying
on the face of the hill miserable, worse than if they were out with the
tinkers.

37497. With regard to the place where you are now living, upon Mrs
Gunn's estate, you do not represent the people on that estate?—No.

37498. Is there any complaint from that estate?—We have no com-
plaint but that we are, like all the rest, too high rented by the proprietor,
that has owned the land since twenty-five years ago, and we are paying
the rent that they were paying for it then. I may say we are all double
rented.

37499. Are you a fisherman as well as a crofter?—No.

37500. You say that of those families that were evicted from Forse a
great many became paupers and died. Were many obliged to emigrate
and leave the country?—I believe there were very few that emigrated.
There was very little emigration at that time.

CAITHNESS 37501. Where did they go to then?—Most of them that are living are on the estate that I am on. Their parents are dead, and they became paupers, because they had nothing to support them.

LYBSTER. George Sinclair. 37502. Who was the proprietor at the time who took the poor people on the estate of Latheron?—Munro had most of it then.

37503. Did he take them out of kindness, or what were the circumstances under which they came to this estate?—It was small places that were on the estate of Latheron then, and any of them that got better places removed and went to other places and made the best shift they could, because it was a place that had nothing but rocks on it, and all the green on it was not fit to be cultivated.

37504. *The Chairman.*—What is the name of the proprietor now—Sutherland of Forse?—Yes.

37505. Is it the same gentleman who made these evictions?—Yes, it is he who is living still.

37506. Does he ever live in the country?—He has lived in Ireland ever since 'the evictions, unless he comes for a short time. He may come for a night or two. The last time he was in Caithness was at the time of last election.

37507. Is it an old family in the country, or did they buy the estate?—They ran from generation to generation for I believe the memory of man; but we had good proprietors in that family—as good as were in Caithness—until he came.

JAMES MILLAR, Achow, Swiney (44)—examined.

James Millar. 37508. *The Chairman.*—What is your occupation?—I am a crofter's son.

37509. Is your father alive?—Yes.

37510. Is he holding a croft himself?—Yes.

37511. Do you work along with him?—I work along with him.

37512. On whose property?—On the Duke of Portland's property.

37513. Is that near Lybster?—About a mile west from Lybster.

37514. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Are you delegated here by the people on the Duke of Portland's estate?—Yes.

37515. Have you any statement to make on their behalf?—Yes, I have prepared a statement.—'The rents on Swiney estate were raised three times during my memory. It was always by a rise of rent we knew our improvements were taken notice of. In 1846, a lawyer factor named Morrison Snody increased each crofter's rent £1, 10s. to £3; but death removed him before the increase became due, and the greatest regret was that the burdens which he imposed could not be got free of as easily as himself. The next increase was under the proprietorship of the late General Gordon twenty-two years ago. The poor rates being raised to four shillings per pound—two shillings on proprietor and two on the tenant. In order that the general might stave off his own share of the rates, he clapped 10 per cent. immediately on every tenant not protected by lease. Besides, no opportunity was lost of increasing the rents when a change of tenancy occurred, or when a sitting tenant drew a lease. But the third, last, and worst, the climax of cruelty was in 1875, when we got a fiscal factor named Malcolm M'Lennan, a Lewisian, who still resides in Wick. Under this oppressor our rents in many instances were raised over one-third. And in attempting to come to terms with

'him for our crofts, it was all in vain to plead by word or letter, how CAITHNESS
'unlikely his demands were, for he never wanted as much of a bar- LYBSTER.
'barian's charity, but could tell us "If you don't agree to my terms,
'"another will when I advertise your place." In consequence of James Millar.
'M'Lennan's exorbitant rents, a shameful number of evictions took place ;
'and owing to his opposition the meliorations of some of the evicted are
'still unpaid. He imposed heavy fines on others for carting a few loads
'of mossy earth to their "middens," or even cutting peats, although five-
'sixths of the estate's surface is peaty ground. The tenants who had no
'other shift but to comply with M'Lennan's proposals were also fined, for
'every form of lease wherewith they were more effectually "tied down"
'cost one-fifth or sixth of a year's rent, being his fixed price for a sheet or
'two of paper and their contents ; whereas other tenants on neighbouring
'estates got leases fully as good but free of cost. In 1878 the estate of
'Swiney was purchased by the Duke of Portland, and in consequence of
'high rents and bad seasons we were compelled to implore his Grace three
'times for relief—twice we asked reduction of rent, and the other time
'many who were in extreme need sent in their petitions in the spring time,
'requesting some help in seed oats. All our petitions were answered
'indifferently, or treated with silent contempt, except a small considera-
'tion granted in the name of a reduction ; but even that itself, in our
'opinion, was shared out with amazing partiality. Hence our recent
'action in behalf of submitting our grievances to the investigation
'of a Royal Commission.'

37516. Was it the custom to give meliorations on this estate ?—Yes, it was the custom.

37517. For what?—For the wood of the roofing of the house.

37518. Were meliorations given for anything except the roof of the house?—Nothing that I know of. We got no compensations for any improvements or buildings.

37519. What extent of land does your father hold ?—Nine acres.

37520. What is his rent?—The rent, by the increase which M'Lennan put on us, was £10, 10s., but the reduction I referred to cut off about £1 of it. M'Lennan put £3, 10s. of increase upon it, and Snody put 30s. upon it.

37521. How long is it since your father first went to this place ?—Thirty-nine years ago.

37522. Was it bare moor when he went there?—There were only three acres of it cultivated at the time.

37523. Was there a house?—There was a sort of a house.

37524. Had he any lease when he went there first of all?—None.

37525. He improved the land without any lease?—Without any lease.

37526. Had he any promise that he would have the place for a certain time?—None.

37527. Had he any idea that he would be left there for ever at the same rent?—Well, there was no guarantee.

37528. I am not speaking of guarantee. I am speaking of the impression he himself was under?—There was no promise, but then we were improving the land for our own benefit ; indeed the late General Gordon put a check upon it. He said—'There is no use trenching or improving that land unless you agree with me for a rent ; and if your offer pleases me I will accept of it, and if not I will advertise the place.' He even at one time put a stop to open drainage.

37529. Were you objecting to pay any increase, or was it the amount of the increase?—We never objected, but we always grudged its enormity.

37530. What do you think now would be a fair rent to give for this

CAITHNESS place which you yourself improved?—I think 6s. 6d. or 7s. an acre would be a full rent for it, going to the outside of it. There are many other crofts that would be dear at 2s. 6d. per acre, and some not worth labouring in their present state.

Lybster. James Millar. 37531. Then 7s. an acre would be the same rent that you paid when you entered in 1846?—That is it.

37532. You think it should not rise beyond that?—Well, if there was anything granted us for our improvements; but all the labour is due to our own energy and expense.

37533. *The Chairman.*—What was the first rent your father paid for the place?—£5.

37534. Did you not say that in 1846 it rose from £1, 10s. to £3?—Yes.

37535. What was it that rose from £1, 10s. to £3?—That was over the whole estate in general. I am not sure that each crofter's rent was raised equally.

37536. But your father's original rent when he went to the place was £5?—Yes.

37537. And now it is £9, 10s.?—Yes, it was for a few years at £10.

37538. And during that period has any proprietor laid out anything or afforded you or your family any assistance?—Not a farthing.

37539. How many years is it since your father went there?—Thirty-nine years.

37540. And you say that you ought to have it now for the same rent it was at first? You think that would be a fair rent?—I say that 7s. an acre is rent enough.

37541. So you think you ought now to give £2 less than your father gave for it at the beginning?—Well, it would scarcely recoup our labour in draining, trenching, and manure.

37542. How is the rent practically paid? Is it paid by the sale of an animal?—By an animal or by crop, but very seldom by either. It is often done by external labour. We pay our rents generally by working otherwise.

37543. What stock do you keep upon this little farm?—One horse, one cow, a stirk, and maybe a calf.

37544. Do you never keep more than one cow?—It would not support more than one cow.

37545. Have you ever, practically speaking, more than one cow in your byre?—Yes, sometimes there are two.

37546. Are there ever three?—But there are other outlets upon another estate on which they pasture.

37547. What is the name of the township?—Achow.

37548. You consider it is a township?—Yes.

37549. You consider you belong to a crofting township?—Yes.

37550. What is the connection between the crofts? Have they got any common pasture?—None.

37551. Had they ever any common pasture?—Achow had no common pasture; but other parts of the estate had common pasture.

37552. Had your township ever any sheiling ground?—None that I am aware of.

37553. Had it never any rights of common pasture at all?—None outside the tenant's own pasture.

37554. Is it a very old township?—I am told there was scarcely a croft in it about eighty or ninety years ago.

37555. Where do you think the people came from?—They came there,

a good many of them, in consequence of the Sutherland evictions in 1818 CAITHNESS or 1820, and some of them before that—back to 1810.

37556. Do the people still remember that they came from Sutherland ? LYBSTER.

—Yes.

37557. And they look upon themselves as Sutherland men?—As strangers. James Millar.

37558. Was your family a Sutherland family?—Partly.

37559. With regard to the old townships on the country, had they as a rule common pastures and sheiling ground, or had they sometimes none at all?—They had common pastures for the most part, and sheiling ground, outlaying pasture common to each tenant.

37560. When those people came from Sutherland and settled in your place, who was the proprietor that took them in?—Old Swiney Gordon, the father of the General Gordon to whom I have referred.

37561. What family succeeded the Gordons?—The last of the Gordons we had was a sort of half Gordon or Yankee, but the estate was sold out of his hands to the Duke of Portland, and that was the cause of the immense increase of rent; M'Lennan was principally put in, I believe, to roup us up for the market.

37562. The high rent was imposed in order to sell the estate to advantage?—Just a year before the sale, M'Lennan came in early in 1874, and we were sold in 1878.

37563. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—It was the late Duke of Portland who bought the property?—Yes, he died in the beginning of 1879.

37564. You represent in the paper you have given in, that you made three applications to his Grace?—We did, as an estate.

37565. Was that to the late or to the present Duke?—To the present Duke. The first application indeed went in before the late Duke's decease, but there was no response to it for about a year afterwards, when the reduction took place.

37566. What is the name of the gentleman who has charge of the Portland estates in Caithness now?—*Mr James Muckart, factor, Langwell, Berriedale.*

37567. You complain that the reductions of rent are partial; whose doing is that?—I cannot account for that, but there are some tenants in our township who have got far worse reductions than others in proportion to what they occupy.

37568. You do not blame the proprietor for that?—No. There was one Alexander Sutherland, Bravell, Swiney, who got no reduction, and in common justice should get a reduction. He pays £14. Donald Gunn, Swiney Mains, also got no reduction.

37569. Has the present proprietor ever come among you at all?—Yes.

37570. Have the tenants come into personal contact with him?—Yes, there was a reception here three years ago when he came north.

37571. Do you not think, as he is a young man, lately come into a very fine estate, it would be well to approach him directly with regard to any grievances you have?—Well, there were two approaches of late. I am not sure if the latest approach came under his notice, but the other approach, which was occasioned by the poor crop of 1881, came under his notice without any profitable results,—the second approach for reduction. The crop that year was remarkably poor. In fact, we paid £3 per boll that year for meal.

37572. So far as you are aware, except the matter of the rent, there is no other complaint on the part of the tenants on the estate you represent?—Well, I think some of the crofts are far too small. There is a complaint

CAITHNESS too that the land is very bad, but that is included in the complaint of too much rent. The quality of the land is very bad.

LYBSTER. 37573. Are there farms upon the estate that could be given up for the James Millar. enlargement of the smaller crofts?—There are two pretty large farms on the estate—the farm of Swiney and the farm of Reisgill.

37574. Are these suitable for breaking up?—I would not say but they are. I leave them to the powers that be.

37575. With regard to the people who came from Sutherland long ago, who consider themselves still strangers in Caithness, do they still preserve the Gaelic language? Do they speak Gaelic?—Not so much as they were wont to do in my earlier days, but there is a good sprinkling of Gaelic among them.

37576. Do you speak Gaelic yourself?—Yes.

37577. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—How small are these crofts that you say are too small?—Some of them are only 2, 2½, or 3 acres. Some of the people are not able to keep horses, and they pay immensely dear for laying down their crops in spring to keep horses and have five or six acres.

37578. What stock can they keep who have these small crofts?—In general, one cow and a calf, and maybe a sheep.

37579. There are none I suppose without cows?—There are some who have no cows.

37579*. Are there many of them that don't make their livings out of the crofts?—I don't know but the smallest share of them make their living out of the crofts. They draw their living from extraneous sources, such as labouring or fishing. They are very poor indeed. I knew one industrious crofter lately who was so poor that she had even to borrow clothes and shoes from a pauper when she went out to pay her poor-rate, to go out decently.

37580. What size of croft do you consider sufficient to support a family independently of other sources of income?—15, 20, 25, or 30 acres.

37581. Is the number of that size in your neighbourhood very small?—There are a few.

37582. Who are able to make a comfortable living out of their crofts?—Well, the fishing helps them considerably.

37583. Are most of them fishermen as well?—A proportion of them.

37584. Is their fishing confined to the herring fishing entirely?—Almost entirely. A few near the sea-coast fish cod and haddock, but it is merely for the benefit of their own families.

37585. Who is the present factor?—Mr Muckart.

37586. Is he an Englishman?—He is from the south.

37587. How long was Mr M' Lennan factor?—Too long.

37588. How many years?—He was three years our factor.

37589. Why did he cease to be factor?—When the Duke of Portland purchased the estate, the late Mr Bowler of Berriedale became factor, and Mr Muckart succeeded him.

37590. Is there any difference in administering the estate since the new proprietor and factor came?—I find no difference, only that when we meet at rent day we are all good friends.

37591. What other work do the people get besides fishing?—Ditching and draining, and there were a good many working at the harbour that was going on down at Lybster. They also hire for the fishing, a few of them who have not boats or nets of their own.

37592. Is there any regular work to be got on the land round about?—As long as the harbour works are going on there is work for a good few, but when these are done the work is very irregular and unremunerative.

37593. What are the wages?—Generally 2s. a day or 2s. 6d.

37594. *The Chairman.*—Who gives the employment in ditching or draining? Is it the proprietor or the tenants who give it?—It is confined sometimes to some of these large farms in the hands of the farmers who have an improving lease. They give work to the surrounding crofters in ditching, James Millar. draining, and quarrying.

37595. Is the proprietor at this moment giving any employment?—None that I know of.

37596. Are there no works going on at the harbour?—At the harbour there are. That is on Lybster estate. It is the Swiney estate I represent.

37597. But they belong to the same proprietor?—Yes.

37598. Do the Swiney people get employment at the harbour?—Yes, there are some working there.

JAMES INNES STEWART, Fish-Curer, Lybster (59)—examined.

37599. *The Chairman.*—Do you occupy any land?—No land.

37600. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Have you been appointed a delegate to come here to-day?—Yes.

37601. Was it by the people in the village of Lybster?—No, by public meetings at Forse.

37602. Have you a written statement to make?—Nothing special, but I have just two or three points to touch upon. At the outset, the tenants or crofters on the Lybster estate apparently have complained of no grievance. First of all, under the late Duke of Portland, both estates certainly were at a disadvantage so far as the estate previous to his purchase was under trustees, and consequently the rents were certainly run up as high as they possibly could be, the most of them; but, after the purchase of the estate, I believe it was the policy of the late Duke of Portland—and the present Duke pursued the same policy—that they are rarely known to raise the rents or remove tenants, and consequently these recommendations in their favour have rendered the people quite content with the rents, although they are somewhat high, and also rather precarious in being paid, because it must come principally out of the sea. The farms or crofts of Lybster are so convenient to the sea that they prefer, though they find it rather high, to make no complaint with regard to their rent. But they have another grievance. They have the parochial burdens bearing very hard upon them. In consequence of the larger farmers, as it is said, in this parish paying less per acre than the crofters, the parochial burdens bear very high upon the crofters. That is not their only grievance. There is the Poor Law Act, and I am very happy to have to bring before this Commission the injustice of a certain clause of that Act whereby proprietors,—rich proprietors, and even millionaires—are exempt from paying the rates as tenants upon their shooting grounds. Hence, it becomes very expensive to the small crofters of the parish, who are rated for all the public burdens, such as poor rates, vaccination rate, and also for registration and school rates, at over 5s. per pound. We look upon these as, for the crofters, one of the most particular grievances from a parochial point of view, because here are wealthy proprietors who are able to pay for their shootings and they get off scot free, while we have to distrain upon the poor crofter for the last farthing. I think it one of the most one-sided and unjust pieces of legislation that has passed into law in Scotland within the last hundred years, and I am delighted to have this opportunity of laying it before you. That is all I have to say, but I shall be happy to answer any questions.

James Innes
Stewart.

CAITHNESS 37603. How long have you been here?—I have been here twenty-one years.

LYBSTER. 37604. This has always been an important fishing station?—Very important. There have been just two or three seasons—1874, and the season before last—when it was an entire failure, but it has never been a complete failure here except those two years.

James Innes Stewart. 37605. Perhaps you will tell us something about the harbour works that are going on just now. Are they of considerable magnitude?—They are not of such an extent. It is just the difficulty that, notwithstanding the large sum of money that has been laid out, the harbour is not protected from the sea. It will be absolutely necessary, to serve the end it was intended for, to have some breakwater thrown out on these headlands to prevent the sea coming into the harbour. Further, the harbour is too shallow to admit of shipping or ordinary sized boats loaded with herring.

37606. Is the whole expense borne by the Duke of Portland?—Yes.

37607. Who is the engineer employed by him?—Mr Cooper, an Englishman.

37608. You appear, therefore, rather doubtful that what is intended to be an advantage will be sufficiently effective for the purpose?—We are quite of that opinion. Then the entrance to the harbour is unprotected; the sea comes right in, and actually it is worse than before they commenced the improvements.

37609. What was the object of the Duke of Portland in making these additions? Was it still further to develop the fisheries?—Yes.

37610. And chiefly for the benefit of the residents of Lybster?—Yes; we petitioned the late Duke to have additional harbour accommodation. During a heavy storm that took place a few years ago, it broke down the sea-wall completely, and, in carrying out the improvements, they will not have the necessary effect without the improvements I have now suggested.

37611. Is this town increasing in importance? Is the population increasing?—Yes, it is increasing in population.

37612. Are there facilities given by the Duke of Portland to build? Are there feus?—Yes. At one time it was not so under the late Duke of Portland, but now there are plenty of facilities given.

37613. I suppose the rates vary; but for the fishing population what is the rate per acre for a feu?—£3 per acre is, I think, the minimum. They can extend higher, but that is the minimum charge.

37614. Is that considered reasonable by the people?—I think it is. We pay higher for some feus in the village. I pay 30s. for a feu extending sixty-five feet in front and one hundred feet back.

37615. Is there not a local authority in the village?—Only the Parochial Board.

37616. What is the population of Lybster?—I think about 1500.

37617. Have you never thought of applying to get it declared a populous place, and have authorities of your own?—Unquestionably we would require it for various purposes, but the Parochial Board supplies all the necessary local authority. Sanitary matters are all under the Parochial Board. The only thing, perhaps, would be to introduce water. It would be very important if there were some constituted local authority for that purpose.

37618. You have been present all this forenoon?—Yes.

37619. And heard what was stated?—Yes.

37620. Are you able to concur generally in the statement we have heard that the rents in this locality generally are very high?—They are

certainly high. As it was so fully discussed, I did not think it necessary CAITHNESS to go into the matter.

37621. But I ask your opinion generally whether you concur with what was stated?—Yes; I see that from 1856 to 1882 there has been a rise of 40·2 per cent. on the whole of the parish.

LYBSTER.
James Innes
Stewart.

37622. Can you state that very much has been laid out by the proprietors for that increase?—Some of the proprietors have done so, but some of the proprietors I know must have laid out very little indeed.

37623. Has it fallen under your observation that a great deal of the reclamation of the land in this parish has been done at the expense of the smaller tenants, and crofters?—Chiefly of the tenants, both small and large. They have reclaimed the land themselves, and carried on the improvements.

37624. A witness was asked whether originally the people who took any of the land had improving leases, and he seemed to be of opinion that they had no leases. Do you know whether those who first began had them?—I think those who went in at first had improving leases. Nineteen years was the original lease. I know there were fourteen and sixteen, but nineteen years was the general improving lease.

37625. But you can hardly call a nineteen years' lease an improving lease?—No, of course it is a short lease, but during the currency of the nineteen years vast improvements were carried out upon these farms.

37626. Even upon so short a lease as nineteen years?—Yes; great improvements.

37627. Is there more land capable of being taken in in this parish and neighbourhood—I mean on the sea-board from Wick to the Ord?—Yes, a good deal could be reclaimed, and if I had the management of an estate I think I would have the ground put out in small comfortable crofts adjoining the harbour, and let the land inland in large lots of from 50 to 200 acres that a man could live upon. I would allow crofts to those on the sea-board, because they follow a very precarious business, and if they had a croft adjacent to the harbour it would assist to support them during part of the season if they did not succeed in the fishing; and the larger farms I would have so that they could live upon them alone—from 50 to 200 acres.

37628. You concur with what Mr M'Culloch stated that the general feeling of the fishermen here would be not to depend entirely on the fishing, but to have a croft and a home?—Evidently the crofters would require that, but the inhabitants of our village could not attend to that; they must be wholly fishermen.

37629. You make a difference. They merely require a home?—Yes.

37630. But would not you like these people in the village to have a cow?—They have that; not all, but of course a good many of them have cows, and a large common pasture for those cows.

37631. What do you pay for this cow?—I think it does not exceed 30s. for summer.

37632. Is that sum paid direct to the proprietor?—Directly to the proprietor.

37633. And he has, in point of fact, reserved from letting on lease, a certain quantity of land for the benefit of the people in the village?—Yes; but it answers a two-fold end—for drying nets on and also for the cow.

37634. So the proprietor certainly did a humane thing for the village and a wise thing in every respect?—And a profitable thing for himself—very profitable. He takes two rents out of it.

37635. You are a native of Forse?—A native of the parish of Wick.

CAITHNESS It was at a meeting at Forse that I was appointed a delegate from the estate of Lybster.

LYBSTER. 37636. You heard what the delegate George Sinclair stated about 105 families being evicted. Is that correct?—I am not aware of the number. James Innes Stewart. I know there were a good many evictions upon that estate, but I cannot tell the number.

37637. Without any ostensible cause?—I cannot tell what was the cause unless to block out large farms. He blocked out two large farms.

37638. It was not in consequence of any arrears on the part of the small tenants?—I don't think it. I think it is generally understood that small tenants pay fully as much rent and pay punctually.

* 37639. And pay as well?—And pay as well. I have always found in my experience that they would even lift money in advance from me when fishing for me in order to pay the rent.

37640. I observe in the valuation roll the following entry:—‘Farms of ‘Rumster, Glosary, Shepherd's Town, Arrycraggan, Auldandoo, Jock's ‘Lodge, &c. William Brown and George Little, £410.’ I presume that is the farm that was constituted out of the crofts of those evicted people? Yes, that is the farm.

37641. Who are William Brown and George Little? Are they Caithness people?—Yes, they belong to Caithness.

37642. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Do you give money advances to the fishermen?—We do.

37643. Do you engage boats for the next season by giving advances?—We do, as soon as we engage the boats. There are a few independent men who don't require advances, but a great many require advances. They cannot carry on without it, and pay these rents. Generally the little crofts are not expected to do more than keep them for part of a season.

37644. And they depend upon next season's fishing to pay the rent of this year?—Yes, a good many of them do.

37645. Do you engage boats from other places besides those of the country here?—Yes; I engage them at Wick and at Stornoway.

37646. You engage West Highland boats as well as the Caithness boats?—Yes.

37647. Do you give advances to engaged boats in all cases?—In nearly all cases; but there are a few independent men who don't require a rap. Generally speaking, we have to give advances even to the West Highland men. We sometimes give them new boats.

37648. Does it sometimes happen that you don't get paid the first season?—Yes, sometimes not for three seasons.

37649. And they carry on this fishing the next season?—Yes, they carry on the fishing, and when they meet with success they clear us all up.

37650. On the average, how long are they before they clear up?—Well, I gave a boat at £100 two years ago and some nets to a crew, and they fished one year for me at Boathaven and one at Wick, and they cleared it off, and had money to draw this season.

37651. These were good fishing seasons?—Remarkably good.

37652. But of late years the seasons have not been so good?—Not so good.

37653. Notwithstanding that, have they been in the habit of clearing up?—The last season here was a complete failure, and that threw a great many of them back. There were only about ten and a half crans on the average. I am referring to the spring season of 1882. That kept them back for a long time, but we have advanced boats and nets, and I have seen them clear off in two years.

37654. But though they clear boats and nets they are obliged to have CAITHNESS advances to pay their way?—The greater number, but there are a great number who come from the Western Islands, quite independent men, who never lift anything.

LYBSTER.
James Innes Stewart.

37655. I am speaking of those from the parish of Latheron?—A great many of them are independent men. They go to Peterhead and Fraserburgh; but a good many that fish at Latheron require advances.

37656. You spoke of the great hardship of having to pay rates here, the proprietors not having to pay on their shootings. I think I saw in a paper lately that the proprietors of Caithness had petitioned that they should be assessed on their shooting rents?—I am glad to hear that. I merely knew that Sir Tollemach Sinclair agitated that. We look upon it as a vexed question, because it is a very great hardship on the poor crofter, to distrain his effects and let the millionaire with shootings pass scot free.

37657. Are the shootings in the parish let?—They are all let, except the Duke of Portland's and Major Stocks'.

37658. Does the shooting produce a large rental?—A very large rental in some cases.

37659. It gives considerable ease to the rates?—Yes, it is great revenues that they draw from the shootings, and hence we could lower the rates.

37660. There have been complaints made of the ravages of the grouse. If grouse were extirpated, would it be for the disadvantage or advantage of the country?—I cannot say much about grouse, but I know rabbits are very destructive. As for grouse, we used to think they were diseased when they came into the crofts.

37661. I am speaking of the grouse, which are a source of great revenue for shooting purposes, and I ask your opinion whether it would be desirable that they should be done away with?—I for one would oppose it. I should not like to see them done away with, especially if we had such a revenue in our hands for parochial purposes. It is worth a great deal more than all that the grouse eat. They chiefly live on heather.

37662. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Of what nature are the harbour works that are going on just now?—Concrete walls principally.

37663. What is the design of the harbour?—The first was to strengthen the outer walls, and they excavated a certain part in the upper harbour so as to enlarge it, and the one they are going on with just now is intended for an inner harbour, but I am afraid it is too small for the purpose.

37664. What number of boats would it accommodate?—I think it could accommodate about 145.

37665. What number of boats is there belonging to Lybster itself?—I suppose they all belong to Lybster or the district.

37666. All boats of the large kind that are used on the east coast generally?—Yes, of the large size. They are building them as large as fifty feet keel, and forty-eight feet and forty-six feet, and so on.

37667. With seven or eight men as a crew?—Six men and a boy.

37668. Do most of these boats belong to the men themselves at present?—Yes, nearly all to the men.

37669. Do you cure any fish but herring?—It is chiefly herring we cure, but there is cod curing going on here every winter, and they send them up in the state of what they call mud fish to the London market.

37670. Is there any reason except want of refuge why they should not carry on white fishing as well as herring fishing all the year round?—No other reason but the want of harbour accommodation. There are as able crews and efficient fishermen as you will get anywhere, but the want

CAITHNESS of a harbour deters them from going out many a night when they would go out.

LYBSTER. 37671. When these present harbour works are completed, will they be able to prosecute the fishing with more advantage?—Provided they take all precaution to protect the entrance from the sea coming right in, there is no doubt they will, but unless they do that I am afraid there will be no more safety than there was before.

37672. Do you know what the estimated cost is of the works that are being executed by the Duke of Portland?—I have heard it stated they would come to about £11,000.

37673. But you think, to make them more useful, there ought to be a breakwater besides?—I do.

37674. Where?—There is a diversity of opinion; some say down near the entrance. If there were a jetty there, it would protect it wonderfully; and there is another plan of building a quay-head on one of the out lying rocks at the outside of the harbour.

37675. What would be the probable cost of such a breakwater?—There is a little uncertainty in working it out. Probably it might be done at £3000, probably more, but it would depend very much on how they succeeded. Great storms might come on when they were in the act of erecting the quay-head, and it might get knocked down.

37676. When the present harbour is improved are there harbour dues to be exacted?—There are harbour dues just now, but these are to be doubled. A boat pays 10s. just now, and 1d. per barrel of herring; it will be 2d. per barrel, and 10d. for a ton of salt, and so on when the works are entirely completed.

37677. *The Chairman.*—There is no municipal constitution here at all?—None whatever.

37678. If the place were declared to be a populous place and obtained some form of constitution, would they then be able to obtain a loan from Government for the improvement of their harbour?—I have no doubt, but it is all done just now at the Duke's expense.

37679. The people would be more satisfied to pay higher dues with improved accommodation?—Undoubtedly.

37680. What would the area of the basin within the inner harbour be? How many acres?—Two and a quarter acres inside.

37681. Would that be susceptible of increase by excavation towards the land?—Yes, it could be excavated.

37682. To any extent?—To almost any extent, and the more excavation the safer it would be.

37683. Is there any river or stream flowing into the harbour?—Yes, there is the burn of Reisgill.

37684. Does it bring a great deal of stuff down?—Yes, a great deal of débris.

37685. Would they be able to make works on the course of the burn which would arrest the flow of the débris?—Yes; not very easily, but it could be done quite well at little cost. Just now they have a weir, and the accumulations are kept from going into the harbour.

37686. You said you believed that the land was originally broken in and improved under improving leases. When these first leases expired and the rents were raised did the people obtain a renewal of the leases or not, generally?—Sometimes they did. It depended very much on the management of the estates. Some of the proprietors put the land up to the highest bidder, but others had an amicable arrangement between themselves and the tenant.

37687. Can you mention any particular estate upon which there was a

wise and liberal system pursued in that respect?—Well, there is one CAITHNESS estate I know; but I am not so well acquainted with the management of it now, the Dunbeath estate. It was very particular that way. They were not very apt to remove the tenants. They must have done so at one time, because they removed a whole strath of tenants, but for a long time I did not hear much about it.

LYBSTER.
James Innes Stewart.

JOHN MOWAT, Bank Agent and Factor, Lybster (40)—examined.

37688. *The Chairman.*—Upon what estates are you factor?—Upon John Mowat, Latheronwheel only.

37689. How long have you been a factor upon this estate?—Eight years.

37690. Who was the previous factor?—I don't think Major Stocks had a factor. He had a manager who looked after the estate.

37691. Had you ever been connected with the management of land?—Not previously.

37692. Are you in the occupation of land yourself?—Not at present.

37693. You have no holding?—None.

37694. Have you any statement you wish to make in consequence of what occurred to-day?—I have. In the first place, Mr M'Culloch went on to say there was a common pasture at Braelungie taken from the tenants, and he said I went and used threats along with the sheriff's officer to induce them to sign a letter that they would go out. I deny that I ever used a threat. Major Stocks expended £2000 on a piece of land to have it reclaimed. He built a steading, and wanted a tenant. We thought it would be well to have the pasture divided, so that this tenant would have his own share of it. He paid £50 of rent. Twelve tenants in Braelungie paid £70. I went and asked each tenant if he was willing it should be divided, and they said yes. 'Well,' I said, 'give me a letter to that effect,' because my instructions from the Major were not to take it unless they were willing to give it up. I find from the map of the estate that the tenant who got the pasture has about 500 acres or thereby, and the tenants who are round about have now actually 2000 or 3000 acres of pasture. I cannot speak with regard to the pasture referred to by Mr M'Culloch taken from the Leodabost tenants. I was never aware that such a thing happened. Mr M'Culloch said something about leases—that there were no leases granted at Latheronwheel. Now, there was a very good reason for that. They never asked a lease, and Major Stocks never puts out a tenant and never raises the rent. I never knew him raise the rent except in one case, and that was the case of a man who had a lease at a rather low rent. He improved his farm, and his lease was out, and he was asked if he was now prepared to give £30 for his farm. He had paid £26, 10s. He said, 'No, Major, I cannot give you that; I have been "worked hard, and I will give you £28,"'—and therefore he got his farm at a rise of 30s. Mr M'Culloch went on to say that the Mains farm of Latheronwheel was let at a rent of £250. It is quite correct; but he went further, and tried to show that the value had decreased. Now that is really not the case, because although Dr Burn has this farm for £250, we were offered £350 for it, which I am prepared to prove. With regard to game, I must say there is not one rabbit now on Latheronwheel for ten there were ten years ago; and Major Stocks has given Dr Burn permission under the Game Law Act to destroy the rabbits on the Mains farm, although he was sitting under a lease previous to the passing of

CAITHNESS the Act. Mr M'Culloch has also referred to some pasture at Achnagoul taken from the tenants and given to Dr Burn. That is not the case. Dr LYESTER Burn occupies the farm just now as it was occupied by the previous tenant. John Mowat. I regret to say that some of the statements of Mr M'Culloch, got at the meeting at Latheron, are false. I was told by a person present at the meeting that a man rose and said his rent was raised. Now the person who told me that told it in the office, and I opened the ledger and showed him it was false. I think it wrong for people to make false statements, and ask Mr M'Culloch to come here and give them to the Commissioners. That is all I have to say.

37695. I would like to understand about the constitution of the farm and the withdrawal of the sheiling ground, as they called it, or common pasture. When this new farm was constituted how was it made? How was it formed?—It was made by Major Stocks at his own expense; the land was brought under cultivation at his own expense.

37696. But when the first portion of land was taken in for the purpose of forming this new farm, what was it taken from?—From the centre of the common pasture.

37697. How large was the new farm to be?—About sixty acres arable.

37698. And then the additional portion of the common pasture was added to it in order to give it a share of the general common pasture?—Exactly.

37699. Well, when the original sixty acres were taken out of the common pasture or sheiling ground, was any reduction made of rental in connection with the first sixty acres?—Not that I am aware of, but that was previous to my being made factor.

37700. Well, the ground was taken and no reduction of rent made to your knowledge?—Not to my knowledge.

37701. When the second piece of ground was taken and added to the common pasture of this new farm, was any reduction of rental made to the tenants?—No, but the tenant of that farm has no right whatever to go on the common pasture. It was separated at the time. Previously the occupier of that farm pastured the common pasture along with the tenants.

37702. Still I don't understand it. The first was ground that was taken to form ground for this new farm and was taken out of the common pasture. Had all the tenants or all the crofters in the township a right to the pasture then?—No, I don't admit they had a right, and I don't admit they have a right now, because there is nothing in their agreements about pasture at all. We let the arable farms.

37703. Had they a right by custom or usage?—I quite believe the proprietor allowed them the privilege of pasturing.

37704. Had they by custom or usage the practice if not the right of pasturing upon both the ground occupied for the new farm and the ground added to the new farm?—They were accustomed to do so.

37705. And when this customary right was taken away there was no reduction made whatever?—No reduction.

37706. Then you say there was a sort of resignation or paper which they signed; but you say they signed it of their own accord?—They did.

37707. Have you a copy of that paper?—I think I have. I have not got it with me at this moment.

37708. But you say they voluntarily resigned it?—They did.

37709. When they resigned this usage, which must have been of some value to them, did they ask for any reduction of rent at all?—They did not.

37710. They made no application for reduction of rent?—No application.

37711. With reference to the question of leases, I think you say there CAITHNES: are leases now?—There are leases.

37712. In the leases which are given upon this property is there any stipulation with reference to reimbursement for improvements or anything John Mowat of that sort?—No. LYESTER.

37713. What is the length of the lease in general?—Nineteen years.

37714. Have the majority of the small tenants got leases?—They have not.

37715. What proportion do you think have leases?—There are very few leases indeed. It is principally the larger holders who have leases.

37716. Have any of the small tenants—the ten acre or five acre tenants—got leases?—None.

37717. Had they leases originally when the land was first taken in and improved?—Not that I am aware of.

37718. What is the reason that the people have no leases? Has the proprietor a dislike to the system of leases?—I don't think so. I never heard of anybody who ever asked it.

37719. Do you think the crofters don't want it?—They don't seem to want it. Major Stocks never evicts a tenant.

37720. Since you have been in the management of the estate have you never heard any expression of a desire on the part of the tenants for leases?—I have never been asked for a lease.

37721. What is the practice of the estate about improvements? If the tenants voluntarily make improvements, and if they have occasion to leave, is there any compensation given to them?—The improvements are generally made by the landlord and tenant. Major Stocks assists them if they want a house or want land broken in. He did so regularly so long as he had the home farm in charge. He sent persons to break in the land.

37722. Will you explain to me this system of co-operation more accurately. Supposing a man says he wants to break up two or three acres of moor, what does the proprietor do for him, and what does he do himself?—He gives him the land free of charge, and does not add any rent.

37723. For how long?—As long as he sits.

37724. Then you say he helps them. In what manner does he help?—In building houses.

37725. Suppose a house is to be built, what part of the house is done at the expense of the tenant and what part at the expense of the landlord?—There is no rule to go by. It depends entirely on the arrangement between the proprietor and the individual.

37726. Take a particular case that you remember?—I cannot, because there have been no new houses built since I have been factor, but I know that previous to that Major Stocks had done something in the way of building houses. He would, perhaps, put on the roof, and supply the wood, and they built the walls.

37727. Would he pay the wages of the labourer?—Certainly.

37728. I mean he would pay the mason, the carpenter, and the slater?—Yes.

37729. But there is no general rule?—No general rule.

37730. With regard to the farm which is now said to be let at £250, but for which you say £360 has been offered, is it indiscreet to ask you what the reason was?—I will be very glad to answer what I believe to be the case. It was on account of very valuable services rendered by Dr Burn to Major Stocks' family.

37731. Then the expenditure made by Major Stocks on the farm has

CAITHNESS not been an unprofitable one?—Not at all, if Major Stocks cared to take advantage of it, but in the meantime he does not care to do so.

LYBSTER. 37732. There was a complaint about the destruction of crops by game or rabbits, and the first witness said he thought that the small tenants were deterred from destroying rabbits by fear of the landlord—lest they should be disturbed in their occupancy—and you reply to that that there are much fewer rabbits on the estate now than there were before, and that leave has been given to Dr Burn to destroy rabbits on the large farm. Of course if there were many rabbits on the large farm that leave might indirectly benefit the small tenants, because the rabbits might come from the large farm on to the small tenants; but am I to understand that, in reality, the small tenants are at perfect liberty upon their own grounds to destroy rabbits exactly as they like or not?—They have the full power under the Act to do so.

37733. They have the full power, but that is a theoretical power in some cases. Can you state that they have full power so far as the landlord is concerned, and that the landlord would not resent it or prevent them in any degree from destroying rabbits?—I am not prepared to say anything on that point, because I have not Major Stocks' authority for doing so.

37734. Has the question ever been brought before you?—I don't think so; I have never heard it.

37735. Is the right of shooting let?—Major Stocks has the moor in his own hands.

37736. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Was there ever any separate occupier of the ground that has now been made a new farm upon Brae lungie commony?—The proprietor had it in his own hands to begin with.

37737. But previously to his taking it into his own hands?—It was part of the commony.

37738. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—With reference to this question about the home farm, you say an offer was made of £360; was it by a good tenant?—Yes, a good tenant.

37739. Would it not have been fairer to the parish generally, since an offer by a *bona fide* tenant was made of £360, that if the proprietor wished to benefit the doctor the rent should have been stated at its full value, and the difference between £250 and £360 given back?—That is, perhaps, quite true; but after the doctor took the farm he complained that it was too dear even at £300. That was the first rent he paid for the farm. At the time these offers were made there was a mania for land, and perhaps there were higher offers put in than it was reasonable to expect; but he complained it was too dear at £300, and Major Stocks took £50 off the rent two years ago.

37740. But it comes to this that the parish suffers a loss of the taxation applicable to £110 a year?—Certainly.

37741. You made use of the expression that Major Stocks never raised the rents in your time?—With one exception.

37742. But, according to your own account, 500 acres were taken from the Brae lungie tenants without any reduction whatever. Was not that a raising of the rent?—Well, we did not admit that they had a claim to it.

37743. You have admitted out and out they have a claim?—Well, it is not let along with the arable. Major Stocks has allowed them the privilege of the pasture.

37744. Had the Brae lungie people ever a lease?—Not in my time.

37745. Then if they have been in possession, according to your own account, of this pasture, and if there is no writing on the subject, how can

you say positively that they have not got that pasture?—I don't think CAITHNESS they have anything to show that they have got it.

37746. They have possession of it, and is that not nine points of the law?—Certainly.

37747. Major Stocks is not a resident now, in the ordinary sense of the term?—No; he stays here a few months in the year.

37748. What might be the value of the shootings on the estate if they were let?—I am not prepared to say.

37749. What offer would you be disposed to take?—I am not disposed to let them at all; Major Stocks wishes to keep them.

37750. Will you not answer a hypothetical question; supposing they were in the market?—The value put upon them when Major Stocks purchased the estate was £120.

37751. But that is an old story—a long time ago?—Yes; but I am not prepared to say what they are worth now in the market.

37752. Ten times as much?—Oh, no.

37753. Five times as much?—No.

37754. At all events, what they would let for is also a loss to the parish under the present law?—It is.

37755. In regard to leases, you say they never asked for leases? You have heard a communication by one of the previous delegates that the terms of any leases that would be granted were of such a stringent nature that the tenants would not be disposed to take them. Now have you any estate regulations?—No; no printed ones.

37756. Are you prepared to contradict what was stated by Mr M'Culloch and others as to the general impression, and to say that any leases which would be granted upon this estate contain no clauses except those that are usually articed?—I am quite prepared to say that.

37757. If any tenant wished to come forward and take a lease there would be nothing exceptional in the clauses of the lease?—I don't think so.

37758. Of course you have not the authority of the proprietor as to what the terms would be?—So far as I am aware, there would be nothing objectionable.

37759. About the rabbits, you know this question of rabbits has been such a grievance in many parts of the country that it necessitated the interference of the Legislature to pass a Bill on the subject?—Yes.

37760. Is that Act taken advantage of or is it not among the crofters on the estate of Latheron?—I don't know what advantage they take of it. Some of their crofts have been destroyed by rabbits, but I have paid for damages done by rabbits; and even this year Major Stocks has ordered me to take half the rent from a man whose property was so destroyed.

37761. Then there is a grievance?—There is, but Major Stocks has directed me on more than one occasion to pay for it when damage was done.

37762. Does he take ordinary or extraordinary precautions to keep down the rabbits?—He does take precautions, by snaring, shooting, and trapping, but it is a most difficult matter where there are woods to get at them. They run in, and it is not easy to shoot them.

37763. I thought there were no woods in Caithness?—There are some in Latheronwheel.

37764. One word more about the Braehungie matter. Mr M'Culloch told us the extent of that sheiling was 1800 acres?—About 500 acres to the best of my knowledge. I looked up the map particularly for that.

37765. Do you say Mr M'Culloch is misinformed as to the quantity?—Yes

LYBSTER.

John Mowat.

CAITHNESS 37766. As to the old sheiling?—As to the common pasture.

LYBSTER. 37767. That the tenants used to have?—Yes.

John Mowat. 37768. But they have nothing now?—They have some 2000 or 3000 acres yet of pasture.

37769. Where is that?—All over the estate—all that is not under cultivation they are allowed to pasture.

37770. How do you reconcile that with the story which one or two of the tenants stated that they were obliged to reduce their stock very considerably?—I cannot answer those questions.

37771. Have you an estate plan?—I have.

37772. What is the extent, at this moment, of pasture—sheiling ground as it is called—that those tenants at Braehungie are entitled to use?—2000 acres and some odds.

37773. But according to the story we had, they have nothing?—I took it down from the map bit after bit with my pencil, and added it up, the other day.

37774. But other tenants besides them would have a right to it?—Certainly other tenants have an equal right to the pasture.

37775. But we understood from Mr M'Culloch that exclusively the Braelungie crofters had about 1800 acres?—I never understood that.

37776. As you have a plan of the estate and know the acreage, can you tell me whether the crofter or the large farmer pays the biggest rent per acre?—I should certainly say that in Latheronwheel the crofter pays a larger rent per acre than Dr Burn does for the Mains farm.

37777. That is at £250?—Yes.

37778. Is there any other large farm?—No; we have no other large farm. It is all divided into small farms.

37779. Supposing you got £360, would that average about the same per acre as the crofters?—I should think so.

37780. And to get that you laid out £3000 upon buildings?—I quite believe that to be true. The farm was in Major Stocks' own hands when he let it out, and the old steading was getting very much out of repair, and was too near to his house, and he had it removed entirely, and a new steading built on another part of the farm.

37781. Then to get proportional rent from the big farmer you had to expend £3000, and you spend nothing on the crofter—and he pays the same rent?—I do not see that, because Major Stocks might spend what he liked on the farm when it was in his own hands, but it might not be necessary to put out the same amount of money for a tenant.

37782. In what respect would he have spent more when it was in his own hands?—Because a proprietor to suit his own purpose may spend more money than if the farm had been in the hands of a tenant.

37783. But, as regards mere reclamation, or building dykes, or trenching, it would be the same whatever he would do?—Yes, but the farm was in the proprietor's hands for generations, and never was let till Dr Burn had it, so far as I know.

37784. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—The parochial rates are excessively heavy in this parish?—They are.

37785. What is the cause of that?—I cannot give you the reason for it.

37786. Is it the school rate or the rate for paupers that is so excessively heavy?—They are both very heavy, but the rate for paupers is gradually coming down year by year. The parish is out of debt; previously it was in debt, and paying heavy interest on its overdraft at the bank.

37787. Is the number of paupers in the parish decreasing?—It is.

37788. How did the great number of paupers arise originally?—I can. CAITHNESS not say.

37789. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Had the Forse evictions anything to do with it?—Perhaps they had. LYESTER. John Mowat.

37790. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Do you think it likely the rate of pauperism in the parish will go on decreasing?—I believe it will.

37791. Do you find the paupers come from the crofting or the fishing class mostly?—A good many from the crofter class in some parts of the parish, and a few from the fishing population also.

37792. Do crofters having crofts of twenty or twenty-five acres or any of their families degenerate into paupers?—Not so readily. The small crofters are apt to degenerate into paupers.

37793. You think it would be advisable to increase the size of the crofts?—I do.

37794. What would you consider a proper size of croft?—From forty to fifty or sixty acres. They could manage to live upon that.

37795. Do you consider sixty acres a croft?—A holding, with a pair of horses.

37796. Do you think two crofters sharing a pair are not in comfortable circumstances?—They may not be, because you may have a large family and too little land to support them.

37797. Then you would have nothing between the labourer and the pair of horse farm? Do you think that is a desirable state of society?—I would like the crofter to be able to live by his farm. I think it is safer than to depend on the farming partially, and depend on something else for his living.

37798. But there would not be land in the county to supply everybody with sixty acres?—I am not sure but that, if subdivided, there might be.

37799. In this particular parish of Latheron there are not many large farms?—There are not.

JOHN McDONALD NIMMO, Law Agent in Wick, and Factor for Mr Sutherland of Forse (59)—examined.

37800. *The Chairman.*—Do you desire to make some statement in consequence of what has occurred to-day?—I do. I came here from the south in the end of 1859, and through my predecessor in business I became acquainted with Mr Sutherland of Forse, and at first acted as his law adviser. In course of time I came to have the management of the estate more or less. In regard to the evictions that George Sinclair has referred to, I had to give advice in regard to the mode of carrying out these affairs. There had been some little difficulty in the matter, and it is very likely that I gave instructions by Mr Sutherland's authority, and in point of fact by his orders, that these evictions upon Stemster should be carried out. I daresay I may have been about hand at or shortly after the evictions. I have been frequently upon that part of the estate, as well as over all the other parts of the estate, and I may tell you I found that, on that particular part of the estate, there was a regular system of smuggling going on, and this man's father's house I inspected particularly after the parties had been removed, and I found a concealed part of the house where the operations were carried on—a sort of false wall. Well, I cannot tell what were Mr Sutherland's views in regard to clearing out these people, but this I know, that in practice the land they occupied was made to a very large

John
McDonald
Nimmo.

CAITHNESS extent by Mr Sutherland, by ditching, draining, and otherwise, and is remained in his hands for some time until he got tenants ; and, speaking from recollection, I have no hesitation in saying that the place is letting for more now, on account of the improvements that Mr Sutherland made, and of the help that he has given to the tenants he has got there—very much more than the five tenants paid that were there, and of whom Mr Sinclair speaks. Then there was a process of improvement going on upon the whole upper part of the estate about the same time, and there were small places where the people were, so far as I could gather, merely vegetating—not making a proper existence at all. They were very small places with really little or no cultivation upon them, except, perhaps, a miller who had a holding, and whose rent I have never been able to ascertain, owing to my having no proper rental. Then there were some small farms further to the west, including one upon the boundary of Tacherledie, but these places have all been very much improved since that time. There were not many evictions there—very few indeed. Then there was a place that was called Badree-eiskeith. It is now called Shepherdstoun. I remember there being a number of very small tenants there, with a sort of common pasturage among them. I think I travelled over that ground with Mr Sutherland previous to there being any removals from it. Mr Sutherland had laid off a part of the estate by division ditches and otherwise, and in the case of those who were removed from that part of the estate offers were made to go to this part that Mr Sutherland had so laid off, and the tenants were then offered to be placed in the same position as to meliorations for houses as they would have been had they remained. That is to say, Mr Sutherland would have assisted them with the building anew of their house, and would have allowed them what they call compriseiment for the wood they put upon them the same as if they had remained. Besides that, there are at least three of these families who chose to take lots, and are now possessing them. They took them, I think, in 1864, on short leases, and have remained till this day, with the exception of one man who has died, and whose sister was unable to carry on the place. She is allowed to remain in the house, and the pasturage belonging to that place is given to the remaining two. There have been further changes besides that. Reference was made to Rumster. A number of the tenants there were offered, and went to, other places. Some of these remain on the estate still, and some of them, after taking other places, have left them. There were parties who were getting hopelessly into arrear ; some of them leaving over £30 in arrear upon a small rent. These places Mr Sutherland took into his own hand, and spent a great deal of money in improving them, and they are now let to a tenant upon lease ; and I may mention that Mr Sutherland is always quite willing to aid these small tenants, when they can show that draining or ditching will be a beneficial thing, by contributing towards the cost—that is, if parties avail themselves of that. I may, however, state in regard to the letting of farms now—those farms which have been taken and improved by Mr Sutherland in the first place, and given off as large farms—it is a very common thing for Mr Sutherland to make this bargain—that he will provide the mason work and slater work and the tenant will supply the wood, and the like of that, and he gets a valuation for his wood at the termination of his lease. That is quite a common thing. There are what are known as compriseiments on the estate, and there is what we call master-wood ; but I may say that, generally speaking, there is no objection to the tenants improving their houses as much as they please. They will get the full valuation, less what they call this master-wood. There is a prohibition in the articles and regulations of the estate, of which I sent a copy on 3d August to the Secretary of

LYBSTER.

John
M'Donald
Nimmo.

the Commission, against building without the consent of the proprietor, and the proprietor is not disinclined to give such consent when it will benefit the holding; but he, of course, looks to this that these small holdings are not to be overburdened with buildings—that is to say, that there are to be no unnecessary buildings.

37801. About how long ago is it since these proceedings originated—since Mr Sutherland first began to shift or remove the small tenants?—About 1863 it commenced, I think.

37802. How long did it go on, and when did he terminate his operations? Are they still being carried on or are they terminated?—They have terminated. The bulk were in 1863 and 1864.

37803. At what time did they terminate?—I think the last would be ten years or so ago.

37804. About 1874?—I think so.

37805. During those ten years can you tell me how many cases of removal or eviction there were. The previous witness said 105 heads of families?—Well, I made a return to the Secretary. I have a draft of it with me.

37806. Can you state it from memory?—I could not trust myself to state it from memory.

37807. Does 105 seem to you to be an over-statement?—I do think it an over-statement. There were voluntary removals, removals by death, and removals to other parts of the estate—so that 105 is very greatly over-stated in regard to the number of positive removals.

37808. But I said disturbances or transfers or evictions—I mean removals altogether from existing tenements and occupancies. Do you think there were as many as 105?—I don't think it.

37809. What proportion, do you think, of the persons so removed or disturbed were practically accommodated with new holdings on the estate, and what proportion shifted for themselves in the world?—I cannot state without referring to the paper. Referring to my draft, the first question that is put I have answered thus—‘Twenty-four, and about the same number of families. Impossible to state area of land, because there have been three divisions of commony within the last thirty years, and in some cases more land was given than was taken away.’ In regard to the second question, I have stated, ‘No extent of pasture and no reductions of rent to speak of. There have been three divisions of commony.’ Then, question number three—‘Sixty-six. Nearly one half received the option of going to ground laid out for them, but refused to accept.’ Question four—‘Several parties who have crofts have leases varying from seven to thirteen years; others hold from year to year.’

37810. Will you allow me to adhere to the particular point? Can you make out from that statement how many transfers or how many removals occurred? You mentioned sixty-six?—There were twenty-four transfers. Then there were sixty-six removed. ‘Nearly half received the option of going to ground laid out for them, but refused to accept.’

37811. Sixty-six and twenty-four would represent a total of how many?—Of ninety; but of those ninety, twenty-four got other places.

37812. There would be therefore about ninety removals and transfers, but as to the sixty-six removals half of these got offers to settle upon the estate again?—There were three who accepted.

37813. What I want to arrive at is this, you say that about half of the sixty-six got offers to settle upon the estate elsewhere. When they were removed, and when they got this offer, was any compensation offered to them for any improvements that they left behind them?—I cannot say whether they left improvements or not. I am not aware there was any-

CAITHNESS

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LYBSTER.

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John
M'Donald
Nimmo.

CAITHNESS thing to compensate them for. There were no compensations, strictly speaking. These parties got the usual allowance for the value of the timber upon their houses. They would be paid for whatever dung, fallow-break, and new grass they left; and perhaps, in some cases, they may have been allowed valuation for second year's grass; that is to say, current valuation for second year's grass.

LYBSTER.
John M'Donald Nimmo.
37814. When those were offered new places, were the places they were introduced to in a state of nature, or were there any improvements upon them?—I am hardly able to answer that, but the places were laid off in farms. I think they had been under the plough and cropped.

37815. In these extensive removals were the people very reluctant to remove?—Some of them were. I don't deny that Sinclair's father and some others were very reluctant to remove, and perhaps this reluctance accounts a good deal for the strong evidence that George Sinclair has given here to-day.

37816. Were a great proportion of these—for instance, of the sixty-six—in arrears of rent?—Well, I never looked into that.

37817. But you state that a great number of these small tenants were in a very poor condition—in fact, that they were, as it were, vegetating in their holdings? When they were removed and dispersed in the country, did their condition become any better?—I cannot say. Some of them went to neighbouring estates.

37818. And do you think they were well treated upon the neighbouring estates?—I know there are some of them on neighbouring estates now. Several of them I can name,—for instance, some on Mr Sharp's estate, some on Mrs Gunn's estate, and some upon the Latheronwheel estate

DONALD M'KAY, Crofter, Bulldoo, Caithness (46)—examined.

Donald M'Kay.

37819. *The Chairman.*—You have been elected a delegate?—Yes.

37820. You produce a statement. Is this a statement on behalf of the people who have sent you here or on your own behalf?—On behalf of the majority of the people who have sent me.—‘I, Donald M'Kay, crofter, ‘Bulldoo, am forty-six years of age. I have been appointed to give ‘evidence before the Royal Commission as to the condition of the crofters ‘in Achremie and Bulldoo, on the estate of Sir R. C. Sinclair of Stevenson ‘and Murkle, Bart.* The district I represent contains twenty-seven crofters, ‘of whom the greater number is either those who have been formerly ‘evicted from other parts of the estate and crowded in on the seven tenants ‘then in possession, as described by another delegate, or by their repre- ‘sentatives. The evictions took place between forty and fifty years ago, ‘when the late John Paterson was tacksman of the whole district. When ‘his lease expired, in 1859, the number of crofters, after being removed ‘from one place to another, and each time building houses and improving ‘land all at their own expense, was the same number as now. Great ‘suffering and oppression were endured at the hands of the tacksman; but ‘when our present proprietor came to the estate in 1859, we hoped for ‘better treatment and more security, and therefore set to and improved ‘our crofts almost wholly at our own expense. At that time the rent of ‘the twenty-seven crofters amounted to £60, 8s. sterling. Between 1859 ‘and 1876 our rents were raised to £152, 17s. sterling, all on the fruit of ‘our own industry except a small sum for drainage, the interest of which ‘amounted to £1, 2s. sterling, of the above sum of £152, 17s. Twelve

* See Appendix A, LXII.

' pounds was expended on ditches, for which no interest was charged ; but CAITHNESS
 ' this was all the outlay by the proprietor, unless one thousand and four LYBSTER.
 ' hundred yards of a road be taken into account, on which the labour of
 ' the tenants was fully equal to, if it did not exceed, the sum spent on it
 ' by the proprietor. Again, between 1876 and the present time, a further
 ' rise of £68, 13s. took place, including £1, 4s. drainage interest. Thus
 ' in twenty-four years a rise of £161, 2s. took place, with only £2, 6s. for
 ' interest, or over three times the amount of rent paid by us in 1859.
 ' During these last seven years there was expended by the proprietor on
 ' houses—(1) On new buildings. On one holding £35, 2s. was expended,
 ' while the tenant's share was £57, 12s. 6d. In addition to this, £5 were
 ' expended by the proprietor in fencing on the same holding, while the
 ' tenant expended £18 for the same purpose—thus making a total ex-
 ' penditure by the owner of £40, 2s. and by the tenant of £75, 12s. 6d.,
 ' or a sum nearly double. On a second holding, lime, wood, woodwork,
 ' and slate were supplied, while quarrying, carting, and building were done
 ' by the tenant. A third tenant got a dwelling house of thirty-eight feet
 ' by twenty feet, of which he did the carting himself, erected by the pro-
 ' prietor, while he himself is erecting buildings fifty feet by twenty feet.
 ' (2) Repairing houses. Eleven tenants got wood, five of them also getting
 ' lime, the total cost of which would be somewhat under £40. For the
 ' sums thus expended by the proprietor he is more than fully recouped
 ' by the addition of £67, 9s. to his rent roll. But this is not all, for he
 ' has the advantage of the expenditure of the tenants, who will receive no
 ' compensation from proprietor unless the recently passed Agricultural
 ' Holdings Bill compels him. The only alteration made in the distribution
 ' of the land since 1859 is that of four crofts. One was given up on account
 ' of the death of the occupant and joined to a neighbouring croft; another
 ' was given up by the occupant on account of his old age, and also joined
 ' to a neighbouring croft. But the same number was kept up, as two new
 ' crofts were formed on land formerly held as pasture by the tenants. The
 ' houses (for tradesmen) on these were erected by the proprietor, and the
 ' rent charged for them, and for the land improved at the expense of the
 ' tenants, was for the first twenty-one years £9 and £10, 2s. respectively.
 ' Now the rent is £14 each. The twenty-seven crofters may be classified
 ' as follows :—Four, having an average of 50½ acres each, for which they
 ' pay £80, 4s. of rent, may be said to require no more land. Other four,
 ' occupying 15 acres, may be said to desire no more. These pay £4 of
 ' rent. Of the remaining nineteen, three occupy 36 acres arable and nine
 ' waste and unimprovable ground at a rent of £34. The other sixteen
 ' hold 165 acres for £103, 6s. Comparing the rents with the quantity of
 ' ground occupied, one might be inclined to think that the rents were not
 ' too high; but when the fact is known that about 73 acres held by us is
 ' waste, and much of the rest of very poor quality, their opinion may well
 ' be changed. We are surrounded by large farms from which some of us
 ' were evicted, and which contain rich land, but pay less per acre than our
 ' poor lots, thus showing that the large farm system is not advantageous
 ' even to the proprietor. What we desire is revaluation of our land by
 ' persons well qualified to know its value, and appointed mutually by
 ' proprietor and tenant; also an increase of land, fixity of tenure at fair
 ' rents, and compensation for improvements. We the undersigned crofters
 ' in Bulldoo and Achremie testify to the correctness of the above statements.
 ' —GEORGE INNES, JAMES CORMACK, ROBERT MANSON.'

LYBSTER.
 Donald
 M'Kay.

37821. Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.—Your principal complaint is that the rent has been raised ?—And too little land.

37822. I observe there are four that have fifteen acres between them

CAITHNESS who don't wish for more land. How does it happen that they are satisfied?

LIVESTER. —They are aged, and unable to labour their ground.

Donald M'Kay. 37823. Are they able to support themselves on the fifteen acres?—No, the land is wrought by the neighbours.

37824. But the produce of the land is sufficient to keep them?—No.

37825. Do the neighbours give them help besides?—They give them help in labouring it.

37826. What have they to subsist on besides the produce of the land?—I don't know of anything else.

37827. What is the extent of land you would think sufficient for each?—About fifty acres would support a family.

37828. And what rent is that worth?—According to the quality of the land.

37829. As the land goes at Bulldoo?—The land is of various qualities there—some good and some waste land—some very inferior.

37830. You mention that there are new buildings, and that on one holding £35, 2s. was expended, while the tenant's share was £57, 12s. 6d., and that in addition £5 was expended by the proprietor in fencing, while the tenant expended £18 for the same purpose; was that under an agreement?—I am not sure if it was. The conditions might have been an agreement, but the sum expended was not.

37831. Are there written agreements with the tenants?—Not so far as I know.

37832. Are you a tenant yourself?—Yes.

37833. Have you any written agreement?—No written agreement.

37834. And in this particular case where it is mentioned—on the second holding—lime, wood-work, and slate were supplied, while quarrying, carting, and building, were done by the tenant; was that done in virtue of an agreement?—I believe it was.

37835. Is the tenant satisfied or not satisfied with the agreement?—He is not satisfied with the quality of the land.

37836. I am speaking as to these improvements on the houses?—Yes, he is.

37837. He is satisfied with the agreement?—Yes.

37838. It is not put in here as a complaint?—No, there is little complaint among those poor who have fifteen acres in regard to too little land.

37839. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—You say in the paper that three occupy thirty acres of arable and waste unimprovable land at a rent of £34; are these content with what they have?—No; I am one of the three.

37840. If you had fifteen or twenty acres, do you think it would be enough to live upon?—No, it is too little to live upon.

37841. What is the lowest you think you would require?—We would require fifty acres at the least to work and live upon.

37842. But it seems there are four who, you say, may be said to require no more land?—Yes.

37843. They have an average of fifty acres each?—Yes.

37844. And these are the only ones you consider in a comfortable condition?—Yes.

37845. Do you consider their rent reasonable? It is about £20 each?—Well, it is a general complaint that it is too high.

37846. What stock do these £20 ones keep?—Two horses, two cows, and a follower, and sometimes a few sheep.

37847. Can they keep no more than two cows?—No, there are no more than two cows on any of these except in one case, where one of them owns a separate croft of thirty acres. That thirty acres is not included in the acreage stated there.

37848. Don't you think two horses are too many in proportion to two CAITHNESS cows?—They require two horses for the work of the place.

37849. Would not two horses between two neighbours be sufficient?—
Sometimes it is, but sometimes they don't agree about it.

37850. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie*.—Does a tenant with fifty acres not keep more than two cows?—There is one who has more.

37851. That is upon another place; but will the fifty acres only keep two cows?—No more.

37852. And what have you who have only fifteen acres?—I have two cows.

37853. The same as the men who have fifty acres?—Yes, but he can keep some sheep.

37854. How many sheep?—About a dozen.

37855. *Sheriff Nicolson*.—Is it because the land is so poor that fifty acres of it cannot support more than two cows, for we have been in places elsewhere where people had only about ten acres, and some of them managed to keep four cows?—There is no outside pasture on the land.

37856. They have to pasture the cattle round about?—On their acres.

37857. On their arable land?—Yes.

37858. Then, if the crofts of those who have the small lots were increased, would they be able to stock them sufficiently?—Yes.

Witness handed in the following papers to the Commissioners:—
' I
' Donald Campbell, working farmer, Keunachy, in the parish of Reay, am
' seventy years of age. I have been elected a delegate by the working
' farmers and crofters of the parish of Reay, assembled in public meeting,
' to appear and give evidence before the Royal Commission, and specially
' to give evidence in respect of the evictions which have taken place in the
' parish, and whereby the great bulk of the parish and by far its best land
' has been converted into a few farms of very great extent, some containing
' about 30,000 acres. In the year 1838 there were evicted from Sheurerry,
' on the estate of Sandside, by the efforts of the late Captain M'Donald and
' John Paterson, factor on the estate of Sandside, not fewer than thirty-one
' families. Of these only five got permission to settle on wet mossy ground,
' where they erected dwellings for themselves, and by dint of hard toil were
' able by time to cultivate as much as enabled them to barely subsist. These
' five holdings have been increased by one, and are occupied chiefly by the
' descendants of those who first brought them under cultivation. The rest
' had to find habitations wherever they might. None of these tenants were
' in arrears, having always punctually paid their rents, yet they were
' ruthlessly and sore against their will forced to leave their homes. To
' add to the injustice they suffered, the wood of their houses, which was
' their own, although valued by men appointed by the proprietor and
' tenants respectively, was never paid for; and this applies to the other
' cases of eviction too. The late William Innes of Sandside was the then
' proprietor, but inasmuch as he had shortly before erected a church at his
' own expense, and invested money to meet the expense of a minister,
' entirely for the accommodation of the people of that locality, just immedi-
' ately before the evictions, it is not believed that it was his wish to put
' these people out, but that he was induced to do so by Mr Paterson, factor,
' and the late Captain M'Donald, who was his nephew and heir presump-
' tive, and was also tacksman of Brubster and Isauld, the property of the
' late Admiral Sir John Gordon Sinclair. The same policy of eviction
' was applied to Brubster, and twenty-seven families had to quit their
' holdings under circumstances similar to the above to make room for
' sheep. A goodly number found new homes for themselves in Canada,
' paying their own passages thither; a few, after one or two removals, got

LYBSTER.

Donald
McKay.

CAITHNESS ' squatted through the parish, and the rest where they best could. For
LYBSTER. ' the reception of a number of families, a range of buildings, in the form
 of three sides of a square, was erected in a miry spot, and by way of
 courtesy or in irony has been dubbed the village of Brubster. In 1840
 Donald **M'KAY.** ' Shebster and Clashmore, part of the estate of Sandside, was under the
 same promptings as Sheurerry, and in a like manner, cleared of forty-two
 families. John Paterson, who for a time was factor on the estate of
 Sandside, became tacksman of Downreay, Skaill, and Borrowston, all the
 property of Admiral Sir John Gordon Sinclair. From these places
 Paterson was instrumental in evicting no fewer than sixty-seven families
 to gratify his propensity for sheep farming. An example or two of
 Paterson's treatment of the tenants before and after the evictions may
 be given. A canal had to be made for drying a marl moss, and the
 expense of doing this was made to fall on the tenants, some of them pay-
 ing £1 and others 10s., in proportion to the size of the holdings; but
 before any but one of them could make use of the marl they were turned
 out, while the marl was plentifully used by Paterson himself. Then
 when some of them had after two or three shiftings got settled in Bulldoo
 and Achremie, they were on one occasion called to meet at the school of
 Downreay, to sign a document prohibiting such as were able to work
 from leaving the place to work elsewhere, even though to their advantage,
 on pain of eviction. Of these high-handed proceedings it can well be
 believed that the worthy admiral, who seldom visited his estates, was
 kept in utter ignorance. In the neighbourhood of Sandside a slower
 process of thinning took place, so that the tenants who early in this
 century numbered seventy-two are now represented by only twenty-six.
 After making allowance for the tenants still existing, and whose present
 condition will be spoken to by other delegates, fully one hundred and sixty
 families have disappeared from the two estates within the period named.
 Some of the ground from which the tenants were evicted was the finest
 corn ground in the county. It is not desired that any revolutionary
 change should be made in regard to distribution of land, but it may
 surely be hoped that the Commission will recommend that additions, with
 hill pasture, will be made to the present small holdings, as the leases of
 the large farms fall out. On behalf of the six crofters in Sheurerry, the
 place of my birth, let me say that they want revaluation, more land,
 fixity of tenure, and wood and lime for building. We certify that the
 above statements are correct.—DONALD CAMPBELL, DONALD M'KAY,
 DAVID CAMPBELL.'

' *Evictions in Caithness.*—The grievances resulting to the agricultural
 holdings in Scotland with regard to the bad land laws. I do not speak for
 myself, as I have a good factor, who is willing to do all that lies in his
 power for the comfort of the tenants. We have also good trustees on
 this estate, who are not oppressors of the poor. But with regard to the
 parish of Reay I have not the same to say of it. There has been a great
 many evictions in all parts of the parish, viz., at Lamb's Dale, Brawlin,
 Sheurerry, Brubster, Forssie, Shibster, Barlum, Sandside, Upper and
 Lower Downreay, Skail, Borrowstone, and Lybster. The late John
 Paterson occupied almost the whole of the above named places. He
 had a few crofters whom he kept as slaves. The men had to work for the
 small sum of one shilling per day, the women got a sixpence; they were
 bound as slaves not to leave their houses. The number that were
 evicted, as far as I remember, from 1838 to 1860, were from 150 to 200
 comfortably sitting tenants and crofters. You may ask me what became
 of all those people. Those who had money emigrated to America and
 elsewhere, those who remained became paupers. But previous to that

' time a pauper or beggar was unknown, but now there are plenty, and CAITHNESS
' this shows that the land laws for Scotland should have been amended as
' they were for Ireland. The Land Act for Scotland speaks for itself.
' We must open our eyes in Scotland, and especially in Caithness. Every
' farm should have a resident tenant, or I am afraid some of the Irish will
' visit us, and we will get the Irish Land Act to Scotland by-and-by. We
' the undersigned appointed David Nicolson, farmer, aged sixty-eight, Lieu-
' rary, as a delegate to appear before H. M. Royal Commission.—HUGH
' CAMPBELL, crofter; DONALD M'KAY, crofter; DONALD CAMPBELL.'

LYESTER.
Donald
M'Kay.

' I, John M'Kenzie, aged forty-one years, being elected by the crofters
' in the parish of Reay to lay before Her Majesty's Royal Commission how
' they have been deprived of their land, and how it has been put into the
' occupation of a few. The rental of the Caithness section of the parish
' of Reay is about £7000, of which upwards of £4000, is in the
' occupation of four tenants. On Sir Robert C. Sinclair, Bart. of Murkle's
' estate, in the parish of Reay, there is a rental of £4384, of which there is
' £2527 paid by three tenants, £3144 by five tenants, and £3388 by six
' tenants, leaving land, the very worst on the estate, less than £900 of
' rental, for the whole of the rest of the population to live upon. When
' the evictions were taking place all the people that could not shift for
' themselves, by going to other parts of the country, got leave to set up on
' any barren skirts of ground that were not worth including in the large
' holdings. There was in Brubster, a part of the estate, a collection of
' houses built by the proprietor, on a bleak piece of moorland; there were
' rents charged for the houses, although there was no industry or any
' source from which they could derive a living whatever; there was not
' even a drop of pure water to be had in the district.'

' We, Kenneth Sinclair, aged , crofter, and Hugh Campbell, aged 50,
' blacksmith and crofter, Sandside, having been duly elected at a public
' meeting delegates for the townships of Sandside, New Reay, and Milton,
' all in the parish of Reay and county of Caithness, beg to submit the
' following statement:—The district which we represent contains twenty-
' six crofters, whose rents aggregate £193, 15s., and vary from £17 to £38
' each. About the beginning of the century there were in the same
' district, but occupying more than four times as much land with hill
' pasture besides, seventy-two crofters, whose total rental was £202, 15s.
' 11d., and varying from a few shillings to £45. Almost all the land then
' occupied by the tenants or crofters has been absorbed into the Mains
' farm of Sandside, while such of the crofters as were allowed to remain
' had to be content to move into new allotments of thin poor land on the
' margin of the moor, which but ill repays the labour which has to be
' expended on them. This land was rated at from 7s. 6d. (for but a small
' and very indifferent part of it) to £1, 7s. per acre. The houses, erected
' by the labour or at the expense of the tenant, were all valued by a
' former proprietor, and these values, added to the value of the land, have
' become permanent burdens, along with the further burden of keeping the
' houses in repair; and this is the state of matters still. What we have
' to complain of is that, with a single exception or two, the quantity of
' land we occupy is by far too small to maintain us in any degree of comfort,
' and the rent too high in every case. Our small allotments require our
' labour to make them produce anything, but unless we work off them
' (and little work is to be got), they will not maintain us even had we no
' rent to pay. Further, there is no hill pasture which would enable us to
' rear stock, so that, unless now and then a person strives to rear up a
' calf to succeed a cow getting old, no such thing as young cattle are to be
' seen amongst us. True we have summer grazing for our cows on the

CAITHNESS links at a reasonable rate in addition to our rents; and although for a year or two we have had the privilege of leaving them on for a month or two in winter, yet the pasture, being bare and partially covered with sand during this period, gives little or no sustenance, and possibly does more harm than good, from the quantity of sand necessarily swallowed with the scanty grass. It is therefore no uncommon but the ordinary thing for our cows to be tied up for six months of the year. Nor is this all the hardships; for our crofts being small, will not produce fodder sufficient for winter use without going to the market, always scarce and often dear. Our usual stock consists of, for the most part, one cow, in some cases two; about half our number keep a pony, and a few two; no sheep except on the two largest holdings, where a few are taken during winter. What we would require is more land—holdings from 10 to 30 and 40 acres, with hill pasture, and revaluation of our present holdings. We have no complaint to make against our present noble proprietor. Both he and his immediate predecessor with all their officials have treated us well and kindly, except that they left us as we were when his Grace the late Duke of Portland came to the estate. We admit we never approached his Grace either singly or united requesting an alteration of our circumstances. We the undersigned witness that the above statements are correct.—**WILLIAM M'KAY**, crofter; **ROBERT SINCLAIR**, crofter; **JOSEPH M'LEOD**, crofter.'

37859. *The Chairman.*—The whole of these papers are sent by different townships, in what we may call the Reay country?—Yes.

37860. But they belong to different proprietors; some, I see, are upon the Duke of Portland's property, some upon Sir Robert Sinclair's, and one or two others. What is the general character of the townships in that country? Have the townships got hill pasture—common pasture—attached to them, or not?—Part of the country has very little common pasture.

37861. Have most of the townships got common pasture, or is it an uncommon thing?—It is a common thing. One part I am not well acquainted with, but in another it is the common pasture for which they pay rent.

37862. Do you mean that all the country is lotted—that all the crofters have lots of arable land?—Yes.

37863. They don't cultivate on the runrig system?—No.

37864. Besides the lots, have most of them got a run upon the common pasture, or have most of them not got a run upon it?—They are allowed to keep their cows on the common pasture.

37865. Is each allowed to keep a cow?—Or more, as they are able to put them on.

37866. Is that common pasture generally fenced in, or is it wild and open?—It is fenced in on one part I am acquainted with, but I am not prepared to give evidence upon it.

37867. Has any of the common pasture been taken away of late years by the proprietors?—We have been deprived of some common pasture ourselves in the district I represent.

37868. How long since?—Twenty-four years ago.

37869. Now, within this same period of twenty-four years, have there been any evictions? Have people been turned away altogether?—None at all.

37870. Then they have not been turned away, but they have been partially deprived of the common pasture. With regard to rents, have the rents generally been raised within the last twenty or thirty years?—The rents were raised at the expiration of the tacksman's lease.

37871. But since the expiry of the tacksman's lease?—At the end of CAITHNESS sixteen years it was further raised.

37872. That is in the particular case that I read, but generally all over the country have the rents been raised, or have they remained the same during the last twenty years?—I believe they have remained the same—the parts that I know.

LYBSTER.
Donald
M'Kay.

37873. Have they generally remained the same upon the Duke of Portland's estate?—They are the same as they have been in former years.

37874. And upon the Duke of Sutherland's estate?—I am not acquainted with it.

37875. Has the Duke of Sutherland not got any land in your country?—No.

37876. Then what is the chief complaint; is it the raising of the rent?—And too little land.

37877. Now, in some cases, are these large farms which are contiguous to or adjacent to the crofters' holdings?—The smallest of the large farms in our neighbourhood is £570 of rent.

37878. And, generally speaking, are the townships adjacent to these farms; do they march together?—The township is surrounded by three large farms from which the most of the people have been evicted.

37879. So if the proprietor was disposed to give them back a portion of the hill pasture it could be done?—There is no hill pasture now. The land has been improved.

37880. But the whole of these large farms have not been improved?—Yes.

37881. In what sense have they been improved?—There is a large sheep farm that has been improved and turned into an arable farm in the year 1859.

37882. But now you say there are three large farms near to your place; have they all been taken into arable farms?—The other two had been arable before.

37883. Had they been occupied by crofters?—Partially.

37884. But part of the arable ground might be given back to the crofters, supposing the proprietor were disposed to do it?—Yes, it could be done.

37885. Would the crofters be able to stock the ground; would they be able to use it, or are they too poor?—I think not. I think they could use it.

37886. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You have been authorised to put in the different papers that are here?—Yes, I have.

JAMES WATERS, Farmer, Bower, Caithness (65)—examined.

37887. *The Chairman.*—What rent do you pay?—I pay £42 of rent. James Waters.

37888. Who has elected you a delegate?—I was elected by the parishes of Dunnet, Bower, and Orlig.

37889. Do you represent the crofting class?—Yes, I represent the crofting class as well.—In appearing before the Royal Commission to give evidence of grievances, I do so in the first place by the request of the committee of the working farmers and crofters of Caithness, a committee that represents every parish in the county. A large meeting was held in the Temperance Hall, Wick, on the 27th October 1882, where upwards of a thousand persons from all parts of the county attended, composed principally of small farmers, crofters, and labourers. Several resolutions

CAITHNESS ' were passed, which I need not trouble your Honours with. And in the
LIVESTER. ' second place, I have been elected as a delegate to give evidence before
 ' this Royal Commission by several parishes on the west side of the county.
James Waters. ' In the third place, I do so because I and my widowed mother and
 ' younger portion of the family suffered great hardship through factorial
 ' cruelty, being driven from a fair position in the world to hardship and
 ' poverty. And if I were to put it in this way, why or what was the
 ' reason this committee was appointed, well it was in order to bring our
 ' grievances through the Scottish Farmers' Alliance before the Govern-
 ' ment. We sent resolutions up to the secretary of the Alliance, and a depu-
 ' tation of our committee was asked up to Aberdeen in December last for a
 ' conference at the general meeting of Alliance. But the Alliance being
 ' principally composed of large farmers, they refused to help us or to
 ' recommend our case to the Government. At a meeting then a resolution
 ' was unanimously agreed to, that a representative that support our views
 ' be returned to Parliament next general election. But a Royal Commis-
 ' sion being appointed to inquire into the grievances of the Highlands
 ' and Islands of Scotland, there has been meetings held in almost every
 ' parish in the county, preparing delegates to give evidence to their griev-
 ' ances. And, Sir, what we complain of is, that in many parts of the
 ' county the small farmers have been evicted from their holdings, and the
 ' ground they occupied converted into large tracts of arable farms, and it is
 ' believed upwards of a thousand such tenants have been reduced to poor
 ' crofters and paupers ; and what is the astonishing fact, that fifty-five of
 ' these large arable farms are held on rent by fifteen tenants. These fifty-
 ' five large farms are considered to be about the half of the culitivated land
 ' in the county,—yea, and certainly the most fertile part of it too, and held
 ' at a rent of one half, and in many cases at one-third of what the small
 ' farmers and crofters pay for greatly inferior land, giving one farm to each
 ' of the fifteen farmers referred to. There is forty large farms in this small
 ' county having no resident tenants, so that through this monopoly not
 ' only the social, but the moral character of the county has been much
 ' deteriorated. Let me refer to Dunnet, from where I have appointed a
 ' delegate, and where I spent the first nineteen years of my life, and what
 ' a sad picture does it show. About forty-five years ago it was a part of
 ' the county full of respectable happy families, a parish where poverty was
 ' not then much known, the people were all in a fair comfortable position,
 ' generally had farms sufficient to support their families. But the hand of
 ' the spoiler came over it. There were of long standing a few pretty large
 ' farms in the landlord's hands. But the time I refer to a change of
 ' factors came over the estate, and some of them having got unlimited
 ' power, set to work and drove out the smaller farmers, adding their hold-
 ' ings to these farms in the landlord's, or rather into the factor's hands.
 ' Whole townships were thus cleared out. On the estate of Lochend,
 ' owned then by Mr Sinclair of Freswick, there was a good home
 ' farm, three pairs of horses, twenty cows, and a large lot of young
 ' cattle ; there were nineteen tenants, thirteen of these putting out ploughs,
 ' some two pairs of horses ; six small crofters, these were turned out and
 ' their holdings added to the home farm, now all occupied by one tenant.
 ' North of the parish was the farm of Ratter, the property of Mr Traill, a
 ' farm of long standing, a farm second to none in the county. About fifteen
 ' farmers were evicted, and the ground they occupied added to this fine
 ' farm. Large tracts where I once saw families brought up, not a plough
 ' being put in it for the last forty years, it is now not worth half a crown
 ' an acre to landlord or tenant. Again, on the south side of the parish, is
 ' the farm of Reister. This farm is made up in my own day, by evicting

' seventeen tenants and making one large farm of them ; these seventeen CAITHNESS
' tenants all put out ploughs. This farm is on the estate of Mr Traill of Ratter. I fear I cannot enter into further particulars. West Greenland,
at the time referred to the property of Mr Sinclair of Freswick, where James Waters
there were a few excellent tenants, all turned out and given to one tenant,
all but one. Sir, it may be a fair question, what became of these evicted
people ? Well as many as chose were allowed to put up small houses on
barren hill, where nothing formerly existed but plovers, and not much for
them ; others on the edge of mosses, or on the rock heads, where sheep
could not exist. Close by the Reister farm, on the edge of a moss, a lot of
small huts ; it would not keep as many sheep, as they would not be
allowed there. It is known by the name of Beggars' Town, being likely
all paupers. About a mile farther west there is another colony ; it is
known by the name Paupers' Town. The younger portion of the evicted
families got work for a time about the large farms,—the males ditching
and draining ; when that was through there was nothing for them but to
leave the country. The young women likewise got work at these large
farms, which was the means of destroying the moral character of many ;
what destruction of morals has these large holdings been ! Thirty-five
large farms, where no resident tenant is to look after the best interests of
their servants. They have almost ceased being a church-going people, and
I have it on the most reliable authority that every twelfth person in
Dunnet has become a pauper ; and in my early days I believe there were
not twenty in that parish needing aid, and there were hundreds more in
it than now. At that time there were ten or twelve boats going to Wick
to the herring fishing ; but so crushed down by the iron heel of oppression
have they been, that for the last number of years they have not been
able to put one boat to sea. Their means are gone, and the young go
off to other lands, leaving a lot of poor crofters and paupers. The prin-
cipal part of the parish is kept as sporting preserves for a few non-resident
tenants. The working farmers have been driven out of the fertile
ground and reduced to poverty ; and who has been benefited ? not land-
lords. On the finest estate in the parish, forty-five years ago, there was
hardly debt, when a factor got unlimited power ; now the same estate is
hopelessly encumbered with debt. The majority of the population
reduced to poverty, the landlord helpless with a burden of debt ; it may
be asked who has been benefited by this revolution. I do not mean to
answer the question. Let me now mention a few of the hardships that
took place in carrying out these evictions. An aged couple, who had brought
up four sons and seven daughters on the said farm, fell a little in arrears
to the landlord. The factor having unlimited power, hypothecated his
subjects, and as soon as law would allow it was sold by auction for ready
money ; I was an eye-witness to this. The mother of this large family
had been an invalid for years. The factor was looking on when all was
sold off but the blankets ; they were ordered to be carried out—I know not
whether they were taken off the sick woman's bed or not ; the people felt
so disgusted no one would offer a shilling for them ; had any one done so
they would have got them. The factor ordered them to be carried
away as they were to somewhere about the south end of the Dunnet
sands. It was seen next year the factor's reason for such cruelty to this
man. There were five families ; he was the centre one ; they were all
turned out next year, and their farms made an outrun to a large farm.
There has not been a plough in since ; it has now become a barren waste.
Another case of cruelty, two aged persons—man and wife—who had
brought up a family respectably, were turned out of their home and their
furniture together. They had no way to go ; these two aged Christians lay

CAITHNESS ' six weeks beside a dyke amongst bits of furniture. At last the aged man
 —— ' became delirious, and wandered off through the hills; the neighbours went
LYBSTER. ' in search, and found him wandering with his Bible under his arm, say-
James Waters. ' ing he was seeking his father, who had been dead nearly thirty years. He
 ' then was allowed to put up a house in the bottom of an old quarry, and
 ' I understand is still living there. I might go on detailing of equal cruelty.
 ' Many of these small holdings have one horse, a cow, and a stirk; for a long
 ' time they had the grazings of Brabstermire, where they got them grazed
 ' for paying for. This grazing was a great benefit to the poor people all
 ' along the seaboard for about fifteen miles, and they had it, I suppose, for
 ' half a century. But recently it was all taken from them, and given to a
 ' farmer who had seven or eight farms besides, that he might have the
 ' pleasure of keeping sheep on it, not to farm it. One of the finest grazings in
 ' the county deprived hundreds of the best support they had, and it did not
 ' benefit the landlord; he did not get one pound more rent than the keeper
 ' of the grass was getting out of it; it was as sure paid as the big farmer
 ' is doing. Again there are the grazings of the hill of Dunnet, which the
 ' people say they had for two hundred years; some three years ago a neigh-
 ' bouring landlord too took a fancy to get it to breed grouse on that he
 ' might have sport, and the factor merely appointed a most amiable gentle-
 ' man; but it would appear cruelty and oppression if the poor follow a factor
 ' as the shadow does the substance. Well, this landlord got the hill of Dun-
 ' net, and put a wire fence around it. But in April 1882 the poor people,
 ' having nothing to give their cattle, broke the gate and put them in. Then
 ' there was a great noise through and through all Scotland that the Dunne
 ' folks had become rebels. However, through the advice of the ministers,
 ' they took the cattle out and shut the gate; but this last spring the land-
 ' lord sent for the Dunnet people, and told them that because of the agita-
 ' tion he was to let their cattle in, on paying him a small sum as grazing
 ' money, so when the agitation is over he can shut the gate if he choose.
 ' It is amazing how short-sighted some landlords are, how they burden the
 ' small farmers with rents and allow the large farmers to have superior
 ' land at half, and in many cases less than half rent per acre. There are
 ' several large farms in my own neighbourhood who do not pay the half
 ' that I and the like of me do, so that the small tenant is burdened
 ' with the rents and taxes of these large farms. One of these farmers in my
 ' neighbourhood has his farm at 6s. 6d., another 7s. 1½d., a third 8s. 1½d.,
 ' and the small tenants more than the double for far inferior land. True
 ' they all three drive their coach and pair; but if they were paying the rent
 ' the like of we are doing, they would soon not be able to drive. One of
 ' these three has a tract of arable land six miles long by three broad in
 ' parts; he has more arable land than the two hundred and ten tenants of
 ' Clyth at less than one-third of the rent they pay. Now, why is this the
 ' case? There is surely something wrong in the tenure of land. These large
 ' farmers cannot plead better farming; many of them are most miserable
 ' farmers. There is another parish named Olrig in which the poor crofters
 ' suffer much hardship, but I need not waste the time of the Commission.
 ' I hand you a written statement by one of themselves, which I believe to
 ' be a truthful statement. I have just a few words more to say, and it is this,
 ' there is not a landlord in the county who allowed his working tenants to
 ' be evicted but is hopelessly in debt, but the landlord that kept the
 ' industrious tenants as a rule his estate is clear of debt. Sir, let me men-
 ' tion one instance to support this, and I shall name the estate, as I know
 ' the whole matter. The late Sheriff Horne of Stirkoke had a fine estate
 ' clear of debt. He was sheriff of Haddington. He got a factor from some-
 ' where from the south of Scotland. He, the factor, at once set to evict-

ing the tenants ; it is reported that he hoped to see the day when CAITHNESS
there would not be a reek on the sheriff's estate but his manager's and LYESTER.
shepherds'. In about twenty years he very nearly accomplished his object ;
but the sheriff became bankrupt ; the land was all sold ; the poor hirers lost James Waters.
six months of their earnings, and they never got one halfpenny. The labour-
ing men on the estate lost many of all their earnings ; the kind sheriff
died on the bounty of his friends ; but the factor went to Peebleshire and
took a farm of £1200 of rent. This has been the fate of all landlords
that gave unlimited power to factors ; but whenever a landlord resided on
his estate, and looked after the welfare of his tenants, he and them
are generally in a thriving state. But let me close these remarks by refer-
ring to Bower parish, where I have spent forty-five years on one farm.
Bower has not suffered so much by evictions as some other parts have done.
There are few paupers in it. The poor law has not been legally applied
to Bower, and small crofters generally have not much to complain of.
But a great part of it, and perhaps the best part, has been converted into
large farms, so large that it is often difficult for the tenant to put the crop
down. One of the large pluriel farmers was unable last year to do so
until his neighbours and others sent horses and ploughs to do so ; and yet
he coveted a £50 farm last year, adding it to this farm—a farm not pay-
ing more than 7s. 3d. per acre, and has not paid more for the last thirty-
five years, while the small tenants on the same estate are paying about £1
per acre. But I must close these remarks, thanking the Commission and
the audience for their patient hearing.' I have also a paper from a dele-
gate from Olrig, which I got by post yesterday. It is as follows :—'I was
asked at a public meeting of the inhabitants of Olrig parish to give evi-
dence before the Commissioners on behalf of that parish. There are four
proprietors in it. The Earl of Caithness has now no crofters on
his property there. They were all evicted, and their lots thrown into
one large farm about thirty years ago, and some very fine arable land has
been thrown out under sheep and nearly gone waste. Had the expendi-
ture then incurred on that one large farm been laid out on the then
crofters, the proprietor's rent roll would be very different to-day, and the
country would have been much better too. Sir Robert Sinclair has a lot
of small farms on his property, and his tenants are very much over-rented
and most shockingly housed ; but I expect evidence to be given by one
of themselves regarding their condition. Several cases of very heartless
eviction without compensation have taken place on it. Mr Smith of
Olrig has only about a dozen tenants altogether on his property. His
father came to the county as a schoolmaster about the beginning of the
century, and bought the property for £1000 or £5000. The rental is now
raised to nearly £2000. One tenant occupies a farm for which his
father paid £1, 10s. to the proprietor from whom Smith bought it, and
he now pays £22 for it ; only a few acres worth £2, 10s. to £3 have been
added to it. The extent of this farm is twenty-two acres, and a part of
it will not grow crops of any kind. Some small crofters have been
evicted, and their lots given to Mr Thomas Purves, who holds several
large farms. Mr Smith will do nothing whatever to his tenants in the
way of repairing or rebuilding their houses, drainage, fencing, or anything
else. He will scarcely see any of them if they call, or answer any of
their letters. He will do nothing to encourage his tenants, and it is good
for the country he has not more of them. The Commissioners asked
somewhere if tenants preferred the lairds of old families to these new
ones. On this property they would most decidedly prefer the old lairds.
They were always gentlemen at least, if poor. All his farms are over-
rented, and though several of his tenants have asked him to relieve them

CAITHNESS ' of their holdings he refuses to do so. Mr Traill of Ratter is the other
 —— ' proprietor. On his property near Castletown there are a good many
 LYBSTER. ' people who have small crofts. They are employed as labourers in the
 James Waters. ' proprietor's pavement quarries; and it being absolutely necessary that they
 ' should be supplied with milk, they petitioned the proprietor, who por-
 ' tioned out a number of lots among them, which Mr Purves, Lochend,
 ' himself tenant of several large farms, valued at from 30s. to 50s. per
 ' acre. The land was no better and much of it not nearly so good as he
 ' himself pays less than 10s. an acre for, while I see by the valuation roll
 ' than he himself received a reduction of £147 on one farm, but these poor
 ' crofters never got any reduction. But the poor workmen must have milk,
 ' and must submit to be rack-rented. Some of their lots will not grow
 ' white oats, a sure sign of the poverty of the soil. These poor workmen
 ' are only paid once in three or four months, their wages only being 2s. to
 ' 2s. 4d. per day of ten hours, and they are most of them over head and
 ' ears in debt. And they can never be otherwise, such long payments, low
 ' wages, and such an amount of truck, that no other working class in the
 ' United Kingdom can be found so wretched as they are. Even in the
 ' West Highlands wages are much higher. The great bulk of them are
 ' compelled to take their meal out of the laird's store, as they can't get
 ' money and can't get credit elsewhere, and must take it as it is, though
 ' they often complain of the quality. A very few of them who can raise
 ' money in any way or get credit never take meal from his stores, not on
 ' account of the price, which is not complained of, but the quality. And
 ' they must also take their coals from the proprietor at any price he likes
 ' to charge and any quality he likes to give. Sometimes they are so inferior
 ' he can't use them himself in Castlehill House, but they are good enough
 ' for the poor workmen and small crofters. And only one other person is
 ' allowed to import coals into the district, and only then a limited quantity,
 ' and if she sold at a low rate it is believed the permission should be at
 ' once withdrawn. And besides the high rent for their crofts they have to
 ' pay £2, 10s. to £3 for their houses, and also £2 for cow's grass, which
 ' has often been previously eaten by sheep. And when pay day comes
 ' round, after the proprietor and manager have made their deductions,
 ' some of the foremen try to have a little out of the poor workmen too.
 ' They get them to take several articles of household consumption through
 ' them, out of which they no doubt received some discount to themselves.
 ' No wonder the workmen are so miserably poor and so deeply in debt.
 ' And if it be thought strange that so much illegal truck should be allowed
 ' to continue, I cannot account for it. Only I may mention that the pro-
 ' curator-fiscal for the district is also factor on Mr Traill's property. Why
 ' not pay the labourers there as is done everywhere else, monthly, and let
 ' them provide themselves where they like, and why not pay them fair
 ' wages too? In Tain township there are a lot of crofters and small
 ' tenants paying very high rents in proportion to that paid by the large
 ' farmers around them, and only the poorest of the land is left in their
 ' hands. Some of the Tain tenants have so little house accommodation
 ' that on one farm several members of the family have had to sleep in a
 ' part of the barn for the last ten years.'

37890. Do you think that the process of consolidation is now terminat-
 ing? Do you think it is still going on, or that there is a reaction?—
 Well, there was a £50 farm put into a large farm last Whitsunday; but,
 I suppose there is very little to add; it has been done in other parts of
 the country.

37891. You think there are very few small farms left?—I believe I am
 quite correct in saying that half of the land of Caithness is now in the hands
 of fifteen tenants.

37892. But do you think that now there is a change of policy on the CAITHNESS part of the landlords or not? Do you think they have seen that a mistake has been made, and is there an alteration or not?—I have not seen any alteration, but there is not one of them but sees the mistake now when it James Waters. is too late.

LYBSTER.

37893. Are there many of the large farms which are thrown upon the hands of the proprietor?—Not yet in Caithness.

37894. Do you know any example of a large farm which recently, within the last two or three years, has been re-let at the end of the lease? —The farm of Ratter was let two or three years ago at a reduction.

37895. Are there no large farms out of lease at the present moment in the county?—Not that I am aware of; I see some advertised. I think there are three farms advertised just now when the lease is out.

37896. Large farms?—Yes, on Sir Tollemache Sinclair's estate.

37897-8. Is it reported there is a difficulty in obtaining offers?—I don't know. It is just a week since they were advertised.

37899. Is there any difficulty in obtaining tenants for farms of between £40 and £100 a year?—That is the reason the small tenants have been so much raised in rent. If there is a small place of £50 or £100, there will be a rush of half-a-dozen for it. That is what makes the small tenants too high.

37900. Then the great rise of rent in the case of the small farmers is partially owing to the competition of the tenants themselves?—Exactly so.

37901. How do you propose to remedy that evil, if it is an evil?—There is a very easy way to remedy it. There is plenty of waste land, if they would give it to the people to cultivate. There are thousands of acres I once saw cultivated that are out of cultivation altogether.

37902. You propose then that the proprietor should divide these large farms, and offer them to small tenants?—Yes.

37903. Who would, in that case, put up the farm buildings and offices?—Well, if you will allow me to tell two cases in my neighbourhood it will clear up the whole matter. Within half a mile of my place there is a poor man who came there. His family were growing up a good many years ago, and he was allowed to build on a piece of hill where the people were cutting their peats, for 2s. 6d. He was allowed to put up a house. The first he put up, you might have taken the corner out of it with your hand; but he wintered over in that, and begun to take in hill ground. He then put up a better house, and went on and on with his family helping him, and he has now a comfortable house, and he has improved the land. He has about sixteen acres taken out of the hill—one green spot—and he has built on this steading his dwelling house, barn, stable, and byre, and he has a one-horse threshing mill on it, and he says he cut 200 chains of draining, but never got a farthing from the landlord to help him at all, and he is in a very comfortable state.

37904. Has he got a lease?—I don't know whether he has or not, but he pays £8 of rent.

37905. For how many acres?—He says he has about sixteen acres under crop. That shows what a man can do. There was another man who was a farm servant near me for twelve years, and he got a piece of land from the late Sir George Dunbar. He was allowed to build on a strip of green, and last spring he asked me if I would buy any stinks. I went to his house, and to my astonishment the man had five excellent cows. I gave him upwards of £40 for his five stinks. He had three horses, and a two-horse threshing mill, and there was never a stone put down till he did it, nor a plough in the ground till he did it, and he got not one sixpence from the landlord.

CAITHNESS 37906. Had he any lease?—He told me the landlord had never signed the lease. He paid £3, and he pays £19 now. There are hundreds of families getting up in the same way in the county.

LYBSTER. 37907. And you think that, if the large farms were redivided, they would do it again?—Let there be a resident tenantry, and the landlord will find it to be to his advantage.

37908. What sort of lease do you think the landlord ought to give?—I have not considered that.

37909. You have not got before you what you would recommend as an improving lease?—I cannot say anything about that. I suppose all the people want is to be allowed freedom to get the land, and they will put it in order themselves.

37910. You don't propose that the people should expend labour and capital on the ground without a lease?—I don't say but they would do so rather than not get the ground at all.

37911. Do you know any proprietor at the present moment who has begun to break up a large farm and divide it?—No; these farms are now advertised with the option that they will be divided, if needed, into separate parts.

37912. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—I think, perhaps, the most striking thing you mentioned in your evidence is that the large farms are let at 7s. 6d. and the small ones at £1. Is it your experience that the landlords in Caithness are fond of big rents?—No doubt of it.

37913. Then why don't they let the land to the people who will pay £1 per acre?—They can't help themselves. The matter was put wrong owing to the foolishness of non-resident landlords and factors. Whenever they had the power they threw out the tenants and put the land in that position. It was little worth to the landlords at all, and they had to hand it over to those men who have it now at anything they could get out of it.

37914. But when a large farm falls out of lease, is there any difficulty in breaking it up?—I don't know. It has never been tried.

37915. Are the landlords not aware that they get more money from the small farmers than the big ones?—Perfectly so.

37916. Then how do you explain the fact that they don't break up the farms?—The difficulty is in the way of buildings. I have told them that they need not put out £1 in buildings. Give the land to the small tenants in farms of a fair size, with one or two pair of horses, and borrow money, and the tenants will pay the interest on the buildings. Give it at the rate the large farmers are paying, and they will pay interest on the buildings and make a comfortable living, and the landlord need not put any money out of his own pockets.

37917. In point of fact, the landlords could do it with benefit to themselves?—Yes, it is the very thing that would benefit them. They would very soon redeem the land if they would do so.

37918. You have mentioned there are thousands of acres of land, once arable, now lying waste in the country?—Yes.

37919. Can you mention the names of the properties?—Yes, on the farm of Ratter there are hundreds of acres; Reister; the township of Scoulary; and Hollanmay. I saw a lot of tenants on them, but they are all put out, and a large farmer has it for sheep. There were about 150 families turned out, and all the land is in the hands of seven tenants at the present day. *I had a list sent to me which shows a very sad state of things.*

37920. And the land that was under a regular rotation of crops is now under pasture?—Exactly so.

37921. You mention certain farms where this has occurred; on whose property are these farms?—Ratter is Mr Traill's.

37922. Are all these farms on Mr Traill's property?—No; Reister and CAITHNESS Ratter are on it. There are others, but I only mention these, so as not to take too much time to go over them. There are many others in the same position.

LYBSTER.

James Waters.

37923. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You have given in a very interesting paper, and I should like to put some questions in regard to it. You speak about the estate of Lochend, at one time owned by Mr Sinclair of Freswick, and you state that thirteen out of nineteen tenants who were there have been removed to other places, and it is now occupied by one tenant; what is the name of that tenant?—Mr James Purves.

37924. Has James Purves the shootings of Lochend as well?—I am not sure. The gentleman is here himself.

37925. Again, you say about the farm at Reister that there were seventeen tenants there, and they are now put into one farm; is that so?—Yes.

37926. Who has got that farm?—Mr Clyne.

37927. There is also another farm of Greenland; who has got the greater part of Greenland?—Mr Brock.

37928. What is the name of the tenant, and what is the name of the place where the one man has more arable land than the whole 210 tenants of Clyth?—That is in the parish of Watten—Mr John Davidson.

37929. Is that the person who is said to have twenty-seven pairs of horses?—Yes, the same gentleman. He has twenty, but if he farmed it all he would require ten more.

37930. And the sum he pays is only about one-half what the tenants of Clyth pay?—He pays 8s. $1\frac{1}{2}$ d. per acre.

37931. What property is that on?—Sir Robert Anstruther's.

37932. We find, in other places, particularly in regard to sheep farms, that there is now a difficulty in getting tenants when large farms fall out. Is it the case that there is a difficulty in getting tenants for the large arable farms in Caithness?—There has not been any this long time with the exception of the farm of Ratter, where he had to submit to a reduction of rent.

37933. Was it a large reduction?—About £100. I am not positive; but I think so.

37934. Is the reason, in your mind, likely to be this, that the price of cattle is still high, while the price of wool has gone down?—The price of sheep was never higher.

37935. Have any of the large sheep farms hill pasture?—Very little hill pasture in Caithness.

37936. And they are really and truly not sheep farms?—They are mostly arable farms.

37937. When you spoke of there being all these farms in the hands of fifteen men, do these fifteen men reside in the county?—They are all resident within the county. Three of them live in the town of Thurso. I suppose Mr Clyne—that is Ratter—has twelve farms.

37938. Are they all adjoining?—None of them join.

37939. How can one person manage such a concern?—I don't know; but he is managing it, and an old man too.

37940. With regard to the crofting population, with which we are more immediately concerned, will you explain in what way they are affected by these large farms?—Just this way, that there are so many persons upon the bit of land, if there is a small croft or a small farm to let, there is just a run of half a dozen after it, and they bid for it merely to get a home.

37941. It comes to this that the crofting farms have now been reduced so much in consequence of these big farms, that there is a great com-

CAITHNESS petition on the part of the small farmers—an undue competition?—Certainly.

LYBSTER. 37942. Are there many crofters present in your mind that would be prepared, if land were given to them—even land that has never been taken into cultivation before—and if they got long leases or fixity of tenure, to go in and improve it without much expenditure on the part of the landlord?—They would do so. I have just referred to two cases that have done it, and done it well. The last man I spoke of, who got the land from George Dunbar, has money in the bank. He was a ploughman, and he saw that green spot on the side of the hill, and Sir George Dunbar allowed him to take it for £3, and now he is paying £19 for it, and is comfortable, and he never got one sixpence from the landlord.

37943. Are the people of Caithness, like the natives of other counties we have come across, attached to their homes and their native place?—Certainly they are.

37944. As much so, you think, as in any other part of the north of Scotland?—No doubt of that.

37945. And there is an unwillingness on the part of that class, I presume, to leave the country if there is any means of making a comfortable living at home?—There is no chance for any young man in present circumstances to get any home for himself unless he leave the county. There is no chance in Caithness whatever in the present circumstances.

37946. It has sometimes been said that one of the great grievances in regard to the Highlands is that there is too much land belonging to one person; but apparently, that is not the case in Caithness. There are plenty of proprietors, but still there is a scarcity of land for crofters?—Yes, it is not the want of proprietors.

37947. You have taken a great interest in this matter for two or three years back?—I have. There were a few of us in the county that took it in our heads when the agitation got up two or three years ago. It was generally large farmers that went in for that, and a great many large farmers in Caithness got a reduction of rent, and they made believe that it was on behalf of the small tenants, but as soon as they got the reduction there was no more pleading for the small tenants. The small tenants could do nothing, because the proprietor would say ‘If you go, I can get half-a-dozen to-morrow;’ but the big farmers knew there were none to bid against them.

37948. Was it the undoubted grievances you saw to exist that compelled you, as it were, to take the active part you have done, seeing you don’t belong to the crofter class?—It was purely out of sympathy, because I expect nothing, and do not want anything. I will not take more land, and I don’t expect a reduction of rent. I am forty-five years on the present place, and I don’t want another landlord than I have.

37949. With regard to another remarkable statement in your paper about the poor rate of the parish of Dunnet; are you well advised in saying that every twelfth person in that parish is a pauper?—I have it on the authority of two members of the Parochial Board. It was some two or three years ago.

37950. And in your early recollection the parish was an exceedingly prosperous one?—Yes.

37951. It has a good deal of seaboard?—Yes.

37952. And you have stated that at one time there was a considerable fishing, which has now dwindled down to nothing?—There used to be ten or twelve herring boats going from Dunnet; and for many years they have been unable to put out one. They have not the means to do it.

37953. Can you tell us from your experience what extent of land you CAITHNESS consider is necessary for a crofter or small farmer to be able to make a LYBSTER. living out of without outside earnings?—Well, a man could do with thirty acres, and keep a pair of ponies, two or three cows, and two or three starks, James Waters, and live very well on it.

37954. You don't include sheep?—No; these small arable farms could not keep sheep.

37955. The 30 acres would occupy the attention of the farmer all the year round?—Yes, that is what I mean. It would keep the farmer well, and give bread to the family, and keep the horses at work. A farm of fifty or sixty acres would be very desirable.

37956. But 30 acres is the minimum on which a person could bring up his family?—Yes.

37957. What rate per acre would you put upon land—fairly good arable land—say for thirty acres?—Well, 15s. is considered a fair average rent in Caithness for arable land.

37958. Would you think a crofter not over-rented at 15s.?—No.

37959. A man with the extent of land you say, and the stock, and paying 15s. an acre of rent, would be able to live in comfort?—Oh, yes; no doubt of that.

GEORGE CORMACK, Crofter and Fisherman, Bruan (39)—examined.

37960. *The Chairman.*—You have been elected a delegate?—Yes, by the tenantry on the Clyth estate. I have been elected to read a statement from the tenantry on the Clyth estate.

George Cormack.

37961. Do you represent the tenantry, or do you principally represent an association?—I only represent the tenantry. There are other district delegates who have delegated me to read this statement.—To the Royal Commissioners, Highlands and Islands. *Statement of the Clyth Tenants.* After bearing long with over-renting, until we have found it impossible to meet the demands made upon us, we petitioned our landlord several times for a revaluation of our holdings, and would willingly pay what the land is worth. Being refused, we considered the only course left us was to petition the Government for a Commission of inquiry into our case. We are glad now of having an opportunity of expressing our grievances to the Commission, and also our usage for the past twenty-seven years. Our chief grievances are *rack-renting* and the confiscation of our improvements. We wish to give a detailed statement, and show how unreasonable this over-renting is. The estate has a coast-line of about seven miles long and about three miles broad, with about 230 holdings at present. In 1855 Mr Sinclair of Ulbster, the present M.P. for the county, devised a plan of getting the estate relotted and new houses built. When this relotting went on the old zigzag lots were cut up, and on some of the new lots there were as many as five old houses and on others no house. The tenant who would consent to build a new house and steading, remove the old houses and dykes, and fill up ditches to the factor's satisfaction, would get a lease of fourteen years, £5 for building dwelling house and £5 for offices if roofed with shed covers, but if thatched nothing, with £15 of meliorations at expiry of lease; while the tenant who built a house with a thatched roof got neither aid nor melioration, the proprietor giving slate and flag at the Clyth quarry and some lime for pointing, with the promise that it would be all for our own good and comfort. It was then discovered that we were done out of the meliorations of our old houses,

CAITHNESS which ranged from £6 to £15. The tacksmen, Henderson and Miller, who held the estate, did not pay the sub-tenants, and the proprietor would not pay us. At the same time there were more than 4000 acres still pasture taken from us and made into sheep-runs. In this change the rental was raised 30 per cent. Though these terms were so severe that several left the estate rather than submit to them, we, believing that it was for our good and comfort the change was intended, wrought to the utmost of our ability, until seventy slated houses and seventy-three thatched houses and steadings were built, and the remaining houses well repaired. If we put anything like value on our labour along with the money expended on these 143 houses and reclaiming and improving land, these will average £150 each. The rest of the tenants repaired their houses and reclaimed and improved land to the extent of from £30 to £100, while the proprietor only expended £18 on the slated houses and £5 on the thatched ones. The extent to which these improvements were carried on greatly improved the appearance of the estate; but instead of these alterations being for our benefit, we found that it gave the proprietor a good opportunity of selling the estate to advantage. Before the work was finished, he sold the estate to our present proprietor in 1862-63, and he began by raising the rents on yearly tenants, and when the leases expired, instead of our receiving compensation for our labour, our rents were in many cases doubled and some even trebled, so that in seventeen or eighteen years the agricultural rental was raised about 50 per cent. The £15 which should have been paid us at the expiry of our leases, instead of being given us, as expressed in our leases, our rents were raised and £5 taken off our meliorations. Rather than leave our houses, many of us agreed to these terms. This estate, so far as known to us, was higher rented than the rest of the county on account of the harbours and creeks on its coast. People driven from Sutherlandshire by the cruel evictions there gathered to this estate to prosecute the fishing at these harbours, and built houses and broke in patches of land, giving higher rents for them than they could otherwise do on account of their being near the stations. In 1862-63 these stations were rented at £460, and now the only place where herrings are cured is Clyth, which is rented at £11, so that this industry on which we depended is altogether removed from us. In Whalligoe, which was the least of these stations, there have been 4000 barrels cured, marketable fish, in one season, and these were all caught and cured by the people in the district. When we compare the roll 1862-63 with 1882-83, we find in the former there were 135 tenants who were owners or part owners of fishing boats, and in the latter they are reduced to forty-five, which shows the altered circumstances of the tenants, and the rest have fallen out of material for prosecuting the fishing as shareholders. Those who fish prosecute it from the various stations from Peterhead to Shetland, instead of fishing at the estate stations as formerly, these having been allowed to go to ruin. Now we maintain that instead of the estate going 50 per cent. up it should have come 50 per cent. down from the former. About forty years ago the rental of this estate was not above £1000, and now the gross rental of the estate is £4307, 11s. In 1862-63, when we take the rent of harbours, shootings, and tenants under £2 off, it was paying £2730; but in 1882-83 it pays, with these off, £4116, which gives an increase of over 50 per cent. We know nothing our landlords have done to warrant these repeated enormous increases of rent. We are aware that Mr Sinclair can show a considerable amount of money expended on the estate. A large amount of it went to build a harbour at Occumster, which is long since in ruins, and in making the farm of Bruan Lodge, from which

LYBSTER.

George Cormack.

'sixteen tenants were removed, but he did little for his tenantry except CAITHNESS
'what we have already mentioned. As for our present proprietor, he has
'done next to nothing. Another grievance is the meal mill, which is
'rented at £100, but this rent is paid by the tenants indirectly ; we are
'bound to go to that mill with all the corn we convert into meal, and there
'pay 1½d. per boll more than we can get it done for elsewhere, or that
'a tenant from another estate can get it done for there. The mill should
'stand on its own merit. Those of us situated along the braes suffer from
'spring storms, which so fills the ground with salt that it destroys any crop
'we may put into it. The coast side is also subject to harvest blast, as in
'1879 the oats were as low as 28 lbs. per bushel and very generally 31,
'while in through the county it was weighing 39 lbs. and 40 lbs. per
'bushel. We cannot see why we should be forced to pay four or five
'times as much per acre as farmers holding thousands of acres of good
'arable land in this county. We pay 30s. to 35s. per acre, and in some
'cases where not let by acre considerably higher. Ground set cheaper
'than that on this estate is not worth the name arable land. The usage
'we have received has put a stop to improvements, as those of us who
'improved most have suffered most. Taking off farms above £80 and sheep
'farms, in a census taken on the 18th September last, we find for a rental
'of £2674, 188 horses including foals, 277 cows, 95 stirk, 241 calves, 213
'sheep, which is something like 1 horse, 1 cow, 1 stirk, 1 calf, 1 sheep for
'every £14 of rent, and even this stock requires an average of £3 each hold-
'ing of bought-in keep to maintain them. Much is said about freedom
'of contract, but the only freedom we have is to accept of the proprietor's
'terms or leave, which means to many of us to be without a home. We
'say under the present system the landlords are practically despots under
'the British Government, as hitherto they have done with the soil of the
'nation as they pleased, and the same will continue in future unless the
'Government interferes on our behalf, which they have never done hitherto.
'What we want is our holdings valued by competent judges, and an
'appeal court, compensation for unexhausted improvements, and to do any
'good to the present generation compensation must be retrospective. The
'breaking up of some of the larger farms to suitable holdings from 30 to
'100 acres, and that each tenant should live on his farm ; also breaking up
'of deer forests and sheep runs, where these are suitable for cultivation.
'Farther, shootings in the proprietor's hands should be rated as other
'property.—GEORGE CORMACK, chairman.'

37962. Do you occupy a croft yourself?—Yes.

37963. Have you always lived at Bruan?—No, I have been in three places ; I was born and brought up on a croft. My father had a croft, and then we shifted when that relotting took place which is spoken of in this statement. We had to leave the country altogether, and then we settled in a place on the north side of where I am just now.

37964. Where did you receive your education?—At home.

37965. In the country?—In my own place ; I have never been anywhere else.

37966. You have never had any other occupation except that of agricultural labour?—I have been a fisherman from fourteen years of age.

37967. Now, as to the croft you are occupying yourself, are you tenant, or is your father the tenant?—I am the tenant.

37968. Is your father alive?—No, he died seven years ago.

37969. What is the size of your present croft?—The arable ground when I took possession of it was something like 11 acres, I improved it, and have put out £50 perhaps or £60 on it since I took a lease of it.

37970. You have a lease of it?—Yes.

LYBSTER.

George Cormack.

AITHNESS
LYBSTER
George
Cormack.

37971. How long was the lease?—Nineteen years.

37972. How many years have elapsed?—I took a transfer from another. I am not certain how many years have elapsed—perhaps eleven.

37973. You got the holding from another person?—Yes.

37974. Did you make any payment to your predecessor on account of existing improvements?—No, not on account of existing improvements. I gave £15 of meliorations.

37975. What does that mean?—For the wood of the house.

37976. Since you have held the place what have you laid out yourself?—Something about £50—between £50 and £60.

37977. Besides the value of your own labour?—No, taking my own labour into account more than ordinary farm work.

37978. What have you done; what have been your permanent improvements? Have you trenched the ground?—I have trenched a good deal of what I ploughed, and taken out rocks and stones, and drained it, and removed old houses, and put the land together—removed dykes and put it in shape.

37979. Have you expended anything on the house?—Yes, some on the office houses.

37980. Have you, in your lease, any security for compensation whatever?—At the end of my lease I only got £10—£5 taken off for meliorations.

37981. You got the value of the roof?—Yes.

37982. But you do not get anything for improvements to the soil or the fences?—Nothing, and I have asked for help, but I have been denied it on the plea that it was for my own benefit.

37983. What is the rent of the holding?—£24, but there is a room on the place which makes it £25.

37984. For how many acres arable?—I have added to it since I came, but when I came there were eleven acres. There is some heath pasture; I cannot say how many acres, but it is very worthless so far as it goes.

37985. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Will there be twenty acres?—Nothing like twenty acres. It faces the sea.

37986. *The Chairman.*—How much stock will it keep?—I never had anything on it but two sheep, what is above the road the cows sometimes go on. If it were enclosed, it might keep four or six sheep.

37987. Have you any common pasture?—No, the common pasture was all taken off the tenants in 1855; what is in the statement is much too low. It says there are about 4000 acres, but there must have been 6000 or between 6000 and 8000 taken off the tenants.

37988. Is there any common pasture left on the estate at all for the use of the tenants?—I think there are a few acres of common pasture in Roster, on the west end of the estate.

37989. When the common pasture was taken away from the tenants was any reduction made on their rents?—No reduction, but something like 30 per cent. was laid on the rents.

37990. When the common pasture was taken away was there a large reduction in the number of stock kept by the tenants?—All the young stock, such as sheep that went to that common hill, they had to cut short, because then their holdings were merged, and they did not go over their lots. They had to remain within their lots in those crofts. They had no hill pasture whatever except what I have mentioned.

37991. When the hill pasture was taken away did they reduce the amount of cattle they kept?—Yes, they had to do away with all their sheep.

37992. I mean the other cattle?—The other cattle became unsuitable, CAITHNESS because it was what we call Highland cattle they kept on the hill; but they had to change, and keep the cattle on the lots.

LYBSTER.

37993. Do they keep much fewer?—Yes; much fewer.

37994. But of a better kind?—Not of the same kind. The one is Highland and the other is cross.

George Cormack.

37995. Have you now to buy any provender for your cattle?—Yes, we have to buy it in for them.

37996. What stock do you keep?—I keep one horse, three cows and three calves, and two sheep; and at Martinmas I have often to sell off some of the calves, just as this season I will have to sell off some of the calves.

37997. How many acres have you under grain cultivation?—Since I have added to it I think there should be something like six or five and a half acres under grain.

37998. Do you observe a regular rotation?—A regular rotation; a fifth year rotation.

37999. Are you bound under a lease to do that?—We are bound to the rules of good husbandry—either fifth or sixth.

38000. What do you do with the grain? Do you grind it at the mill for the consumption of your own family?—I thresh it in our own barns, and I mill it.

38001. You thresh it in your own holding, and grind it at the mill?—Yes.

38002. Do you consume the grain yourself or sell it?—We consume the grain in our own family, and it is very little I can afford; but I rather buy in more than I sell it.

38003. Are you married?—Yes.

38004. And have a family?—Yes.

38005. Do you find that, in a good season, you raise enough food for the family, or have you always to buy food?—In a very good season it may do the family. The family is not very old. The oldest is only nine years.

38006. Do your potatoes last you the whole year?—No, some seasons they are very poor. The potatoes, in general, are a very poor crop on our side of the coast. They don't agree well with the salt water spray that is dashed up.

38007. Then your rent being £25, do you pay it by the sale of animals or by the proceeds of your own work, or by fishing, or how do you manage to do it?—Just by taking it out of the sea. I have been now on my third croft, and I wrought a great deal on the second one I was in; but I never could see yet that the land benefited me. If I can take the rent out of the sea, I can stay then in the winter season comfortably; but if I did not get it out of the sea, it was a pinch with me all the season—it impoverished me all the season.

38008. Have you a share in a boat yourself?—Yes.

38009. You don't possess a whole boat yourself?—Practically I do.

38010. How many men are in the boat?—Six, and perhaps a boy.

38011. But the greater part of the boat belongs to yourself?—Yes.

38012. How did you get the boat? When you began had you to borrow the money for the boat, or was it advanced to you by a fish-curer?—The boat was not advanced to me by a fish-curer. I just began by entering along with my father, and by keeping my head above water, as we say—by being very careful—I have managed to do so, though sometimes pretty hard put to it.

38013. But, notwithstanding the high rent you have had to pay, you

CAITHNESS have been able to support your family in comparative comfort and become proprietor of a boat?—Yes.

LYBSTER. — 38014. Well, comparing the rent of £25 which you pay for these eleven acres of ground with the rent paid upon other estates in the neighbourhood by men in such a position as yourself, do you consider that your rent is much higher than is the custom of the country generally?—Much higher, considering the custom of the country.

George Cormack. — 38015. What do you think would be the rent upon another estate—on the Duke of Portland's estate or any other estate in the neighbourhood—for the same sort of ground?—I could not be sure.

38016. Do you think you are paying twice as much or half as much again?—Along the coast there may be those who may be paying not so much as we do, though very high rents; but in the county their rents are much lower. They don't pay the half.

38017. You are paying £25 for eleven or twelve acres of arable ground?—I possessed that at first, but I have added to it.

38018. How many acres do you think you have added to it?—I think I have something like five added.

38019. So you may have sixteen acres?—About fifteen, I think, but I cannot be sure.

38020. You are paying about £1, 16s. an acre?—Yes.

38021. What is the common rental of the country for the same sort of arable ground; does it go above £1 or 25s.?—In the other parts of the country there is not the same sort of soil that we have. For one thing, our elevation is very high. Most of the land of Clyth is about 300 feet above the level of the sea, and some as high as 500, and there is no real subsoil in it. All the patches of ground that are good with us, those who came before us carted the surface that is within a distance of a mile from it, and have laid it upon those patches, the same way as they cultivate on the west coast at the present time, and there was no regular rotation then. The regular rotation began when the lots were cut up.

38022. Are you paying a higher scale of rental than the other tenants on the estate, or is it just about the same?—About the same, except the two largest farms the Mains of Clyth farm and the farm of Bruan Lodge. The one has only been raised 1S per cent., and Bruan Lodge something like 5 per cent.

38023. If you consider that your rent is so very much too high, and if you complain you have not got proper arrangements for compensation at the end of the lease, what has induced you to take in the additional five acres of arable ground?—Just that I would make something to support my family.

38024. You just ran the chance?—Yes, of course I just ran the chance.

38025. What motive do you think the present proprietor had in raising the rents of his property so much more than other proprietors? Do you think it has been done with the view of selling the property, or for what purpose?—There could be no view but for profit—to make something by it.

38026. You have not heard that it is his intention to dispose of the property?—No; I may have heard a rumour, but I have no authority for it.

38027. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.* —What is the ordinary weight of the oats you raise on your land?—It varies very much according to the season, because in a season like this—in a late season—or when the harvest blast comes on it, when once the corn whitens beneath the ear, it fills no more, but sometimes it is about 39 lbs. or 38 lbs. or 36 lbs. or 37 lbs., and as low as 28 lbs. in 1879, or 33 lbs. or 35 lbs.

38028. How many bolls of meal do you usually make in the course of CAITHNESS a year?—I cannot exactly tell that.

38029. Do you know how many bolls you usually consume in the course of a year?—I would say something like fifteen or twenty bolls of meal.

LYBSTER.
George Cormack

38030. And you generally get that off your croft?—Well, in a poor year we will not make twelve, but if it is an ordinarily good year we get that off it. If we get that we cannot allow anything to a horse or anything of that kind. We must keep it all for the winter, and buy in for the horse.

38031. How long is it since you entered upon this lease?—Something like eleven years.

38032. Who had it before you?—A brother-in-law of mine took it the season before that, but he never entered it. He had the quarry of Clyth rented from the present proprietor. I was then living with my brother in a croft on the north side of the present one, and we came there and broke in out of the heather something like twenty acres, and built a steading to the amount of, perhaps, fully more than twenty roods of mason work; and the whole would cost say not less than between £500 and £600, between the money and the labour we put out on that place.

38033. Did you take this lease of your present place to relieve your brother-in-law or for your own sake?—Because my brother-in-law did not go into it, for some reason that I cannot tell, and because I wanted to be alongside my father and mother, as they were growing up in years, and because it was along the coast side, and none being in possession of the place except my brother-in-law, I took the place as a transfer from my brother-in-law.

38034. Did you think the rent very dear at the time you took it?—I did, but I knew there was no help; if I wanted the land, I had to give it.

38035. It was worth your while to take it though it was so dear?—It was for that very reason—just because I could get no other holding on the estate near the one I was into.

38036. And you are paying more than £2 an acre for the arable land as it stood when the lease was entered into?—Yes.

38037. That is more than the average rent of the Clyth property?—More than the average rent, of course, because there is land on the Clyth property that may be cheaper, but it is not worth ploughing or cultivating. In some spots that are good it is just the surface carted from other lands. There is much of it where you have to take the surface and put it on the rocks, the same as if you were drying earth on a kiln.

38038. *Sheriff Nicolson*.—You mention in this paper that the number of persons owning boats has fallen off very much?—Yes.

38039. What is the reason of that?—The people became poor in circumstances, so that they could not put properly to sea. If they go to sea they have to go as hired hands.

38040. Was it the increase of their rents that led to their poverty?—The increase of their rents was one thing that led to their poverty, just the same as if a hair had been coming out of the head always—year by year paying heavy rents—and another thing was the industry of the fishing. The harbours allowed to go to ruin, and also the fishing itself took a change. The boats are now made much larger than they were.

38041. When these people came from Sutherland, the boats, I suppose, were of a smaller sort?—Yes, but at that time when these people came, about 1853 or before 1853, there must have been more than 300 owners of boats on this estate, because no one would get any land there except some one who had a part of a boat. There were something like one

CAITHNESS hundred boats fishing in these creeks, when the tacksmen Miller and Henderson had these harbours and stations.

LYBSTER. 38042. Was it for the same reason that all these harbours were allowed to fall into disuse?—Well, they were just allowed to go to ruin by not paying attention to them; and they were knocked down by storms. Take the harbour of Occumster. I was fishing twenty years ago, and a quay was put up then. It was no time after the proprietor Mr Sinclair had put it up and laid out a large sum of money—it was no time till it was upon the beach. There was a time when I was in Occumster, and it was put up every year.

38043. Who put it up?—Either the proprietor or the curer. It was between the two—just temporarily; but whenever a storm came there was no safety there.

38044. In the period between 1862 and 1882, when the number of owners and part owners of boats fell off so very much, was there a great falling off in the fishery itself?—That is so. In that period there was only the one station they fished at in Clyth, and there were few boats there. There was no fishing from the estate constantly except in Clyth.

38045. Then the profits of their fishing were not sufficient to enable them to keep up their boats and material?—No they would not. The present system of fishing is on a pretty expensive scale. Fishing at the present time, one of these boats with six men requires to expend, whether they fish or not, from £100 to £120.

38046. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—I see in your paper that the rental of this estate has risen very largely within the last twenty years?—Yes, that is the case.

38047. Can you point to any considerable expenditure on the part of the proprietor upon the estate to justify that large rise of rental?—None whatever that I can point to.

38048. In the case of the crofters especially, can you point to anything that was done for their benefit?—Nothing that I can point to; but what was allowed to go away.

38049. Are you well acquainted with the large farms on the estate?—Perhaps on the west end I am not so well acquainted, but I have been all my lifetime on the estate.

38050. Some of the houses seem to be looking rather ragged, also the fences?—There is not much fencing into it.

38051. There seems to have been better fencing at one time than there is now?—No, there have been some old dykes taken away, but there was never any fencing that I can remember, such as that which divided the old properties.

38052. But such dykes as there are at the present time seem to be in rather a dilapidated state?—The old ones have been all taken away and put underground in drains, and the surface made plain to the satisfaction of the proprietor.

38053. The lotting was altered?—Yes, 1855. The zigzag lots that marched with each other were made straight, and all the old houses were removed by the tenants.

38054. There has been some agitation on this estate, has there not, for some few years back?—Yes, there has been much complaining for twelve or fourteen or fifteen years, ever since they have been feeling the rent to be a pinch, and it took the shape of public meetings about two years ago.

38055. Have you been connected with this movement?—Yes, I attended meetings, and the tenants in those meetings asked me to be chairman, and, being present there, I did take a part for the benefit of the tenantry.

38056. You stated you got your education in this part of the country.

George Cormack.

You have been a fisherman from the age of fourteen. How far from this CAITHNESS part have you been as a fisherman at one time?—I have been in the Beauly Firth repeatedly year after year.

LYBSTER

38057. Have you been in the south of Scotland?—Never more than a trip for ten days at the longest.

George

38058. Are there many people on the estate of Clyth like yourself?—Yes, a good few; I know no difference.

Cormack.

38059. They are all pretty well educated like yourself?—Yes, and they employ their time in improving themselves; that is to say, at night.

38060. Have you ever addressed a meeting yourself?—Yes, I addressed a meeting in Wick and in Aberdeen.

38061. Are there other young men like yourself competent to do so also from this neighbourhood?—Well, they are competent enough to do it, but they may not have tried it.

38062. Then, altogether, it may be stated that the people upon this estate and in this neighbourhood are a remarkably intelligent class,—am I safe in coming to that conclusion?—Yes, I think generally they are intelligent.

38063. Such a class as would deserve encouragement upon the part of the proprietor?—Well, I would say so; so far as I have known them, I have found them trustworthy; and I believe where they have had their dealings they can get credit, and there can be testimony borne to their honour in the way of paying so far as they can do it.

38064. You have heard the evidence of the previous delegate, Mr Waters?—Yes.

38065. Do you concur with what he has stated that the large farms of the country have a very prejudicial effect upon the crofting class?—Yes, I heartily concur with that. I believe it is a great degradation to the population. The very servants that are employed on these farms have not the same privileges, and they lose that honour that is connected with a man who is not a servant; and when they go away from service they cannot turn their hand to anything, because health and strength have gone, and they have nothing for it but what they had during the time they were servants,—nothing but the public to support them.

38066. You are pointing to this, that the life of a male or female worker on these farms has a tendency to degrade them?—Yes, it has, because, for one thing, where bothies are used, these are without any ruling head, and they have a very prejudicial effect upon the morals of the young people.

38067. Are you aware that there is upon any of the large farms what we have found in Orkney—that there are certain houses upon the large farms where the families are bound to work?—I am not acquainted with large farms so minutely as to say that.

38068. You have not heard it stated that there is such a rule upon the big farms?—No, I have not heard it stated.

38069. Then where do the big farmers get their labour?—By going to the market and hiring those that come to the market—men and women.

38070. Are they occupied all the year round?—Yes, generally, on big farms I believe they hire for twelve months.

38071. Do you concur, so far as your observation has gone, in thinking that the large farmers pay much smaller rents than the crofters?—Yes, I know they would stand a very short time if they had to pay the same rent.

38072. Is your proprietor resident?—No; some seasons he comes to the lodge at Brnan, and stays there a short time.

38073. Has he an estate residence?—He has a lodge where the shooting

CAITHNESS men put up when they take the moors, and he stays there when he comes north.

LYBSTER. 38074. Does he keep up a permanent establishment upon this place?

—No.

George Cormack. 38075. Have you any complaint, such as we have heard upon some estates, about game?—No, he has not enforced game very strictly upon us—nothing but the common Scotch Game Law, and I never heard any instance where the proprietor was strict in regard to game with us.

38076. You don't complain of the rabbits?—Well, the rabbits do us some evil, but I have no doubt he might have prohibited us from shooting. I cannot say whether he would. I have never asked him.

38077. But you have no particular complaint on the head of game?—No particular complaint.

38078. What remedies now do you want?—I want the land valued—our holdings valued. We believe it is a just thing, and we believe the proprietor can do that.

38079. May we come to this, that it is a question of rack-renting that the tenants of Clyth complain of?—That is the chief grievance, and then those improvements which I made and laid out so heavily upon, instead of being a benefit, have turned out rather a ruin, because another man could come and give a higher rent although he sat only one year. But if we had compensation, such as £150 or £200—and one tenant says he has laid out £900—if such a thing were before the offerer he would not think of giving such a rent for the place.

38080. Are most of the tenants now on the estate, and were their predecessors descendants of those who had been on the estate for a considerable time?—The greater part of them are.

38081. And attached to the estate no doubt, and, therefore, unwilling to move?—Yes, attached to the estate; and there have been a great many that have gone away. I am safe to say that in my memory the estate has decreased by 100 per cent. of the population. It has decreased by 400 within twenty years.

38082. The estate itself?—Yes. There are now something like 1100 of population on the estate according to the last census.

38083. What has become of the lands of the people who have removed?—Well, our young people all go away. The women go to the south, and don't come back. They are in Australia, New Zealand, and America; and, of course, some hang on to their parents just to keep them in their holdings.

38084. Have the holdings diminished as the population has diminished?—Since 1855 I would say the holdings must have diminished. I cannot be quite correct in what I say, but I think they must have diminished by something like 60 or 70.

38085. What has become of them?—They are added to other places. I cannot be correct to a holding, but I think I am correct in saying 60.

38086. They have been added to other holdings?—Yes.

38087. Are there any other large farms on the estate?—The two largest are the Mains of Clyth and Bruan Lodge.

38088. *The Chairman.*—I want to ask you a question connected with one which Mr Fraser-Mackintosh put to you. You said you thought there should be a revaluation of rental. Do you mean that that valuation should take place in each case at the end of the lease, or do you mean that the law should step in and break the present leases and value now?—I believe that the law should step in and break the present leases, because it has brought us to the verge so that we cannot pay our debts.

38089. But I understood you to say that you took your present holding CAITHNESS and signed your present lease because it was suitable to you to do so, and that, during your occupancy, you have so far prospered that you have been able to improve your position and live?—Well, I cannot say I have improved it, but I have maintained my ground.

LYBSTER.
George Cormack.

38090. But you have become proprietor of a boat, or nearly so?—Nearly so; but in our calling of the fishing I may be proprietor of a boat this season, and next year it may be away. It is a precarious business, because if you don't make a fishing the expense is so heavy that it goes out of your hands all at once.

38091. But still you think it would be right for Government to step in and break a contract voluntarily entered into between you and the proprietor?—Yes.

38092. And to give you his property upon easier terms?—The greater part of the tenants have been forced into these engagements by the force of circumstances. That is why I believe the owner has power to value it, and should value it if he wished to have the people there. I believe the Clyth tenants, if they had the means, would emigrate, but I believe they would not emigrate until they would see the law changed.

38093. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—You say the population has diminished by 400 within the last twenty years?—Yes, or it may be a year or two more.

38094. And the condition of those who were left has not improved since then?—Not improved, but the other way—every year getting worse.

38095. There was no increase of their land or their means of living although the population diminished?—No increase, because it was eaten up by excessive rents year after year.

ALEXANDER SUTHERLAND, Crofter and Mason, Roster of Clyth (37)—
examined.

38096. *The Chairman.*—Do you hold a croft here yourself?—Yes.

Alexander Sutherland.

38097. Were you born in this place?—Yes.

38098. And you belong to this place?—Yes.

38099. Were your forefathers always settled here?—Yes, my immediate forefathers.

38100. Have you been living and working here, or have you been abroad?—I have been in the south.

38101. Where have you been engaged?—In Edinburgh.

38102. Do you come down here often?—I have been here for ten years. Previous to ten years ago I was in Edinburgh.

38103. But you have been resident here for ten years?—Yes.

38104. Exercising your own trade as a mason?—Yes.

38105. And working the ground yourself?—Yes. I have a statement to read.

38106. Are you a delegate?—Yes, I have been appointed for that side of the estate.

38107. Has this memorial you are about to read been read to the people? Have they sanctioned it?—They have been telling me the grievances, and I have written them down.

38108. So that though they have not heard it it is substantially their views?—They approved of it. They are here to prove it. ‘Roster, the district which I have been asked to represent at this meeting, is on the westermost boundary of the Clyth estate. As Britain is surrounded by

CAITHNESS ' the ocean so Roster is completely encompassed with heather-covered
 moor, and thus may truly be called an "oasis in the desert." Being
 isolated in this way, it has a peculiar history of its own. This I venture
 to submit to Her Majesty's Commissioners as worthy of their attention
 in illustrating the evils of the land system under which we crofters live.
 —
 LYBSTER. ' I wish to trace the effects of that system in Roster during the present
 century. At its beginning Roster had three tenants. I have been able
 to find out the exact rent of only one of these, that was £4; as the other
 two lots were about the same size and had the same privileges, each
 would pay about the same rent, that would make £12 in all. Let us
 say £15 to make sure work. Now I wish to point out the privileges
 this rental brought to the three tenants—not only had they a right to
 the arable patches round their houses, but to all the moorland within a
 radius of about two miles from the centre of the township; over all this
 their sheep, cattle, and horses roamed by right after their own free will.
 The average number of these on each lot was about three horses, five
 cows, ten small cattle, and from thirty to forty sheep. This state of
 matters was first disturbed about the year 1802 or 1803. Dr Henderson,
 the tacksman of these days, went to Tongue in Sutherlandshire, and the
 adjoining district induced a number of the crofters there to come to
 Clyth and settle down as fishermen. Several families had lots assigned
 to them in Roster. They settled down on untilled land, and although
 the rent in most cases was only nominal, they had to build for themselves
 and reclaim the land before they could sow anything. When in 1805
 evictions took place in Strathnaver, more families from that quarter came
 and settled down in Roster. In 1819 still larger accessions came from
 Kildonan, and a readjustment of the holdings had to be made, the moor-
 land pasture being still the common right of all. Dr Henderson was
 tacksman still, and it is worthy of notice how he treated the people. He
 was proprietor, fish-curer, and merchant. One account was kept for all
 dealings, which was of course on the truck system, and the people knew
 only at the end of four years how matters stood with them. From this
 time (1820) on till 1840, as the people were reclaiming the land and
 bettering their houses, the rents gradually rose. There was indeed a pro-
 mise of melioration for the houses built, but as the tacksman in the end
 failed this was never fulfilled. Matters, however, went on quietly in
 Roster till 1840; a considerable amount of moorland was now reclaimed,
 and formed an unbroken tract of arable land of such dimensions as would
 make one nice large farm. Some time about 1840 the tenants got word
 that they were to be cleared off the estate, and the reason assigned was
 that they were a lazy ne'er-do-well lot. Mr Horne was now factor, but
 instead of approaching him the tenants sent two of their number, John
 M'Intosh and William M'Kenzie, to Thurso Castle to Sir George Sinclair,
 to ask why they were to be turned off. He said he was told they were
 of no use on the estate, and of as little to the nation, as their young men
 never left home. These two delegates, however, pointed out that not
 only did the Roster people greatly improve their holdings and prosecute
 the fishing, but at that time there were sixteen men belonging to it in
 the army, and navy, and mercantile service. Sir George said, "If I get
 that verified, you are all secure in your district," and so the tenants went
 to their work again in peace, and a would-be big farmer was disappointed.
 We are glad to observe that proprietors now see the wisdom of dis-
 appointing more embryo big farmers. The next stage in this township's
 history is the granting of leases by Sir Tollemache Sinclair, and this
 brings me to quote figures to show how the land system wrought. In
 1854 and for two years after leases were given to the tenants for fourteen

years. They were got on conditions that new houses should be built, CAITHNESS
and an increase of rent paid both at the beginning and middle of the
lease. When the tenant agreed to slate his house, the proprietor helped
in money and material to the extent of £20; in case of some thatched
houses assistance was given to the extent of £5; making a total sum of
£200 expended by him. Some ditches were also put in as marches to
the extent of £20 to £30—in all £230. Now for a comparison of
Roster in 1800 and in 1856:—Rental in 1800, £15; rental in 1856,
£172; increase, £157. If this increase were capitalised at twenty years'
purchase, it would amount to £3140. Deduct from this £230, the sum
expended by the proprietor in improvements, and you have £2910, the
exact amount put into the landlord's pockets by the lazy tenants of Roster
and by the inherent value of their soil reclaimed from heath and peat
moss. This is not half the story as concerns Roster, and the best or
rather worst half is to be told. The rental of Roster in this year of grace
is fully £372; increase since 1856, £200; this capitalized at twenty
years' purchase is £1000. Deduct from this value of meliorations £120,
other improvements £80, in all £200 for improvements made by the
proprietor,—£3800 again put into the proprietors' pockets by this peat-
begirt region. And what are our privileges in return? There is no longer
any moorland outside the crofts for our diminished flocks to roam over.
Instead of three horses, five cows and ten small cattle, and thirty or forty
sheep running over a wide extent of pasture, the crofter's horse and cow
and two small beasts are now, as a neighbour pithily put it to me yester-
day, anchored by tether on a few square yards of lea and stubble land.
In eighty-three years Roster's rent has risen from £15 to £372, the
increase ever rising faster and faster. This shows that our fathers and
we have toiled hard. We have made the place what it is, and so we love
it as our home. Our clinging to it has cost us dearly, no less than £6700
to the capital value of the place, worth only £300 in the year 1800.
There is no end of waste land encircling Roster, much of it waiting to be
reclaimed. We are tired of reclaiming on such conditions; however, we
are gratified for the Land Act passed by the Government this year, but
we hope this Commission will do something to help the tenants at least
to share with the proprietor the result of their own labour in reclaiming
the soil.'

38109. Who drew up that paper?—I did.

38109*. With the advice of your neighbours?—Yes.

38110. What has become of the large common pasture? You said
there was a common pasture two miles on each side of the original town-
ship?—It is turned into sheep runs.

38110*. A portion must have been turned into arable?—Yes.

38111. But the greatest amount of it you say has been turned into
sheep runs?—Yes, the greatest part.

38112. How much do you think has been brought into cultivation in
these eighty years by the township as arable, and how much has lapsed to
the sheep farmers?—About 300 acres, I think, have been cultivated.

38113. There are now about 300 acres of arable ground?—About
that.

38114. And the rent of that is £372?—Yes.

38115. Is there no right of common pasture left at all?—No, not as
common pasture. There is a small strip of a few acres in one case that
belongs to nobody, but it is not of much service as pasture.

38116. There is no common pasture?—No.

38117. Are there any bits of waste ground attached to the different
holdings?—There are some bits.

LYESTER.

Alexander
Sutherland.

- CAITHNESS 38118. Would they add much to the area of 300 acres?—Yes, it would add to the area, but not to the value.
LYBSTER. 38119. How much would it add to the area?—There is a plot of four or five acres of rough ground in each croft at present.
Alexander Sutherland. 38120. How many sheep farms have been created upon the outskirts?—Three—two complete ones and part of one.
38121. What sort of size and rental have these farms?—The one is to the east side; I did not look at the rental as it lay a bit from the district, but I think it is something like £100.
38122. Are they arable or altogether sheep farms?—One of them is wholly a sheep farm, and the part of the one that was taken out of that pasture is wholly a sheep farm. They are all almost wholly sheep farms.
38123. Are your people employed in the fishing?—No.
38124. How do they live? Do they live upon the crofts?—Some of them live by the crofts, and there are others abroad assisting them to pay the rent and live, and a few go to the fishing.
38125. To whom does the property now belong?—Mr Adam Sharp.
38126. It is on the Clyth estate?—Yes.
38127. Was it sold by the Sinclair family at the same time?—Yes, altogether.
38128. Was the greatest rise of rent made by the Sinclairs, or has it been made since the sale by the present proprietor?—Sinclair held it longer, but it has been at a faster rate since the present proprietor came.
38129. Has there been any outlay by the proprietor in drains?—None but what I have mentioned. He is liable to pay meliorations, and he expended about £100.
38130. But the contribution to building the houses was given by the Sinclairs?—Yes.
38131. Do you find employment as a mason in the country?—All over the parish.
38132. But you live at the croft?—When I am at home.
38133. How long have you been working at the mason trade in this parish?—Since ten or twelve years ago.
38134. Has there been a good deal of building and improving going on?—Yes. There have been any amount of schools to build. That is the principal thing.
38135. You have been employed in building schools?—Yes.
38136. Have the wages of your description of work increased in the last twelve years?—They increased, and have diminished again.
38137. Did that depend upon the schools being finished?—A good deal, because there was seldom such a thing happening as so many buildings going on.
38138. Is there an improvement in the nature of the crofters' houses now?—There are none being built just now. We get no security for meliorations.
38139. Are any of them built with stone and lime, or are they dry stone?—They are all stone and clay; they are not built with much lime.
38140. And pointed outside?—Yes.
38141. How long will a house of that kind last?—It will last one hundred years.
38142. It is excellent stone?—Excellent stone; the weather has no effect upon it.
38143. It does not fall down?—No. They are not like the stones in the south of the country.
38144. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Does the population at Roster hold from

year to year at will, or by lease?—The greater part from year to year. CAITHNESS
There are very few leases.

38145. Was it ever generally the case to hold upon a lease?—There were leases given at one period. Every one had leases. When the former proprietor sold the estate he had leases, but since then very few have had leases. LYBSTER.
Alexander Sutherland.

38146. Is that owing to the unwillingness of the proprietor to grant them or the unwillingness of the tenants to accept them?—They think their position is so bad that they don't care for going into a contract of lease under the present system.

38147. Is that especially owing to the amount of the rent or want of compensation?—Both; and that their holdings after all that they have made are too dear.

38148. Too much rent?—Too much rent, and they don't get compensation.

38149. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—How many people are there in Roster? How many families paying rent?—About eighty, I think.

38150. The most of these people, I understand, came originally from Sutherland?—The greater number.

38151. And so they had to leave Sutherland, in the first instance, and came to Caithness to get in time enormous rents put upon them?—Yes, so it turned out. Some were induced to go, as the factor wished to get the fishing started.

38152. You have described the stone here as very good. If encouragement were given, and the people were pretty secure in their holdings, is there any reason why the houses of the crofting class here should not be as good as any in the country?—There are several waiting and ready to do what they can with their work, if they would get security for what they put out in money at the end of their leases; and some of them have bad houses too.

38153. You know the house of Clyth Mains?—Yes.

38154. It is a very old house, is it not?—I think so. I am not minutely acquainted with it.

38155. Is it reported to be 200 years old?—I don't know.

38156. It has always been occupied?—Yes.

38157. And is occupied at this moment?—Yes. The tenant has another farm at this moment in Ross-shire.

38158. But it is occupied?—Yes.

38159. Do you complain of game in the place where you are?—No, our proprietor is not strict on us in that respect. We are on very good terms so far as we can manage.

38160. You complain simply of over-renting and the uncertainty of your position?—Yes; and then, if we got security and the like of that, there are some patches which the greater part of us could cultivate, and so improve our position.

38161. Are there many of the young members of families in Roster obliged to go abroad and elsewhere?—Yes, great numbers go. They go to all parts. Those who don't go abroad go away to the fishing in the summer season, and wherever they can get work.

38162. And some go away for good?—Yes, a great many.

38163. Is there at this moment any encouragement for the young men to remain at home?—No, I could not say; there is nothing special.

38164. Is there a good deal of land in Caithness that might be reclaimed?—Yes, there is a good deal that might be reclaimed.

38165. Would it not be well that the people in Caithness should reclaim lands of Caithness in place of going say to Manitoba?—If

CAITHNESS they got the land on the same footing on which they get it there, it would be better.

LYESTER.

38166 For everybody concerned?—Yes, that is my opinion.

Magnus
Sinclair.

38166*. The following statement was given in by Magnus Sinclair, Lingland:—‘I was appointed by the Clyth tenants to appear as a delegate in behalf of the Newlands district of the Clyth estate. As is the case over all the rest of the Clyth property, our chief grievance is the enormous rise on our rents. I think Mr Sharp has used the screw to greater effect in rack-renting the Newlands district than any other part of the estate. Within a radius of a mile our proprietor raised the rents of some of my neighbours from £15 to £30; from £9 to £19; from £9 to £22; from £4, 10s. to £10, 10s.; from £5, 10s. to £11; from £7 to £14; from £1, 10s. to £8, 5s.; from £1 to £8, 9s. And all these great rises have been put on the poor tenants twelve or thirteen years after Mr Sharp held possession of the estate. The people quietly submitted to the taking away of the hill pasture, and instead of getting any abatement of rent, it went up. I shall now give a case or two to show the injustice and oppression of landlords and their officials. A violent gale swept over the north of Scotland in November 1877, which did a great deal of damage in the way of unroofing houses and overturning stacks of corn. A poor, weak, delicate man in Newlands, with a young helpless family, got the roof taken off the whole of his dwelling-house. A neighbour kindly lent him a boat’s fore-sail, which was put over the house. He sat for a week under canvas, when a few of his friends and neighbours gathered to get the roof on. They began to cut divots near the house on as poor a piece of heath as can be found in Caithness, when Mr Sharp’s ground officer came and stopped them, and would not allow them to cut a single divot, although the house lay roofless in winter. Again—another neighbour took a fourteen years’ lease of a croft at £4, 10s. about the time that Mr Sharp came into possession. My neighbour died four or five years before the expiry of the lease, leaving a widow between eighty and ninety years of age and two elderly daughters in the croft. The daughters, to keep a home for the aged mother, pluckily stuck in, and did well until the expiry of the lease, and owed no man anything. Mr Sharp then demanded £14 for the croft, and tried to frighten the poor women by saying that he had several offers of that rent. This was a custom of his when he wished to squeeze a rack-rent from the sitting tenant. The poor women were at a loss what to do. At last they were allowed to sit at £10, 10s. yearly rent. At this time their stock was worth £30 or £40. But in four or five years afterwards, when the aged widow died, what was the result? They were in debt, and £15 in arrears of rent. The ground officer bullied and threatened to hypothecate, &c. It took all their remaining stock to pay the landlord. So they were driven out on the world penniless, although they had sat in the croft for forty years. Many others on the estate could tell the same tale of the consequences of rack-renting. When a tenant is rack-rented, and plainly sees that he cannot make ends meet, he loses heart and cannot work, and will not do the same justice to the land that a tenant with a fair rent will do. With regard to our own croft at Lingland, where I was born, and my father before me, in the beginning of the present century, the land which now belongs to the croft was only 30s., with miles of hill pasture. In 1850 it was £9, in 1860 it was £15, 15s., in 1880 it was £30. I believe we put out perhaps £300 in money and labour in improving the croft since the last twenty-five years. Mr Sharp

' and our critics may say that we have ourselves to blame for the rise of CAITHNESS rental on the estate, for (say they) did we not outbid one another? I say no. To the credit of the people be it said (except in two or three cases as far as I know), they did not bid for a croft when the sitting tenant was an offerer, although Mr Sharp left no stone unturned to induce them to do so. On the expiry of a tenant's lease, our proprietor visits the croft the last summer of the lease, and goes through the process of valuing the farm, as he calls it. He takes out a note-book, and I suppose fixes the rent. Very often if he could not get that rent, he would allow the house to lie vacant. A few years ago there were several vacant houses on the property. Eight or ten years ago Mr Sharp was charging us with being thriftless and worthless; and he threatened us with a wholesale importation of Morayside farmers, and the first symptom of that threat being real, was the appearance in our midst of a poor Morayshire crofter, with all his goods, chattels, &c. It was on the evening of a beautiful Sabbath in summer that this distinguished individual happened to come. He took a look of his new home. But little time was needed to convince him that he had been miserably duped; so he about ship, and took his departure across the Ord, a sadder but a wiser man. We heard no more of the Speyside crofters. What we want is our holdings valued by competent local judges, compensation for improvements, and that the land of our country be given to its people to live on at a fair rent.— MAGNUS SINCLAIR, Lingland, Lybster, Caithness.—4th October 1883.— Something must be done for the Highlands.'

LYBSTER
Magnus
Sinclair.

ADAM SHARP, Proprietor of Clyth (66)—examined.

38167. *The Chairman*.—Do you wish to make a statement in consequence of what has been related here to-day?—At this late hour I shall not detain you long. Your Lordship and the Commissioners will easily understand the difficulty I labour under in making any adequate answer off-hand to statements that have been under careful preparation for months past; and that difficulty is mixed up with the acts of my predecessors, so that there is a double difficulty. I have very little to say on the matter further than that I have no wish, and I have, of course, no power, to make parties pay more than they are willing to pay. I may mention that a great many of the leases have been renewed on the voluntary offer of the occupants. That has not been so in every case, but a great many of them have been renewed at the voluntary offer of the occupants. Mr Cormack, who has been a very respectable man, made a very nice statement, and justly and truly told that he went in upon another man's lease. He came to me and asked as a favour if I would accept him as a tenant. I had very good reason to be proud of him as a tenant, but it was not my doing if the rent was too high; and I may mention that his place is, perhaps, exceptional on the property, because the average rent is not nearly so much as his, over the property. The property is rented at from 10s. to perhaps 35s. for some very fine land; but that land here, I venture to say, is as good land as there is in Scotland. I assert without any fear of contradiction that there is as good land on the coast as your Lordship and the Commissioners will see in Scotland. The climate may not be so good, but I affirm it is as good land, and I pay double the rent myself for no better land in Morayshire. I really have nothing further to say. I may add what Cormack omitted to mention about the arable land. In addition to what he calls eleven acres of arable land, and the improved land he has taken in, he has upwards of thirty-five acres of pasture.

Adam Sharp.

CAITHNESS 38168. What kind of pasture?—A sort of rough pasture, not fine pasture, but good useful pasture.

LYBSTER. 38169. How long is it since you have been the proprietor here?—

Adam Sharp. Twenty years.

38170. When you state that the tenants have taken their holdings at n increased rent by voluntary offer, I should like to understand exactly what is meant by that. Have most of the small tenants got leases or not?—Yes, a great many of them have leases; some have none.

38171. Taking the case of a tenant who has a lease, when the lease expires in a case of that sort, how do you proceed? Do you fix the rent which you think just or not in your own mind, and ask the tenant whether he will give it?—Sometimes I do, and sometimes he makes a voluntary offer to me.

38172. What is most usual? Does he generally come and make you a voluntary offer?—He generally applies for a renewal—sometimes before the lease expires.

38173. Have you a factor?—No, I manage myself.

38174. He comes and makes a voluntary offer?—Yes, and we have, perhaps, a year or two over it before the lease expires,—what he would be willing to give and what I would be willing to take.

38175. And at the expiry of the lease, up to the present time, what increase of rent have you generally expected or received?—Since I entered the property twenty years ago there is just about one fourth part of an increase. The statement which has been made in regard to the percentage of increase is not correct. At the time I purchased the property, as the basis of the agreement between Sir Tollemache Sinclair and me, £3399, 14s. was the rent submitted to me.

38176. That was the basis of rental submitted to you at the time of purchase?—Yes.

38177. In what year was that?—1863.

38178. Was that the amount of the rent actually paid to your predecessor in the estate?—That is the statement I got as the basis of the agreement.

38179. Was that gross rental?—Gross rental.

38180. And what is the gross rental at this moment?—Last year the gross rental was £4248. There has been a reduction on the fishing stations, and a rise of about £120 on the shooting grounds, so that the increase is something over a fourth part, or over £1000.

38181. What was the highest rental ever received? Was it higher two or three years ago, or is it now at its maximum?—It has been very stationary for four or five years.

38182. Would you kindly now give us what was the agricultural rental about the time you purchased the estate, and what is the agricultural rent now?—At the time I first purchased the estate the agricultural rent would be a fraction under £3000.

38183. What is the same agricultural rental now?—A little over £4000.

38184. So the increase upon the agricultural rental has been 25 per cent. ?—Yes, something over that.

38185. Can you tell us how that compares with the general increase in the same period of agricultural rental in the county of Caithness?—I don't know much about the county of Caithness, but I know that in many other parts of the country the rental has been increased much more than that in twenty years. I cannot speak much of Caithness; I don't reside here.

38186. You are not able to state what it is upon any of the neighbouring estates?—No, I know nothing about that at all.

38187. In any case has a small tenant left you and removed himself CAITHNESS rather than pay the rent which you thought would satisfy you?—I am not aware of any case at present in these circumstances.

38188. You don't remember anybody leaving you?—Not on the plea of rent. It may occur in twenty years. I don't remember everything that happens in twenty years, and it is quite possible that might have been the case.

38189. Have there been many removals or changes by people going away?—There have been a good many in the course of twenty years, and a good many people have come in.

38190. If at this moment you have a vacant croft—a small holding—to let by the removal or death of the existing tenant, do you find a number of applicants?—Yes, I generally find more applicants than I can supply.

38191. And do you find they are applicants who are willing to take the holding on your terms?—In that case I leave it to their own voluntary offer. I ask them to make me an offer. I never ask a rent from an incomer.

38192. You don't specify the sum to the incomer?—No, I merely ask them to make an offer, and then I accept whom I choose.

38193. Do you find that the incomer is generally willing to pay the amount which was paid by the outgoer?—Yes, and over it for the most part.

38194. Then there is no difficulty in getting small tenants here?—I have never experienced any. When it is at the top of a hill there is a difficulty in finding a tenant for a time, but generally any place about the coast will let at once.

38195. Is sub-letting forbidden?—I never prevented any one sub-letting who chose to do it.

38196. Have you any examples of tenants sub-letting to others and rem^ving elsewhere?—No, I am not aware so far as I remember at present. They sometimes sub-let houses and bits of land to their own friends, but there is not much of that.

38197. When the tenants sub-let to others in their own condition do they get an equal or a higher rent than your rent?—I think they get more. I don't know, but I think they get more when they sub-let.

38198. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Have you laid out much upon the property since you bought it?—I am not a rich man, and I have not been able to lay out very much; I have laid out perhaps £2000 altogether.

38199. Is that chiefly on the larger farms and on houses?—I laid out a good deal on the farm I had in my own hand a while, and I have laid out a good deal on the Mains of Clyth. That has, of course, added to the rental.

38200. But you cannot say you have laid out much on what may be called the crofting part of your tenantry?—I have put in some drains and such as that for them.

38201. You stated that the rise of 25 per cent., which you admit has taken place in your estate, is not out of proportion to what it has been in other counties. Would you say that in your own county of Moray the rents of agricultural subjects have, as a rule, risen 20 per cent. within the last twenty years?—I think they have; I think they have risen more.

38202. Purely agricultural subjects?—Yes. They have been rising recently. For the thirteen years preceding the last five years there was a very heavy rise.

38203. *The Chairman.*—Has that rise not been reduced again the last two or three years?—In some cases it has been reduced, b within slightly in my part of the country.

CAITHNESS 38204. If a farm is out of lease at the end of a nineteen years' lease in your part of the country, does the proprietor find a tenant for it at the same rent?—Yes, and very often more. There have been cases of increase Adam Sharp, lately in Banffshire and Morayshire.

LYBSTER 38205. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Have you any difficulty in getting your rents paid?—Well, I have always a little difficulty that way. It has been so, more or less, since I entered the property; and about as much the first year as it is yet.

38206. Have you much arrears?—Well, there are too much.

38207. And you have been sometimes obliged to resort to legal measures to recover the rent?—It is very seldom I do that, if I can avoid it at all.

38208. Do you think the land is worth to the people the increased rent that is put upon it in comparison with what it was twenty years ago?—I consider it is. The price of stock is doubled. Sheep and cattle are doubled in price since then, and I think that compensates for the rise of rent.

38209. Have they not made considerable improvements on the land themselves?—Well, there has not been much improvement since I came to the property. There have been some little patches of land improved.

38210. Don't you think it right to give them the benefit of the improvements they make themselves?—So they do. They get that.

38211. In what shape do they get it?—If a tenant has a lease, and if he improves waste land at the beginning of the lease, I think he is fully paid by the time the lease expires for all his outlays. I have known labourers take land in the south and trench it 14 inches deep for two years, and get a crop; and I think if land is worth improving at all, if he improves it in the first years of the lease, he is fully paid before the expiry of the lease, or the land has not been worth improving.

38212. And if the man's rent has been doubled in the course of the twenty years, and he has spent about £150 upon it, you think it fair that when he goes out he should receive no compensation for that?—I hold he is compensated by the crops he has had off the land.

JAMES PURVES, Tenant Farmer, Barrowgill Mains, Caithness (56)—
examined.

James Purves 38213. *The Chairman.*—I am very sorry you should have been called upon to speak at such a very late period in the evening, but I shall be very glad to hear any statement you wish to make, especially with reference to some allusion that was made to you?—I have handed in a statement to the Secretary. It is a written statement of the expenditure by me on the drainage and improvement of Lochend. There is also a report of the Highland Society, in which report is shown the cost of the estate to the proprietor, and the whole of the outlays that were incurred before I entered, and all the outlays I have made on permanent improvements since I entered. It also shows that from £360 I have raised the rent of the property to £800.

38214. Shall we have another opportunity of seeing you, because we have had statements here with regard to the management of landed property and the prospects of landed property in Caithness, and we might have the benefit of your experience?—I shall be very glad to appear to answer any questions that may be thought necessary.

HELMSDALE, SUTHERLAND, SATURDAY, OCTOBER 6, 1883.

(See Appendix A, LXV.)

SUTHER-
LAND.

Present :—

HELMSDALE.

Lord NAPIER AND ETTRICK, K.T., *Chairman.*
Sir KENNETH S. MACKENZIE, Bart.
DONALD CAMERON, Esq. of Lochiel, M.P.
C. FRASER-MACKINTOSH, Esq., M.P.
Sheriff NICOLSON, LL.D.

ANGUS SUTHERLAND, Teacher in the Glasgow Academy (30)—
examined.

38215. *The Chairman.*—What is your connection with this place?—I am a crofter's son here. I have been brought up here, and I always visit the place annually, and spend two months of every year in it. Angus Sutherland.

38216. Is your father living, and in the occupation of a croft?—Yes.

38217. Have you been elected a delegate by the people of this place?—I was elected a delegate by the people of this place in the month of March, at a meeting publicly convened.

38218. Do you represent other townships besides this, or this place alone?—I was delegated to read a statement on behalf of the parishes of Loth and Kildonan.

38219. Will you be so good as to read that statement?—‘Our grievances had their origin in the years 1814–19. In the year 1815, when many natives of the parish were fighting for their country at Waterloo, their homes were being burned in Kildonan Strath by those who had the management of the Sutherland estate. During the period above referred to, the people of the parish of Kildonan, numbering 1574 souls, were ejected from their holdings, and their houses burned to the ground under circumstances of the greatest hardship and cruelty—the houses in many instances having been set on fire while the people were still in them. These burnings were carried on under the direction and supervision of Mr Patrick Sellar, who was at that time under-factor on the estate, and who was also accepted tenant of the land from which the people were evicted, and which their ancestors had held from time immemorial. But we think it unnecessary to enlarge upon this phase of the historical “Kildonan burnings.” There is abundance of contemporary literature testifying to the barbarity of the proceedings attending these clearances, and there are still living amongst us witnesses of them, and our own poverty and present grievances are due entirely to them. The immediate result of the clearance of this parish was that the entire population of close on 2000, who had previously in their possession and pretty equally divided 133,000 acres of land, were compressed into a space of about 3000 acres of the most barren and sterile land in the parish; and the remaining 130,000 acres were divided among six sheep farmers, who thus held on an average upwards of 20,000 acres. This division of the land has remained very much the same ever since. The cultivated land in Kildonan Strath was allowed to go back to a state of nature, and the green which succeeded to the crofters’ corn crops has formed the mainstay of the sheep farms ever since. The people of Kildonan, of course, got no compensation of any kind, though their houses which, were their own absolute property, having been built entirely by themselves, were

SUTHERLAND. ' destroyed, and their labour in the reclamation of the land confiscated.
 ' When they were expelled from their homes in Kildonan Strath, the only
 ——————
 HELMSDALE. ' provision made for them was that the holdings of a few tenants at the
 ' seaside round about this neighbourhood were subdivided to such an ex-
 ——————
 Angus Sutherland. ' tent that what was then held by three or four families is now held by 200
 ' families. There was no subdivision of holdings by the people themselves.
 ' Such a thing was never allowed. That matter has been always attended
 ' to by the proprietor, and the consequence is that we have the smallest
 ' agricultural holdings in Scotland—from one to three acres—side by side
 ' with holdings of 44,000 acres. We feel that it is needless to enlarge upon
 ' the many evils which must of necessity have followed this sudden im-
 ' poverishment of people who had hitherto been in comparative affluence.
 ' At one fell swoop progress was for ever made impossible, and everlasting
 ' poverty made certain. The struggle for existence became so fierce that the
 ' ordinary amenities of life became impossible. People were so huddled
 ' together that a man cannot now walk round his own house without
 ' trespassing on his neighbour's land. Poultry cannot be kept, for if they
 ' stray half-a-dozen yards they are into a neighbour's corn, and this in a
 ' parish which contains sixty-seven acres for every man, woman, and child,
 ' rural and urban, within its bounds. Our bounds have not been ex-
 ' tended for the past sixty years, to allow for increase of the population,
 ' but, on the contrary, they have been continually contracted. If any
 ' official or superannuated official of the estate has to be provided for, a
 ' slice is always taken off our miserable holdings, never off those of the
 ' holders of the thousands of acres. The people of the district of West
 ' Helmsdale had this done to them no fewer than three times. Part of
 ' the holdings of fifteen of their number was some years ago taken from
 ' them and added to the holding of the local ground officer. At the same
 ' time, part of the holdings of nine others was taken from them in the
 ' following manner:—The then ground officer went round among the crofters
 ' concerned, and told them that the proprietor wanted them to give up to
 ' him a part of their land in order that it might be planted with trees. On
 ' these conditions they consented. Immediately thereafter the land taken
 ' from them was given to the harbour master, another estate official, and who
 ' is son of a former ground officer. A tree has not been planted there to this
 ' day, though this happened ten years ago.* We are well aware that the most
 ' persistent efforts have been made by those guilty of the cruelty of the Kil-
 ' donan burnings to justify their actions. The state of the people before
 ' the clearance has been systematically misrepresented. They have been
 ' represented as suffering from periodically recurring famines; but we
 ' defy any one to show that the people of Kildonan suffered in this way
 ' at any time that there was not famine in other parts of Scotland. Mr
 ' Loch, the author of a great many of the oppressive rules under which
 ' we suffer,—published to the world as a fact that the people were frequently
 ' reduced to such straits by famine, that they were obliged to bleed
 ' their cattle and mix the blood with oatmeal in order to keep themselves
 ' alive. This statement by Mr Loch has been repeated over and over again,
 ' and has been made the text of many a homily on Highland destitution, and
 ' we have often heard attempted justifications of the clearance founded on
 ' it. Yet, for all that, the statement bears absurdity on the face of it. Oat-
 ' meal mixed with water—of which we presume there was no dearth—
 ' would be as nutritious and certainly more palatable than if it were
 ' mixed with blood; and if they wanted to use the cattle for food the
 ' best way would surely be to kill them and eat the beef. The statement,
 ' so far from militating against the people, has the very opposite effect.
 ' It proves two things—(1) The utter want of any justification for the

* See Appendix A, LXV.

' clearance, and (2) it shows that the people had both oatmeal and cattle
 ' of their own, and now they have neither. Also, before the clearance,
 ' the people had the right of fishing for salmon on the river and of
 ' shooting game on the hills, and the fact of there being always abundance
 ' of game and salmon is sufficient proof that the assertion referred to, if
 ' not entirely destitute of foundation in truth, is at least grossly ex-
 'aggerated. It has also been asserted that their methods of agriculture
 ' were primitive. We don't deny that they were so when judged by
 ' modern standards; but the proper standard to judge by is the general
 ' state of agriculture at that time. We have no hesitation in saying
 ' that, judged by that standard, the agriculture practised in Kildonan at
 ' that time was as good and scientific as that practised at Dunrobin Mains.
 ' At any rate we think that any farming was better than allowing the land
 ' to go back to a state of nature, as was done. The fact is, that the sheep
 ' farmers who succeeded to the land of the crofters were enabled to make
 ' fortunes out of the confiscated labour of the evicted people. The value
 ' of Kildonan Strath as sheep farms depended entirely on the green
 ' which succeeded to the crofters' corn crops; and one of the reasons of
 ' the present deterioration of sheep farms is, that the grass is being over-
 'borne by moss through want of cultivation. As bearing on this point,
 ' we may be allowed to draw the attention of the Commission to the fact
 ' that the present proprietor has reclaimed 1312 acres at Kinbrace in
 ' this parish, at an expense, as has been stated in the newspapers, of up-
 'wards of £40,000. Now the amount of land reclaimed by the proprietor
 ' as stated above is certainly not one-fiftieth part of the land which had
 ' been reclaimed and put under crop by the crofters prior to the clearance.
 ' This can be conclusively proved from the amount of green with the
 ' plough ridges still distinguishable. We have thus then, according to
 ' the much-lauded method of reclamation pursued by the Duke of Suther-
 'land, the value of the labour expended by the Kildonan crofters on the
 ' land before the clearance, fixed at £200,000. All this was confiscated
 ' to the sheep farmers, and the rightful owners were turned out on the
 ' world penniless. We consider that it is not at all surprising that sheep
 ' farming paid in Kildonan under such conditions. On the other hand,
 ' our small holdings are exhausted through constant cropping and
 ' manuring for the last sixty years. They are so small—average size
 ' three acres—that we cannot afford to give the land any rest. From this
 ' exhaustion and the shallow nature of the soil, the corn crop is frequently
 ' so short that it cannot be cut, but has to be pulled up by the roots.
 ' All the produce we derive from our holdings is not sufficient to main-
 'tain us for half the year. The rest has to be bought, and for money to
 ' do so, as also for the money wherewith to pay our rents, we are de-
 'pendent on the herring fishery, and on friends abroad and in the south.
 ' The herring fishing in this place has been a failure for a number of years
 ' past. We have most of us a cow and a horse. Some have a cow, but
 ' no horse. A few have a horse, and a cow, and a calf; but on pain of
 ' instant eviction we are forbidden to have a single sheep. Very few of
 ' us would be able to keep a horse for purely agricultural purposes.
 ' Work can sometimes be obtained from the fish-curers during the fishing
 ' season in carting nets and herrings for the fishermen, and in loading
 ' and discharging the cargoes of the ships that carry away the herrings
 ' and bring the materials used in fish-curing. Those of us who keep
 ' horses for this purpose have to buy food for them. We would beg to
 ' give the Commission just one more example, and a very mild example
 ' it is, of the misrepresentation of the state of affairs in this parish. It is
 ' from that widely circulated and much read and quoted book called the

SUTHER
LAND.
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HELMSDALE.
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Angus
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SUTHERLAND. ‘ Statistical Account of Scotland of 1847. It is not written by the parish minister, as the accounts of all other parishes are, but by the Duke of Sutherland’s factor, the late Mr Gunn. This is what the writer says—“Population—1801, 1440; 1811, 1574; 1821, 565; 1831, 257.” He then proceeds to say—“The decrease is accounted for by the change that occurred in the rural economy of the parish by the substitution of Cheviot sheep for Highland cattle between the years 1811 and 1821. The system of small holdings and subletting, previously common in the parish, was thereby altered, and no part of the parish being adapted for new settlements, the bulk of the population was settled on the coast-side parishes, and in particular they resorted to the village of Helmsdale, which is within two miles of the southern boundary of the parish forming part of the same district of country, and where the increase of the population far exceeds the decrease in the interior.” Under the heading “Industry” the writer says—“Almost the whole of the parish is occupied as sheep farms. The number of sheep grazed—all of the Cheviot breed—is estimated at 18,000 head, and they are divided among six tenants of separate farms.” In the account of the adjacent parish of Loth, which was written, not by the parish minister, but by a legal gentleman in the employment of the estate, after quoting the population thus—1801, 1374; 1811, 1330; 1821, 2008; 1831, 2234, the writer proceeds—“This increase is to be attributed to the successful establishment of the herring fishery at Helmsdale.” To put all this into plain language, “a change in the rural economy of the parish” of Kildonan reduced the population from 1574 in 1811 to 257 in 1831; while “the establishment of the herring fishery at Helmsdale” increased the population of Loth from 1330 in 1811 to 2234 in 1831; the plain fact being that the people were burnt out of Kildonan, and compressed into the miserable patches of land in the most barren part of the parish of Loth, or forced to a worse fate in the wilds of North America. The writer of the account of Kildonan asserts that the increase of the population at the sea-shore exceeded the decrease in the interior; but this can easily be proved not to have been the case by adding the population of both parishes, as given by the writer himself. So far from exceeding it, the increase did not equal the decrease. In 1811 the population of both parishes combined was 2904, and in 1831, 2591, or a decrease of 223. We may suppose that the statement as to the people resorting to their pleasant seaside residences is equally accurate, though it took fagget and crowbar and military to induce them. Further, to meet the requirements of “the change in its rural economy,” the old boundary of the parish had to be changed, because it would not look well to have a population of 2234 in a parish of only 17,371 acres, while the neighbouring parish of 134,550 acres had only a population of 257. We merely state these as instances, and not by any means the most aggravated, of the attempts that have been made to keep the truth regarding our treatment and condition from becoming known to the public. We also wish to bring before the Commission the great disadvantage at which we are placed in the matter of rent as compared with the much favoured sheep farmers. There are in the parish six sheep farms and part of two others. The rental of the whole, as per valuation roll, is £4180, and the acreage of these amounts to 130,000, which gives 7½d. per acre. Again, the farm of Kinbrace was recently advertised, and the acreage stated at 44,391, and the rental per valuation roll is £1070, which gives 5¾d. per acre. A sheep farmer in the county, giving evidence before a Parliamentary Committee recently, stated that

his rent was £1240 (which is the exact figure in the valuation roll), and that he had 7000 sheep. Now the rule is six acres of hill and dale for one stock sheep. That gives 42,000 acres, which gives his rent per acre as 7d. Here, then, we have three different tests which show practically the same result, namely, that the sheep farmers in this parish pay a rent of 7d. per acre. There are 200 crofters in the parish. Their rental per valuation roll amounts to £651. Their total acreage is a little over 3000, or say, to put it beyond any possibility of mistake, 4000. That gives a rental per acre of 3s. 3d.; that is to say, we, with our miserably small holdings of barren, rocky land, the greater part of which we have reclaimed ourselves, pay five times as much per acre as the sheep farmers pay for the best land in the parish. Two years ago the sheep farmers got an abatement of 50 per cent. of their rents, but we never got anything of the kind—nothing except the rigorous application of the death premium and increase of rent on our own improvements. In winter we have to resort to whins or furze to keep our cattle alive. This is bruised or pounded with a flail, and then given to the cattle. When that fails, we must use sea-weed to feed them with. This is invariably done in the case of a severe winter. We cannot grow straw enough to thatch our houses or outhouses. We have our choice between allowing our houses to get roofless or taking rushes or bent from the holdings of the large farmer, at the risk of prosecution and punishment, as has been done on several occasions. We are also at a great disadvantage in regard to economy of labour, because of the smallness of our holdings. We are obliged to manure all our land each year, whereas, if our holdings were large enough, we could adopt the five-shift rotation, when it would be necessary to lay down manure only once in five years, and the land could obtain rest besides. We desire further to direct the attention of the Commissioners to the following particulars of the distribution of the population of the parish:—Area of parish, 134,550 acres; population, 1935, or 60 acres to each individual. There are in the parish 427 families, i.e., 315 acres to each family. There are in the rural portion of the parish 277 families, and the land, if distributed equally among them, would give 413 acres for each family. We have seven-eighths of the population living on one-thirtieth of the land. We just mention one fact which sufficiently shows the nature of the land we hold. It extends from the sea-shore inland for about two and a half miles; and at that point, and forming its north-west boundary, is a mountain ridge nearly 2000 feet in height. There are only two other points in the whole parish attaining to the same altitude. They are far inland, about twenty-five miles, at the source of the river; that is to say, a stream of two and a half miles, flowing through our holdings, falls through the same height as the river does in its course of close on thirty miles. This sufficiently testifies to the steep and rocky nature of our land. After the clearance some grazing land at a place called Breachachadh was set apart for us to summer some beasts, at so much per head. After some years a place called Griamacharry was substituted on the same terms. This was felt to be a great boon. A calf born in summer could with a struggle be fed all winter, in spring sent to this pasture, and in autumn sold to help to pay rent and buy meal and other necessaries. The horses also, not being much required during summer, were sent to the grazing, and taken back when required to take home the peats and to do other work. This arrangement relieved our common, and enabled us to keep two or three sheep a-piece thereon. But three years ago, without consultation or warning, we were deprived of this grazing. There was no provision made for us otherwise. Representa-

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Angus
Sutherland.

SUTHERLAND. ' tions were at once made by us to the estate management, but to these
 ' there was no reply. Besides, we were peremptorily ordered to clear off
 HELMSDALE. ' the few sheep some of us had on the common, and the factor went
 ' round among the people—a thing unknown before—with a paper for
 ' them to sign. Not only did the paper contain a promise to put away
 ' their few sheep, but that they and their successors for ever were not to
 ' keep a single sheep on said common. Some of us, naturally enough,
 ' objected to this last condition, and in consequence refused to sign the
 ' paper. They did not refuse to put away their sheep—that was decreed
 '—but they refused to sign the paper. They were immediately served
 ' with summonses of removing at the next term. This at once gave rise
 ' to an agitation and public exposure, which resulted in the summonses
 ' being withdrawn, and a kind of arrangement, which no one seems to
 ' understand, being made about a grazing club farm. The result of it all
 ' was the loss of the few sheep we had, and the sheep of the large farm
 ' which borders with us now feed on our common. We have already
 ' alluded to the monopoly of almost all the land in the parish by eight
 ' men. From the valuation roll it will be seen that they are as follow:—
 ' No. 190, £697; 191, £376; 193, £500; 194, £1070; 195, £550;
 ' 196, £282; 197, £45; 198, £660. But this is not all. Each of
 ' these eight large sheep farmers occupy large arable farms in adjacent
 ' parishes, and others sheep farms in other parishes of the county. No.
 ' 190 is No. 55 Loth (£308 + £697) = £1005, besides holding a farm in
 ' the county of Caithness. No. 191 is No. 125 Lairg (£300 + £376) =
 ' £676, besides being a landed proprietor in Ross-shire. No. 193 is
 ' No. 216 Rogart (£175), and Nos. 210-11 Dornoch (£500 + £175 +
 ' £100) = £775. No. 194 (now proprietor) was until recently held along
 ' with No. 63 Loth (£292 + £1070) = £1362. No. 196 is Nos. 57, 58,
 ' and 59 Loth and No. 227 Rogart (£282 + £714 + £25 + £442 + £90) =
 ' £1553. No. 197 is Nos. 20 and 21 Farr (£45 + £913 + £255) = £1213,
 ' besides being a large farmer in the county of Caithness. No. 198 is
 ' Nos. 66 and 67 Loth (£660 + £250 + £130) = £1040. No. 190 =
 ' £1005; No. 191 = £676; No. 193 = £775; No. 194 = £1362; No. 195
 ' = £550; No. 196 = £1553; No. 197 = £1213; No. 198 = £1040; total,
 ' £8174. We have thus eight persons occupying land in the county to
 ' the value of £8174, and some of them owners and occupiers in other
 ' counties; while in our case 200 families pay only £651, and that at a
 ' rate five times as high as the large farmers. We also complain of how
 ' we are treated with regard to our roads. Though we are assessed for
 ' the maintenance of roads, those which we use are in a disgraceful con-
 ' dition. They are mere water-courses; they never see macadam. Once
 ' a year, and sometimes at longer intervals, the earth is lifted out of the
 ' shallow ditch which borders only one side, and is thrown on the road.
 ' The first shower washes it off, and the road is worse than ever. The
 ' only solid and well kept part of our roads is where the native rock
 ' crops up. All the money seems to be spent on the old parliamentary
 ' road, on which the trustees drive their carriages. This is well kept and
 ' regularly macadamised. The rate per mile expended on this road is more
 ' than double the rate allowed for the maintenance per mile of the crofters'
 ' roads, yet the crofters pay equal rates on a rent five times as highly
 ' valued. The road on Kildonan Strath is equally well kept. It is
 ' twenty-eight miles long, and has been made and is maintained to
 ' accommodate the scattered shepherds of the eight sheep farmers. For
 ' the accommodation of the 200 crofter families, the trustees maintain
 ' only six and a half miles of the wretched roads already referred to. In
 ' addition the crofters have made and maintain at their own expense

'sixteen miles of road. Generally, we beg to state that any sign of independence or public spirit on our part is visited with the gravest displeasure by the estate management, and subserviency is the only road to success. Strangers are invariably preferred over natives. Boycotting has always been a recognised feature in the management. Parents have frequently been obliged to banish their sons who had given offence to a factor or his underlings. Estate rules, which not one of us has ever seen, are continually held over our heads, and the death premium or doubling, and in some cases trebling, of rents upon our own improvements is a recognised institution. The system of estate management that burnt us out of Kildonan Strath has been consistent and continuous. You will doubtless hear statements of enormous sums of money spent on improving the estate; but let it be remembered that such expenditure has no relation whatever to the crofters, in this parish at least. We have made all our improvements ourselves, and our reward is increase of rent. We have reclaimed hundreds of acres of land which were worth nothing per acre—had they been worth the sheep farmers would have got them—and now we are paying from 15s. to £1 per acre per annum for having reclaimed them. Our main grievance is that we have too little land. The remedy, of course, is to give us sufficient. That sufficiency is quite at hand. What has been said of the parish of Kildonan applies with equal, if not with more, force to the parish of Loth. When a family dies out or emigrates their holding is always added to the large farm of Crakaig. Within the last twenty years upwards of thirty small holdings have been so added. In the district of Whitehill in this parish the people were long ago given a piece of hill grazing and 15s. added to their rent on account thereof; but afterwards this was taken from them, and the rent left as it was. The boundary between the crofters of Whitehill and the large farm of Crakaig originally was a water-course called Crakaig Burn, southward to the point at which it is crossed by the old parliamentary road. The crofters' land was to the east thereof, the farm of Crakaig to the west. The tacksman began to claim his boundary as a point about 500 yards further east, and into the crofters' land, and from that point straight out the hill, and erected a fence there which actually enclosed five of their houses. This took away the best part of the people's pasture, namely, the green spots along the course of the burn. The people all along protested and disputed the arrangement, but the estate management gave them no protection or redress, though repeatedly appealed to. This matter has been in dispute for thirty years. The people of this parish have scarcely any grazing at all. In this respect they are even worse off than the people of the parish of Kildonan.' This statement was adopted last night unanimously at a public meeting, and I have been authorised to lay it before you. I shall be glad to supply information as to any statement made therein.

38220. Will you kindly state by whom this statement was drawn up or written?—If you will allow me I will explain, as shortly as I can, the proceedings preliminary to your visit. When it became known that Her Majesty had appointed a Commission to inquire into the state of the crofters of the Highlands, there was a public meeting called of the people here in the month of March, and delegates were appointed by the people at that meeting. The delegates met on several occasions, and there was an understanding come to that the various delegates should gather information in their districts, and that these statements should be given in. That was done, and it was remitted to me to put them into form, so as to present them in some logical way before the Commission,

SUTHER
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in order that any further labour might be lightened as much as possible in that way. I am not even responsible for the phraseology, as that has been changed and modified in some degree upon representations made by me at the beginning.

38221. Are you responsible for the facts stated?—I am responsible. A great number of the facts are within my own cognisance; and, of course, I have obtained statistics from the proper official sources.

38222. Was the substance of this transmitted to you in Glasgow?—Yes, a mass of notes. I was here in summer, and saw them at that time, and took them with me to Glasgow.

38223. And, when you received this information on the spot, did you examine it critically, and cross-question the people as to it?—Yes; but most of the facts I had as good opportunities of knowing as the delegates themselves had. Being a native, and brought up here, all the facts referred to are within my own cognisance as well as theirs.

38224. It is not very essential to the purpose of our present inquiry to ascertain the exact features of hardships which accompanied the original evictions; but, at the same time, as in the course of this paper the word 'burnings' has been twice used, apparently with the intention of aggravating the intensity of the case, I would like, as a matter of curiosity, to know what authority you have for stating that houses were set fire to during the presence of the inmates of the houses on the occasions of these evictions?—Well, generally, of course, there is some sort of literature on the question, which doubtless you have seen. There are also statements by old people who were sufferers at the time, and a general belief on the part of the people who came down to the sea-coast from Kildonan that this was done; and I may mention that the name by which the transactions are known among the people is 'burnings,' but I have no objection that 'clearances' should be substituted, or any other word. I put in the word 'burnings' simply because I was familiar with it—because it is the word used among the people when they speak of it.

38225. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Will you put it in Gaelic?—'Losgaidh'; and the year is called 'Bliadhna na losgaidh'—the year of the burnings.

38226. *The Chairman.*—When the people were removed from their holdings in the upper parts of the parish and brought down to the sea-coast, did not they bring (as is very generally the case) the timber of their houses with them?—Yes, I believe so, in some cases. I have seen some timber that was brought down, but only in one case. There may have been more.

38227. I don't understand what was burnt if the timber was carried away?—The roof. The houses were not all burnt, but there were cases of burning.

38228. I think it is a rash thing to use the expression without absolute certainty that there were cases in which the houses were burnt during the presence of the inmates. Then you are not able to give any particular case of that—to name any family or any particular case?—I may state that there is a man here named John Polson, who told me recently that his mother-in-law's family were evicted, and the mother took two infant children outside while the house was being burned. There were some of the household effects burned in the house. One of these children was afterwards his wife.

38229. You have also alluded to the employment of the military in evictions in Kildonan; what was the nature of that employment?—I understand, and have heard repeatedly, that the military were forwarded from Inverness at the time the evictions were taking place, and that they actually came as far as Golspie; but it was found unnecessary to employ

them any further, as the people went quietly away when they heard that the military were called in.

38230. In speaking of the reclamations which have recently been in progress, to the extent, I think, of 1300 acres, on the part of the proprietor, if I understood you rightly, you said that these reclamations did not represent one-fiftieth part of the cumulative reclamation of the old holders?—Yes, I made that statement.

38231. That would imply, then, in these parishes hereabout, 60,000 acres of land under cultivation?—Yes; it is so.

38232. Have you got any ground for estimating the arable land in the old holdings at so high a figure as 60,000 acres?—It is about 50,000, I understand, from the amount of land which shows signs of ploughing yet. I did not calculate the amount of land which may have been cultivated, and is overgrown by heather at this time, but only the land upon which ploughed ridges are still to be seen. I didn't go over it and measure it, but I know every inch of it, and I think it is within the truth that fifty times as great an area—close on 60,000 acres—was under cultivation.

38233. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie*.—In the strath of Kildonan?—Yes.

38234. *The Chairman*.—How many acres do you estimate the parish of Kildonan to contain?—150,450 acres.

38235. Do you think that of the 150,000 acres in the parish of Kildonan, 60,000 were in old times under cultivation?—Yes.

38236. Under spade cultivation?—No; plough cultivation.

38237. What was the population—the highest population?—Close on 2000.

38238. In the strath?—Yes.

38239. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie*.—350 families?—Dividing by 5, I suppose so. The families were, generally, very large at that time.

38240. Then there would be fewer families. There would not be more than 350?—No; the highest population was 1754.

38241. *The Chairman*.—Well, if there were 350 families, and all of these families were in the position of tenants—small tenants, crofters, or persons having holdings, excluding the landless families—allowing there were no landless families or families of poor cottars—that would give to each household 160 acres of arable ground besides the outrun. Now, have you ever made an estimate or calculation to test the probability of your statement?—Yes, I did; I tested it in every way, and from what I have heard from some of the people I felt that I was fully justified in putting down the statement from the extent of land they said they had, and the amount of corn they had.

38242. Do you really believe, or is the impression generally entertained that each of these poor holdings on an average contained 160 acres of arable ground?—Perhaps it is a little over the average, but I am under the impression, and certainly they are, that they each held 100 acres of arable land.

38243. Is there any experience in any part of the Highlands, in the present or in the past, of holdings of those average dimensions?—I don't know. Of course, I have not visited them, but I am told the largest holdings are in Coigach, Ross-shire, or thereabout; but your Lordship will have had an opportunity of seeing if they are of that size. As I understand it—I may be wrong—but I have always heard them referred to as what the crofters of Kildonan might have been if they had been left there. I don't know the size of the holdings at Coigach, but it is generally believed among the Highlanders that these are the Highland holdings of the olden time.

SUTHER-
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HELMSDALE.

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38244. It is supposed that, when the people cultivated on the runrig system, 100 acres of arable ground was apportioned off to each family?—100 to each.

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HELMSDALE.

Angus
Sutherland.

38245. And do you believe that possible yourself?—Well, of course, I have no means of judging, because what I have been accustomed to see was the small patches we have up here; but judging from the traditions or beliefs among the people, I am quite prepared to believe there was 100 acres to a family. That is the impression I have received from the knowledge I have of the circumstances, being a native, and hearing the people continually referring to it.

38246. Can the land cultivated in ancient times be generally discriminated by the eye from the land that has never been cultivated? Is not the old cultivated land generally known as green land or the green spots of land?—Yes.

38247. In passing through the country now do you find in Kildonan that the green spots bear anything like a proportion of one-third of the whole?—Oh, yes; a very much higher proportion than that. It gives a very different impression to walk over it from going over it on the railway. All the green spots are not to be seen by any means from the railway or along the main course. All the tributaries of the river are much wider. The tributary valleys are much wider in every case, and the hills don't rise to the same altitude, and there is far more level and more green along the course of the tributaries than along the course of the main stream.

38248. In speaking of the custom of bleeding cattle and mixing the blood with oatmeal, which is so generally stated in regard to the Highlands in ancient times, do you mean to affirm that that practice never existed in the country?—I refer, of course, to the parish of Kildonan itself. I merely give the statement on its merits. I never heard it referred to as a fact that it was done, but I heard it often denied with great indignation that it ever happened.

38249. And one of the grounds you gave for denying it was this, that it proved that the people had oatmeal, and that they mixed it with water?—Yes, made porridge.

38250. Is it not possible that the people may have bled the cattle with a desire to obtain an element of animal food in their diet?—It is quite possible, and I have heard it said very lately that that was one of the delicacies of the Highlands at one time. I don't know whether it is within the experience of any other gentleman, but, apart from that, I think at present, at any rate, porridge is looked upon as the staple food of the people, and, I think, as long as they had porridge they would not grumble at the fare, and, consequently, would not resort to such a thing as to bleed cattle.

38251. As long as they had porridge and milk; but milk is an element of animal diet, and they might not have milk at the season when they bled the cattle?—It is quite possible.

38252. Then you stated that the expatriated people, some of them, found their way to America, where they experienced a worse fate. What ground have you for believing that the emigrants generally experienced a worse fate?—The fate of my great-grandfather's family. My great-grandfather's family, except himself, all went out in Lord Selkirk's expedition to the Red River. My grandfather was married before he went out, and I have seen in my grandfather's house and my father's house a pile of correspondence describing the vicissitudes they underwent. They were left exposed on the north coast, and they had to find their way from Hudson's Bay to the Red River settlement; and they were exposed to the rigours of a lengthened winter, and, to crown all, the Indians came in

and killed some of them, and the rest fled over the winter's snow to Canada. Only seven or eight managed to survive and settle in Canada afterwards.

SUTHERLAND.

38253. Are there many evicted families from this part of the country who cast in their lot with Lord Selkirk's settlement?—Yes, and that accounts for the difference between those who settled here and those who were in Kildonan before.

HELMSDALE.

Angus
Sutherland.

38254. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Had Lord Selkirk a settlement called Kildonan?—Yes, and it is called Kildonan to this day. It is near Winnipeg. Fort Garry was the principal town in the old Red River settlement, and it has now become Winnipeg. You will see an account of it in the book called *The Great Lone Land*, by General Butler.

38255. *The Chairman.*—In speaking of the comparative rental paid by the sheep farmer and by the small crofter in this vicinity, which amounts to a great disparity—7d. being the average rental for the sheep farmer and 3s. 3d. per acre for the small crofter—the 3s. 3d., I presume, includes the home or the house?—Yes.

38256. So it is the rental of the home, *plus* some proportion of land?—Yes; the homestead generally.

38257. Is it quite fair to compare a rental which includes a home, and in which the home is the principal element, with a rental which does not include a home or includes a home which is a very small element in the whole?—No doubt it would increase the power of the rental—if I may so state it—but with the single exception of the proprietor supplying the wood and lime used in the construction of the houses, the house is otherwise provided for by the tenant himself.

38258. Now, taking the houses, we see in the immediate vicinity of this place a number of respectable houses with slated roofs and chimneys, and a proportion of these houses has been raised at the expense of the tenant, and a proportion by the landlord?—The landlord supplies the lime and the timber. In the neighbourhood of my father's house a man built a house last year, and put a slated roof on it; and I was asking him about it two months ago, and he said it was exactly about a tenth part of the value of the house—the whole house costing in the construction about £80—and the timber and lime supplied by the proprietor were valued at £8.

38259. When a tenant leaves a holding of that character here, in this vicinity, does he receive any compensation or any mitigation?—It is unknown in practice.

38260. When a new tenant comes in does he pay the old tenant any compensation?—I have known cases—at least I have not known them, but they were told me—but it is not a rule; the fact of the matter being that no tenant is allowed to run into arrear. That may, perhaps, account for it. I understand that, in this parish, arrears of rent are unknown. So far as is within my knowledge, arrears are unknown.

38261. In comparing the rental of land held by the large farmer and held by the crofter in this vicinity, we may presume that in proportion to the whole held by the crofter he has a larger area of what is now arable ground?—Yes, the proportion of course is much larger.

38262. Consequently it would be fairer to compare the rent of the arable held by the sheep farmer with the rent of the land held by the crofter, because we may suppose almost all the land held by the crofter is arable?—It would affect the calculation in this way—I admit it would make a difference; and perhaps the proper basis would be, if we could ascertain the acreage of arable held by the large farmers; but I limited my calculations to the parish of Kildonan, as it is the one I am acquainted with. I think what your Lordship has suggested would affect the calcu-

SUTHERLAND. lation unfavourably on the part of the crofter. It struck me at the time your Lordship said so, but the point had escaped me.

HELMSDALE. 38263. You compare the whole area of the sheep farmer with the area held by the crofter, and you show that the rent paid by the crofter is much higher than the rent paid by the sheep farmer. But surely it would be fairer to compare the rent paid by the crofter with the rent paid by the farmer for his arable area, because all the area held by the crofter is arable?—Oh, no.

38264. At any rate the large majority of it?—A larger proportion than belongs to the sheep farms.

38265. How was the land held by the crofters made arable?—By their own labour mostly.

38266. How was the land held by the sheep farmers, and which is now arable, made arable?—To a great extent by the crofters also, who were evicted long before in 1815. My parents on the mother's side were called out of Kintradwell, which is now a large arable farm.

38267. With regard to the land held by the crofters in this vicinity, the most of which is arable, is it by nature better than the land held by the sheep farmers?—Oh, dear, no!—not nearly so good. It is the very worst land in the parish.

38268. In speaking of the difficulty of obtaining manure for the holdings here, you mentioned that they were manured with sea-weed in some cases?—It is a fact, though I did not mention it.

38269. Is any price paid by the people for the sea-weed?—No.

38270. They have the free right to the sea-weed?—Yes.

38271. All along the shore?—All along the shore.

38272. You mentioned that a certain portion of the common pasture had been, of recent years, taken away, and that an absolute prohibition existed of feeding sheep on what remains? Where is the common pasture now?—On the holdings of the crofters; the arable land is generally along the sea shore, and back to the watershed that I have referred to is their arable land.

38273. But a good deal of the crofting land is up the valley here?—No, it is along the coast more, above the ridge.

38274. I see some crofters' lands just now, up the valley from the bridge?—Yes, up to the left.

38275. Then they have common pasture?—The sheep hill you see there, and some parts lying beyond.

38276. Then both those who are in the valley and those along the coast have got common pasture—a small amount of common pasture, attached to their arable holdings?—That is so.

38277. And there they are prohibited from keeping sheep?—Yes.

38278. What was the reason of that?—The reason assigned was that they did not take proper means of keeping them back from going into the corn of some people who had no sheep. Of course that is so. Not very frequent instances of that happened; and the reason assigned was that they were continually complaining about that. That was given as the reason why they were ordered to put them away; but it existed at the same time, and was coincident with the time when they were deprived of the grazings up the strath.

38279. Then the reason they were prohibited from keeping sheep was that those sheep molested the arable land of their own class of people?—The ostensible reason. The people believed it was not the real reason.

38280. What was the real reason, do you suppose?—The reason the people generally suppose is that the holding in Gramacary was taken from them; and it was pointed out that they had this hill pasture attached to

Angus
Sutherland.

their agricultural holdings, and they would be asked to keep their cattle there; and of course they could not keep both cattle and sheep there, and the sheep were ordered to be put away. I have no means of knowing the intention of the estate management on the subject, but that is the general impression of the people so far as I am able to ascertain it.

SUTHER-

LAND.

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HELMSDALE.

Angus

Sutherland.

38281. You spoke of a larger common grazing taken away from the people fifteen years ago?—That is another matter. It is connected with some of the holdings that came down to the sea-shore, and parts of the holdings of some people—nine, I think, in one case—were turned away on the pretence of its being used as a plantation; and it was given to another gentleman along there, who has it now, and it has never been planted.

38282. It is used as a sheep farm?—No, it is used as grazing.

38283. You said the evils of which the people complained were intended to be rectified by the concession of a common grazing or club farm of some kind, which you say no one can understand?—That is my impression.

38284. Have you taken any trouble to ascertain the nature of it?—I have, and I was told at first that all the arrangements were made. Of course the arrangements were come to very quickly, as far as I can understand, and there were steps taken, of a kind; but I say that, so far as I am aware, the people were not sufficiently taken into the confidence of the management to make it successful. I have inquired regarding that at some members of committee who have been appointed, and I could not find out whether the farm at Suiseill was taken or not. Some told me it was taken, and some that it was not. I am under the impression that the lease is not signed yet.

38285. When did you come here?—I came here on this occasion only yesterday, but I was here during August and September last.

38286. Do you know whether any stock has actually been purchased by the people?—It has been purchased; that is within my knowledge.

38287. And has been placed there?—Yes.

38288. Then can the people give a greater proof that they consider it a serious and useful project than that they should actually purchase stock and put it on the ground?—Well, no doubt it is. I am not going to say—I have no means of saying—that the initiative was taken by people who really had no interest in the matter. I am not going to attribute motives to those people, but my belief is that the people were not sufficiently taken into their confidence, and I look upon it as if there were displeasure shown towards people who took means of publicly agitating in this matter to get the former grievances redressed. There were some people here who took some leading part, or took some part, in a small agitation we had in order to make the grievance connected with the deprivation of the common pasture known. Now, I am under the impression that there was an attempt made—or at least the fact was so—to shut out and discountenance those people in every way, and those people were not taken into confidence because they had taken a part in the former agitation.

38289. You mean that the people who took part in the agitation are excluded from the benefits of the club farm?—Well, not explicitly; but really it is so. At least the people are under the impression that there might be more frankness in the business.

38290. You spoke of a paper which the people had been asked to sign declaring they would refrain from keeping sheep upon the common pasture, and binding not only themselves but their successors for all time. Have you got a copy of such a paper?—No, but I am sure some of the delegates are prepared to speak to that.

38291. Have you seen it?—No; I was not here at the time.

SUTHER-
LAND.

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HELMSDALE

Angus
Sutherland.

38292. With reference to what you call the death premium, that is, I suppose, a rise of rental on the death of the tenant?—Yes.

38293. Is that rise of rental exacted in every case? Is it progressive, or is it exacted only in the case of certain holdings held, perhaps, for a length of time at small rents?—I don't know the principle, but, so far as is within my knowledge, they are always raised. There is a difference in the proportion in which they are raised.

38294. Supposing a holding has been held for a length of time, and the son succeeds the father, it is raised on that occasion?—Invariably.

38295. But suppose the son immediately died, and was succeeded by a brother, would it be raised a second time immediately, or is the rise only for once?—I rather think it is when the death succeeds quickly.

38296. You mean there is a progressive rental?—Yes, but of course the people here are long-lived as a rule. In all deaths that have occurred within my knowledge the rent has been in some cases trebled and in some cases doubled.

38297. Is that premium exacted in all cases where you succeed immediately a near relative like a father, or is it only exacted in the case of a new tenant coming in, or a new family?—The family arrangement does not enter into it, as far as I can judge.*

38298. According to this statement of yours, up to the present time, or nearly up to the present time, the policy of the estate management has been a course of consolidation with reference to small holdings?—Quite so.

38299. And a crowding of the population into closer bounds?—Yes.

38300. Is there no symptom, up to the present time, of a reaction or a change in that respect? Is there any tendency towards a different system?—Well, I have heard a great deal about that, but really the people have not the means of judging except through these changes, or intended changes, affecting themselves; and I cannot say, from what I am able to see, that there is any change in the deportment of the management towards the crofter population up to the present time.

38301. You said that the immense expenditure which has taken place, and which can be proved to have taken place, on this estate, has not been intended for the benefit of the crofter population, and I think you go so far as to say that it has not actually benefited them. Do you think that would bear the test of inquiry? Do you think the employment given on the estate has been of no advantage whatever to the people?—So far as I remember, I don't think I went the length of saying that; but, if I said so, I did not mean to say that, because no doubt they would benefit indirectly to the extent that employment was provided for the time. Undoubtedly I admit that.

38302. For instance, you say that the houses have been constructed mainly at the expense of the people. But has not the abundance of work, and the distribution of large sums in wages, enabled the people to reconstruct or improve their houses?—Undoubtedly, but I wanted to show that the employment afforded, in the first place, by the construction of the railway, and, in the second place, by the reclamations up the strath, continued only for perhaps five years altogether, putting it very liberally; so that, though they might be a little more prosperous during those five years, they could not save so much money out of what was spent on the estate as would do them any good permanently.

38303. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Do you not think that the construction of the railway is a permanent good?—Decidedly a permanent benefit to the people—I am far from denying that—but not to the extent to which the rents are raised.

* See Appendix A, LXV.

38304. You think the rents have been raised in consequence of the railway coming there?—Undoubtedly it would be one of the reasons.

38305. Have the rents been raised irrespective of the so-called death premium?—No. There is no change made in the rental. I don't know the rules of the estate, but it is the invariable practice that there is no increase of rent during a man's lifetime.

38306. I think you mentioned that one of the causes assigned for removing the people from the hill lands was their inferior mode of cultivation?—Mr Loch states that in his book.

38307. And you rather surprised me by mentioning that they don't adopt, at the present day, the rotation of cropping on the lands down here?—Not the five-shift. I think it is a three-shift they have.

38308. Don't you think the smaller the holding the more necessary it is to adopt a good system of cultivation?—Yes, if it came to spade husbandry; but when ploughing has to be done subdivision of an acre in extent would be an inconvenience, I think.

38309. Do you think it would be any encouragement to the proprietor to give them larger holdings if he found the holdings they had were cultivated in the best possible way?—Undoubtedly, but I think the people require encouragement much greater than the proprietor does.

38310. But the proprietor having this power in his hands, is it not desirable that the people should offer him this inducement to give them larger lands by showing they are capable of using them to the best advantage?—I maintain that the agriculture here is of a most superior kind. I say that by the most scientific farming in Scotland they could not excel the crops these people take out of the soil, considering the nature and circumstances of the case.

38311. But they don't adopt a rotation of cropping?—They cannot adopt the five-shift system. It would subdivide the land to such an extent that it would not be worth the trouble of shifting it, all the patches would be so small.

38312. It seems to me that the smaller the holding itself is, the more necessary it is to adopt the most improved system of cultivation?—Undoubtedly, but the land can get no rest; and you can see the inconvenience of subdivision with plough cultivation.

38313. *Mr Cameron.*—In reference to that comparison of the rental paid by the large farmers and the small ones, as I understand, you take the arable land of the large farmers, and the hill ground, and also the arable land of the crofters and the hill ground. You lump them all together, and take them the one with the other?—No, I simply took the area of Kildonan, in which the sheep farmers have their pasture land, and in which the crofters have both. The parish was the basis of my calculation.

38314. The whole parish?—Yes.

38315. But you say that 3s. 3d. is the rent paid by the crofters per acre for all their holdings—hill and arable?—Yes.

38316. And 7d. is that paid by the large farmers for all they hold—hill and arable?—I may state that, with the exception of one farm, there is no arable farm belonging to a large farmer in the parish.

38317. But the arable land held by the sheep farmer is part of his farm?—Yes; I took the whole.

38318. But I want to ask whether the arable land held by the crofters is not larger in proportion to the whole than the arable land held by the sheep farmers?—Yes, out of all proportion.

38319. Therefore it is hardly fair to lump them together to make the calculation?—I have admitted that already to his Lordship.

38320. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You stated that upon three different

SUTHER-

LAND.

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HELMSDALE

—
Angus
Sutherland

SUTHER- occasions land was taken from the people in this neighbourhood, and
 LAND. I think you also stated that, upon one occasion, it was for the alleged
 HELMSDALE. purpose of planting. Would it not be a very great advantage to this
 immediate locality if there were some planting?—Undoubtedly, and the
 Angus people looked upon it in that light, and were therefore more willing to give
 Sutherland. the land.

38321. But they were not willing to have it taken from them and given
 to an estate official?—They would not have given it up had they known
 that was the reason it was wanted for.

38322. You also stated that crofters' sheep have been prevented going
 upon the hill lands here, but, notwithstanding that, I believe sheep are to be
 found?—I saw them myself.

38323. So the people have been prevented from having the full use of
 their own community while other people's sheep have the benefit of the
 community?—That is so.

38324. For which they are supposed to pay rent?—That is so.

38325. About this story you have mentioned as to the blood being
 mixed with oatmeal, have you ever heard anything of that kind being
 attempted or done in modern times?—No.

38326. Not even as an experiment?—No.

38327. What advantage do you think in your own mind it could possibly
 be?—None, so far as I am able to see; only to the extent that his Lordship
 put, of perhaps having an element of animal food in it; but I don't think
 the people thought of that at all.

38328. Of course it was the blood of cows?—Yes; the cows were said
 to have been bled.

38329. Is the blood of cows now used for food?—Undoubtedly, and it
 was upon that ground that I was talking of a gentleman who told me that
 it was a delicacy in some parts of the Highlands. Of course, what is
 commonly known as blood puddings are of the same nature.

38330. Do you yourself believe, after careful consideration of the matter,
 that it was a common thing, if it existed at all?—I am under the impres-
 sion that it never existed, after all the consideration I have been able to
 give it.

38331. Is it not a fact that it was south country people who circulated
 the story first?—Yes, and Sutherland people always indignantly
 deny it.

38332. With regard to the burnings you have referred to, what was
 the name of the person who married the infant that was taken out of the
 house after she grew up?—John Polson, residing in West Helmsdale.

38333. Have you heard him tell the story frequently?—Once. I was
 told by other people that it was his people who were referred to, so I
 inquired of him.

38334. Are there at this moment living in Sutherland or Caithness any
 survivors of those who were turned out at the time of these burnings?—
 Several. Mr Ross, who was sitting beside me, is one of them. He is not
 a delegate. His health was delicate at the time the meeting was held, so
 he was unable to be put on the list.

38335. Is he an individual whose house was burnt?—I think so. He
 recollects all the circumstances of the case at any rate, and there are several
 others.

38336. Have you in your own mind the slightest doubt that the burn-
 ings occurred?—Not the least. In fact, they might as well deny their own
 existence, it is so firmly believed. It is as well established as the exist-
 ence of William Wallace, at any rate.

38337. We know the existence of the first Napoleon has been doubted

by a very famous man?—Yes, and on far better evidence than the Kildonan burnings.

SUTHERLAND.

38338. Can there be any possible reason why the large population that are here congregated about Helmsdale should not get such additional land as would put them in absolute comfort and enable them to be a credit to the proprietor and a credit to the county of Sutherland?—I see no reason, and it has always surprised me that it has not been done. When I read the glowing accounts in the newspapers about the reclamations by the Duke of Sutherland—and I give him all honour for them—I am often sorry that he does not take the people more into his confidence, and allow them to profit by it.

HELMSDALE.

Angus
Sutherland

38339. Would the people welcome any symptoms on the part of the Duke of Sutherland to alter the present system in the direction you yourself have been pointing out?—I wish I could express the joy with which the coming of age of the present Duke was received, because the people were led to believe great things were to happen. Looking back upon my own experience, I am sorry to say they have been sadly disappointed.

38340. In all the places we have come to, we have generally found it to be the feeling of the people in the various districts and parishes that they are very much attached to their homes. Is it the case in the two parishes you have referred to?—Undoubtedly it is the feeling in every case, and it is no doubt intensified by their want of knowledge of the world.

38341. With regard to the parish of Loth, you stated that thirty different places were added to the farm of Crakaig. What became of the people who were removed?—Numbers of the families died out through poor circumstances. People don't marry, because they see no way of providing for a family—the places, of course, being always added to the farm. Others emigrated.

38342. So within your own recollection that has taken place?—Yes, to the extent of seven or eight of them.

38343. Are there any crofters at all on that spot now?—No, none on the west side of the Loch Beg Burn, and there were plenty at one time within my memory. There is one cottar.

38344. At what age did you leave the country for the first time?—I was about twenty years of age before I left.

38345. You have taken a great interest in all matters connected with your own county, and have you taken an interest also in all Highland matters for some years past?—Well, I have taken a subordinate position.

38346. Have you done that as a matter of conscience?—Pure conscience.

38347. You found yourself impelled, as it were, to take some part in the amelioration of the condition of your countrymen?—Yes, out of pure conscience. I have profited nothing by it. I have incurred nothing but opprobrium, and lost my time and means to some small extent.

38348. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Did many of the people emigrate from this place to America, besides those who went with Lord Selkirk's expedition?—Well, there has been the ordinary stream of emigration going on as circumstances arose. For instance, if one emigrated he sent home money to take out others. That has been the principal way, but there has not been a general exodus since that time.

38349. But, in general, have they been rather unsuccessful than otherwise?—I think the most of them have been successful, but not to the great extent sometimes represented. Of course, we see those who do well and who come back, but those who don't do well don't come back; and the

SUTHERLAND.—hardships that occurred in my father's family of course applied to the whole of the people.

HELMSDALE.—Angus Sutherland.—38350. Do you know whether it is the case that the richest man in America is the son of a Kildonan crofter?—Is that Mr Mackay? I heard that, but I think there is no ground for it. I am told he belongs to the north of Ireland. His forefathers may have belonged to the county. I understand the prime minister of Canada belongs to Rogart.

38351. Has there been any emigration in recent years from either of these parishes?—Yes; a good deal—I mean the people sending for their relatives.

38352. And with satisfactory results?—Well, that depends altogether upon whether the settlement of Manitoba will turn out successful or not. There was a run two years ago, and I suppose it remains to be seen whether that is to be a successful settlement or not. The resources of the colony are not properly developed.

38353. The principal industry of the people in both parishes is fishing?—The herring fishery.

38354. Without that, I suppose, they could not live here?—It is impossible, I understand.

38355. Is there not sufficient work provided for the people to keep them in labour?—There is none whatever except at the occasional times I referred to, namely, the making of the railway and the reclamations.

38356. Then are the able-bodied population here all fishermen?—No, they are not fishermen to the extent they were within my recollection.

38357. What is the cause of that?—I suppose it is this, that they require to confine their attention for part of the year to the cultivation of their crofts, and that renders them unfitted for the other work. In fact, they never took kindly to the sea, and it is impossible they could—people whose forefathers had been engaged in agricultural pursuits so long. I don't know whether it is to be accounted for by heredity, or otherwise, but it is a fact that they are not in the habit of becoming fishermen and sailors entirely,—not even to the extent within my recollection.

38358. I suppose the class of boats and apparatus they have now is similar to what is employed on the east coast generally?—Yes.

38359. Very few fish with the old small boats?—Very few; they are getting fewer every year.

38360. There is no other fishing here except the herring fishing?—There is to a small extent, but not to any important extent.

38361. No important cod or ling fishing?—No.

38362. Do you know whether there is any such fishing to be had on these coasts if it were prosecuted?—I am not so well fitted to speak on that point as some of the gentlemen who are to come after me.

38363. I suppose you are well acquainted with the educational condition of the parish?—Yes; I served my apprenticeship in the parish school here.

38364. Is the administration of the Education Act satisfactory?—Generally it is satisfactory to the people. I would find objection to it in some points, but it is not my duty to say anything about that. I think, however, the people are, upon the whole, satisfied with the administration of the School Board.

38365. And do they take advantage of it?—I must say that, so far as I am able to learn, the board neglects its duty in not making the compulsory clause effectual; I think it is the wish of the people who are better inclined, and who would like to see the children properly educated, that it should be enforced. The objection I had was that, when they were erecting the school, I thought they did not put up a sufficient building.

38366. Not sufficiently large?—Not sufficiently large, and not so good a building as they should have put up.

38367. Is there only one school here?—Yes, they have only one school to attend. There are side schools up the Strath, but they have only one principal school in the parish. These side schools are not taught by certificated teachers.

38368. Then, the compulsory clause of the Act has not been put in force?—No, it has not. There is a compulsory officer, and I understand he does his duty, but I understand the board neglects its duty in not prosecuting.

38369. Has there ever been a prosecution?—I understand not.

JOHN FRASER, Crofter's Son and Labourer, Gartamore, Parish of Kildonan
(34)—examined.

38370. *Mr Cameron.*—Have you any written statement to make?—No; John Fraser: but any questions that may be asked I will be glad to answer to the best of my ability. I was elected at a meeting of the inhabitants held in May, I think.

38371. Was it a large meeting?—Not very large. There was a fair attendance, but not a very full meeting.

38372. How was it called together?—There were notices hung up in public places.

38373. Were there any strangers present at that meeting who were not connected with the district?—None whatever.

38374. It was a meeting got up and held spontaneously by the people?—Yes, entirely so.

38375. And you were not addressed by any outsider?—No.

38376. Have you heard the evidence which has been given by the last witness, Mr Sutherland?—I have heard it read.

38377. Was it read at this meeting to which you allude?—It was read at a public meeting last night, but not till then.

38378. Do you agree generally with the statements therein made?—Yes, I concur in the general statement.

38379. Have you any observations you wish to add to that statement?—I have only to mention the small holdings, the want of fixity of tenure, and no compensation for unexhausted labours.

38380. With regard to the small holdings, what is the average size of the crofters' holdings?—I think they average about three acres of arable ground.

38381. And what stock do they keep on their hill pasture?—Perhaps a few milk cows go out there in the summer, and perhaps a few yeld beasts.

38382. How many does each crofter possess?—Just a cow and a calf.

38383. And a horse, or a share of a horse?—Yes, most of the people have horses. Of course there are a number who have not got them, and their ground is turned by the neighbouring crofters' horses, but most of them have horses.

38384. You describe yourself as a crofter's son and labourer. What labour do you engage in?—I just labour upon the croft, as it were, and I go to the Aberdeen coast in the fishing season, because there is no land to keep me working. I could not live upon it.

38385. But what is the labour at which you work? Where do you go to get this labour?—Just labouring upon the croft. There is no other labour going on; in fact, it would take my time though I put it

SUTHER-
LAND.
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HELMSDALE.
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Angus
Sutherland.

SUTHER-LAND. altogether on the croft. The croft would take my labour entirely, though it is only three or four acres.

HELMSDALE. — John Fraser. 38386. When you describe yourself as a labouring man you mean that you labour for your father, not that you are a labourer and hire yourself out?—No, I don't, because there is no employment to be had. I have gone out since I was sixteen years of age, and hired to the sea as a fisherman at Peterhead, Fraserburgh, and these places, at the herring fishing.

38387. How many months or weeks in the year do you go to the fishing?—If I went to the Aberdeen coast it would take me, perhaps, ten weeks, and here seven weeks or so.

38388. And you go pretty regularly?—I went regularly every season since I was sixteen years of age.

38389. You said, just now, that the croft would occupy almost all your time, though it were a small one?—Yes, taking it that way; because I may be absent at the very time my presence there would be necessary.

38390. But, of course, you are always present during the spring when the chief work of the croft is being done?—Yes.

38391. And in the harvest when your services are also required?—Yes.

38392. Is your position, that you have described, very much the position of other crofters in the district?—We are considerably better so far, because his Grace grants the croft gratis to my father. We are better off than some are; but, upon the whole, they are much about the same.

38393. I am not talking about that, but is your position as a crofter and fisherman and labourer very much the same as that of your neighbours?—Much about the same.

38394. They hold much about the same size of croft, and occupy their spare time in the same way as you do?—Some of them do. Some go out hired as I do, but not many of them go out hired.

38395. Then what do they do?—They just shift the best way they can.

38396. But I want to know what that best way is?—Well, when there is any employment to be got in other localities they go and work there for whilsts in the year.

38397. Do they go at all to the south to obtain work?—They do undoubtedly.

38398. Many of them?—I have a brother who has gone to America to obtain employment as a mason.

38399. But those who retain their crofts, and whose crofts are not large enough to support themselves and their families, how do they eke out their subsistence?—They just shift the best way they can.

38400. But what do they do?—Well, anything they get to do, they do it.

38401. Do they go to the south? You say some of them go out, as you do, to fish, but others don't?—Yes.

38402. Do the larger proportion go to fish?—No, their attention is diverted otherwise. It is very few that go hired now. They come from other quarters hired for Helmsdale.

38403. Then, as to the work they are obliged to engage in, in order to help to support their families, will you kindly say what that work is?—Well, the railway was carried on for a few years, but now it is done out, and there is not much more going so far as I know. There were a few employed at the gold diggings, I think.

38404. Were many employed in the reclamation works that were going on?—Yes, a few—a very few, I may say.

38405. When I say south I mean south of Sutherland. Do many go

there to work, and return at the time their services are required to carry on the business of their crofts?—Well, not many; because when they go there, they try to make a living the best way they can; and those who are not able to work their crofts get assistance the best way they can. There are very few who return north.

38406. I suppose there are few crofts able to maintain a family without fishing or work of some kind?—Not one that I know of. There may be an exception, but it is very few, if any at all.

38407. As to fixity of tenure, do you mean that you would like to have your present holdings as they are on a long lease?—Oh, dear no. I would have means taken that people could not be evicted at forty days' notice, at all events.

38408. What limit would you supply for the forty days?—What I should like is this, that they should not be evicted—those who have been in possession since sixty years at all events—that they could not be evicted at forty days' notice.

38409. Do you mean that the notice is too short, and that you would rather have a longer notice, or do you mean that they should never be evicted?—What I mean is that there should be no power of eviction when a man is not guilty of any crime—as a bad neighbour or anything of that kind.

38410. Have the people suffered from arbitrary evictions of late years?—No, there were no evictions, but there was an attempt made of late. They were served with summonses, at all events.

38411. How many of them?—Nine, if I mistake not.

38412. What was the reason of that?—Simply them not signing a document to the factor about not removing the sheep. They did not deny putting away the sheep, but at the same time they would not sign that document.

38413. Are you able to state any facts in regard to the practice which was mentioned by the previous witness on the subject of increasing the rent on the death of the holder of a croft?—It is almost invariably the practice. It may not be in some cases, but, as a general rule, it is held to be the case.

38414. That, when a crofter dies, his successor, whatever relationship he may bear to the deceased, has his rent raised?—Yes, if the son succeeds the father, though he should be labouring there for half his life, as a general rule it is done. It may not be done in every case, but as a general rule it is understood among the people that that is the case.*

38415. And if a death occurs rapidly after another death, is the rent again raised, or is the one rise considered sufficient?—Yes, that is done.

38416. Supposing a man dies, and is succeeded by his son, and then a very short period afterwards that son dies and is succeeded by his brother, is the rent raised twice, or would the one rise be considered sufficient?—It has been done to my next door neighbour within a few years. The sister died, and as soon as the new name was installed the rent was raised.

38417. That was after one death?—The second death. The father and mother died before. As soon as the first sister's name was put in there was a raising of the rent, and as soon as that sister died there was a rise upon the rent.

38418. During what period of years did that occur? How long time elapsed between the death of the father and the death of the sister?—I suppose it will be seven since the father died, and three years since the sister died.

SUTHERLAND.

HELMSDALE.

John Fraser.

SUTHER- 38419. What is the name of the party in that case?—Margaret
LAND. Macdonald.

HELMSDALE.

John Fraser.

ADAM BANNERMAN, Crofter's Son, Marrel, Parish of Kildonan (27)
 —examined.

Adam Bannerman. 38420 *Sheriff Nicolson*—How far is it from this to the place you come from?—About one and a half miles—the nearest way

38421 What number of families is there?—Twenty-four I have a statement to lay before the Commission I am elected by the crofters of the township of Marrel to represent them in giving evidence before the Commission The grievances are too little land unfixity of tenure and non-compensation for improvements. Previous to the evictions on the Kildonan Strath, Marrel was occupied by four tenants, whereas there are now twenty four, each occupying about two acres in average of arable land, hardly sufficient to keep one cow and one horse. There are also about 1000 acres of hill pasture, on which we were grazing a few sheep. We were deprived of the sheep in May 1882—whether by the proprietor, or his officials, or by both, I am not prepared to say only the act of deprivation had been performed by the official under the proprietor's name. And not only that we had been deprived of the sheep, but we were forced to sign a bond to that effect there were only nine families in the parish at large who refused to sign, and these nine got summonses to quit their holdings unless they would sign the bond. And I wish to explain that these nine never said but they would deliver up their sheep to the Duke's officials when their neighbours would, only they would not sign to make a voluntary act of a thing contrary to their will and welfare. I may mention that the factor and ground officer, and Thomson, the head salmon fisherman, had two days' canvassing getting the people to sign this quasi-proprietor's petition. It is likely the people thought that they would be evicted if they would not sign, and the course adopted towards the few who refused to sign confirmed that. There are five tenants in Marrel which had been rented so much per head for grazing a few sheep on the hill pasture. The sheep have been taken from them, but still they pay sheep rent. Now that hill pasture is of no use to the crofters, it is not fit for cattle or horses, so that it is now left to the adjoining tacksman's sheep—they go and come daily as they choose; so that we can count from fifty to one hundred sheep daily on average all over the tenant's ground, so that the crofters cannot understand how it is that they have been deprived of their few sheep, and their grazing ground left with them, but stocked with the tacksman's sheep. I made the remark in the former part of my statement that the main grievance was too little land, and the only remedy for that is more land, fixity of tenure, and compensation for improvements. There is plenty of land lying waste in all parts of Sutherlandshire and in this part of it as well, especially the Kildonan Strath, where our forefathers were burnt out, in which there is sufficient land; if divided right, it would bring more money to the proprietor than by sheep farms, and supply a small farm to every third crofter crammed on others on the sea-side, where they hold crofts only sufficient to support them for four months in the year; whereas the only thing that would make a crofter comfortable would be to have as much land as would support him all the year round, say thirty to fifty acres of arable land, and hill pasture accordingly.—ADAM BANNERMAN.

38422. When was Marrel occupied by four tenants?—After the SUTHERLAND evictions.

38423. How were the other twenty added to that number?—They have been added to it generally since then.
HELMSPALE

38424. Were they brought from other places?—Yes.

38425. Was any of the land held by these four people subdivided among their families?—Not that I am aware of.

38426. How long have these twenty-four been there?—Upwards of sixty years now.

38427. Have they the same amount of land now that was originally given to them?—Yes.

38428. With the exception of the hill pasture?—Yes.

38429. Was any reason given for taking that pasture from them?—Not that I am aware of, except that the sheep might have been trespassing sometimes on the neighbours—on the same crofters. The whole of them had sheep except four. I understand they all had sheep except those.

38430. Had there been any complaint made by any of the crofters against their neighbours?—Not that I am aware of.

38431. Had they been, in point of fact, trespassing upon their neighbours?—They might go in just occasionally. In the summer months there was a shepherd kept, but in the winter season they came down to the low ground, to the crofts.

38432. Did they use to trespass on the sheep farm contiguous to them?—Certainly, all sheep come and go; there is no neighbour but gives and takes.

38433. But, in point of fact, did they trespass to a considerable extent on the sheep farm?—Not to a considerable extent.

38434. Did the sheep of the sheep farmer trespass upon their pasture?—Yes, and do so to this day.

38435. As much as they did upon his?—Ye

38436. What is the sheep farm that borders upon Marrel?—The farm of Crakaig—Mr Dudgeon's.

38437. What was the number of sheep kept by the people of Marrel?—About fifty sheep, I suppose, altogether.

38438. Will the grass that they used to pasture upon not now give additional pasture to the other cattle possessed by the people?—It is not fit to feed them.

38439. Can they not keep more cattle?—Not a head more. It is not fit for cattle or horses, it is of so soft a nature, part of it, and if they are allowed to go upon it they starve.

38440. Is not the grass that the sheep feed upon also fit to be food for cows?—Sheep feed upon it to this day, but not the tenants' sheep.

38441. Is there no fence between you and the sheep farmer?—No.

38442. Was there ever any fence?—Yes, there was an old stone dyke.

38443. Was it ever kept up?—Not since my recollection.

38444. Whose duty was it to keep it up?—I am not prepared to say, but I think it was the tacksman's.

38445. I suppose it was the duty of both?—It was put up by the Duke.

38446-7. But were the tenants not bound to keep it up, especially those to whom there was injury?—The tacksman was bound to keep it up.

38448. And he did not do so?—No, he did not do so.

- SUTHERLAND. 38449. What is the principal occupation of the people of Marrel besides the occupation that their crofts give them?—The crofting occupation is all they have.
- HELMSDALE. 38450. Are there no fishermen there?—No fishermen whatever.
- Adam Bannerman. 38451. Then are they able to live out of what their crofts produce?—Not by the croft.
38452. How else?—By any labour they get to do.
38453. And what labour do they get to do, and where?—Some have been forced to go to the ebb and gather whelks.
38454. Has that happened often?—It has happened too often.
38455. Is there a considerable number of the inhabitants so employed?—Yes, a good number of them.
38456. But if they are near enough to the sea to gather whelks, why have they not boats to go and get fish also?—Some of them would never return if they got boats.
38457. Is their dread of the sea so great that they would prefer not to go?—Yes, so great; and it is so awkward that they prefer the crofting business. They are no fishermen whatever.
38458. Have there never been fishermen there?—Yes, there have.
38459. Why did they give it up?—Because they could not attend to the croft and the fishery.
38460. Do they find any work in the neighbourhood?—No work whatever, but in the summer season at the shore.
38461. In connection with the herring fishing?—Yes.
38462. Do the able-bodied young men and young women not go and get work in the south and on the east coast?—Some of them go that are inclined to go.
38463. Is there not somebody from every family that does so?—No, there is not. There are some families that cannot go.
38464. How are they able to exist upon these small crofts of theirs?—They just take the work they get to do at hand.
38465. And you say there is no work except at the herring fishing?—Well, it is very seldom there is any work. They may get a day in the week now and again; that is all.
38466. What wages do you get generally for ordinary labour?—According to the work.
38467. How much a day?—From 1s. 6d. to 3s. a day for men.
38468. Does anybody get so low as 1s. 6d.?—Yes.
38469. For what sort of work?—At the harvest work—shearing.
38470. What do the women get?—Some of them get 2s. to follow the scythe.
38471. Do they get more than the men?—Yes, in some cases they do. I have known it for a fact.
38472. Are they better workers?—Yes, some of them are.
38473. What rents do you pay?—According to the extent.
38474. But are the crofts not all of the same size?—No; they are very near it.
38475. What is the highest rent that is paid?—£4 and some odds.
38476. What stock does that man keep?—One cow and a horse.
38477. And what is the lowest rent?—The lowest rent is 25s., I think. There is one exception, and that is 8s.
38478. Has that person a cow?—One cow.
38479. On an 8s. croft?—Yes. It is not sufficient to keep the cow.
38480. How does he get it fed?—By buying food for it—by the sweat of his brow.
38481. Are there any people there without a cow?—Yes.

38482. How many?—One.

38483. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Are you one of the nine who would not sign the paper?—My mother was.

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38484. Have you got a copy of it?—No; I have the summons here.

HELMSDALE.

38485. Can you give us the substance of it?—No, I was not at home at the time; but I was at home when the ground officer came back wanting her to sign the bond.

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Bannerman.

38486. Did he read it to you then?—No.

38487. Did he read it to her the first time he came?—Yes.

38488. Did she tell you what was in it?—Just to sign a voluntary bond to put away the sheep for ever.

38489. And you say that she and others declined to do that because it was against their interest?—Yes, against their weal and welfare.

38490. Then you and others were summoned to the court?—Yes

38491. Were you going to defend the case?—Yes.

38492. And what came of it?—It came about that the sheep had been taken away, and we did not refuse to put them away when the others went.

38493. Was the case called in the court against your mother?—Yes.

38494. And was there a decree against her and others?—Yes.

38495. A decree in absence?—Not in absence. There was a law agent employed.

38496. And what did he state for you? What was the nature of your defence?—Really I could not say what the defence was, because I was not there.

38497. You are a delegate, and you ought to tell us all about it. There was a lawyer instructed to see after the case for your mother and others at the court; what did he say for you?—I am not prepared to say.—[*Mr Sutherland.* The agent craved delay till the case was considered by his Grace the Duke of Sutherland, and ultimately the case was compromised, and was withdrawn.]

38498. Apparently some of the people in Marrel made a complaint to his Grace or to the estate officials that your sheep were trespassing upon their ground, and that was the alleged reason, was it not, why you were ordered to put them away?—I am not aware that they ever complained to his Grace.

38499. But you said yourself that that was said to be the reason?—Yes, but not to his Grace. It was that they had complained to the ground officer.

38500. Has there been any complaint on the part of these people to anybody whatever connected with the estate for the trespass of the tenants' sheep upon them? You say there are plenty of sheep on the ground now?—Yes.

38501. Is there any complaint made against them by the crofters?—Not to the estate.

38502. Why?—Because they thought there was no use—that the tenant was to get the benefit whatever.

38503. They were afraid?—Yes.

38504. Or, at all events, it would be of no use?—No use.

38505. I suppose you think it rather hard, after being deprived of your own sheep, to see other people's sheep on your ground?—By all means.

38506. I suppose the tenants of Marrel were scrimpy enough before this happened?—Too scrimpy.

38507. And this has not improved your condition?—Yes, for the worse.

38508. You stated, in the paper you gave in, that your forefathers had

SUTHERLAND. been removed from Kildonan. How long had your people been in this country?—I am not prepared to say, but they were there hundreds of years' back.

HELMSDALE. 38509. Where did the first of them come from originally?—I don't know; they were Macdonalds.

Adam Bannerman. 38510. Is there plenty of land in your immediate neighbourhood where by the twenty-four crofters could be made comfortable?—Yes, within eye sight.

38511. Is there only one big tenant between you and the march with Caithness?—There is only one towards the seaboard—Mr Hills.

38512. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—When you had sheep on the hill you had a herd for them in the summer?—Yes.

38513. Then the only time the sheep could trespass on the crofts was in the winter?—Occasionally.

38514. Did the complaint refer to trespassing in summer or trespassing in winter?—There was a little in both winter and summer.

38515. Do the tenants in your place sow grass seeds?—Yes.

38516. Did they complain of the sheep eating up the young grass on their croft land? Was that their complaint?—Partly it was.

38517. Do the large farmer's sheep come down upon the arable land?—Yes, upon the corn too.

38518. And you don't complain?—Of course we complained, and we got no redress.

38519. To whom did you complain?—To the shepherds.

38520. Have you got a share in the farm at Suisgill?—Yes, we have got the grazing there, and pay so much.

38521. Do you pay so much a head, or so much in shares?—So much a head for the cattle. There are some sheep there that are rather a joint stock.

38522. Have you a share in the joint stock?—I suppose it will be for the good of us all if any good comes out of it.

38523. Have you any stock there?—Not personally.

38524. Have you paid any money for the stock?—No.

38525. Who has paid the money for the stock?—No money whatever was paid.

38526. Has stock been put upon it?—Yes.

38527. Who has put the stock on it?—There was money got on loan to put the stock on it.

38528. Who got the money on loan? Was it the tenants who got it?—Yes, part of them.

38529. Are you responsible for that money with the rest of them?—Partly.

38530. Then you have a share in the stock?—Yes.

SINCLAIR COOPER, Merchant, Helmsdale (44)—examined.

Sinclair Cooper. 38531. *The Chairman.*—How long have you been settled here?—I have been settled all my life here.

38532. Do you belong to a family of the place?—Yes.

38533. What is the nature of your trade?—My father was a fish-curer for fifty years.

38534. What sort of trade do you now prosecute?—General merchant and commission agent.

38535. You have no connection with the fishing trade now at all?— SUTHERLAND.
No, except that I buy herrings from the curers.
38536. What is the kind of goods in which you particularly deal? Do HELMSDALE.
you mean provisions, stores, and clothing?—Yes, and general goods.
38537. Then you have had experience of the local market in the place Sinclair
for how many years?—Twenty-three years. Cooper.
38538. Comparing your early experience with your present experience,
do you find any evidence of improvement in the condition of the people
and their power to purchase, or the contrary?—I find quite the contrary.
38539. Do your dealings lie with the crofting class, with the small
tenant class?—To a large extent they do.
38540. Do you find, then, that their resources are falling off or improv-
ing?—They are gradually falling off. That is my experience.
38541. Has that depended upon two or three bad seasons recently, or
is it a general and progressive decline?—I would say it is rather a progres-
sive decline; but, of course, it is made worse by the failure of the fishings,
as I was going to show; I have got a written statement. I may say that,
when I consented to become a delegate I led my friends to understand
that, except when it was absolutely necessary to refer to the past to make my
narrative complete, I would confine myself to matters that came under my
own observation; and, besides the condition of the crofters I would take this
opportunity of directing the attention of the Commissioners to the condi-
tion and prospects of Helmsdale harbour, a condition which we all feel
and deeply deplore. ‘I shall first briefly, and with a due regard to your
‘valuable time, make some remarks on the condition of the crofters in
‘this and the adjoining parish, and from my lengthened experience among
‘them as a trader, it may be granted that I ought to know something
‘about them. In doing this it will be necessary for me to refer to the
‘past, so as to understand how the present crofters came to be in the con-
dition they now are. The present crofters are almost entirely the
‘descendants of the evicted population of the Kildonan Strath. At that
‘period Helmsdale could scarcely be said to have an existence, and the
‘hill sides we now see so thickly populated were simply moorland, and from
‘what we know of it now, a most unlikely place to settle so large a
‘number of crofters. Those people who lived in the Strath before those
‘evictions took place have often told me that, notwithstanding what has
‘been said to the contrary, those people were then in a very prosperous and
‘contented condition. Every one knows that at that time agriculture was
‘in a very primitive condition, and the crops then could not be compared
‘with what could be got now, but this was true not alone of Kildonan
‘but also of the whole north of Scotland, and had the inhabitants of
‘Kildonan been allowed to remain there until this day, I for one believe
‘that men who have been so long and so truly renowned for bravery in
‘the battle-field, would not have failed to keep pace with the agricultural
‘progress of the age, and instead of this Strath being the wilderness it
‘now may be said to be, it would be one vast agricultural garden, peopled
‘by a strong, hardy, contented, and loyal people, loyal alike to their
‘queen and country, and to the noble proprietor under whom they now
‘live; and who, instead of having to expend thousands of pounds in land
‘reclamation, as he has done, would have come into possession of this
‘estate with all the available land reclaimed by the strong and willing
‘hands of a population of which he would justly be proud, and the history
‘of the Sutherland clearances would never have had to be written. I am
‘not going to occupy your time by going into the causes that led to the
‘removal of those people, nor the manner in which that removal was
‘carried out; suffice it to say that it has become a matter of history that

SUTHER- it was done, and I shall only say it was in my mind a grand mistake, but
LAND. yet a mistake which can be rectified. I must just give one reason set

HELMSDALE. forth for the removal of those people from Kildonan to the sea coast, by
Sinclair the then leader of the movement, and that was that those people "might
Cooper. become fishermen," a very laudable excuse, but to this day they have not
become fishermen; and although this has been said over and over again,
it is time once and for all to dispel this idea, because there are not in
this and the adjoining parishes a half dozen of fishermen who are crofters.
Then, as to the present condition of the crofters, the fact of their being
settled upon patches of but indifferent ground of from two to three acres,
is almost saying enough. It must be evident to any one that it is an utter
impossibility for crofters with families to do more than eke out a bare subsi-
stance on such crofts. No doubt, when they came into possession of
those crofts, the rents were merely nominal, but that is not the case now. I
consider they are paying in some cases too high a rent; but this is not the
chief complaint, it is that they have too little land—so little, in fact, that
the constant cropping has made much of it really valueless; and it is
those with whom the crofters have commercial dealings who know how
straitened they are in their circumstances, and how hard it is for them
to live; and when the herring fishing fails, as it has done for some years
past, then they are much worse off, because while the fishing is prosperous,
they obtain not only employment for themselves, but also for their
families; and when the fishing is a failure, no such employment is to be
got. Now, it will be asked, how is this state of matters to be remedied?
I can only see one way, and that is by giving the people more land.
There is plenty of land to be had, and if the crofters were, as it were,
thinned in their present holdings by giving holdings of say ten to twenty
acres to those people most likely able to take them, and their crofts given
to those that remained, and so enlarging their holdings in this manner,
and that along with those holdings suitable hill pasture be also given on
fair and equitable terms, then, and not till then, can those people be in
any manner comfortable. Then as to the herring fishing, which is of
such vast importance to the county and to this place in particular, I may
just mention as an instance of this importance, that one fish-curer on a
medium scale gives more employment to the people in one season than
one dozen of the largest sheep farmers in the county. I have mentioned
that the fishing has failed for some years past, and I am going to show
what has, in my opinion, largely contributed to this failure, and that is
the want of a good harbour. Helmsdale harbour was erected many years
ago, and proved a very great benefit to the district. It will be granted
that engineering, like many other things, was not then as perfect as it is
now; and at the best, Helmsdale harbour could never have been called
either a good or safe harbour. It is a tidal harbour; that is to say, at
low water no boat or vessel can either enter or leave it; and what is
worse still, the river runs through it, thus making the entrance liable to
be silted by the frequent floods in the river; banks of sand also get
accumulated inside the harbour, which is both dangerous and obstructive
to vessels. Yet notwithstanding this for years it suited fairly well as a
fishing harbour, until the period some ten or twelve years ago came
round, when it was found to make a successful fishing, fishermen had to
go great distances at sea, and to enable them to do that with safety they
had to get larger and stronger boats, so much so that while in 1864 this
harbour had 365 boats fishing out of it, it will now be overcrowded with
150. And yet the boats that still come here to fish are by no means of
the largest class, for owing to what I said about the bar, those could not
fish here at all, there being not sufficient water for them, because if they

' did manage to get in at high water with a cargo of fish, by the time they discharged their fish the tide would be gone, and so a whole night's fishing would be lost. Since last December the bar on this harbour has been almost closed, and the consequence was that many tons of fish were landed at Buckie, that would have been landed here, but for the state of the harbour, thus entailing great loss on the curers, and depriving the railway company of a very large amount of traffic, all the fish caught in winter being sent by rail. The bar is still, I am sorry to say, in the same condition. Now a great many people are owners of property in Helmsdale, particularly of excellent curing-yards, than which there are not better anywhere. His Grace also owns several of those yards, and if the harbour is not improved, so that the most modern method of herring fishery can be carried on here, as well as other places, and if, at the same time, an effort is not made to improve the condition of the crofter population, then Helmsdale must go down, and property become of little or no value, thus entailing great loss to both the proprietor and the feuars, whose interests at least in this respect are identical. In 1878 I had the honour of laying a scheme of harbour improvements before the Duke (a copy of which I now hand to you). I accompanied the scheme by a sketch of the harbour lately made at Buckie, and which was built entirely at the proprietor's expense; it is a deep water harbour—that is boats can enter and leave it at any state of the tide; yet Buckie never had the one half of the traffic that was usually here. I am sorry to say nothing came of my scheme, and although nature has made Helmsdale a very suitable place for a deep water harbour, as not only could it be done cheaply, but also efficiently, I hear of no steps being taken in that direction. I conclude those remarks with the fervent hope that the labours of your Commission may be the means of giving lasting benefits to the crofter population of Scotland, and that his Grace will yet, and soon, see fit to erect such a harbour here, as will not only prove a safe haven to many a storm-tossed mariner, but that it be the means of bringing a return of prosperity to Helmsdale, besides being a lasting memorial of the goodness of his Grace the Duke, and of the House of Sutherland.'

38542. You stated that there was evidence of deterioration in the condition of the crofting population, and no doubt one reason for that has been the decay of the fishing?—Most decidedly.

38543. You also mentioned that there were not half a dozen crofters who were fishermen. Do you mean there are not above half a dozen men from the crofting population who take wages as fishermen and go out?—No, I don't mean that; I don't call these fishermen. I mean those who have shares in boats and nets.

38544. Are there a great number who take wages and go to sea?—No, there are not a great number.

38545. Is the number of those who have an interest in the boats decreasing or increasing?—They have greatly decreased.

38546. Then one remedy you suggest besides the expansion of the occupancy of the land is the improvement of the harbour so as to increase the fishing industry?—Yes.

38547. Has the town of Helmsdale any municipal constitution at all?—No, it has not, except the local authority—the Parochial Board.

38548. Nothing but the Parochial Board?—Nothing.

38549. There is nobody in existence who could contract a loan and who could impose a tax?—There is not.

38550. You cannot get a loan from Government?—No, because the present harbour belongs solely to the Duke of Sutherland; it was built entirely by the late Earl of Sutherland.

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38551. And there is nobody here that can become proprietors of the harbour and borrow money for the purpose of improving it?—Not that we are aware of.

38552. So you depend upon his Grace's agency entirely?—Entirely.

38553. Do you see any evidence of deterioration in the food of the people, or in their dress or general appearance, within your memory?—I cannot say I do.

38554. Do they get much higher prices for what agricultural produce they send to the market?—Well, they are scarcely able to sell any. They sell some cattle, and of course the prices have gone considerably up, I understand.

38555. Is there any export of cattle from the port?—None at all.

38556. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—You say you don't see, in their general appearance, any evidence of the deterioration of their circumstances. You know it from your dealings with them?—I do.

38557. You have more bad debts?—Exactly.

38558. Have your bad debts been increasing year by year from the time you first recollect?—They would have been increasing if I had allowed them.

38559. You are not able to extend your trade as you think you might do?—I am not. I believe I could not make £20 more in the year.

38560. You recollect more than twenty-four years back?—Yes.

38561. At that time there were people in possession of very much the same extent of land as to-day?—They were.

38562. To what then do you impute the deterioration in their circumstances?—For one thing they have not the same crofts as they had then. The land has been getting gradually worse—has been falling off—and they had several bad years, and there has been a falling off in the fishing. In 1878 was the first great failure of the fishing. Instead of 100 crans as the average, they had only 12½, which was virtually a failure.

38563. Then, practically, it is the want of the fishing that has lowered their circumstances?—No, what I maintain is that they should have something that would render them entirely independent of the fishing, because it is not a right thing to have people entirely dependent upon such a precarious occupation as the fishing.

38564. But in point of fact, they have had the same amount of land ever since you remember, and the change in their circumstances is therefore due to the failure of the fishing, not the land?—Well, they have never been in a good condition since I remember.

38565. But you say they are getting worse?—Undoubtedly.

38566. And that must be imputed to the want of the fishing?—Undoubtedly that is one of the great causes of it.

38567. If their circumstances are so straitened would they be able to stock more land?—There is no doubt many of them have friends in the south who would give temporary assistance till they could repay it again.

38568. They could borrow the money?—Yes.

38569. You mentioned ten to thirty acres. What sort of capital is required to stock that, with a proper proportion of hill ground?—I am not capable of answering that question, because I am not an agriculturist, but I should say the matter of £100 might do it fairly well, with what they would do themselves.

38570. *Mr Cameron.*—I understand you to say you would like to have the people entirely independent of the fishing, and give them larger crofts?—Yes.

38571. And you also say that, in order to assist the people in prosecut-

ing the fishing, you want the harbour improved. How do you reconcile these two statements?—Just because, owing to the precarious nature of the fishing, it is a very bad thing for people to depend upon it in any way.

38572. And suppose you were to approach the Duke of Sutherland and ask him to help in the work of bettering and improving the present harbour, seeing that you have said to us you thought the fishing was a mistake, and that the people ought to be crofters exclusively, do you think that would be an inducement to the Duke?—But the people are not fishing. They are dependent upon that for employment when not working at their crofts.

38573. And you wish them to stick to the land?—I would wish them to be independent of going to the fishing at all.

38574. Then if you wish them to be independent of going to the fishing, how could you ask the Duke to go to great expense to assist them in the fishing?—I ask it for the feuars of Helmsdale, who hold thousands of pounds worth of property. What will become of that property if there is nothing done for the harbour?

38575. Then I understand you ask him to improve the harbour accommodation, not in the interest of the crofters, but in the interest of the feuing population of Helmsdale?—Not of the crofters. Of course there are fishermen who are not crofters.

38576. And you think they ought not to be fishermen, but entirely occupied by land?—They ought to be able to support themselves without being dependent on labour otherwise.

38577. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—What is the population of Helmsdale?—I think about 700.

38578. How many houses may there be?—I think there are over 200 houses.

38579. What kind of title have they from the Duke of Sutherland? Is it a long building lease or a feu?—In some cases they have ninety-nine years, and I know some of them have got perpetual leases.

38580. Are the terms moderate?—The terms are very moderate indeed.

38581. Then I understand there are two classes of the population hereabout—the crofting population, and what may be called the feuing population?—Yes.

38582. All the people in the town of Helmsdale, I suppose, are more or less connected with fishing?—They are more or less dependent upon it. There are many who are coopers and make barrels, and there is a class of fishermen who are fishermen alone. They are living at a place called Port Gower. There are eight crews of them.

38583. Do you think that by an expenditure of £20,000 there would be a fair return?—I do.

38584. I presume also you look to this that the development of the fishing would not only directly benefit the feuars of Helmsdale, but would indirectly benefit the crofters?—Perfectly; that is my opinion.

38585. The one class would help the other?—The one class would help the other.

38586. You want a good harbour for the feuars and enlarged possessions for the crofters?—That is my idea.

38587. These things are easily within reach?—Decidedly.

38588. You say there is no local authority here except the Parochial Board. Do the Parochial Board exercise a sanitary authority?—Yes, we have a sanitary committee.

38589. And is that department looked after?—It is looked very well after.

SUTHERLAND.
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HELMSDALE.

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38590. How are the people supplied with water?—The Duke has put some water into the place with pumps. When they were making the railway water was brought down to feed the engines, and he was good enough to bring it into the place at his own expense entirely.

38591. Then you get the water by gravitation?—Yes, from the hills.

38592. Did you draw up this printed paper [with reference to the harbour] yourself entirely?—Yes.

38593. And you say nothing came of it?—Yes.

38594. Had you a personal interview with his Grace about it?—I had not a personal interview, but I had correspondence.

38595. Are you a native of this parish?—Yes.

38596. Have you ever been out of it?—Yes, but not for any lengthened period.

38597. Did you receive your education entirely in this parish?—I did.

38598. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—What is the nature of the works you propose in this paper?—A deep water basin. I could not explain it unless you could come and see the ground.

38599. Is there anything else required besides the deepening of the basin? Are there additional piers and breakwater required?—I mean an additional deep water harbour outside entirely of the present harbour.

38600. When was the present harbour constructed?—Part of it about thirty-five or forty years ago, and the other part sixty or seventy years ago.

38601. Do you know whether there was any harbour here when the people were removed from Kildonan to the shore?—I am told by a party here who says he knows that there was nothing of the sort.

38602. Had the people any boats when they were removed down from Kildonan to become fishermen?—No, nothing of the kind at the time.

38603. Do you know whether they were supplied with boats?—No, I am not aware that they were supplied with anything.

38604. And how long did it take to make the harbour fit for the accommodation of fishing purposes?—It took four or five years, I suppose, before they got it finished.

38605. Do you know what it cost?—£1600, I understand, was the sum.

38606. And has it been kept up ever since by the Duke?—Yes, but it has always been giving a fairly good revenue.

38607. Has anything been done to prevent the silting up of the river by mud?—There has been a sort of attempt by means of groins, but it never answered the purpose.

38608. What is the biggest tonnage that can find anchorage in the harbour?—I should say it would be rather dangerous to take a vessel in that drew more than 9 feet of water.

GEORGE GREIG, Land Improvement Commissioner, Anchintoul Lodge
(49)—examined.

(See Appendix A, LXVI.)

ii

George Greig. 38609. *The Chairman.*—I believe you wish to make a statement with reference to improvements that have been recently carried on?—Yes. I think it is necessary to explain, before proceeding with this statement, that the Duke of Sutherland's agent for this district has not appeared to-day. It is disappointing to me that he is not here, because I have been told that a great many of the people are under the impression that I am here repre-

SUTHER-
LAND.

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HELMSDALE.

George Greig

senting the Duke in this district. I wish clearly to tell them that I am not here representing the Duke for this particular district, and that I have come here to represent a particular subject, which forms my commission in Sutherland, and in regard to that subject I have thrown together a few remarks, which I will now read.—' In 1877 I received a commission from his Grace the Duke of Sutherland, to undertake an extensive land reclamation on the farm of Kinbrace, extending to 44,000 acres, and subsequently this commission, which was an absolute one, was extended to embrace the division of this large tract into smaller farms and to letting these to suitable tenants. The Duke expressed a strong desire that due consideration should be given to a much-felt want in Sutherland of a graduation of farms in size, so as it were to form a connecting link or stair between the large and small tenancies, and more particularly to consider how far the nature of the land and of the climate would warrant the formation of arable crofts of a better class. After considerable inquiry and experience of the nature of the land, I had no difficulty in deciding that any attempt at arable crofting of itself would prove a complete failure, but that small and medium pastoral farms with a portion of arable land of a size to employ the whole time of one family offered great prospects of success. I regret that the time of the Commissioners does not permit my detailing the nature of the inquiry, of itself very interesting, which has led me to this conclusion. That portion of the county with which I am acquainted is admittedly suited only for pastoral purposes, excepting perhaps a small portion along the east coast where the sand and primitive limestone constituted a part of that formation. The Duke being desirous for a better class of arable crofts, in order to give relief to many of his present crofters on the coast who are rather hampered, I have had under very careful consideration the question, How far this relief can be extended to them by what might be termed pastoral crofts? and I am of opinion that the only practical way now open of relieving these over-populated crofting centres to which I have alluded would be to draft off the most energetic and industrious of them to small pastoral crofts or farms, and give their present holdings to those of their neighbours most requiring more land. If this policy were adopted, and the more suitable of the large farms divided into holdings of sizes on a graduated principle, so as to show to the people that they had an outlet for energy and enterprise, I have little doubt the present crofter grievances would gradually disappear, and the people would become more successful, contented, and happy. But this policy in the present circumstances of the crofter population is not one to be set agoing to any extent without considerable difficulty, and that because of the want of capital. Pastoral farming in relation to labour requires the most capital of any class of farming, and unfortunately the crofters' resources are not capital, but labour. As far as crofting is concerned, I cannot see much room for Government action which would not apply to land generally, but I think an exception might be made in the law of mortgages being extended to hill stock. In America and Australia great impetus has been given to pastoral farming by the fact that the law allows the mortgaging of live stock, thus enabling men of small capital to hold extensive grazings—in many cases four times the extent which under different conditions their capital would warrant. If those gentlemen in the south who agitated the crofters' question from professed motives of patriotism and philanthropy (little doubt sincerely enough) would form an association to lend capital to the pastoral small farmers and crofters, at a moderate rate of interest, I feel sure the Highland proprietors would cheerfully meet them by giving land for suitable holdings at a rent less than that which can be got

SUTHER-
LAND. ' from the large farmers or capitalists ; and if the law was altered to allow
the mortgaging of the stock in respect of which the advance was made,
the association would be secured from loss, and a great public and
national benefit would accrue. Of the 44,000 acres of land the subject
of my commission, I reclaimed 1300 acres by drainage, trenching,
clearing, liming, fencing, road making, and building, and put it under
cultivation and grasses, at a total cost of £16,000. The land thus
reclaimed along with the hill land was subdivided into nine farms as
follows :—

Name.	New Arable.	Old Grass.	Hill Pasture.	Total Acres.
Suisgill,	7	5,980	5,987
Kinbrace,	71	94	4,500	4,665
Auchintoul,	503	61	14,330	14,894
Tordu,	5	49	796	850
Claggan,	255	100	6,180	6,535
Baddenloch,	153	127	6,290	6,570
Bannockburn,	140	33	2,150	2,323
Lochside,	100
Knocthen,	85	17	2,365	2,567
	1,812	488	42,591	44,391

' These were advertised to let, with the result that the only offer we received
for the three farms specially laid out for small farmers, namely Bannock-
burn, Lochside, and Knocthen, was from a south country gentleman—his
offer being for the three farms to be combined into one. The smaller
holdings of Kinbrace and Tordu have been let to local crofters, and
Suisgill to a crofters' association. For the farm of Tordu, which was
valued at £50, we had eight offers ranging from £28 to £45, and for the
farm of Suisgill five offers ranging from £100 to £300. For the large
farms we had no offers. This experience pointed to the necessity of a
still further reduction in the size of the large farms, and this is being done
with a view to advertising again. The farm of Suisgill, as I have said,
has been let to a crofters' association, and for it a rent of £100 a year
has been accepted, which is considerably under what was offered. This
low rent was accepted in order to give temporary relief to the crofters of
Kildonan and Loth in providing summer grazing for their stock, so as to
enable them to husband their resources for the winter. The great want
of capital amongst the crofters to stock additional land, which they are
much in need of, has been exemplified through the operations of the
grazing association by the fact that they have not been able to send half
the stock which the farm is capable of carrying, necessitating on the part
of the committee of management the borrowing of capital for stocking
purposes. This fact is, I think, strong confirmation of the statement that
more land to those most in need of it will not, without some access to
capital, afford any immediate relief. In 1877 I had an instruction from
the Duke to make myself thoroughly acquainted with the circumstances
of his industrials work at Brora, and to consider how far these could be
extended, or whether other industries could be started to provide work for
his people. At that time the industries at Brora consisted of a coal pit,
a brick and tile work, carpenters' shops and foreign timber mills, engineer-
ing shops, a peat charcoal factory, and a tramway system. The capital
account of these works stood at £24,327, and the annual loss in nursing

' was not under £3000. I give this statement to show what the Duke was
' doing for his people at one point of his property. I stopped the charcoal
' factory, and a woollen factory took the place of the carpenters' shops and
' foreign timber mills. An excellent system of water supply by gravitation
' has been introduced at an expenditure of £1500 of capital, and some
' farther capital was expended all round, with the general result that the
' works are now all let to thriving tenants. The Duke's attempt at fostering
' industrial works embraced almost every known industry, and his
' Grace has expended a large sum on experiments with a view to utilising
' the immense tracts of peat which abound throughout his Grace's vast
' northern kingdom. In regard to the fishing population of Sutherland I
' have not much experience, but I can claim an intimate knowledge of the
' conduct and habits of fishermen generally in regard to agriculture. There
' is no doubt it was with the intention of improving the circumstances of
' the Sutherland people that they were afforded an opportunity of combin-
' ing the industry of fishing with that of crofting, and although it may
' have answered for a time, the principle is I think wrong. The instincts
' and knowledge necessary for success in these respective callings is alto-
' gether incompatible. A fisherman's farm should be confined to a patch
' of land for potatoes. It is well known that an active brave fisherman
' can employ the time of all his family in connection with his fishing. Sea
' fishing might be considered a national industry more within the range of
' being nursed by the Government than that of crofting, and if the Govern-
' ment can offer good harbour accommodation and other facilities so as to
' induce the hardy Highlander to desert the patch of land as his worst
' enemy, and rely exclusively on the fishing, a road will at once be opened
' up for the amelioration of the Highland crofters and fishermen, who in the
' general advancement of the people of this country has been somewhat
' neglected. These remarks have been hurriedly thrown together, and are
' very incomplete, and in case they may be misunderstood I wish to explain
' that while I sympathise with the crofter population of Sutherland in not
' having room for expansion, I don't intend by my remarks to infer that
' any of the Duke's people are suffering from privation or want. To do so
' would be a libel on an excellent people, and a noble generous-hearted
' proprietor without example.

- 38610. Before we proceed to the proper subject of your paper, I wish
to ask you one or two questions in connection with the statements made
to us by the previous witness. The gentleman who addressed us at the
beginning of the meeting—Mr Sutherland—gave us an estimate of the
quantity of arable ground which he believed had been at one period under
cultivation in the Kildonan district by the native crofting population, and
he described the district as containing an area of about 150,000 acres,
and stated his impression and the prevailing impression of the country to
be that about 60,000 acres had been in past times under the plough. I
believe that, in the prosecution of your reclamation schemes you have
made yourself acquainted with the area of ground generally alluded to, and
I would like to have your opinion as to the maximum amount of land which,
at any given period, was under cultivation in the district?—I wish it to be
understood that the remarks I make have reference only to the part of
the Kildonan Strath which is the subject of my commission. In the
printed statement which was provided at the time the 44,000 acres were
offered to let, an estimate of the old land was given to those who chose to
be offerers for the different farms. The quantity of acres taken up as
old land of that 44,000 acres, was ascertained by means of a most careful
man who was in my service. I told him to take the Ordnance plan and
ascertain the quantity of old arable land, and to have that checked by

SUTHER-
LAND.
—HELMSDALE.
—

George Greig.

SUTHER-LAND. personally going over the ground. I think the statement which we give in our printed advertisement of the quantity of land is correct. I think we may assume it as correct, and the amount is 488 acres within the area of 44,000 acres. In regard to the rest of the two parishes, to which HELMSDALE. reference was made, I am under the impression, from a discussion which took place on this subject some time ago with the Duke's agents, that the 44,000 acres at Kinbrace represent more old land in proportion to pasture than the other part.

38611. The 44,000 acres you now allude to are all included in the 150,000 acres to which Mr Sutherland alluded?—The whole of Kinbrace is therefore included in the parish of Kildonan.

38612. And you think the 44,000 acres is a rather favourable representation of the whole of the 150,000, and that it would not be likely to contain a less proportion of arable land than the rest?—I give you my reason for answering that in the affirmative. I have been advocating very strongly the policy of making the old arable ground the centres for the homesteads of small farms; and I have been met with this argument on the part of the Duke's other agents, that this portion of the property which is under my control has a much greater quantity of old arable land than the rest of Sutherland. My impression has been that there is as much old arable ground in Sutherland as would make very good centres for an excellent pastoral farming system of small farms.

38613. Then, as to the 488 acres of arable land out of the 44,000, at what period were these under cultivation? Do you think they were under cultivation subsequent to the clearance of the country generally, or do you think they represent the whole of the ground under cultivation while the large resident crofting population was in the country?—My impression is that it represents the whole, because in my instructions to my surveyor who went over the ground I told him to take all the ground that had been under the plough without respect to whether it was green ground or whether it had gone back to heather. I wanted him to include the land that had gone back to heather along with the green ground.

38614. According to your estimate about one-hundredth of the general area had been at one period under cultivation. Now, in walking over the ground yourself and considering the appearance of it, do you see any traces of a larger proportion having been under cultivation than that, at any remote period?—I think there is not any difficulty in ascertaining the quantity of land that has been under cultivation. I would not like to commit myself to say that these 488 acres include all the land, because of my own personal knowledge I could not state so. This is only the result of the instruction I have given to my surveyor to take it from the Ordnance plan, and to go over the ground, but I would be quite correct in asserting that 600 or 700 acres would exceed anything that had ever been under cultivation within that area.

38615. From your own personal inspection?—From my own personal inspection, having been over the whole of these 44,000 acres a hundred times, and I know all the green ground that is upon it. I have not measured it, but I am prepared to swear that the amount of ground upon that farm which had originally been under cultivation would not exceed 600 or 700 acres.

38616. But do you think it is possible that the land may have been cultivated in ancient times, and that all traces of previous cultivation may be so obliterated that you could not see where it existed?—Quite possible, and we had a very interesting instance of that. We reclaimed a piece of land that had been cultivated by the Picts, on which there were 14 inches

of moss covering it; but I am prepared to say that my remarks have reference to all the land that was under cultivation within 200 years.

SUTHER
LAND.

38617. We do not wish to go beyond 100 years at present, because the population was removed in 1814. Then you do not think it could have exceeded 1 in 50?—I am certain—not on this farm.

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HELMSDALE
—
George Greig.

38618. And, therefore, in the rest of the strath. There is another special point I would call your attention to, and that is that we had mention made of the farm of Suisgill, or the common pasture land of Suisgill, and it was stated to us by a previous witness that he was under the impression that this had been appropriated in some form to a club farm or common grazing, but that he did not understand what the system was, and that he was under the impression that the people concerned in it had not been sufficiently consulted—they had not been taken into consultation sufficiently. He also stated that he was under an apprehension that those who had taken part in the agitation connected with the crofter question were not perhaps treated with equal justice in the matter. I would like you to give me an account of the origin of this project of the farm of Suisgill and the manner in which this new appropriation has been carried out?—I will very much have to go over the whole circumstances in connection with the formation of the association. The people of Helmsdale previously had a grazing they called Grianacharry, and after the present commissioner came to Sutherland this grazing was withdrawn from the people without any consultation, and I think very unjustly and unfairly withdrawn from them. I do not think there was any injury intended. I think it must have been entirely an oversight on the part of the commissioner, who was not acquainted with the circumstances of the grazing; but, nevertheless, it was a great hardship to the people at the time, and an agitation was got up here to have the matter represented to his Grace. The result of that was that the Duke put the matter into my hands with full power to do anything I liked in doing justice to the people for that grazing which was taken from them. I came to Helmsdale and met a few of the leading people in connection with the original grazing, and had a very satisfactory meeting with them. I told them I was commissioned by the Duke to do whatever I thought was just between the Duke and them without consultation with his Grace, and that I was prepared to put this farm of Suisgill at their disposal. The result of that meeting with these few people was that subsequently they called a meeting of the whole crofters in the district. That was a meeting which I attended, and I estimate the attendance at 250 people. It was an open meeting, and everything in connection with my proposal was placed before them with the result that there was not a dissentient voice in connection with the proposals. I say it to the credit of the people of Helmsdale that I never, in connection with any business I ever undertook, had more satisfaction. They met me in a spirit which was highly creditable to them. In a manly spirit. It showed that the people of Helmsdale were people who could be developed to a much more satisfactory condition of things than existed at present, by being met in the right spirit. The result was that ultimately we formed our association. I wrote the articles for the association. I discussed with them what would be the machinery for the working of the association which would be most acceptable to them, and after that, I wrote out the articles of association in order that they might be successful in the working of it. My impression is that in connection with all these club farms and farms of that sort a great mistake has hitherto been made, in so far as the representatives of the proprietor have always kept a firm hold on the management. They have not thrown it on the people, and these associations have not met with that success

SUTHER- which I think is in the future for the Helmsdale association. The
LAND. principle which we adopted was simply to grant the association a lease

HELMSDALE. the same as we would to any other tenant, and on the same conditions, and from what I can learn of the management up till now it has been highly satisfactory, and promises not only to meet the wants for which it was formed in the way of giving temporary relief, but it is likely to prove a great success financially.

38619. There are a number of joint tenants. How is the farm to be managed; is it to be managed through a committee, or by one manager appointed by the shareholders, or in what form?—They have articles of association similar to a joint stock company, which provide for all their meetings, for committees, for every contingency that could happen in connection with the management of an association or company.

38620. How, practically, was the stock put on, and were many of the partners in the association able to produce stock at once and send it there? —As regards the duty of the working committee, each represents a district, and there are as many districts as there are members of committee. Each member of committee brings at a certain date in the year a list of the quantity of stock in his district which is to be put on the grazing. After that is all arranged, the committee of management see what they can calculate upon from the people in the way of stock. This year, after the lists were all brought in, it was found the requirements of the whole of the crofters who were members of the association were not equal to half the capacity of the grazing. This necessitated the committee of management borrowing capital for the purpose of stocking.

38621. And how is this stock purchased?—The crofters are all enrolled as members of the association and their names are all in the articles. Then the committee of management appoint two or three of their number as the managing members of committee. These managing members of committee take in stock from the whole members of the association at a certain rate which they fix. This done, the members of committee proceed to purchase stock for the purpose of making up the deficiency in the stock, and the whole thing is managed simply on the principle of a joint stock company, the members of the association who are crofters having the first right to send stock to the grazing at certain fixed prices.

38622. Then the profits which accrue upon this purchased stock will be divided between the members of the association?—It is intended, I believe, by the present members of committee that there should be no division of profits until the association is in possession of as much capital as would, in the event of the crofters not sending sufficient stock, enable the committee to stock the farm without borrowing capital. They intend to accumulate the profits till they have a sinking fund which would meet any emergency in connection with the successful management of the holding.

38623. Their first duty will be to pay the debt?—Their first duty will be to pay the debt.

38624. Will any considerable inconvenience be felt in consequence of the distance of this farm from the crofts?—It would have been very much more serviceable to the people of Helmsdale and the surrounding neighbourhood if the grazing had been lying adjacent to their holdings, but the position of this grazing is very much more accessible than the grazing they had previously. It is about half the distance.

38625. You had the goodness to state to us that you thought the object which ought to be aimed at was the formation of small pastoral crofts; that the land with which you are concerned was not susceptible of profitable appropriation to arable crofts; but you looked to the formation

of small pastoral crofts. Will you state what the area and what the rental would be of these typical pastoral crofts to which you refer?—In regard to the arable crofts, that is to say, crofts that have no outrun, having carried out a series of experiments with the new land—my experience is that they would result in complete failure; but if you give them a small piece of arable land with a large outrun, I am satisfied there is no way in which the grazing of Sutherland could be more economically managed, not only for his Grace but for the nation, as that of having a man that is interested in the stock living in the centre of it and managing his own business. If that policy was adopted, I would recommend that not only small crofts but a gradation of crofts should be established. I would commence with a croft of perhaps about forty acres of arable land, with not less than 1000 acres of pasture. That would mean a rental, if you take the pasture at 6d. per acre, of £25 for pasture, and if you take the arable land at 15s. per acre it would mean £30 for arable. That would be the rental. That would be the smallest holding I could recommend to any family, and if assistance could be given to a great many of the present crofters in this country to start at that point, I am quite certain that before they finished a nineteen years' lease they would be able to take a much larger holding.

38626. Then the smallest holding you would recommend would be a £50 rent?—Something like a £50 rental. Of course, I do not mean to say a man would not be much better with a place half that size than he is in his present circumstances, but I would like if possible to see the next step from the common grazing which we have laid out at Suisgill. That I reckon the first step to the assistance of the small crofter, and the next step I would like to see would be a farm of a rent of £50; and, rather than give a family a less holding than that, if I was a proprietor, I would assist them with the capital.

38627. Have you reflected on what a very small number of families this system would afford relief to, and how very few in overcrowded townships could ever be able to take a holding of that size?—Well, I reckon, if there were facilities given for them mortgaging their stock and getting assistance, it would be about as safe a business as any one could start, and I am satisfied if the tenants are selected for their character and ability to work a holding, the capital could be supplied to them, and land supplied to them, without much risk.

38628. Then you would not contemplate the advantageous formation of holdings of a smaller rental and area than £50 a year?—I would not be disposed to recommend a much smaller holding. Of course, if you had a gradation of holdings once established, no doubt a man with half that size of holding who could be employed during part of the year by the larger holders, would be quite as successful as far as his holding went; but I do not believe in any industry which does not admit of the party who takes part in it employing his whole time at work. I do not believe in intermittent labour. I believe in people who are expected to succeed being employed the whole year round.

38629. But still, assuming the existence of the present race of small crofters, would you be inclined generally to add, as you have done in a particular case, a large common grazing to the present class of small crofters?—Certainly I would be disposed to do that as a stepping stone to something better.

38630. *Mr Cameron.*—Is the association to which you referred composed of crofters from one township or of crofters from various townships?—It is composed of crofters from various townships. There are eight townships.

SUTHER-
LAND.

HELMSDALE
George Greig.

SUTHERLAND. 38631. And it has been found that hitherto the system has worked well, and there has been no jealousy between the members of the association coming from different townships?—We have only had a very short trial of it. The association has not been in operation for more than six months.

— HELMSDALE. George Greig. 38632. Is the working committee fairly representative of the different crofting townships?—Perfectly representative of the different townships.

38633. Do you think, in a case where one township might not be able to supply stock for those summer sheilings, that it would be practicable to invite other townships to join and so carry on the association from different parts of the same district?—The principle of regulating the rights between various townships is very simple. Each member of each township has an equal right whatever size his present holding is, and the claims of the grazing are individually equal. In the event of a township having very few cattle to send to the grazing, another township or other townships would be allowed to fill up the blank, but when the state of business comes to that point where the demands for grazing are more than the capacity of the grazing, the committee of management will have to regulate according to the townships, and there is proper provision made for that in the articles of association.

38634. Do they stock the ground with sheep as well as cattle?—They have a right to send cattle, sheep, and horses.

38635. Are these sheep separately marked as belonging to individuals?—At the present time there are no sheep belonging to the individual crofters on the grazing. The fact that a new arrangement was made in Helmsdale in regard to the sheep two or three years ago deprived the people of their sheep, and in that way just at the present time they had not any sheep to send. There is a large quantity of sheep on the grazing, but these have been bought by the committee of management, and put on as belonging not to individual members of the association, but to the association itself.

38636. They are all under one mark?—Under one mark.

38637. But if the crofters had sheep of their own, would these be marked as belonging to each crofter individually, or would they retain the common mark?—I presume the committee of management would naturally decide that each man's sheep sent to the grazing for each summer would be marked with his own mark.

38638. And would that man share in the profits of the sheep that were bought?—He shares in the profits of the sheep that are bought simply through the fact that he is a member of the association. He would not share individually, but indirectly through the association. The profits of the sheep that are put on by the committee of management would become the property of the association, and as members of the association they would participate ultimately in those profits, but not otherwise.

38639. I assume that in the regulations provision is fully made for all those points?—I think I can state that very great consideration has been given to the drawing up of the articles of association to afford complete machinery to meet every contingency that might arise in connection with the successful working of the grazing.

38640. Do you know anything of the circumstances under which those sheep were removed from the farm of Grianacharry?—I do not.

38641. Will you explain a little further what you mean by legislative action with the view of putting movable stock in the same category as regard borrowing money as real property?—The law of Scotland does not permit of the mortgaging of movable property which extends naturally to farming stock. In regard to the hill stock, I draw a decided difference between

ordinary farming stock and hill stock. Hill stock as a rule belongs to the grazing, and cannot be removed from it. Proprietors usually hand over the stock to the tenant, and bind him to hand over that stock back again, and in that way a very nice distinction could be drawn, I think, between movable property of that sort and other movable property. I myself do not believe it would be for the advantage of this country that we should promote any alteration in the law in regard to the mortgaging of movable property generally, but I think for the purpose of giving relief to the crofters, if for no other purpose, it would be worth while to promote a change in the law to this extent, that the crofter might be placed on the same platform very much as those men who have stocked the grazings of the colonies of America with such beneficial results. There are a great many of the crofters about this neighbourhood, I know, who would become excellent pastoral farmers if they could get the stock.

38642. You say that hill stock cannot be removed, but I suppose you do not mean they may not be removed. You mean, I apprehend, it is the practice in sheep farms to hand over the stock from one farmer to another; but that would not afford any security to the man who lent money. The farmer might remove the best of his stock or three-fourths of his stock, and how would you suggest that the lender of the money should retain that control over the stock which would prevent him being defrauded of the capital he had advanced?—It would be done by the mortgaging of the stock upon that farm.

38643. How would the lender of the money prevent the stock being removed?—I simply point out a way in which hill stock is regarded by the various proprietors in Scotland, in relation to ordinary stock on a farm, and I say the distinction which could be drawn there would be one of the arguments I would use in making an exception of hill stock in asking for a change in the law.

38644. Would a change in the law satisfy the capitalists to the extent that they would be willing to lend money upon a movable property like stock?—It is done every day. At the present time we find a large quantity of Scotch capital is going to America in bonds over movable property—in fact, bonds over stock—and we know for certain that a large quantity of the stock which is grazing the lands in the colonies is represented by money advanced by the bankers in the colonies; and I do not see why, if you gave the bankers in this country a right over the stock on the various farms, they should not lend money with as much security as over stock in the colonies.

38645. But there is no law in existence which prevents capitalists lending on stock in security and taking the stock in security?—There is. It cannot be done. You cannot mortgage movable property by the law of Scotland.

38646. Has any case ever been brought under your notice where attempts have been made to borrow money over stock and the security of the stock has been refused?—I am not aware of a single instance of any one having a security on stock for borrowed money, and I am quite aware there could be no such security.

38647. No banker would lend money upon it?—No, because he knows the law would not protect him.

38648. And if the law were altered as you suggest do you think the bankers would be willing to lend money upon movable stock?—I do. I can only speak for myself, and I would lend money to crofters of good character if I had a mortgage over the stock.

38649. When you say you approve of farms for crofters consisting of 40 acres of arable ground and 1000 acres of hill ground, do you mean

SUTHER-
LAND.

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HELMSDALE.
George Greig.

SUTHERLAND. that those 1000 acres should be held independently by each crofter, or as part of a larger holding held in common?—I would have it separate from any other holding.

HELMSDALE. 38650. Do you think a farmer would be far more likely to manage his stock better if he held it all individually than if he held it as one share of the common grazing?—I do think he would manage it much more efficiently.

38651. There would in fact be one manager instead of many managers? —One instead of many.

38652. And I suppose that is one reason why you fix the figure so high as 1000 acres, so that it might be worth while for a man to have that amount of grazing?—That is one of my reasons.

38653. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You have brought out a new fact, this matter about the alteration you wish upon the law as to mortgaging stock. Are you aware that in Australia and New Zealand it is competent and legal to register a mortgage over stock?—I am.

38654. Does it not afford very great facilities to the settlers who go to those places that they can borrow upon stock?—It does.

38655. You would like to see that facility given to the crofters at home?—I would.

38656. No doubt a higher rate of interest would probably have to be given than would be given upon land?—Possibly.

38657. I suppose you would put the law exactly in the same state as it is in New Zealand, where, once a stock is registered as being in favour of a mortgager, it is illegal and would bring a person under the law if he bought such a stock?—Yes, that is exactly how I would put it.

38658. So, in point of fact, you would create a real security over the stock?—A real security.

38659. With regard to this association, is it a fair question to ask how many are members of the association at present?—152.

38660. I presume they do not all hold the same shares?—The shares are equal. It is an element in the constitution of the association, and the object of doing that was in order that the small people who were most in need of help should have a right equal to those who were best off.

38661. You heard Mr Sutherland's evidence to-day?—I was present.

38662. He indicated rather that there was a want of knowledge on the part of many of the crofters as to the constitution and workings of the association. Have you ever prevented the matter from being made public? —I think I explained before that a public meeting was held where I read and described everything, not only in connection with the articles of association, but with the nature of the lease which was intended to be entered into on behalf of the association. I had the articles of association printed, and every member of the association has a copy of these articles at this moment.

38663. Will you hand in a copy?—I am very happy to hand in a copy now.

38664. Can you state here if you have any authority or indications on the part of the Duke of Sutherland that those alterations that you now recommend in favour of the crofters are likely to be initiated?—I may say I have no authority from the Duke of Sutherland to come here and make any statement whatever beyond the instruction that I would have the same liberty at this meeting as I have had in connection with my commission since I came to Sutherland, and it was simply a white card. I had power to divide those 44,000 acres in any way I thought proper for the good of the Duke and his people, and I have carried out my commission entirely in that spirit. I have not consulted the Duke, but I think I am

safe in saying that in those suggestions I have made to you, and those changes I have made in Kildonan, and in everything I have done, I have anticipated the spirit of the Duke; but as to having authority to make that statement, I have no such thing. I feel quite certain from the intercourse I have had with the Duke of Sutherland, that his disposition towards his people is that they should march forward in improving their condition, and that, if they do not do so, it is not from any want of a desire on his part, not only to give them every facility, but to expend large sums of money in assisting them to do it. I heard a reference made to-day to the conditions imposed on the Sutherland property in connection with the letting of land as being antiquated; I wish to state that I had perfect liberty from the Duke to write such a lease in respect of the farms I am letting as I thought proper, and to see and examine all the more recent modern provisions which have been applied to many properties in Scotland. In the lease which I have drawn and the conditions I have written, I have imported into them everything which the occupation of land in modern times has suggested. I shall send in a copy of the lease to the Commissioners.

38665. In your intercourse with the people of Sutherland, you have come very much in contact with them; what is your impression as to their character?—I have had considerable experience of people in Great Britain and also abroad. I have managed large properties in Spain, and have had some experience in America and other nations. Judging from the Sutherland workpeople who came to the reclamations, they are not good workpeople, but from what I have seen of their industry and their habits otherwise I can speak of them as of the highest character. My relations with them in connection with this grazing association, which have been very intimate, have been of the most agreeable kind, and I am quite satisfied there is no difficulty in getting them to do anything that is reasonable.

38666. They all tell you they want more land?—They want more land, and they want to be assisted with more capital in order to stock it.

38667. Are you, so far as you are concerned, very willing they should have that additional land?—I am quite with the people as to giving them more land. I am quite satisfied the Duke of Sutherland cannot do a better thing for himself and for the nation than to give the people more land, and develop to a great extent the county of Sutherland with the Sutherland people.

38668. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—You stated that the new place which has been given to them at Suisgill is nearer to them than the pasture taken from them before; where was that pasture?—It was in the upper part—in the furthest away part of the farm of Kinbrace—a place near Griamacharry; and the place at Griamacharry will be more than double the distance that Suisgill is from Helmsdale. Suisgill is perhaps nine or ten miles, and Griamacharry will be at least twenty-three.

38669. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Where are the Suisgill stock wintered?—All the cattle stock come back to the crofts, where the summer resources have been husbanded for their keep during the winter. A portion of the sheep, of course, will remain on the Suisgill grazings.

38670. Is the Suisgill grazing low enough to winter hoggs?—Not for hoggs, because there is not much green ground upon it, but it is quite equal to wintering any class of sheep barring hoggs.

38671. And the association will take wintering for their hoggs?—I think the intention of the association is not to keep hoggs on the grazing. I think their intention is, as to any extra stock that is required, to buy hoggs in spring time.

SUTHER-
LAND.

—
HELMSDALE.

George Greig

SUTHER- 38672. Does the association provide a herd for the cattle?—The
LAND. association provides a herd.

HELMSDALE. 38673. What does the association charge for the grazing of cattle?—I
George Greig. have not a list of the prices. It is very like the prices they originally paid
when they had the grazing at Griamacharry—horses 7s. 6d., cattle 5s. 6d.,
stirks 4s., cows on town grazing 15s. These are the prices they originally
paid at Griamacharry.

38674. What does that last item mean?—Cows on the low town
grazing on the green ground.

38675. Sheep?—There is no price of sheep here. It might be very
interesting for you to know what was the result of the Griamacharry
grazing. The gross revenue during the last three years was about £40,
and the expense of management £22, 10s., and that is a holding that
would be worth over £100.

38676. *The Chairman.*—Speaking of the mortgaging of stock in the
colonies, is it the case that when stock is mortgaged to bankers or
capitalists in the colonies, it is mortgaged by men who are holding their
own stock on their own land, who are not farmers mortgaging, but who
are proprietors mortgaging their stock?—I presume that is so. I don't
think it makes much difference. The only difficulty that would be raised,
and it would be raised on the part of the proprietor, would be simply this,
that we would have no security for our rent; but if I was a proprietor in
the Highlands I would be very sorry to allow that question to interfere
with the improvement and the development of my people.

38677. But after all we must sometimes interfere to protect the people
against the bad consequences of their own enterprise. Might it not be a
misfortune to see an honest man incurring such complex obligations as the
payment of even a reasonable rent and a high rate of interest on the
mortgage of his stock? Might you not be condemning a tenant to an
impossible task?—I think not. I think a working tenant upon a
grazing farm would be able to pay 5 per cent. for his capital, while a
tenant who did not reside on his farm and did not manage it would not
be able to go on even without paying any interest.

38678. After all, stock is but a perishable security for payment of
rent *plus* a high rate of interest. Is there any machinery by which stock
could be insured?—I think not, but I would not recommend anything of the
sort. I do not think any tenant would ask his stock to be mortgaged for
the amount of its value. I think if he was known to be a good manager he
would be capable of mortgaging it to three-fourths of its value, and that
would be a sufficient margin where the man's character was good.

38679. Is the stock mortgaged in the colonies insured or not?—It is
not, I believe.

38680. *Mr Cameron.*—In the case of what is called a wether farm, you
sell your three-year-old wethers in the autumn, and to supply the place
of these you have to buy lambs in the autumn or hoggs in the spring.
How would the mortgage extend over the sheep that were not bought?
Suppose in place of buying to supply the place of those sold, he put the
money in his pocket?—I think the law could be so made that whether it
was a regular stock, or whether it was a stock of a particular class of sheep,
a registration in the neighbourhood where the stock is, or the county
where the stock is, would be quite sufficient to cover the whole stock,
and to allow the ordinary movement to take place as in the case of a
regular stock. That is to say, it would not affect the mortgage, suppose
the man took away his draft stock and brought in his young stock. The
mortgage would just transfer itself without any formalities to the stock
that came in.

38681. But suppose no stock to be bought in. A buys his lambs from B, but suppose A was one year hard up and did not buy lambs from B, B would have the lambs, and the mortgage would not affect the lambs of B, which were not sold to A?—I think the question would be answered in this way, that it would be a matter for the party who made the mortgage to stipulate the conditions under which he was to move stock.

SUTHERLAND.

—
HELMSDALE.

38682. All I wish to point out is that as one difficulty was pointed out by Lord Napier, this would be another case in which the condition of things in the colonies would hardly apply to the condition of things in this country?—In as far as it is tenants here and proprietors there.

38683. No, but in as far as regards the buying in of stock. In the colonies each keeps his own stock?—If you make the law so as to allow me to arrange a mortgage with the tenant for his stock, my mortgage with him would stipulate all the conditions in connection with the movement of the stock, and I would have added to an ordinary mortgage an agreement on the subject of the management of his stock, which would be perfectly legal suppose you made the law to allow the mortgage, in the first instance; but at the present time I am not in a position to carry out any agreement with regard to the mortgage of the stock, in as far as it is against the law to make a mortgage of the stock at all.

38684. But if you come to the management of stock, I suppose you can hand over the management to a banker, and say, 'That stock is yours,' and the law would not prevent it?—I think it would. If you were justified in doing that it would be taken advantage of in many cases in connection with people on the verge of bankruptcy. They would give a preference to particular creditors through that channel. I don't think such a thing could be done.

ALEXANDER GUNN, Crofter, Bual, West Helmsdale (38)—examined.

38685. *The Chairman.*—You have a written statement to make to the Commission?—Yes.—‘*Bual District.* I was appointed delegate by the crofters of the Bual district, in West Helmsdale, to state our grievances. There are fourteen crofters in the district. We complain of the smallness of our holdings, which are from two to three acres each, and which is not sufficient to maintain our families for four months in the year. The most of our land was reclaimed by our forefathers out of the face of a barren hillside. Our forefathers were removed off the Strath of Kildonan in order to make room for sheep farms. We are generally very poor, as there is no work of any kind going on except during the herring fishing season, when only a comparative few are employed by the fish-curers for a short time. Our rents are more than double what our forefathers paid, and this was done for improvements made by ourselves. My father's rent was £1, 5s.; it was reduced six or seven years ago to 19s. on account of half an acre being cut off his croft by the railway going through it. When I became tenant the rent was raised to £3. I complained to his Grace and his local officials of the high and excessive rent for such a barren patch of rocky land; but they paid no attention to my complaint. The land has deteriorated by continual cropping. We are forbidden to keep sheep. What we want is more land, enough for families to live comfortably upon, with fair rents, fixity of tenure, and compensation for improvements.—ALEXANDER GUNN, crofter.’

Alexander Gunn.

SUTHER-
LAND.

38686. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—How many people are in the town you represent?—Fourteen families.

HELMSDALE.

38687. What is the average rent paid per acre by them?—From £2.

Alexander
Gunn.

38688. For three acres?—For two and a half acres.

38689. In fact, you may say £1 per acre, or a little more?—Yes.

38690. Have you got any grazing?—No grazing, except steep, rocky hill adjoining the croft.

38691. What stock are you able to keep on your own piec:—Well, previous to this present year, I was not able to keep more than one cow. Now, this year, I managed, on account of being thrown out of other employment, to get two young calves. I could manage to rear them in the summer time on the croft by putting them on to the hill, but I was forced to put them away because I could not provide straw for them during the winter, on account of the smallness of the holding and the scarcity of straw.

38692. What is the number of your family?—Just my wife and myself.

38693. What work do you go in search of?—I have nothing to depend upon at present except the croft, and any other turn I will get to do.

38694. You say the railway has taken off a piece of your land?—Half an acre.

38695. Do they occupy the whole, or has somebody else got some of it?—The railway possess the whole half acre.

38696. Do you assert as correct that all the people in your township reclaimed every inch of the arable land at their own cost?—No, they did not reclaim the whole of it.

38697. How much did they reclaim on an average?—I am certain they reclaimed an acre and a half at any rate, or about that.

38698. Were there people there before your predecessors came from Kildonan? Were there crofters there before?—I am not aware of any.

38699. How did you find then some arable land before you?—There was none reclaimed on the lot I occupied when my grandfather was removed from the Strath of Kildonan. He built a house on the barren hillside, and took most of the ground in himself, and a number of years after that the late Duke reclaimed a few roods and raised the crofters' rents on account of that.

38700. Is there any land in your neighbourhood that the other crofters and yourself could get with advantage?—Well, not near hand.

38701. What do you wish then exactly to be done for you. Supposing you had only to ask, what would you like?—The want is that we would get land where it is easy got. There is plenty land in the parish. It is better for us to get it than for it to be lying waste.

38702. Are you willing to remove to another part of the parish?—Quite willing, if I could be better.

38703. How much could you afford to take? Supposing you got a piece of old arable land given you, how much could you afford to take in and how much hill land could you afford to stock?—I would be very glad to get from ten to fifteen acres.

38704. You would in course of time take in from ten to fifteen acres of arable land?—Yes.

38705. And what stock would you like to have?—Two cows, and two or three calves, and a horse or two, and some sheep.

38706. Suppose you got such a thing as that, are you prepared to

work hard day and night to get those fifteen acres brought under cultivation?—Very willing to do it.

38707. And I suppose, in giving expression to that sentiment, you express the sentiments of your neighbours who are also cramped in their land?—Yes.

38708. Are you one of those who have a share in this joint stock company?—No.

38709. Did you get an offer of taking it?—I got an offer, but I did not take any part of it.

38710. Will you explain why, because it would seem rather suitable for you who bought the two young beasts?—I would rather have them at hand in order that I might be ready to sell them to the first person that came round to buy cattle, because I would require it to meet the demands upon me.

38711. But Suisgill is not very far away. Was there a disinclination on the part of the other crofters besides yourself to take part in this Suisgill farm?—A good many.

38712. Then will you explain what your objections are?—Yes. I was talking to some of them and they had not the means to buy the beasties on account of their poverty, especially in the district I represent.

38713. Is that the only reason?—The only reason some of them had.

38714. You have heard what Mr Greig stated; do you approve of his views?—Not altogether.

38715. In what respect do you not approve?—I do not approve of the large farms he was proposing for the crofters, because the crofters being reduced to poverty on account of not getting a chance, would never be able to take so large farms as those.

38716. Not at once?—Not to jump to the top of the ladder at once. I do not believe in that.

38717. Then what you are pointing at is this, that you would like to have about fifteen acres of arable land and hill pasture in proportion?—Yes.

38718. What rent could you afford to pay for that arable farm and that stock?—Well, I would not grudge to pay £9 or £10.

38719. Do you think about £10 would be a fair rent?—I think so.

38720. Could you at that rent, and having such a possession, be able to make a livelihood of it without going to other external sources?—I think so.

38721. *Mr Cameron.*—You say that the crofters declined to join this association because they could not afford to put any beasts at all upon the common grazing?—I know that some of them could.

38722. I am afraid they would be equally unable to take such a farm as you point at with fourteen or sixteen acres and the hill grazing in proportion?—Very many of them would not be able to take it.

38723. So that in suggesting that figure you are alluding more to yourself than your neighbours?—Yes, and a few young crofters.

38724. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—When you speak of £10 for sixteen acres and a proportion of hill pasture, you mean the sixteen acres should be improved arable land?—Yes.

38725. But, first of all, I understood you to say you would be willing to take land that was improvable and to improve it yourself?—Well, I could not do that without having a little capital.

SUTHERLAND.

HELMSDALE

Alexander
Gunn.

JAMES PURVES, Farmer, Barrogill Mains, Caithness—re-examined.

38726. *The Chairman.*—I am sorry we were not able yesterday, partly James Purves

SUTHER- on account of the hour and partly on account of the disorder, to continue
LAND. your examination, but you were so good as to say you would come here,
— HELMDSDALE. I wish particularly to hear your opinion about the prospects of the large
— farmers in Caithness, which I daresay would be in some degree applicable
James Purves. to this county. You are the author of a statement respecting the
agriculture of Caithness, which I had the pleasure of reading in 1875?—
Yes.

38727. Well, since that period what has the experience of the large farmers been in Caithness?—Our experience since then has been most ruinous. Our losses have been nearly equal to the rental each year since 1875.

38728. Is it the experience of the large farmers generally that they have a larger amount of land in hand than they care to have and be responsible for?—Well, there are none yet that have given up their farms, but their circumstances are very much reduced from what they were. In 1875 we were all in very good circumstances indeed, and there was little fear of our being able to go on, but the price of wool has gone down so much, and we have encountered disastrous seasons that have reduced us very much in circumstances, but with favourable seasons we expect to go on again.

38729. But favourable seasons, I am afraid, will not raise the price of wool?—Perhaps not, but with favourable seasons we have always good trade, and if trade gives way the price of wool may give way relatively. Perhaps we shall never see such prices again, colonial wool being so much in competition with ours that the price will be kept relatively lower.

38730. And if at this moment the class of large farmers were at liberty to do what they liked, and not bound to any engagement, would they diminish the area of their holdings or not?—I don't think they would.

38731. Do you think they would continue to carry on those large holdings at an annual loss?—Not at an annual loss. If things do not turn, they must come down some time. However, they will be obliged to struggle on as long as they can.

38732. Then do you expect a reduction of rental?—In some cases they have got it. I got a reduction from Lord Caithness myself.

38733. What I want to arrive at is this, whether you think the large holdings might be in some cases broken up into smaller holdings with benefit to the people and to the country; do you think the process of consolidation has been carried too far in Caithness or not?—It depends entirely on this, whether or not steam is to come into application in the cultivation of land. If steam is to come into employment, certainly the occupations cannot be too large; if steam is not to become applicable to the cultivation of land, then I hold that occupations of eighty acres, that would keep a pair of horses, and keep a man and his family in employment, are best for the country and for the whole community.

38734. You would fix your agricultural unit at eighty acres?—At not less than eighty acres for agricultural purposes, but I would not like to say that there should be no crofting in such a district as the West Highlands, or even Caithness, or Orkney and Shetland, where the fishings are so capable of being developed to an enormous extent.

38735. Then you think there might be a smaller class of crofters as auxiliary to other industries?—I think so.

38736. But we hear from a great number of people that fishing should be entirely separate from the occupation of land?—Well, I do not think so in those situations in the Highlands and Islands, and I think in Shetland it was a tremendous mistake letting the country out in sheep farms,

as has been done within ten or fifteen years. I think that a quantity of land was required for the people, and would have enabled them to develop the fisheries much better than they could do without it.

SUTHER-LAND.
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HELMDALE
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James Pirie.

38737. Then you think the occupation of land is a useful assistance for the fishings?—Yes. I wish to contradict a statement made by Mr Waters, condemning large farms in Caithness. There is not a county in Scotland where there is a better admixture of holdings, from the smallest farms to farms of £1100 a year of rental, and that occupation is suitable for all concerned. For instance, we buy up the calves and young cattle of the small tenants and make them marketable, and supply them with short-horn bulls and stock of that kind for all their requirements, and they benefit us by enabling us to get all the stock we require, and they afford us labour at the same time.

38738. Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.—With regard to labour, do you get labour for your farm from the crofters of Caithness?—Very much from the sons and daughters of the crofters.

38739. What size of crofts are those that supply you with labour?—From £10 and under.

38740. What acreage is a £10 croft?—Perhaps ten or twelve acres.

38741. A croft of that size will give a good deal of labour to a crofter, will it not?—Yes, a good deal of occupation, but not full employment, unless he got labour somewhere else, and it is an extraordinary fact, which I show in *The Agriculture of Caithness*, that the rental of the crofts along the coast is 18s. 6d. an acre, and the rental of the same crofts in the two parishes in the interior of the county is only 8s. an acre, so the difference between 8s. and 18s. 6d. is what may be called the sea-rent.

38742. That is to say, a habitation in a favourable position for securing employment commands a higher rent?—Yes, exactly on the same principle that ground near a town is worth three times as much as ground at a distance from a town.

38743. Do you think ten or fifteen acres is a good size of croft for a crofter who wishes to make the main part of his living by labour, and merely wishes to keep a cow for himself and grow potatoes?—Yes, I think it is large enough.

38744. And when a crofter has to make his living entirely by farming and not to earn wages at all, you think the minimum size should be eighty acres?—Yes.

38745. With a pair of horses?—Yes. We have a great many of these occupations in Caithness that are, I think, as comfortable a class of tenantry as can be found anywhere under the sun. But with regard to the occupations in Caithness, I can show you exactly how they stand as to rental—85 occupations above £200; 107 occupations between £100 and £200; 171 occupations between £100 and £50; 386 occupations between £50 and £20; 576 occupations between £20 and £10; and 1927 occupations under £10.

38746. And the crofters in those nineteen hundred occupations have not sufficient opportunity of finding employment for wages?—I think the Caithness people are pretty well employed all round.

38747. That was their complaint—that their holdings were not large enough to support them?—These are along the coast, without making wages from their sea labour.

38748. In the paper you deposited with us the other day you refer a good deal to the want of compensation for improvements; have you studied the new Agricultural Holdings Act?—I have had it in hand, and I have not had time to study it. If it is wrought fairly, I think it should

SUTHERLAND. make a very great difference as regards the occupation of land in Scotland.

— 38749. Is there a way of eluding its provisions?—I think so.

— 38750. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—I think you told us you did not at all James Purves. approve of the big farms that have been recently started in Orkney and Shetland?—Yes.

38751. But you very much approve of big farms in Caithness?—I do not approve of increasing the number of big farms, but as they are I think there is no county in Scotland that is better situated as to large and small occupations than Caithness is, and I would like very much to have had this Commission in sight of the Pentland Firth, where all classes of occupations and residences could be seen, and a more comfortable and happy allocation and of occupation cannot be conceived.

38752. You are a factor yourself?—I was a factor. I served a seven years' apprenticeship.

38753. You were present at Lybster the other day?—Yes.

38754. You heard a proprietor state there that when one of his crofts was out of lease he invited offers—he would never tell what rent he wanted, but invited offers. Do you approve of such a thing?—Most decidedly not; but it is very much the practice. Most farms are advertised for set, and the highest offer is taken.

38755. But Mr Sharp is not in the habit of advertising at all?—If I recollect right, he does not require to advertise. I think it is quite the case what he said—that for one holding near the coast he had ten applications.

38756. Do you think that is a healthy state of matters?—I do not think it is a healthy state of matters to take one-third more for land than it is worth under the circumstances, and not to do the necessary improvements and make the necessary outlays to put the place in perfect order and give every accommodation that is necessary.

38757. Upon what grounds do you justify, if you justify, the adding of farm to farm? We find one tenant has got nine big farms in different places?—I do not justify it. I say the thing is wholly wrong, and if compensation for improvements at expiry had obtained, no such thing could possibly have happened, because a tenant when he entered his farm would have to pay the outgoing tenant so much that he would not be able to go in for half the amount of land he can take now. That is a system which has risen up in Scotland under the present land law system—that there are two or three men who go in for taking up all the land that goes out of lease in good order, and scouring that land during the currency of the lease, putting the money which the preceding tenant had laid out upon it into their pocket, and returning the land to the proprietor ten times worse than it was before.

38758. Do big farmers do such dreadful things?—They do, and the present land laws induce them to do it.

38759. You mean help them to do it?—They induce them to do it, because if they do fairly they see it would be confiscated at their outgoing.

38760. Is it your observation as to land which has been taken in by small people and crofters, that they have been put out and evicted because larger farmers were willing to go in, in order to reap the benefit of the crofter's work?—Well, I do not think that under the crofting system very much improvement is done to the land. I know that a large proportion of the land under crofts on some estates in Caithness would take as much to put them into good order as the waste land of the county.

38761. Take a sheep farm. Is it not very advantageous to a sheep

farmer who has some crofters bordering on him to get the benefit of their arable land?—Yes, to lay it waste, but there has not been much of that done of late in Caithness.

SUTHERLAND.

38762. It has been all done already?—Yes, it has been all done. There is not much to do.

HELMSDALE.

38763. You know the county of Sutherland well?—I know it pretty well.

James Purves.

38764. You are a native of Caithness?—Yes.

38765. Don't you suppose the big sheep farmers who came into Strath Naver and Kildonan were able to make fortunes there in consequence of the extent of old arable land they got possession of?—There is little doubt Sutherland would not have been adapted for keeping the sheep stock it did unless that arable land had been there.

38766. Did you ever hear that when the people who made that arable land were turned out, or burnt out, they got compensation for what they took in?—I cannot say as to that, because these things were before my day, but I do not suppose they did.

38767. Such timbers as were not burnt they were allowed perhaps to take with them?—Timber of that sort is not of much value, and I do not think it would pay the cartage.

38768. Do you consider, that this demand which is now so generally made all over the Highlands on the part of the crofters, to increase their holdings, is a *bona fide* wish on their part?—I should think it is. I do not think it is in human nature not to wish to increase their holdings, and I have told them over and over again that the man who wished to remain a crofter and not to better his position was not worth his salt.

38769. Then you sympathise very much with them?—I sympathise with them in maintaining the rural population of Scotland, so long as it can be done, on the soil.

38770. *Mr Cameron*.—I do not think you answered Mr Mackintosh's first question about big farmers taking crofters' lands. He asked whether you had come across any cases where large farmers had taken possession of lands that were improved by crofters?—I only objected to the word 'improved.'

38771. He asked you whether that had happened in your experience, and the subject turned to what happened in 1811. In your own experience has any case occurred where large farmers have obtained from the proprietor lands formerly in the occupation of crofters, and which were improved at their expense?—Well, I object to the word 'improved.' There is not much improvement in turning land over and cropping it and leaving it in a worse state than you got it in, but if you say 'cultivated' I can answer you.

38772. Well, I put it 'cultivated'—lands begun to be cultivated by the crofters?—Well, at the meeting at Lybster I myself was accused of having taken the land of thirteen tenants. There were not quite thirteen tenants on the Lochend estate when I got it, and there was not a man evicted during my occupation. Three of them were paupers. The Parochial Board paid their rent till their death. The others have died out except two. There were two sons who wished to remain in and got their fathers' occupations. They are there yet; they are younger than I am, and they will remain in their occupations till their death. Except these two, all the land occupied by the former small tenants on that estate is now in Lochend farm occupied by me.

38773. From what period was that ground cultivated by these crofters?—It may have been for a very long time.

SUTHER-LAND. 38774. Was it within the memory of man or not?—I think not. I think there must have been people located on it before the memory of man.

HELMSDALE. 38775. But the land was not taken in by the sitting crofters?—No; I James Purves. think they were just sitting quietly. It was in a very miserable state indeed.

38776. *The Chairman.*—Then if I understood your statement rightly, none of these crofters were removed from the soil in order to increase the area of your farm during your time?—Not until death. They were not removed by me, and instead of advertising the land I took it into my own occupation.

38777. Did they leave any natural heirs?—Two of them have done so, and these two are still on the land; and they are younger men than I am, and will remain on the land till they are gone if they hold on to it.

38778. Then you have nothing to do with the eviction of crofters?—Well, if I had to do with it again I would not have anything to do with being a middleman. I would not have small tenants again.

38779. You do not think it a good thing that farms should be let with small tenants upon them?—I think not.

38780. You would rather leave the responsibility of managing that class of tenants to the landlord?—I should say so.

38781. Is there anything you would like to state about the tenure of land in Caithness?—I do not think I need to state anything further. I have handed in 'The Agriculture of Caithness' and a statement of the outlays made on Lochend and Leister by me, and the gold medal report of the Highland and Agricultural Society of Scotland, which shows how it was done. I would like you to hear me on behalf of a petition by my road constituents in the parishes of Dunnet and Canisbay. I am the elected representative road trustee for Dunnet, the parish that Lochend and Leister are in, and I have been so since the passing of our Road Act in 1860. I came to Barrogill four years ago, and then the inhabitants of the parish of Canisby elected me their representative too, and I have since had to act for both parishes. The road we ask for is one which will connect this district with the whole system of county roads. I have been working at this matter since 1854 trying to get this road, and I was first on the list on Monday last trying to get it adopted out of some money we are getting from the Exchequer for the abolition of tolls, but the opposition was too strong for me. We cannot adopt the General Road Act for Scotland without a majority of two-thirds.

38782. Is this the region you say is so well divided into large and small farms?—Yes.

38783. This is rather a question for your local road trustees than for us?—Yes, but it is a crofters' grievance. The population in that district is 4300 odds.

38784. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—How many represent the crofting interest?—The number of inhabitants is 4390. That was the population in 1871.

38785. Are most of those crofters?—The large farms above £10 rent are 166, and below £10 there are 437, making 603 occupations altogether in these two parishes, and of course the 437 are the number that are most thrown out for want of those roads.

38786. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Are the elected trustees unanimous in asking for this road?—Well, I cannot tell as to that. They would wish their own roads in preference.

38787. Then it is not exactly the case that the elected trustees are out-numbered by the higher powers?—No, but we would be out-numbered in

getting the General Road Act adopted, which provides on principle for the making of all new roads that are required. SUTHERLAND.

38788. *The Chairman.*—You must look forward to a Local Government Bill!—I think the Acts are there if we could agitate till they are put in force. There is nothing for it but publicity. HELMSDALE.
James Purves.

WILLIAM MACKAY, Factor and Farmer, and Chief Magistrate of the Town of Thurso (39)—examined.

38789. *The Chairman.*—You have a statement you wish to make?—I wish to make a statement in answer to a statement made by a delegate at the meeting at Lybster. I should have preferred to make the statement there in presence of the Caithness people, but as I was requested to come here I came here for this purpose. Mr Waters, the delegate for Dunnet stated, with regard to a grievance which he said was felt by the people of Dunnet, that the whole grazings were taken from them. I think it right to put the facts of the case as I apprehend them before your Lordship and the Commission. These grazings are near Dunnet Head, and they had been, like a great many other grazings in the Highlands, I admit, in the occupation of part of the tenants of Dunnet for a considerable period. They have never been in reality let to them, and no rent, as far as I could ever discover, had been put upon their holdings in consequence of them. Part of the grazings were grazed in common with the farmer who held what was, compared with the others, a large farm. That farmer does not now have any sheep upon the grazings in question, and a part of the grazings in consequence was let to Mr Traill, a neighbouring proprietor, for grazing purposes. When this was done I intimated this arrangement to the tenants at the rent time. I cannot say that they made any very serious objection to what had been done at the time, but a day or two afterwards a deputation of them visited me in Thurso, and said that they felt they would like to have retained these grazings, or, at any rate, they said they would be quite satisfied if a portion of them which they indicated would be left in their possession. I immediately communicated with Mr Traill, to whom they had been let, and we arranged a meeting on the ground between the deputation, Mr Traill, and myself. They pointed out what they wanted. He said he would be glad to give it up, and we went over the line of march. The tenants expressed their satisfaction with what was to be done. A fence was accordingly put up, and I have had no further representation made on the subject by the tenants of Dunnet from that day to this. It was at a time when there had been considerable commotion in the other parts of Scotland in connection with such questions, and on a representation being made to Mr Traill that they felt they were aggrieved by this land having been taken from them, he very generously arranged they should still have the liberty of grazing their cattle and horses upon these grazings at a small grazing charge, which I think was 6d. a head, and when the first rent came to be paid I believe all he exacted was 1s. for the whole lot. I think it right to make that statement, because it was produced in Caithness as a case of oppression, which I do not admit it was, and the more so because I am factor upon an estate which holds the largest number of crofters of any estate in Caithness, and there has been no representation made to this Commission by any crofters upon that property. There are at present on the Freswick estates 488 tenants under £30, and thirty years ago the number was 479. So to all intents and purposes they remain very much about the same. The rent at pre-

William Mackay.

SUTHER-LAND. sent paid by these crofters is £2449, while it was, in 1850, £2455. I think it right to put these statistics before the Commission, in order that you may see that the position of the crofters upon that estate has been very much the same during the period for which the statistics are given.

HELMSDALE. — William Mackay. 38790. When this common grazing, or whatever it may be called, was withdrawn from the small tenants and let to Mr Traill, Mr Traill gave a rent for it?—Yes.

38791. What was the amount of rent?—It was to be £35, but after he gave up the part to which they objected it was reduced to £30.

38792. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Who lets it?—Mr Thomson Sinclair of Freswick, for whom I am factor.

38793. *The Chairman.*—Then we may assume the actual value of the subject practically withdrawn from the crofters was £35 a year?—It was £30—what was let to Mr Traill—but I have made out, I think, that there was one tenant who grazed that land in common with the crofters and who does not now graze the land in common with them.

38794. What proportion do you suppose of the whole common grazing was absorbed by that one tenant, and what proportion was really in the hands of the crofters?—The one tenant grazed not only upon the Freswick estate, but also upon Mr Traill's estate, and had a large flock which went over both. It would be difficult to arrive at the exact proportion, but I think it would be represented by one-third or one-fourth of the whole.

38795. So the value of the subject withdrawn from the crofters which was previously practically in their occupancy might have been worth £20 a year?—Possibly.

38796. In the meantime, whatever it was worth, they are really using it at a nominal rental at this moment?—They are so.

38797. When the common pasture was withdrawn from the crofters were they left in possession of any other common pasture?—Yes, possibly about one-third was taken off what they had, and they still have upwards of 1000 acres. I may mention that the tenants upon the Freswick estate are very much fishermen. The estates are situated in three different parts of the county—part about John O'Groats's House, part at Dunnet, and part about 16 miles from this village here—and they combine the occupations to a considerable extent of fishermen and crofters.

38798. What is your opinion personally about the division of the two industries? Do you think fishermen ought to be fishermen altogether, or do you think the fishing ought to be supplemented with crofts?—A witness said to-day that it was sufficient if a fisherman had potato ground. I think every fisherman should have a cow to supply his family with milk, and where agriculture can be carried on alone there should be at least thirty acres of the arable land in order to enable a tenant to depend upon it altogether. When it becomes less than that, I think he requires help from some other quarter.

38799. Besides a common outrun?—Besides a common outrun.

38800. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Are you in favour of such crofts as thirty-acre crofts?—I would be very much in favour of them.

38801. You have mentioned a very satisfactory state of matters in connection with the estate of Freswick. Which Mr Traill was it that got the hill from the tenants?—Mr Traill, the proprietor of Ratter.

38802. That is a large estate?—Yes.

38803. Still he wanted a bit of hill grazing from those small tenants?—Yes; but the circumstances were these. He had an outlying corner at Dunnet Head which was lying waste, very much the same kind of pasture. It had not been much used, and he proposed putting sheep upon that

corner, and he just wished this part in order to have a sufficient flock that would keep a shepherd.

SUTHERLAND.

38804. You are a factor, and know exactly what should be done; is it usual and fair that a proprietor should take away part of the grazings of some of his own tenants and give it to another proprietor without consulting them?—I do not quite comprehend your question.

HELMSDALE.

William Mackay.

38805. Those tenants were in possession of grazing. You intimated to them at a certain rent day that it had been given to Mr Traill. Now, is it proper for a proprietor to take away grazings from his own tenants and give them to a stranger outside the property?—Before taking any steps I took statistics of the stock held by the tenants on the ground. The pasture is rough and heathery, suitable only for blackfaced sheep or Highland cattle. The tenants had neither blackfaced sheep nor Highland cattle upon it; and for all the number of stock they held I considered the land was practically lying waste, because it was only grazed for a couple of months in summer, and they graze the same number of cattle upon the hill.

38806. But do you not think it would have been fairer, before you settled with this stranger, to go and ask whether you could not get the same rent from your own tenants?—I had been a very short time on the estate as factor, and if I had been better acquainted with the state of the tenantry I might have consulted them more on the subject, but certainly in what I did I was acting fairly as between man and man, and I would be willing to submit that to the arbitration of any one who knew the circumstances of the case.

38807. But as it turned out, Mr Traill changed his mind very soon after and gave up pasturing it?—He has not given up pasturing it.

38808. *The Chairman.*—He gave up a portion of it?—No, he allowed the stock to be grazed with the sheep he put on it.

38809. I thought you said he put up a fence?—Yes, on the portion he retained, but he allows them inside the fence.

38810. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—But that was in consequence of agitation on the subject?—It was in consequence of their request.

38811. Does he keep any stock upon it at this moment?—He keeps blackfaced sheep upon it.

38812. Does he continue to pay the £30?—He continues to pay the rent.

[ADJOURNED.]

SUTHER-
LAND.

GOLSPIE.

GOLSPIE, SUTHERLANDSHIRE, MONDAY, OCTOBER 8, 1883.

(See Appendix A, LXV.)

Present:—

Lord NAPIER and ETTRICK, K.T., *Chairman.*
 Sir KENNETH S. MACKENZIE, Bart.
 DONALD CAMERON, Esq. of Lochiel, M.P.
 C. FRASER-MACKINTOSH, Esq., M.P.
 Sheriff NICOLSON, LL.D.

WILLIAM BLACK, Crofter, Pitaxie (34), and JOHN Ross, Crofter, Clunel,
 Parish of Lairg (26)—examined.

William Black 38813. *The Chairman.*—You have been elected a delegate by the
 and people of Gruids?—*William Black.* I have.
 John Ross.

38814. How many people took part in the election?—I did not count
 them, but there was a large assemblage.

38815. Was the paper you are about to read communicated to them
 after it was drawn up, and did they approve of it?—Yes. '*The Crofters
 under the proprietorship of Lady Matheson.*'—The grievance of the
 crofters of the township of Gruids is the smallness of their crofts, both
 arable and pasture. The overcrowding of the township is mainly due to
 the Clunel evictions sixty years ago to make room for sheep. The
 crofters had reclaimed the land, and built houses thereon at their own
 expense, and were paying rent to the amount of £84 annually, being a
 higher rent than ever was paid since. When in our present factor's
 possession he had it for £30 a year. This certainly wounded the feel-
 ings of the evicted crofters and their descendants, to see the land from
 which they were ruthlessly driven in possession of the factor for less
 rent. Twenty-six years ago miles of pasture were taken off the crofters
 without any reduction of rent being given, as well as depriving them of
 the work done on the estate, which made their grievances twofold.
 The factor's practice was to send men from Dornoch to do all the work,
 while all the men of Gruids were allowed to go idle; still their rents would
 require to be paid, otherwise they would be threatened with eviction,
 or their effects pointed. We have neither lease nor valuation given us,
 or encouragement of any kind. We have to pay for the smallest piece of
 wood we require for houses, fences, &c. The crofts we occupy will
 hardly keep meal to each of us for six months, and for most no work on
 the estate to assist us for the remainder of the year. The first evictions
 carried into effect on this estate commenced about seventy years ago.
 Some of the evicted got crofts in Clunel, from which they were again
 evicted in the course of twelve years to the township of Gruids, others
 having to leave for foreign countries; and a third eviction was attempted
 on the township of Gruids. The above evictions were cruelly brought
 about. The people were forced out of their houses by a military force,
 and had to take to the hills. Old men and children were nearly starved
 in snow on their return. After the departure of the soldiers, they found
 that they had no houses to shelter them for the night, besides taking
 some, that turned back to save their effects, prisoners. The land from
 which those crofters were evicted amounts to about one thousand acres,

' for which the tacksman pays about sixpence an acre on an average, with SUTHER-
' hill pasture; while we pay 2s. 8d. an acre for ours, which is of very LAND.
' inferior quality, and all improved at our own expense. We are informed
' that there is a law in our country to protect us, but when such oppres- GOLSPIE.
' sion as described in the above is in force we find no protection what- William Black
' soever from the present law. Therefore we earnestly advocate a and
' thorough reform of the land laws. In advance of the Royal Commission, John Ross.
' we had our winter stock taken up by the ground officer, which could
' not be done with justice to us, as we have to buy yearly for our winter
' stock. Second, we had a one-sided valuation in the month of August,
' when the crop looked at its best, never considering the amount of arti-
' ficial manure, &c., yearly laid on our unproductive soil, and then they
' think to oppress us as has been done in the past. Remedies.—Enlarged
' crofts of average quality, with sufficient pasturage and peat ground for
' the township, the crofter to be entitled to full compensation for build-
' ings, fences, and permanent improvements on well-defined principles.
' Absolute security from eviction so long as the tenant does not exceed two
' years in arrears, and performs his duty as tenant. The rent should be
' judicially fixed by valuation by parties mutually chosen, and it ought
' not to be raised or the possession restricted earlier than thirty years.
' Personal Grievances.—I produce one case out of many as an illustration
' to show you how improvements are stopped, and that we are not allowed
' to trench our own land. James Robertson, crofter and miller, Gruids,
' having about two acres in his croft which was not cultivated, he employed
' men to trench it. After he trenched one acre of the land and fenced it
' in, he received strict orders to stop improving his land, and he was com-
' pelled to pull up his fence, and this land is now only a common waste.
' Yet he has to pay for it. He has only been tenant there for five years,
' and the foregoing happened within the last two years. James Robertson
' is present, and can substantiate this statement.'

38816. I want to understand more exactly about the successive evictions. You speak of three evictions here. You say the first evictions were seventy years ago?—Yes.

38817. Is that the case?—Yes.

38818. Who was the proprietor of the estate then?—Sir George Gunn Munro of Poyntsfield.

38819. When the first evictions took place was the whole of the land in the possession of the crofters, or were there already large tacks at that time?—Not at all. It was all in the possession of the crofters; the whole place at that time was in their possession.

38820. The hill land was held as common pasture?—Yes.

38821. At the time of the first evictions was the hill pasture taken and formed into a farm?—No, I suppose they were evicted first, and both the arable and pasture combined were formed into a farm. They had both in their possession until such time as they were evicted.

38822. And both the arable and pasture were taken away?—Yes.

38823. What became of the crofters at that time; were they not allowed to remain in possession of some arable?—No, they were removed to Clunel, and some went further. We have one here who can substantiate that statement.

38824. Was the whole place then made one farm?—No, it is made into two farms.

38825. That was the first eviction sixty or seventy years ago; who got the farms?—I can hardly state that; but I believe there is a man here who can state it.

38826. Were they given to strangers from outside, or to the people of

SUTHER-LAND. Sutherland?—They were not given to people of Sutherland. Certainly they were given to strangers.

GOLSPIE. 38827. Then you speak of a second eviction. How long ago was that?—Sixty years ago.

William Black 38828. What happened then?—A most cruel eviction.

and John Ross. 38829. Do you mean that the same people who had been evicted the first time seventy years ago were evicted again sixty years ago?—I mean that.

38830. Where were they taken to?—To the township of Gruids, and they are here to-day to prove it.

38831. Then you speak of a third eviction; when was the third eviction?—Shortly after the same time.

38832. Then there has been no eviction for about fifty years?—None at all.

38833. How long is it since the Matheson family became possessed of the estate?—I think it will be about forty years ago. There were no evictions since then.

38834. From whom did they purchase the property?—Sir George Gunn Munro.

38835. Since forty years there have been no evictions whatever?—None whatever.

38836. Then since forty years has any ground been added to the crofters?—It has been taken off them—miles of it.

38837. Since the Matheson family came?—Yes.

38838. Common pasture ground?—Yes.

38839. What was done with the common pasture ground which was taken off them?—It was added to a sheep farm, and part of it, eighty acres, is planted.

38840. And when this pasture was taken away from them during the possession of the Mathesons, was any reduction of their rent made?—None whatever.

38841. Was any other advantage given to them as a compensation?—None whatsoever.

38842. To whom was the pasture given; who was the farmer?—Mr Sellar.

38843. He is spoken of here as both factor and farmer. He was the factor for the estate?—No, not at all.

38844. When in our present factor's possession?—That is a different part of which I am talking—twenty-six years ago.

38845. When did the present factor obtain the farm?—I don't know.

38846. Who is the present factor?—Mr Fraser.

38847. Then Mr Fraser is both farmer and factor at the present moment?—No, he is not.

38848. How long is it since he ceased to be farmer?—Seven years.

38849. But he was a long time farmer and factor?—Yes.

38850. And who is factor at present?—Angus Bethune, residing in Inverness.

38851. Who resides on the farm?—The manager or a man in partnership with him. But I have a letter from Mr Bethune to the effect that he was misled in his offer for the farm, for he thinks it too dear; and certainly it is not out of place to think it too dear when we pay 2s. 8d. for ours.

38852. During the last forty years, since the family came into possession, there has been no eviction, but there has been a diminution of the hill pasture. Has there been any increase of rent?—None whatsoever.

38853. What is the average size of the holdings? How many acres of

arable ground?—Well, I think the largest is eighteen acres three poles. But it is in the possession of the ground officer, as they have the fat of the land—all those officials. That is the point of the letter.

38854. Don't let us enter into reflections. I want to know the fact?—The fact is that the largest who has arable land pays about 7s. 6d.

38855. But generally speaking, what sort of crofts have they? Are they ten or five acres of arable? What is the full croft?—I did not make up that, but the average rent is about £6, 10s.

38856. And what would be about the area of a croft at £6, 10s.?—There are about 200 acres of arable land altogether and twenty-eight crofters.

38857. Then I suppose there are six or seven acres of arable ground a croft?—Rather over seven.

38858. Is there a good hill pasture still left?—No, it is bad hill pasture.

38859. Is it a large area?—It amounts to 1200 acres.

38860. Do they run both cattle and sheep upon it?—Both cattle and sheep and horses—in fact, too much.

38861. About how many sheep?—I have only two myself. I cannot say what the rest have, but the quality of the sheep is such that they are nearly turned into goats for the want of pasture, and the one must rise before the other lies down.

38862. On a £7 croft what stock is kept on an average?—I cannot exactly say. I did not study that point.

38863. Would there be three cows on a £7 rent?—I believe there would be.

38864. And a horse?—A horse.

38865. How many sheep?—I know some that are only paying £3 have twenty-four sheep, but that is on account of the estate regulations not being carried into effect.

38866. Would it be a usual thing to have three cows, one horse, and twelve or twenty sheep?—That is what we should have.

38867. Then whose fault is it that you have not got it?—Just officials. They do not look to that.

38868. They allow some to keep too many and others too few?—They allow some to keep twenty-four sheep upon £3, whereas I pay £13, 12s. 6d. and have only two sheep.

38869. Still I don't get a general idea. A crofter who pays £7, say, would have about three cows, one horse, and a dozen sheep?—Say a dozen sheep. The estate regulations carry two sheep to the £1, but that is too much for the extent of pasture we have.

38870. When the people were settled here did they receive any assistance in building their houses?—None whatever.

38871. They built their houses and improved the ground entirely themselves?—Yes. They got six weeks of Government money for what improvements they would do within the six months, and they have been paying for thirty-five years interest for the said money, so I believe they have done it all upon their own account.

38872. Some Government money was expended in improvements?—All finished within six weeks were paid Government money. Some did improvements and some none at all.

38873. Is your hill pasture fenced?—Yes, too hardly. It is fenced on either side.

38874. With a wire fence?—Yes.

38875. Does not that protect you from the stock of the adjacent farms?—Yes, but it keeps us out of occupation of the land which we

SUTHER-
LAND.

GOLSPIE.

William Black
and
John Ross.

SUTHERLAND.—should have had, and which our forefathers had, and which they had for sixpence an acre, and which we pay 2s. 8d. for.

GOLSPIE.—38876. When you say the adjacent farmer only pays sixpence an acre, does that include any arable ground on his holding?—It includes all the William Black arable land our forefathers tilled and gave to him in good order.

and
John Ross.—38877. Is any of that cultivated?—There has been 1000 acres cultivated.

38878. But at the present moment?—No, it is all grown with bracken and ferns and rushes. It will soon be a wilderness altogether, and a loss to the nation.

38879. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—You say—‘In advance of the Royal Commission we had our winter stock taken up by the ground officer.’ Do you mean the stock was counted over?—Yes.

38880. You are aware it was done for the Royal Commission?—Yes.

38881. Did you raise objection to it?—Well, I did not do it at the present time, because I was not there. I was in Inverness, but if I was at home I would not give them the privilege of numbering my stock, because I would think it was an imposition.

38882. You did not wish the Commission to know what stock you kept?—I would not do anything against that.

38883. But you understand it was at the request of the Royal Commission that that numbering was done?—If that is the fact, it was all right.

38884. How long is it since James Robertson entered upon his croft?—Five years.

38885. Did he get a lease?—He did. He had a letter to that effect.

38886. Were any conditions contained in the letter?—I am not sure. He is here present. But I know there is a gross injustice in the manner in which he has been treated. He has been a man that paid far more for his mill and land than any of those before him paid, and a persevering man, and he should be encouraged instead of oppressed.

38887. There is a statement you make, and other witnesses have made it in other places, that the crofters pay a very much larger rent for their land than the large farmers. Do you understand why it is that the landlord does not accept the larger rent if he has the opportunity of getting it?—I understand that exactly, because the law is upon his side, and it is an unjust law, and that he has the power in his own hand of self-control, and he can do with the land what he pleases.

38888. But if he has an opportunity of getting a larger rent for his land, why does he not avail himself of that opportunity?—Well, I have stated there that he does not get a larger rent.

38889. If he accepted crofter tenants he would get a larger rent for his land?—I believe so.

38890. Then why does he not do it?—Because it is not in accordance with his own mind.

38891. Is it not a landlord’s interest to get a larger rent if he can do so?—Yes, but my statement does not confirm that; I say he gets a less rent for his land.

38892. But I want an explanation of the fact that the landlord is willing to accept a less rent from a large tenant. Why is it he is willing to accept that?—Because he wishes to exclude us from the face of the earth, and send us over the ocean. I can see no other reason for it.

38893. You cannot see any object he has except getting rid of the people?—It is his object. I cannot arrive at it, but I know there is gross injustice to us on that part.

38894. If you were to give up your croft would your landlord have any difficulty it letting in?—No, he would not.

38895. There is a demand for it?—Yes, and there is a demand for any land.

38896. And therefore he could let the large farm at a higher rent by William Black dividing it among small tenants?—I think he could.

38897. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—How many large farms are there on the estate?—There are only two.

38898. What are the names of the tenants?—There are Messrs Dobie and Martin, and Mr Angus Bethune, Inverness.

38899. How many crofters may there be altogether on the whole estate?—There are twenty-eight, and there is a population of 184 upon that small piece of ground, 1400 acres.

38900. And what population is there upon the two farms?—A few shepherds. Messrs Dobie and Martin do not reside at all upon the land. They reside in Dumfriesshire. There are six or seven.

38901. Can you give me any idea how the land is divided? Do you know what is the acreage of the whole estate of Achany?—I cannot exactly say, but there will be about 41,000.

38902. We shall say upwards of 40,000?—Yes.

38903. How much of the 40,000 acres is in these two farms?—Nearly the whole 40,000 acres.

38904. How much have the crofters altogether?—1400 altogether.

38905. Arable and pasture?—Arable and pasture combined.

38906. Are there any cottars upon the lands of the tenants who do not pay any rent?—There is only one now, but till the last year there were a good many.

38907. Were they a burden upon the crofters?—Certainly, and they were put in defiantly against the crofters. I suppose they were in favour with the factor and ground officer and were put upon the tenant's pasture, and at present they are the best off in the whole township.

38908. Do you feel sure you are right in stating there is 1000 acres of land which had once been tilled by the small tenants that is now lying waste, or nearly so?—Yes, I believe I am quite justified in stating that. I suppose there would be no harm in referring to this letter which I received from Mr Bethune, and you can judge a little from that, which will confirm so much of my statement.

38909. Will you tell me for whom was the clearance first made in the time of Munro of Poynsfield? What big farmer came in?—Mr M'Gregor.

38910. Who was he?—I cannot exactly state. That is too far back, but I have men present who can state it.

38911. At all events he was a stranger?—Yes.

38912. Now, tell me something about the farm that Mr Fraser, who was long factor and is now factor, had?—The farm of Clunel.

38913. Is that the one Bethune now occupies?—Yes.

38914. Do you know what rent he was paying?—I don't know. I think it would need to be a pretty small one.

38915. What reason had he for not giving employment when there was any farm work necessary on the farm? Why did he not employ the people on the estate?—There might be reasons, but I cannot arrive at them assuredly, but he was a banker at Dornoch, and there might be bills in his bank, and if he sent men up who had bills in his bank he could redeem them. But the tenants were kept out of employment, as well as the pasture was taken off.

38916. Then though no rise of rent has been put on you since the time of the Mathesons, yet, at the same time, having been deprived of pasture,

SUTHER-
LAND.

GOLSPIE.

John Ross.

SUTHER-
LAND.

GOLSPIE.

William Black
and
John Ross.

you consider yourselves aggrieved?—We do, and we are deprived of this melioration labour as well, which is bound to make us worse than in Sir George Gunn Munro's time. I put in a copy of the original melioration letter, which is as follows:—‘I, George Gunn Munro, proprietor of the estate Poyntsfield and Gruids, bind myself and my heirs and successors whomsoever to pay melioration to the small tenants on Clunel and Pitavie, Terry Mill, or any other stances thereabout, for any neat stone and lime cottages, byres, barns, &c., and stone dykes they may build, which shall be paid them at whatever period they may remove or be removed, the value of what they may be worth at outgoing to be ascertained by judges mutually chosen; this is provided all such will be finished by learned tradesmen. And as a further encouragement will make a present of a guinea note to each of tenants of six first finished with chimneys at each end of their said houses. Given under my hand, Poyntsfield House, on this 11th day of August 1834, and a separate letter to the above agreement will be given to each separately as their houses are finished (signed) GEORGE GUNN MUNRO.’

38917. You complain that upon the sale of the estate the new proprietor raised the rents?—Yes. The old proprietor fell into debt and the estate was entailed, and he rented the Gruids tenants to the highest they could go, and they remain there yet, and all the privilege he gave them is taken away from them. The hill pasture is taken away and eighty acres of plantation is put there, and there was more pointed out last week which I could not get in my statement, and in the face of all this I see Lady Matheson is again pointing out some pasture to be planted.

38918. Do you mean that your remnants of 1400 acres are still to be diminished?—Exactly, and it is one thing certain that with the privileges there stated and the miles of pasture we had, we must be in a worse state now than we were then.

38919. Is anything done on the part of the proprietrix for the people on the estate?—None.

38920. Is any encouragement given?—None at all; not even a hand-stake out of the wood, and that is little enough.

38921. Is any money spent in any benevolent or charitable way?—None whatever. There has been no reduction of rent for all the bad years, and the game going away with the half of our crop. There has been nothing done whatever.

38922. *The Chairman.*—I want to ask you again respecting this engagement to give compensation for a better kind of houses. This is a promise on the part of the old proprietor that he will give a bonus of one guinea to the first six who build improved houses, and that he will give them compensation for houses when built of a particular character. Have any such good stone and lime houses with two chimneys been built?—They have been all built of that quality.

38923. Then in your township all the houses are improved houses with chimneys?—Altogether, with the exception of one or two.

38924. Do you know any particular case in which an occupier has left his improved house and has asked for compensation, and has been refused compensation; has a case arisen?—I cannot answer that question directly.

38925. Has this engagement of the former proprietor been distinctly repudiated by the present proprietor?—Certainly.

38926. You mean they will not give a similar engagement at the present day?—Yes, none whatever. They refuse it altogether.

38927. They do not admit the validity of this engagement?—No. The excuse they put to us was that it was not stamped.

38928. [To John Ross].—Have you got a paper?—*John Ross.* Yes
 ‘ The grievances of the Gruids crofters are the smallness of their holdings,
 ‘ both of arable and pasture. Some of us pay as high as £1, 6s. an acre
 ‘ for very inferior soil. There is a population of 184 depending on about
 ‘ 1400 acres of land between arable and pasture for their livelihood, while
 ‘ the three neighbouring tacksmen occupy thirty times as much. Another
 ‘ grievance is bad dwelling houses and steadings, for if it rains outside for
 ‘ three hours it rains inside for six. Twenty-six years ago we were deprived
 ‘ of the most and best of our pasture, no reduction being given in our rents.
 ‘ At the same time we were threatened with eviction, unknown to the pro-
 ‘ prietor we believe, by a report published in a newspaper concerning the
 ‘ said threatened evictions. When the factor came to know of such a report
 ‘ being published he persuaded a few of us to sign a document to the effect
 ‘ that it was all a falsehood, and published the same in a newspaper.
 ‘ Shortly after we were deprived of the pasture, we inquired of the factor
 ‘ what to do with our sheep, the answer given us was “ Eat them.” Although
 ‘ we were needful of mutton at the time, ewes and lambs would not be
 ‘ very palatable to eat in the month of May. Another injustice done on
 ‘ the estate was that of exacting labour from men without paying them.
 ‘ A man having the value of £3, 5s. of land, arable and pasture, could not
 ‘ be supposed to work for nothing to the proprietor. Although the soil of
 ‘ his croft would be as productive as any in Scotland, it would not be
 ‘ adequate to supply the wants of a family of six persons. Our greatest
 ‘ grievance is want of land, arable and pasture, and the inferior quality of
 ‘ what we do occupy. It is not easy for people to keep the tenth com-
 ‘ mandment while they can see thousands of acres of good productive land
 ‘ in our neighbourhood, but nothing can be seen there but the ruins of
 ‘ crofters’ houses and sheep roaming over it, and we poor people labouring
 ‘ among peat bogs and rocks. We don’t blame proprietors, factors, or
 ‘ ground officers but only in a measure for the tyrannical oppression waged
 ‘ against us; but we blame the existing land laws, which permit such
 ‘ oppression to be carried into effect. We only say that proprietors, factors,
 ‘ and ground officers should be more humane than they have been towards
 ‘ their fellow-creatures. God says he has no respect of persons, therefore
 ‘ we understand the poor were not created to be persecuted and oppressed
 ‘ by the rich. No doubt, eviction is not carried on to such an alarming
 ‘ extent now-a-days, but the people are so much curtailed of the privileges
 ‘ they once possessed that they cannot live comfortably in their present
 ‘ circumstances. It would make people think of their wings and fly to the
 ‘ colonies, but behold their wings are clipped so that they cannot fly, and
 ‘ worse still there are no prospects of them growing under the present
 ‘ land law administration. What could a penniless man do on arriving in
 ‘ the colonies? He could not erect a house, buy stock, seed, nor farm
 ‘ implements. As a remedy, we earnestly advocate the extension of
 ‘ the franchise; we further want, as remedies to better our condition, more
 ‘ land, arable and pasture, compensation for improvements and for damage
 ‘ done by game, also a permanent hold of the soil, so that eviction be
 ‘ heard of no more. Eviction is a disgrace to our nation; such oppression
 ‘ has not been perpetrated among the uncivilised tribes, and still it has
 ‘ been done in a country whose law-makers profess to be enlightened
 ‘ Christians.’

38929. You belong to a different township?—It is the same township,
 but a different part of the township.

38930. *Mr Cameron.*—You complain here of the badness of the houses.
 Then these houses were not those spoken of by the last witness, which
 were good houses, and for which they failed to obtain the meliorations

SUTHER-
LAND.

GOLSPIE.

William Black
and
John Ross.

SUTHERLAND. stipulated for by the proprietor?—The walls are good, but they are not capable of keeping out the rain.

GOLSPIE. 38931. Is it a grievance with you or your neighbours that they cannot obtain those meliorations spoken of by the last witness?—Surely it must William Black be.

and
John Ross. 38932. If the houses were originally good, why do not the tenants keep them wind and water-tight?—There is nothing they can keep them water-tight with.

38933. Cannot they use lime?—They are thatched houses. There is no slate. They are built of stone and lime walls.

38934. Why cannot they renew the thatch as it gets old?—They have nothing to renew it with unless they use their straw, and that curtails their provender for their cattle.

38935. Where did the thatch originally come from?—It was turf.

38936. Could they not supply thatch from the same place that it came from originally?—No.

38937. Why not?—Because it is not there.

38938. What was it?—Turf.

38939. Is there no turf where it came from?—That might last for a year or so, but whenever the turf is done it is as bad as ever.

38940. Not knowing the place myself I do not understand you; but on other crofting farms the crofters, as it is required, repair their houses and keep them in repair. What I want to know from you is what peculiarity there is in your circumstances which prevents you doing what other crofters in the Highlands do?—We do as much as we can. But whatever can be done without the houses being slated, they will not be watertight.

38941. You were deprived apparently of the best of your pasture twenty-six years ago?—Yes.

38942. That was a more recent period than was spoken of by the last witness?—Yes.

38943. It was in the time of the late Sir James Matheson?—Yes.

38944. Are your rents about the same on an average as the rents of the other part of the township spoken of by your friend here?—Yes. Some of them are higher and some lower.

38945. And no reduction was made when your pasture was taken away?—No.

38946. Was any arrangement made at the time or any remonstrance made by the tenants?—No, I don't think it.

38947. They submitted quietly to it?—The factor requested three of them to sign a document giving over their claim, and promised the piece we all occupy between us to the three men if they would sign a document that they had no claim on the rest.

38948. Did they get it?—No, when they signed it he gave as good a right to the whole as to these three men.

38949. What was the piece of land that these three wished to sign away, provided they got it themselves, and which was afterwards given to the whole of the people that did not sign? Was that the land you complain of as having been taken away from your hill pasture?—No; the land we now occupy was promised to three men if they gave over their claim to the rest.

38950. But did not you have it before?—Yes.

38951. Then how could it be promised to you if it was in your possession?—They had it already in their possession, but the others had it in possession as well, but the others were not to have it in their possession afterwards.—*William Black.* The factor could not bribe the others.

38952. Who occupied this bit of land you say the factor tried to bribe the others to give away?—*John Ross.* The whole tenants. SUTHER-LAND.

38953. Then is this the land you complain of as having been taken away?—Part of it. GOLSPIE.

38954. Then the factor got those three people to agree to give it away? William Black
—Yes. and John Ross.

38955. And they signed this paper?—Yes.

38956. And then the land, as I understand, was not given to the three, but left with the whole of the crofters?—Part of it we got back.

38957. But did the document signed by the three crofters refer to this part, or did it refer to the whole?—To the one part. The half was to be taken off. They were to sign a document that they were willing to give away the half of it, if they got the other half of it among the three of them.

38958. And the result of it was that the half of it was left with the whole crofters, and the three men did not get the other half?—No.

38959. Who got it?—The factor and Mr Sellar.

38960. You say one injustice on the estate was that of exacting labour from men without paying them; was that an old practice on the estate? —No, it was not a practice, but it was done on the estate.

38961. Then if it was done was it the practice?—It was done once.

38962. Was it constantly done?—No, it was done once.

38963. You mean in the case of one man or in one year?—More than one man, but only in one year.

38964. I suppose the people remonstrated against it, and it was not done any more?—Yes.

38965. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You said in your paper that you complained of game?—Yes.

38966. What is the nature of your complaint? Is it of hares and rabbits?—No, black game and grouse. The whole of us do not complain of it, but some of us who are near the wood; and in a late season there is a great deal of damage done by game.

38967. Have you any rabbits?—No.

38968. To bring out a little clearer about this land taken from you twenty-six years ago, the factor took it himself?—Between himself and Mr Sellar.

38969. Had they or either of them land before then in their occupation?—Yes.

38970. That was close by your hill land?—Yes; our hill pasture was between theirs—a strip straight between theirs.

38971. And they thought it would suit them very well, I suppose?—Yes, and so it did.

38972. Did the factor allege or give any reason why he was doing this against the people, or did he just call the three people quietly together to try and make this arrangement? Did he consult the whole of you about it?—I am not exactly sure. I was not of age at the time. I have only other men's statements.

38973. What might it be worth to you at this moment—this pasture the half of which was taken away from you?—It would be worth six-pence an acre to us.

38974. Can you give us any idea how many acres there are in it?—No; there is a considerable amount.

38975. More than 1000 acres?—About 1000 acres.—*William Black.* There are more than 4000 acres—four or five miles of pasture.

38976. Then they took away more than the half?—Yes, we have only a small piece in comparison to what we had.

SUTHERLAND. 38977. [To John Ross].—Do you carry on any other business besides being a crofter?—*John Ross.* Yes, in labouring work.

GOLSPIE. 38978. Is it you that pays £3?—Yes.

William Black place? Have they been there from time immemorial?—Most of them.

and
John Ross. 38980. Did you make any representation to the late Sir James Matheson, or since his death to Lady Matheson, about your possession, that you are now so very much scrimped for land?—I did not, but others did.

38981. I mean did the crofters generally do so?—Yes, to the factor.

38982. What answer did you get?—*William Black.* We were denied any reduction whatever.

38983. *The Chairman.*—You complained about the difficulty of making water-tight roofs for the houses. Is there any rule on the estate about slating?—No, not any.

38984. Will the proprietor give slates for a certain payment or on certain conditions to the crofters?—No.

38985. There is no rule whatever?—No. Although you would pay interest for it you will not get it. I have offered that.

38986. Is there any labour now exacted without payment?—*John Ross.* No, none whatever.

38987. Are you cognizant of the particular case of the miller who was prevented trenching his ground? Do you know the circumstances of that case?—Yes.

38988. Can you give any reason why he was prevented; can you imagine any reason? What was the motive of the proprietor in preventing this improvement?—I think she was of the mind to plant it. That is my belief. She is planting quite close to it.

38989. Now, with reference to planting, the previous witness, I think, mentioned the project of planting as a hardship. Does planting give some occupation to the people?—It might for a very short time, but that would not last as long as the pasture.

38990. Do the people obtain any permanent employment in connection with the plantations?—Not any permanent employment.

38991. Are they not employed in thinning and draining the woods at all?—No, not at all.

38992. Is the proprietor in the habit of giving any wood or branches, or any advantage of that sort, out of the woods?—They have the advantage of getting some birch.—*William Black.* Oh, there is nothing whatsoever.

38993. I mean, is the existence of plantations in the country of any use or benefit to the people?—Well, we are not so much against plantations as we are against deer forests and sheep farming, but at the same time, when it comes to taking away our small piece of pasture, and we think it a great grievance, because, although we get a few days' work there, we lose it altogether in the future.

38994. You would rather see the plantations made upon the farmer's ground than upon your own?—I believe so, and I think it is but justice to us that are natives of the soil and loyal to our proprietors.

GEORGE MACDONALD, Crofter, Lairg (50)—examined.

George
Mac donald.

38995. *The Chairman.*—Have you been elected a delegate by the people of Lairg?—Yes.

38996. What is the name of the township?—Rheanbreck.

38997. Have you a paper to read?—Yes. ‘ I am a native of this parish, and have always resided in it. I occupy the croft which my mother held, for which she only paid 2s. 6d. until I improved some of the waste ground to arable land; it was rented to her at £1 then; and when I got my name in the rental book it was rented at £3, and now I pay £4. I am put forward to represent Rheanbreck and Tomich district, in which there are twenty crofters. We have to complain of the smallness of our holdings, especially of Rheanbreck. Of late years the railway passed through our lots, and deprived us of part of the best of our land, and that without any reduction of rent or compensation for our labour; but the following summer we were made to pay for the grass growing inside the fence opposite each croft, so that we pay double rent for that portion where the railway went through. Then in 1871 nine of us were deprived of the lower parts of our lots to the average of about three or four acres each, of which a good deal was under cultivation, for which we received no compensation or reduction of rent, but three who got a few shillings off their rent. This land taken from us was for the new farm of Ballone. The land in our township has a northern exposure, and was valued some years ago at a higher rate per acre than the southern exposure on the opposite side of the valley; some of us being valued at about 14s. per acre, and the opposite side, which is much better land for crops, at about 12s. per acre. The rent of Rheanbreck is £57. We had to pay last year for meal, £119, 10s.; for seed oats, £20, 13s.; hay and straw for wintering, £30, 18s.; lime for land, £19, 6s.; manure for land, £2, 18s.; outlay, £250, 5s. Our income for cattle sold, £67, 10s.; sheep sold, £7, 10s.; pigs sold, £6, 10s.;—income £81, 10s.; deficiency, £168, 15s. To make up this deficiency we have to work wherever we get it to do, and what we earn elsewhere is swallowed up to keep our lots and families together. Both townships have too little pasture, and the grazing on it is very inferior, and the stock on it the same; as it is surrounded by sheep farms, and there being no march fence between us and the farms, our stock do not get the same justice as they would if there was a fence. Should we make improvements on houses or land, we have no guarantee that we can reap the benefit of such labour, as we have no hold upon our lots further than the good-will of the proprietor, and we can get no compensation for such improvements if we were to leave.’

38998. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Who holds the land upon the south slope?—Other crofters or tenants.

38999. And they have their land cheaper?—Yes.

39000. Do you object to their holding their land so cheap?—No, but I object to the rent of our own, for it is of different quality.

39001. Is the land worse on your side, or is it only the exposure?—The land is worse. The climate is bad and the soil is bad.

39002. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—You are on the south side?—Yes.

39003. Are Rheanbreck and Tomich both on that side?—Yes.

39004. What is the name of the place on the other side?—Ballindelson and Kinvie.

39005. What is the size of your own croft?—Four acres of arable land; but there is more enclosed in the fence that cannot be arable land, for it is rocks and stones.

39006. Were all these four acres taken in and cultivated by yourself?—Yes, with the exception of the sowing of three bushels of oats. That is what my mother would sow.

39007. When she got it at 2s. 6d. how much of it was arable?—None at all; it was a waste place.

SUTHERLAND.
—
GOLSPIE.
—
George
Macdonald.

SUTHERLAND. 39008. Was there any lease or agreement that if it were improved the rent would be kept as it was?—Never. She was removed from another place to make a large place, and she was put there to make a living, and most that are on that side were put there for that purpose.

GOLSPIE. —
George Maedonald. 39009. Your rent is £4. Then if you have only four acres, that is £1 per acre?—Yes, but I have more than I took in since that of arable land, for which I got Government money. £3 was the standard put on by the valuers, and £1 was put on by Government. £20 I drew out of the office for trenching.

39010. What is the general size of the other crofts in your neighbourhood?—Much about the same till we come to Tomich. They are larger in Tomich.

39011. Are the rents on an average like yours?—Yes.

39012. How much an acre generally, do you think?—We are valuing it at about 14s.

39013. What stock are you able to keep?—Well, of the kind we have I keep two cows, but it would not keep one right cow, because the other cows would not live in the place we are in for want of pasture and winter feeding.

39014. Have you to buy winter feeding for them?—Yes; little wee Highland things.

39015. Are the rest of your neighbours much in the same condition?—Yes, the same.

39016. When was that farm made to which the land was added—the farm of Ballone?—In 1871, I think.

39017. What land was that farm made up out of?—Out of the tenants' pasture and arable. On our side it was arable and pasture mixed, but on the Ballone side it was pasture.

39018. Was it entirely made up of land that had been in possession of crofters?—Yes, the crofters had it all in possession between them.

39019. What size of farm was it?—I am told it was well on to 100 acres,—between 80 and 90 acres.

39020. Then it is not a large farm?—Not very large.

39021. What is the rent of it?—I am told it is 26s. per acre.

39022. To whom was it given?—To Mr Crawford, hotel-keeper at Lairg.

39023. Had he any land before that?—Yes, he has an arable farm at Lairg too.

39024. How much land was taken from you for the use of the railway?—About one acre of arable land, but then we had more of pasture that was not cultivated at the time, and that was as good.

39025. Was that average taken from each croft?—Some of them more. At my side there was more, and there was one man who lost nearly all he had. He had his arable land below the line, and he got a piece above it to take it out of the rocks and stones the best way he could.

39026. Did you make any representation to the factor as to the fact that your land was taken away and your rent not reduced?—I have made a representation, and others have too, for a reduction of rent, but Mr Peacock said it was not his fault, but it was the valuator's fault, to raise the rent to that, and he could not reduce it.

39027. Who was the valuator?—One Mr Mackenzie from Inverness.

39028. The produce of your land is not sufficient to support you. How do you make your living otherwise?—Well, I have to work wherever I get it.

39029. Do you or your neighbours get any work in the neighbourhood?—No.

39030. There are no works going on?—No. There were two or three years when work was going on very brisk, when his Grace was going on with reclamations, but that is all finished. There has been no work since two years ago.

SUTHER-LAND.
—
GOLSPIE.
George Macdonald

39031. Do your able-bodied men all go away from home in search of work?—They must do so.

39032. None of them go to fish, I suppose?—No.

39033. *The Chairman.*—Can you tell me the history of the township of Rheanbreck; how long has it existed, and where did the people come from?—They were removed from other parts of the parish. They were not able to keep the lots they had at the time, and they were put to that place.

39034. Where did they come from—from Kildonan?—Some from Strathnaver and some from Kildonan.

39035. They were families which were evicted from other parts of the country and brought to Rheanbreck?—There were three families sent from Strathnaver at the time of the sheep coming there.

39036. Did your father and mother come there?—My father did not live with my mother at the time.

39037. Did your mother come there?—Yes, from the far east end of the place. That place was made too large for her, and a smaller place came in to her to make a living of.

39038. Where did she come from?—She always lived in the same township.

39039. Then she got a piece of ground; was that unimproved ground?—Never.

39040. Not improved?—Never.

39041. How many acres did they give her?—A long strip.

39042. How much did she pay at first?—2s. 6d.

39043. Was it given to her for her life?—From year to year.

39044. Who lived with her and kept the croft and worked?—Her sister and herself.

39045. But they could not till the ground. Who tilled the ground for them?—It was themselves that did all that was done of it till I came to maturity.

39046. Did these women dig the ground and improve it?—Yes.

39047. Then when you came to maturity you set to work to improve the ground?—Yes.

39048. Who built the house?—I did myself.

39049. How long did the rent of 2s. 6d. continue?—It was a long time.

39050. How long did it last at 2s. 6d. Was it thirty or forty years?—I am safe in saying twenty years.

39051. Then on what occasion was the rent raised; was it raised in consequence of the death of your mother, or how was it raised?—Because I improved some land, and they were saying it was too much value for 2s. 6d.

39052. How much did you improve; how many acres?—I have improved altogether about five acres between Government money and at my own expense.

39053. But at the time the first rise was made?—Three acres.

39054. Then, when you had improved three acres, they came and saw it and raised the rent upon it?—Yes.

39055. How much did they raise it to?—To £1 for the whole.

39056. That would be 6s. 8d. an acre?—Yes.

39057. It was raised from 2s. 6d. to 6s. 8d.?—It was 2s. 6d. for the whole lot at first.

SUTHER-
LAND.

GOLSPIE.

George
Macdonald.

39058. And then they raised it to £1 for the whole lot?—Yes.

39059. Then, as to the second rise, was that at the time of your mother's death?—A year before that. She was for me getting my name put on.

39060. How much was it made then?—£3.

39061. And how much improved land was there then?—A little over four acres.

39062. Then what next? Has it remained at that rent since?—There is another £1 put on since for the improvement money.

39063. Then it is now a little more than four acres and the rent is now how much?—£4, towards five acres.

39064. How many years is it now since your mother got it altogether?—Over fifty years.

39065. Then after fifty years the rent has been raised from 2s. 6d. to £4?—Yes.

39066. During the whole course of these fifty years what assistance has the proprietor given for the improvement of the ground?—None at all, but the £20.

39067. Was that Government money or out of the landlord's own pocket?—Government money, for which we pay 1s. a pound.

39068. What sort of house have you now got?—A common stone and lime thatched house.

39069. Has it got chimneys at both ends?—Yes, at one end.

39070. How much do you think the house has cost the family altogether?—Something about £10.

39071. Now, as to the rest of the crofters around, have they been improving the ground and building their houses and paying rents just in the same way?—Yes.

39072. That is in the township of Rheanbreck. You say that a farm has been taken out of the middle of these holdings; is the farm entirely composed of the parts of the holdings of the crofters?—Yes.

39073. Is it in the middle of them or at one side of them?—On both sides. There was a water going through the centre, and the one part was on the Ballone side, and the other on the Rheanbreck side of the farm; and the farm is made up of these two sides put together; the Ballone side being pasture, and our side both pasture and arable.

39074. When the farm was made, was some land taken away from almost all the crofts, or from only a few of them?—From the most on our side.

39075. When the land was taken away from the crofters to make the farm was the rent of the crofters reduced?—Never a penny.

39076. It was never reduced at all?—No.

39077. Now, about the common pasture; is there common pasture attached to your township?—Yes.

39078. Is it a good large common pasture?—It is large, but it is not good.

39079. When the new farm of Ballone was formed did the farmer get a share of the common pasture of the township?—He has got a plantation that is next it, between his two farms, at the same rent, and has that for pasture.

39080. Did the township graze the plantation before? Was it taken away from the township?—Yes, when it was planted it was taken from them.

39081. But did the township ever graze their cattle in the plantation when the trees grew up?—No.

39082. Then the farmer did not obtain any part of the common pas-

ture?—The farmer was giving it to them for so much per month for some of their cattle and horses.

39083. But when the farm was formed was it made out of the arable ground of the township, or out of both the arable ground and the pasture?—Both arable and pasture.

39084. But the crofters in the township never got any compensation either for the arable or for the pasture?—Never.

39085. Are you quite sure of that?—I am certain, on our side, with the exception that two or three got a few shillings.

39086. But I thought that was in connection with the railway?—On the low part that was taken from them.

39087. For the farm or the railway?—For the farm.

39088. When the farm was formed and ground taken away did they petition the factor; did they make any representation to the factor?—I am not very sure.

39089. Do the people in the township consider they have lost by the formation of the farm?—Yes.

39090. It has been a loss to them?—Yes.

39091. Have they received any kind of benefit or advantage in exchange for their loss?—No.

39092. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Some of the crofters' land, you have told us, has been taken away by the railway; was any compensation given you for that?—Nothing.

39093. Had the crofters any leases?—No.

39094. Do you know that if you had a lease the land could not be taken away from you without compensation?—Yes, we have seen a case of that kind in our neighbourhood, and when he came on them for valuation when his lease was out, he would get no more from the estate.

39095. But by the want of a lease here you were deprived of what the law has ordered to be given to tenants when their lands are compulsorily taken from them?—Yes.

39096. You spoke about remonstrating with Mr Peacock, the factor, on the subject, and that he said it was the fault of the valuator; was it the crofters who appointed the valuator?—I am not very sure.

39097. Had they anything to do with his appointment?—I don't believe it.

39098. In fact, there was no one to look after their interest?—Not at all. There were some lots he did not see at all. I am told he passed without looking at them.

39099. Considering you had not the benefit of a lease, which would be very important to you in the circumstances, I suppose you and the others expected that the people who were over you would look after your interests as well as their own?—Yes, we would expect that.

39100. But it was not so?—No.

39101. Are you far from a station?—About a mile.

39102. I suppose the railway is of undoubted benefit to yourself and the others?—Yes, in one sense.

39103. Have you any crossing?—The low parts were taken from us, and there is no occasion for a crossing. There were crossings put in at first, and we had them for a few years, but then the land was taken for a farm and the crossings were closed.

39104. I suppose the best land is generally in the low part of the valley?—Yes.

39105. And the railway likes to keep as low as possible?—Yes.

39106. Am I correct in assuming that the line of railway took a fair

SUTHER-
LAND.

GOLSPIE.

George
Macdonald.

SUTHER-
LAND.

GOLSPIE.

George
Macdonald.

average of your land from you?—The very best of it from the one end to the other.

39107. And in point of fact your crofts are so small that nothing would make up for this cutting away?—No.

39108. From your own point of view and that of the other crofters, if you were told a railway was to be made, but you would get no compensation, and that so much land was to be taken from you without any reduction, would you be satisfied to give it if it was at your disposal?—No, but before then we were promised to get a reduction for it before the railway came through, but we never got it.

39109. Who gave the promise?—A man from Dunrobin—from the Duke.

39110. Was it in consequence of that, that none of you offered any opposition to the railway being passed?—No, not for that.

39111. Still you were glad to hear you were going to get compensation?—Yes.

39112. *Mr Cameron.*—I did not quite understand how much land was taken away from each crofter by the railway?—Between three and four acres; some of them three and others four—not arable land, but altogether.

39113. How many crofters were there who had land taken away from them?—There were nine of them.

39114. Suppose a railway occupies ten acres to the mile, that would be 176 lineal yards for every acre. That would make a considerable mileage if you multiplied it by three or four and afterwards by nine. What is the lineal distance over which the railway runs through your crofts; I mean not only what was taken for the railway but what was taken on the low part for forming the farm?—We have not measured what was taken for the railway, but very much more than was required, for the fence has come out too far on our cultivated land.

39115. You talk about having to go to work to make up sufficient to maintain your family; where do you get work?—The best way we can, —here and there; not in one place at all.

39116. In the neighbourhood here?—Sometimes, according as it turns out.

39117. What wages are current in the district?—2s. 6d. when we get it. We are as often without it as with it.

39118. But you speak in your paper as if it were rather a hardship to work. You do not consider it a hardship to have to work?—Well, it is a hardship, for we lose the work on the crofts.

39119. Are you aware the great grievance in the Highlands in many places is that there is no work, and one great grievance brought before us by crofters is that the crofts are not able to maintain them, and they have to make up the difference to support themselves and their families?—Well, we don't get work but very seldom since two or three years ago.

39120. Do any of you go to the south to get work?—Not since some years back. I was forced to go myself once or twice; but there was no work in Laig till the reclamations commenced and the railway came on.

39121. But if you could get regular work in the district at 2s. 6d. a day you would not be so badly off with your crofts?—No, but we do not get it except very seldom.

39122. Have many of you been engaged in the reclamations?—Most of us.

39123. What do you get there?—There were good wages going there.

39124. And that has been going on for some years?—Yes.

39125. So long as that lasted, it enabled you to make up the difference between what you got from your croft and what was required for your family?—Yes.

SUTHERLAND.
GOLSPIE.
George
Macdonald

ANGUS ROSS, Crofter, Ballone, Lairg (51)—examined.

39126. *The Chairman.*—Have you a statement to make to us?—Yes.—
I am a native of this parish, and I have resided therein all my life. My father possessed the same lot as I now do, and I succeeded him in 1872, at his death. He paid of rent £2, 10s., but the rent to me was raised to £3. During my father's lifetime I built new offices and drained and improved a considerable part of the lot, and nearly an acre of the arable land was taken from me and added to Ballone farm in 1872, without any compensation or reduction of rent. I, as delegate, represent Ballone, Knockdhu, Rinamain, and Boutnatobrach, in which there are thirteen crofters. All these complain of the arable lots being too small, specially those of Ballone, and all are short of pasture for their cattle. In 1846, 177 acres were taken off and planted, and in 1871, 90 acres were taken away and reclaimed, which now form Ballone farm, tenanted by Mr Crawford, hotel-keeper. No reduction of rent was made, though the tenants were deprived of their pasture. The plantation grazing is now let to Mr Crawford along with the Ballone farm, but the small tenants are willing to give a reasonable rent for it. This year we made application to the factor, Mr Peacock, for the grazing of Lairg wood by the side of Loch Shin, said wood being part of Dalchook grazing, presently in the hands of the proprietor. But his Grace did not grant us that, but pointed out seventy acres of mostly barren land much further up the loch side. We could not accept of this, as we thought the rent (£25) too much, and also because there was neither shelter nor grass on it, as well as its being too far away from us, about four miles. In the township of Ballone there are five tenants, and the whole acreage within their ring fence by the Ordnance Survey is twenty-six acres, and the rental as seen by the valuation roll is £13. The tenants of the other townships I represent have rather larger arable lots, but we are all in the same state as regards pasture. We have no fixity of tenure nor any hold of the soil, but are yearly tenants. We can get no compensation for any improvements made, and when a son or other relative succeeds to the lot the rent is almost always raised.'

39127. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Who is this Mr Crawford; is he the first person who has got this new farm?—Yes.

39128. Is he from Sutherland?—No, he is from Lasswade, near Edinburgh.

39129. Has the whole of his farm, both arable and pasture, been taken away from the arable and pasture lands of the crofters?—The whole of Ballone farm.

39130. Was there any reduction made in the rent?—Not any.

39131. Was it in consequence of the opening of the railway that this farm was made?—I understand it was.

39132. I am afraid then the railway has not been very advantageous to the crofters?—Not to the poor people whatever.

39133. What lands are in the neighbourhood now that could be given to the crofters advantageously?—This Ballone farm could be divided among them—that is the only land I see in the Ballone district—at a reasonable rent, so that poor people could live.

SUTHERLAND. 39134. Is the hotel-keeper paying more rent, do you think, than the crofters could afford to pay for it?—I believe he is, but I do not believe any man will give the rent if he comes in after him. It is a bad soil and bad climate.

GOLSPIE. —
Angus Ross. 39135. Probably he could afford to pay that bigger rent because he has the hotel?—Yes, and he has a plantation of 176 acres that was taken off the poor tenants, only he pays £20 rent for the plantation.

39136. You state you applied to his Grace to get the pasture of these plantations?—No, Lairg woods.

39137. That is in his own hands?—Yes.

39138. Did you want that as a privilege, or were you willing to pay rent for it?—We were willing to pay a reasonable rent for it.

39139. Is there any stock pasturing there at this moment?—The Duke has some stock on—some sheep—the ruination of the country.

39140. Supposing you got more land, you would not be for putting sheep on it?—No, I would not.

39141. You make rather a strong statement here, that when a small tenant's name is entered on the roll there is always an increase; is that really the fact that it is the case over the estate?—I can tell that by experience.

39142. We have been told in other cases it is called a death-tax; but suppose, as we have heard in a case already, that the mother or father is getting old, and that they are willing the son's name should be entered before their death, will the additional tax be put on then?—There is no mistake. Any member of a family that comes in after the father or mother is sure to be taxed with perhaps 10s., 20s., 30s., or 40s. I knew that last July in my own neighbourhood.

39143. Supposing that deaths occur in the head of the croft, say within a short time of ten years or so, will it be exacted then? I mean, suppose that two come in within a period of ten years, would they still exact a new tax upon a new name?—There is a tax upon any man who gets into the rental book.

39144. It has nothing to do with time?—No.

39145. Is it an old condition on the estate?—Yes, since I recollect the estate.

39146. How long do you recollect it?—Fifty-one years ago.

39147. That is your own age?—Yes.

39148. And you have heard it ever since you can recall anything?—Yes.

39149. With reference to the place by Loch Shin side, did they ask a rent for it?—They asked £25 for seventy acres of barren moor without even heather, rushes, or anything else on part of it.

39150. That is more than 6s. 8d. an acre. Is it enclosed?—The one side is enclosed by a fence and the other by Loch Shin.

39151. Would the rent of itself have stopped you from taking it?—Certainly.

39152. Apart from the other disadvantages?—Yes. If it was good pasture we would not get it. The Duke of Sutherland would not give it, as it would be given to large sheep farmers.

39153. May I ask if this inn at Lairg and this large possession is of any advantage to the inhabitants of the place?—Mr Crawford is as good a neighbour as is in the township of Lairg.

39154. But is the fact of there being a hotel and large farm attached to it of any advantage to the district itself? I do not speak of tourists and strangers going to the place?—I don't believe the farm is of any advantage, only he is very kind to give us the summer grazing of this

plantation. He gives the privilege of that to the poor people for so much. If we put in a horse or pony we pay 12s. a month.

39155. Then he does show a neighbourly spirit to the people?—Very kind.

39156. Does he do that because he sees there is a necessity for it?—I don't know, but one thing I can say is that he is a kind gentleman.

39157. You cannot say whether it is from kindness of heart he does it, or because there is a necessity for doing something for you?—Both.

39158. *The Chairman.*—You said that if you had the pasture of the plantation you would not put sheep into it, and you said that sheep were the ruination of the country. Then you have a bad opinion of sheep?—I have.

39159. Well, on Saturday, when we were at Helmsdale, the people complained very much they were not allowed to keep sheep?—That is for the small tenants, but I mean for sheep farmers.

39159*. You think the sheep are a good thing for the small people, but a bad thing for the big people. You have no objection to keep sheep yourself?—A few for myself.

JOHN MACKAY, Railway Contractor, and resident at Hereford (61)
—examined.

39160. *The Chairman.*—Do you appear as a delegate before us?—I do. John Mackay.

39161. From what township or parish?—If you will allow me I will just give you the explanation which the crofters wished me to give before the Commissioners. ‘Parish of Rogart, Sutherland—upper portion of the parish. The crofters of Rogart respectfully desire to state to Her Majesty's Commissioners that they held a general meeting on the 19th June, to discuss their grievances, and made an application to the Commission for an inquiry into them. Another general meeting was held afterwards to consider the reply of the Commissioners, and to discuss the best mode in which their grievances could be represented before the Commission, when it was resolved that the parish be divided into three divisions, and each of these to elect its own representatives. Consequent upon this resolution, district meetings were held a few days afterwards at Torbreac Public School, Rogart Public School, and at Rhilochan Public School. At each of these meetings several delegates were appointed to represent each district; but at a subsequent meeting, on having further information from the Commission, and having regard to the limited time the Commissioners could devote to hearing evidence from the representatives of four parishes in one day, the subject of delegates was reconsidered, and it was finally resolved that the number of delegates be reduced to two—one for the lower portion of the parish, and one for the upper; that John Sutherland, merchant, Pittentrail, be the representative of the crofters in the lower portion of the parish, comprising the townships of Achoillie, Achvrail, Ardachadh, Junisdeape Cluaranaich, Junisoraig, Dalmore, Muie, Blarich, Torbreac, Pitture, and Pittentrail; and John Mackay, Achellach, be the representative of the upper, comprising the townships of Rhiliun, Rhimusaid, Phichalmia, Little Rogart, Meikle Rogart, Achcock, Cnoc-arthur, Rhilochan, Tanachy, Dalreavich, Bauscoll, Craggie Beg, Craggie Mor, East and West Langwell, Breacachadh, and Morness. These two representatives were considered sufficient upon the consideration above stated, and for the additional consideration that the grievances complained of were generally of the same nature in all the townships, and

SUTHERLAND.
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GOLSPIE.

Angus Ross.

SUTHER-
LAND. ‘the remedies thought necessary were the same all round. The above townships contain nearly two hundred crofters’ lots and families, paying upwards of £1000 rental or an average of £5, 5s. each. There are two tenants paying £15; six, £14; one, £13; one, £12; one,

GOLSPIE. ‘John Mackay. £11; four, £10; three, £9; three, £8, 10s.; seven, £8; one, £7, 10s.; seven, £7; five, £6, 10s.; eight, £6; three, £5, 10s.; twenty-seven, £5; nine, £4 10s.; twenty-nine, £4; five, £3, 10s.; thirty-three £3; eight, £2, 10s.; nineteen £2. The grievances complained of are, too small holdings, insufficient for the subsistence of a family, and bringing it up in the way Highlanders always desired to do. Hill pasture too scant, and too restricted—in some places taken from the crofters to be added to that of the large farmers. Boundaries generally unfenced. Rents generally considered too high, and frequently raised without notice, particularly upon a son succeeding a parent, notwithstanding that the son might be the improver and not the father. It frequently happens that the mother survives the father. The son remaining with the mother makes most of the improvements himself, and when he succeeds the mother the rent is invariably raised, in many instances from 20 to 100 per cent. and more, as for example 5s. to 47s., 25s. to 5ls., £4, 15s. 8d. to £10, 35s. to 80s. Numerous other instances could be produced. Crofters’ rents are paid in advance. The mode of rent-raising upon holdings reclaimed by the crofters themselves, from moor and other equally sterile land. The houses and steadings being also built by themselves often at a cost they could not afford nor bear, if they were not assisted by their sons and daughters in the south of Scotland and in the colonies. The tenure being uncertain, acts detrimentally upon their minds, and prevents many of them from effecting improvements, and thereby incur the odium of idleness. Lots falling vacant are given to strangers, in preference to natives of the parish, who are able and willing to take them. The parish of Rogart contains 67,000 acres, 55,000 of which are occupied by fifteen large farmers, paying an aggregate rent of £2370; while about 200 crofters pay upwards of £1000 for the 12,000 acres they occupy, making 10d. an acre for the large farmers, and 1s. 10½d. for the crofters. One half of the arable land now occupied by the crofters has been reclaimed by themselves within the last forty years. Previous to that date they were so stunned and disheartened by the terror created by the evictions that very little reclamation of land, or any other improvement, was effected. The population of the parish within the last fifty years has decreased from 2300 to 1300, chiefly by voluntary emigrations to various parts of the world. During the eviction years no less than 140 families in the parish were displaced, most of them wedged in amongst crofters in townships which did not covet the notice of these large farmers who then came into the county with the object of obtaining sheep runs. There are three sheep farms in the parish; the number of families displaced for them was, in one case fifty-two, in another forty-three, in the third forty-five. The result of this displacement is seen to this day in the congestion of the population in various townships, particularly in Little Rogart, Meikle Rogart, Cnocarthur, and other places adjacent. The number of lots being now double what it was in 1815, the result of this congestion being, that while the arable land was increased by reclamation, to provide food for subsistence, hill pasture, such as it is, and so necessary for summer pasture, has been diminished, and is now insufficient for the horses, cattle, and sheep which must be kept for the consumption of the provender grown, and the maintenance of the people, in the means of paying their rents, and providing themselves with necessaries of life, education, food, and clothing. The remedies the people of Rogart desire to be applied are compensation

' for improvements effected by themselves, security of tenure, more hill pasture, and more land capable of cultivation, to do away with the congestion enforced from them by the evictions. They beg most respectfully to submit these considerations to Her Majesty's Commissioners. They desire to say, that they, in common with their countrymen in other parts of the Highlands, have sad recollections and woeful tales to tell of evictions and burnings, and other harsh proceedings, at that time and since. That hitherto they have submitted quietly and submissively to much suffering; they now hope that brighter days may shine upon them, that repression and oppression by factors shall cease, and that the ancient feelings of reciprocal attachment and affection, once the pride of the Sutherland tenantry, and that bound chiefs and retainers in a great and grand whole, may again be restored and revived, to be a source of contentment and happiness, conducive to the best interests and prosperity of all, and a strength to the nation.'

SUTHER-LAND.
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GOLSPIE.
John Mackay.

39162. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—You are a native of Rogart?—Yes.

39163. And the son of a crofter, I believe?—Yes.

39164. You received your education in the parish of Rogart?—In the parish of Rogart entirely.

39165. At what age did you leave the parish?—Twenty.

39166. But you have been in the habit of revisiting your native place regularly ever since?—During the last fourteen years I think it is only twice I had been in it before 1869 or 1870, but since then I have came once or twice every year.

39167. Are you personally well acquainted with the parish and with all the facts which are stated in this paper?—I am more particularly acquainted with the upper parts of the parish. It is in the upper part of the parish I was born, and I seldom visited other parts unless going along the road.

39168. But you believe, of course, that all the statements in this paper you have read are strictly correct?—I do.

39169. And that the figures are to be depended upon?—The figures are to be depended upon. The information about the townships can easily be seen on the Ordnance maps; and I got from two of the oldest men in the parish their statements, and I simply copied them.

39170. Has there been much change in the parish since you left it as a youth?—There has been a great deal of land reclaimed. In fact, the crofters were obliged to reclaim merely for subsistence. I recollect the parish forty years ago, and, when I left it, I don't think there was half the land then under cultivation than there is now. I have not seen in any portion of the county of Sutherland so much improvement made, and entirely by the crofters themselves, and at their own expense. A few of them may have obtained what has been said by some here to be Government money; but with 5 per cent. charged for the money, the expenses of reclaiming the land in the parish of Rogart is so excessive that it will never repay them. The crofters must do it themselves at odd times—that is to say, when not busy with their spring and harvest work.

39171. Of what nature have their reclamations been?—Trenching the land. Every yard must be trenched, and generally they trench it from 15 to 20 inches deep, and it produces such a crop of stones as would surprise anybody. When I came into the parish, being attached to the parish, I wished to make improvements so as to ameliorate their own lot. I have been persuading many of them to work in the winter and reclaim land where they can do it. One man in particular I asked to start and reclaim half an acre, and, as it would cost £20, I said I would give £10 towards it. I advised him that it should be let by contract to a man

SUTHER-LAND. to reclaim the place and blast the stones out of it. When it was done the half acre cost £22, and seeing the cost was enormous, instead of confining myself to £10 I gave the man £15.

GOLSPIE. 39172. Have there been any reclamations on the large sheep farms?—John Mackay. Not on the sheep farms in the parish of Rogart.

39173. There are fifteen large farms; has the number of large farms increased in your recollection?—No.

39174. Do you think that their occupation of the land is most beneficial to the landlord and the country?—I should say so.

39175. The occupation of the land by large farmers?—No, no. I mean the other way; and it can be proved, and I defy any one to disprove the figures I have given you. I measured the extent of the parish as given in the Ordnance map—67,000 acres. I measured all the land in the occupation of the crofters paying under £15.

39176. We call them crofters up to £30?—Well, I did not. The 10d. includes the arable land held by the large farmers. Rogart farm pays £175; that is included in the 10d.; Dalle-beg pays £100.

39177. Do you think the land occupied by the large sheep farmers is deteriorating in their possession?—I am not able to say that of my own knowledge, but I have heard it said repeatedly, and I believe it to be a fact, and I think the proprietor is quite well aware of it. I have heard himself say it.

39178. Do you think it would be beneficial to the estate and the country that a considerable portion of that land should be given to increase the holdings of the small tenants?—Certainly. Why, this county, at any time before the evictions, could raise 1150 men. At the time of the French Revolution this county raised 1800 men, and when they were away defending their country, they behaved themselves well on the field of battle. They were fighting against the Irish rebels, and one of the Sutherland regiments of Fencibles defeated the Irish rebels on Tara hill, though they were only one to ten; and I say, on national grounds, that men are better than sheep. I have no detestation of sheep or of deer. Deer forests were in this country from time immemorial. There are tracts of land which are worth nothing except for deer; but I object entirely, upon national grounds, that laud capable of cultivation or of supporting sheep should be put under deer. We may go too far, and find ourselves, as Rome found itself when it was invaded, with no Romans left to resist the Goths and Vandals.

39179. The population of the parish has decreased 1000 within the last fifty years?—I had not the figures by me, but I believe it is not quite so long ago.

39180. That implies that a great number of families have left the parish?—It does not. Every young lad in the parish of Rogart, almost as soon as he attains eighteen or twenty, goes off, because it is better for him. He is starving at home, and there is not subsistence enough to maintain a family of six or seven.

39181. But, personally, I suppose you have no reason to regret that you emigrated from Rogart?—Not the slightest, and I advise every boy who has pluck in him, to go to New Zealand or the colonies; and if the authorities of this country don't take thought and mend, it will be better for the whole population.

39182. Then, supposing it to be feasible that there should be a redistribution of land in this parish among the crofters, would there not be a great difficulty in regard to their houses and to the existing farm steadings?—No man should conceal that from himself.

39183. How would that difficulty be overcome practically?—No doubt,

if a family left, and their lot were added to another, one of the houses would be useless, and it might be used for an outhouse.

SUTHERLAND.

39184. With regard to the general character of the population, do you think that they have changed in any respect in their character since the days when you were young?—I don't think they are so quiet. They have been of late years irritated to such a degree that a rebellious spirit has arisen in the minds of the people. They have been irritated. In former years they were as submissive, as quiet, and as good people as could be found in the whole of Great Britain; and when I sometimes go and listen to the feelings of irritation they give expression to, I simply am surprised, and wish myself back in my own home.

GOLSPIE.

John Mackay.

39185. The educational condition of the parish has advanced, has it not?—It is lower since my time.

39186. What is the cause of that?—The Education Act—inefficient teaching. In my time I learned Latin, Greek, and all that—and so did every one of my brothers—and algebra, mathematics, and book-keeping.

39187. There is not the same encouragement now given in these branches?—They work for results, for money results, and the standard of education of the teachers themselves is not so high as it was in my time.

39188. Do you mean to say the teachers are not such highly educated men?—Certainly not, in my estimation.

39189. But in those days the number of teachers was smaller?—Well, there were two schools in the parish when I was a boy.

39190. The number of schools is sufficient?—Certainly, the number is sufficient.

39191. You have, I think, established some educational association yourself in the parish for the promotion of education; is it doing good?—A great deal of good. The first lad taken in hand was an orphan boy. He was sent to Aberdeen Grammar School so as to qualify himself. The education he would receive in the board school was not sufficient. He was sent to the Aberdeen Grammar School. The first year he was there he gained a bursary of £18, tenable for two years. That relieved the funds of the association, and enabled them to take another. That same boy entered the university, and is now an M.A. Others have been sent to the Aberdeen Grammar School to qualify themselves for teaching. We assist not only boys, but girls; and, recently, the funds of the association being sufficient, if there are boys who have a predilection for trade—such as masons and so on—we provide them with money to assist them. So the association does not exactly help them to education alone, but education alone is the prime object.

39192. The chief purpose of the association is to encourage all those, of both sexes, of promising abilities, to go forward and advance their education?—Yes. I may mention the test applied for the election of these boys or girls. There is an examination every year, and prizes are given by the association, and the boy who wins the first prize is assisted to go forward, and the same with the girls.

39193. The military distinction of the inhabitants of the country is beyond all question; but from your knowledge and study of it, and from what you have heard, did they voluntarily enter the army, or did they go because it was either a duty or a necessity to go to please the laird, or the cadets of the family, who were going also?—No doubt, in the fencible regiments they were raised by what I call conscription, and when the 93rd was raised first in 1800 it was certainly by conscription. If a father had three sons, two were demanded; and if he had two sons, one was demanded. Our township was required to furnish a rough census of those who were of the age for soldiers, and there was simply the order sent, and they were obliged to go.

SUTHER-
LAND.

GOLSPIE.

39194. Was there any inducement given to them in the shape of some reward to be given in connection with the land?—There is not a doubt about it, and his Grace of Sutherland admitted that to me last night.

39195. Was that ever reduced to writing?—I don't think so. I don't John Mackay, think any letter can be found now; but General Stewart, in his *Sketches of Highland Character and Highland Regiments*, has several pages where he descants on the 93rd.

39196. Was there not a tradition, which was believed, that those who sent their sons into the army at that time were never to be deprived of their land?—Certainly.

39197. And that is still believed?—Yes.

39198. But many of them were deprived of their lands?—Oh, dear, yes. Some came back when they were discharged—the wounded especially who fell at the battle of New Orleans, where the 93rd was more than decimated. There were three hundred and fifteen soldiers killed or wounded at New Orleans; many of these returned, and one of them was an uncle of my father. He was discharged with a pension of 6d. a day. No land could be found for him, and he was shoved in with another on a little lot at Pitfour, and, after being there twelve or fourteen years, he went off to America.

39199. Does the military spirit still survive to any extent in the district?—I don't know of any people in the country who have such a military tendency, and I don't know of any men in the country who would learn the drill so soon. The military spirit in the olden times before 1815 was extraordinarily strong in Sutherland. Why, my own father enlisted three times before he was accepted as a soldier; and I myself, if my father had allowed me to go on my own hook, would have been a soldier at this day. My predilection was to be a soldier, and so it is with my children.

39200. In point of fact, are there many young men from your parish or the county generally, in the army, and in the 93rd especially?—Some few years ago the 93rd was quartered at Woolwich, and, always taking an interest in my own county men, I felt a very great interest in the 93rd, and went down to look at them on a Sunday. I visited them in their quarters, and I found only one man in the regiment who could speak Gaelic—that man being a Sutherland man.

39201. Then what is the chief reason why there are so few of them in the army?—One is the passive resistance in the minds of the people. They say—'Let the Duke take his sheep to defend the country.'

39202. But they turn out well and make a splendid appearance as volunteers?—Yes, admirable.

39203. But they are not willing to enter the regular army?—I don't think they are. There was a Rogart boy in the 72nd killed in the last Afghan war.

39204. Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.—Are we to have the pleasure of seeing you in Edinburgh again?—Yes, I hope so.

39205. Then I will not detain you, but would you explain here the causes of irritation that you say have given rise to a rebellious spirit in the minds of the people?—Harshness on the part of the factor himself, and unconciliatory conduct towards the families; and so much is that carried out that he will take a stick and turn them out of his office, and any factor who would lift a stick to break the minister's head is surely not fit for his office.

39206. Do you think there is more harshness shown now than used to be shown?—The population complain more.

39207. For how long has that complaint been growing?—I have heard it for the last ten years.

39208. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—I understand you have come here today to represent the parish of Rogart especially, and to read that statement, and that on a future occasion you propose to make a statement upon the county of Sutherland generally and upon the Highlands?—I do, and I hope I shall have the pleasure of meeting the Commissioners in John Mackay. Edinburgh.

SUTHER-
LAND.
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GOLSPIE.
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39209. *The Chairman.*—I think I am safe in stating that, at a former period—a period which has now become rather remote—the policy of the estate management here (as it was in many other estates in the Highlands) was a policy of consolidation pursued in an unsparing spirit?—That is so.

39210. But the most striking examples of that policy were as far back as the period between the year 1814 and the year 1820?—They began sooner in various parts. The parish of Rogart was, I believe, the first touched, and they extended to Assynt, from that they came to the upper parts of Brora, and they began with the terrible doings in Strathnaver.

39211. We know that the policy of consolidation was not invented on this estate, and we know it occurred at a much earlier stage in other parts of the county, in the Reay country?—Yes, the first evictions began under Lord Reay.

39212. I don't want to revert to the features that distinguished those evictions of those times. What I want to arrive at is as to the course which has been pursued since. Has the policy of consolidation been continuous, and pursued since those early examples of it? For example, since 1820, has the course of consolidation been continuous in this part of the country?—Not since 1822 or 1825. Enough had been done, and no more could be done.

39213. Then, during the last fifty years or so, there have been no striking examples of eviction or consolidation?—No.

39214. No further harm has been done to the small tenantry?—Not to any extent. You have heard at Helmsdale of the grazings taken away. Instances of that have occurred.

39215. But it has not been the deliberate policy of the estate?—No, I don't think so, and I am unwilling to believe it.

39216. Then, are there any symptoms of a reaction in the policy of the estate; can you point to any examples?—We are always hoping there may be a rift in the sky, and that the silver lining may come to be seen on the edge of it. We hope for that.

39217. Do you discern such a rift? Do you yourself see the beginning of a different course?—I do; or, at least, I hope I do. Perhaps the hope may give rise to it, but I think it is sincere. People are more listened to now. They are more manly and make themselves respected, and by making themselves respected very likely they will obtain better redress.

39218. May there not also be a change of opinion? We are all more or less the creatures of the principles and opinions of our time. There were, fifty years ago, different economical ideas prevalent. It may not only be the resistance of the people, but may there not be a change in the views of the proprietors too?—I hope so, and I think there is, and I think that will be seen, and very soon.

39219. You have pointed to the changes which you desire to see carried out; that is to say, the restitution of the land, and especially the pasture to the people—the enlargement of their boundaries—and the creation and development of new holdings of a small character. I suppose you don't expect these things to be done immediately, or by the infraction of existing contracts and leases?—I think that would be unwise. To rehabilitate the people, and put them in what may be termed a good position, would, I am sure, take twenty years; unless the Duke of Sutherland lives to a good old

SUTHERLAND. age it will not be done in his time—unless he goes at it in a magnificent and princely way, as he did at the commencement.

GOLSPIE. 39220. Without pursuing that subject in detail, as you have spoken of increased irritation in the country, would the manifestation of a disposition John Mackay. and a resolution to do that in a cautious manner be received with very great satisfaction?—I am positively certain of it. The people only want to see a manifestation of a change of policy, and they will be as quiet and submissive as ever they were before.

39221. You think that would produce a very happy change in the disposition of the people?—I think so, and that immediately.

39222. You say there is still in the country a very strong, although a latent, feeling of affection for the proprietor of the soil?—Very strong indeed. There are some of them here now. The people of Rogart cannot believe that the Duke can do any harm. They impute all the woes and cruelty, and repression they talk about to the Duke's officials. The Duke in their opinion, can do no wrong.

JOHN SUTHERLAND, Merchant, Pittentrail (40)—examined.

John Sutherland. 39223. *The Chairman.*—You are delegate from Lower Rogart?—Yes.
 39224. Have you got a written statement?—Yes. 'At a meeting of
 'the people of Rogart, held in Torbreck schoolhouse on the 11th
 'September, I was elected delegate by the people of Strathfleet, to state
 'their grievances before the Royal Commissioners. I am forty years of age,
 'a crofter's son, and carry on a general business in the parish. In the
 'district I represent there are 67 tenants—43 tenants on the south side
 'and 24 on the north side of the river. The whole district comprises a
 'population of about 360. In Muie alone there are 20 tenants who pay
 '£78 rent for less than one mile square, arable and pasture land included.
 'The arable land in this district is stony and rocky, and in some parts
 'very steep, and the pasture is inferior. The tenants' grievances are—first,
 'the smallness of their holdings the produce of which is not sufficient
 'to sustain their families for more than six months. For their support
 'during the other six months of the year they have to depend upon the small
 'sums they may receive from sons and daughters resident in the south, or
 'abroad, and also upon such work as they may get to do in the parish or else-
 'where. The size of holdings to yield enough to support their families ought
 'to be from 15 to 25 acres for each tenant, with pasture to keep three or four
 'cows, three or four stirlings, one or two horses, and forty or fifty sheep of a class
 'superior to the stock the majority of them are constrained to keep under
 'the present system, and that would compare favourably with the stock
 'of larger farmers, without having to buy provender in winter, and pay
 'for grazing part of their stock in summer, as they have to do now. Their
 'second grievance is their being deprived of portions of their pasture without
 'getting their rents reduced for the loss they sustain thereby. On the
 'south side of the Strath the tenants were deprived, sixteen years ago, of
 'over 200 acres of pasture, which was added to Torboll sheep farm. On
 'the north side the tenants of Muie were deprived of a portion of their
 'pasture, which was added to Blarich sheep farm, and a fence erected
 'between the sheep farmer and the tenants; not only so, but the sheep
 'farmer has his shepherds' houses, and about seven acres of arable land in on
 'the tenants' pasture about 200 yards from the fence, destroying that part
 'of their pasture considerably. The tenants' third grievance is that their
 'lots were valued by valuators appointed by the proprietor only, and

' unacquainted with the quality of the soil, and valued a number of lots without going off the main road, relying on the ground officer's word with regard to the quality of the land. What the tenants of Strathfleet want is larger holdings at fair rent, fixed by competent valuators appointed by landlord and tenant, sufficient pasture for their stock, compensation for improvements whether made on land or on houses, and security of tenure to encourage them to make improvements.' I have also been requested to lay the following special grievances before the Commissioners :—*The special Grievances of Alexander Bain, Tenant, Corry.*—' My uncle George M'Kenzie, on being evicted from Strath-Carnaig, got the lot I now occupy which is situated in the tenants' pasture on the south side of Strathfleet. The lot is high and cold, and very much exposed to the north storm. I was adopted and brought up by my uncle, and his constant kindness induced me to devote as much as possible of my time to the improving of his lot, and by my own labour I reclaimed seven acres of moorland. After my uncle's death I expected to succeed him as tenant, but on account of some rent arrears left by my uncle, I was refused possession unless I would pay these arrears, which I considered illegal and unjust, consequently I was summonsed ; and having occasion to be away on a certain day about the middle of July 1877, on my returning home in the evening I found my delicate wife, with my weak and numerous family, and all my furniture, turned out to the field, and all the doors locked. My first endeavour was to kindle a fire and cook a meal for my family, which I had to do in an earthen bank, and under drenching rain. I made several applications to get possession, but without success. At last the Duke and his factor came to the place, and stood in the hut I rudely built for protection. When his Grace was leaving I asked, what was to become of me now with my delicate wife and weak family. His Grace's reply was, " You are entirely in Mr Peacock's hands, and attend at the office Tuesday first." When I got there I was told the old story, viz., that I would get no settlement unless I would agree to pay the arrears of rent, and that in future the rent of my lot would be £9, 14s. instead of £3, 7s. 6d., my uncle's rent. However, my rent was reduced to £6, but I had to pay the arrears, which I still feel a burden.—*ALEXANDER BAIN.* ' *The special Grievances of John Sutherland, Tenant, Muie.*—As an inducement to my father to enlist in the 93rd Highlanders, my grandfather got a promise of being left undisturbed in his lot during his lifetime, and that if his son survived the term of his service in the army, he would succeed him. Consequently my father joined that regiment, and was wounded in an engagement at New Orleans. On the expiry of his service in the army he returned home, and expected to succeed his father as tenant of the whole lot, but, to make room for another man who was evicted from a sheep farm, my father (William Sutherland) was summonsed, and deprived of the best part of his father's lot. He was offered about two acres of land on the outskirts of his lot, on which we had to build new houses. I reclaimed, mostly by my own labour, nearly all the land I have, and when I succeeded my father my rent was raised from £4, 10s. to £5, 10s., all of which I consider great grievances.' *Grievances of Alexander Gunn, Inchcape, Rogart.**—My name is Alexander Gunn ; my age is 49. I am a crofter living at Inchcape, in the parish of Rogart. I pay £7, 16s. for twelve acres of land. The number of stock I have are as follows :—Two Highland horses, two Highland cows, two young heifers, and eleven sheep. The returns from my croft will not supply my family with meal and vegetables more than six months in the year. My croft nearly employs my time in its cultivation, and even when I have a few days to spare from being employed on

SUTHER-
LAND.
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GOLSPIE
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John
Sutherland.

SUTHERLAND.

GOLSPIE.

John
Sutherland.

' my croft it is seldom I get employment otherways. The fact is that between returns of outer employment and cattle and sheep, &c. sold, I can barely sustain my family; and even I am often compelled to keep my wife and children from what is termed good clothes on account of my rent. If I had double the amount of arable land that I now possess at fair rent, valued by competent valuators appointed by landlord and tenant, and guarantee to defend me against capricious eviction, I do consider that I would be able to educate and bring up my family in a manner more consonant to my mind, and have sufficient to defend me against pauperism in my old age. My grievance is the smallness of my croft, and the inferior cattle I am obliged to have, and no rule to govern the rise of rent or the threat of eviction, as my case will prove. When my mother died, twenty years ago, my eldest brother, on getting possession of the lot, had to pay death premium, or £1 of a rise of rent. This rise was put on, on the recommendation of two of the Duke's ground officers, who valued our lot. Three years afterwards my brother died, and I became his successor, and I had to pay a death premium of 4s., that being four shillings more than the Duke's servants or ground officers valued my croft at. Four years ago I received a summons of removal, when on making inquiry I found out that this was an introduction to another £1, ls. of a rise of rent, which I had to pay, and pay still; the actual fact is that I pay £1, 5s. per annum more than what his Grace's own servants valued my croft at, and all the improvements on the lot were done by myself and predecessors.—(Signed) ALEXANDER GUNN.'

' Illustrative of harshness, I am requested to produce the case of Janet and Christina Ross, who succeeded their brother as tenants. In November 1877, one of the sisters attended, as usual, to pay the rent, but the factor, instead of accepting of the rent, told her that they were to be removed from their lot. After making fruitless attempts to get the factor to accept of her rent, she left the money on the table. The factor returned the money by one of their neighbours; but expecting to keep possession, they refused it. Shortly afterwards officers were sent to evict them. Instead of that being done in the ordinary way, they were shut up in a compartment of their dwelling-house till the other compartments and their barn were levelled to the ground, and their stock driven away to the hill. In this houseless condition, and their crop exposed on the field, they were visited by the ground officer, who saw clearly that they could not live without some shelter from the snow storm. A kind neighbour was applied to, and this man took them into his house for three weeks, after which time they were turned back to their old place, to live in one end of the byre which was left standing; and the ground officer, so as to make them more comfortable in their miserable situation, levelled down some manure that happened to be in the byre at the time. All this was done in the presence of three witnesses, who are ready to prove how these creatures were dealt with. As one of these creatures, on a certain occasion, applied to Mr Peacock for relief, the Rev. Mr M'Kay, who happened to be present, asked Mr Peacock if the Duke was aware of how these creatures were abused. Mr Peacock replied that the whole affair was carried out according to the Duke's instructions. — ALEXANDER BAIN, witness; ALEXANDER GUNN, witness.'

39225. What is the nature of your trade?—General business.

39226. Do you sell provisions chiefly, or do you also sell clothing?—I sell both.

39227. Are you in the occupation of any land yourself?—No, except a garden.

39228. You have a house?—Yes.

39229. From whom do you hold it?—I have a lease. I built the house myself. SUTHERLAND
39230. Are you the son of a crofter, and do you belong to the country?—I do. GOLSPIE.
39231. How long is your lease?—Ninety-nine years. John Sutherland.
39232. Then it is a kind of feu?—Yes.
39233. Is it customary upon the estate that such feus should be granted?—Yes, in villages especially.
39234. What is your ground rent?—£1, 10s. for the feu.
39235. What is the area—an acre, or half an acre?—Not a quarter of an acre.
39236. What description of house have you built on the strength of this tenure?—It is a stone and lime house, cottage shape and slated.
39237. Your trade is that of a dealer in provisions, clothing, and so on; have you a licence to sell whisky or spirituous liquors?—No.
39238. How long have you been engaged in this trade?—About ten years.
39239. From your experience in these ten years, has your business increased?—Yes, a little.
39240. Do you find the people purchase more than they did at the beginning?—Perhaps they don't purchase more, but I believe I have more customers.
39241. But the individual families don't purchase less?—I believe they are much about the same.
39242. Has there been any change in the character or quality of goods that they take, or do they take the same kind of provisions and the same kind of dress?—Very much the same.
39243. You sell oatmeal?—Yes.
39244. Do you find the people buy more wheat flour than they did ten years ago?—I don't think so.
39245. There is no change in the nature of their diet?—I think it is much about the same.
39246. Do you sell loaves?—Yes.
39247. Do they buy more bread or less bread than they did?—I think it is much about the same.
39248. Have you in your books any evidence that the people are getting worse off or better off? Do you find you have more or fewer bad debts than you used to have?—I cannot say I have. I think it is much about the same as it was at first.
39249. Your trade seems to be a stationary one?—Yes.
39250. What do you think, generally? Do you think the people are better supplied with goods and better dressed and fed than they were ten years ago, or the contrary, so far as your experience as a draper goes?—I don't think they are better, I would not like to say they are much worse, but I don't think they are better.
39251. Do you think they are any worse at all?—I don't think they are much worse.
39252. How do your customers generally live, do they live principally by day's wages or by the sale of stock and commodities?—They have to depend chiefly upon their crofts; but of course they have to work for a certain part of the year where they can get work.
39253. Do you buy cattle?—No.
39254. Do the crofters, as a class, get much higher prices for their cattle now than they formerly did?—Yes, than they did a long time ago.
39255. Taking the period of twenty years, for instance, what is the dif-

SUTHERLAND.
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GOLSPIE.
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John Sutherland.

ference? Do they get twice as much for a stick as they did then?—I am not very well acquainted with that, as I don't buy and sell cattle.

39256. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You are one of the two delegates from the parish of Rogart?—Yes.

39257. You heard Mr Mackay's paper?—Yes.

39258. Do you concur in it?—I do.

39259. And it may be held, I suppose, to represent the true feelings of the crofters of Rogart?—Yes.

39260. You have been asked about your trade? You say it is rather stationary. Might not that be accounted for by the fact that the population of the parish seems to be decreasing?—There may be something in that too.

39261. With regard to the papers you have read to us about those especial grievances; do you know anything about the case of those two sisters personally?—No, I cannot speak of that.

39262. Are you acquainted personally with Alexander Bain and Alexander Gunn, who sign this paper?—Yes.

39263. Are they credible witnesses?—They are reliable.

39264. Are the two women living?—No, one is dead.

39265. Did she die in the house they ultimately went to?—No, a house was built for them afterwards—a better house, I understand.

39266. By the proprietor?—I think so.

39267. Were they paying any rent for the new house?—I cannot say, but it is not likely.

39268. Had they any land at the time they were put out?—Yes, they had the croft.

39269. Who got the croft?—A neighbouring crofter.

General Sir ARNOLD BURROWES KEMBALL, K.C.B., K.C.S.I., Uppat House, Commissioner on the Sutherland Estates (62), and Mr JOSEPH PEACOCK, Factor for the Dunrobin District of the Sutherland Estates (59)—examined.

General Sir A. 39270. *The Chairman.*—How long have you been connected with the administration of these estates?—Sir Arnold Kemball. Since June 1879. Mr J. Peacock.

39271. But you have had an opportunity of examining the history of its previous administration?—Certainly. My experience is necessarily short, but at the same time, I have looked into it.

39272. And you are assisted by a local factor who will be able to supplement your personal information?—Yes, as regards all details beyond my own knowledge.

39273. I am sorry to have to ask you, in the first instance, some questions regarding what passed at Helmsdale the day before yesterday, when there was no representative of the estate present, or, at least, no one presented himself, so that I was not able to check some assertions at the time which I would gladly have inquired into?—I think I am in a position to answer these.

39274. There was a general allegation made there that whenever it was necessary to provide estate officials with some land, the land was subtracted from the small holdings and not taken from the larger ones?—I can tell you nothing about that, because that must have been a long time ago. It came upon me as a complete surprise, and I was not aware of it.

39275. Perhaps Mr Peacock can give some information about that?—Mr Peacock. My experience extends over the last twenty-five years, and

the only case in which I am aware of any change of that sort was when it SUTHERLAND.
 was necessary to square up the allotments in the neighbourhood of the ground officer's present croft. They are very irregular, and I believe there GOLSPIE.
 may have been some land taken from the immediately adjoining crofts, but not seriously to damage their value so far as I am aware. I General Sir A. would have been prepared with particulars if I had known what was Kenball and Mr J. Peacock coming.

39276. You might have had an opportunity by attending at the meeting, but, however, I can give you some particulars here. The first assertion was that some parts of the holdings of fifteen crofters were taken off some years ago to form a holding for the local ground officer; can you tell me what that alludes to?—It alludes, I believe, to the present ground officer's holding, the boundary of which was, I believe, slightly enlarged at the expense of some of the adjoining crofts.

39277. But to an insignificant degree?—I think to an insignificant degree.

39278. There was another assertion that the holdings of nine other crofters were modified under a statement that the ground taken from them was to be planted, but that the ground taken from them was actually formed into a holding for the harbour master?—That was before my time, and I cannot speak of it.

39279. In connection with the general assertion that ground had been taken from the smaller holdings, it is stated that, after the great changes in the occupancy of the estate from the years 1814 to 1820, a piece of hill pasture was given to the evicted people settled near Helmsdale, called Breacachy, and then that was taken from them, and they received a better place called Griamacharry, but that that, which was extremely useful to them, was withdrawn from them about three years ago?—I believe that Breacachy was a place up in the interior of the country, not a common pasture in the ordinary sense, but a piece of ground that was let to the tenants of the east coast for a grazing, for which they paid so much per head of cattle sent to it; but, at some time subsequent, although before my time, this piece of Breacachy was taken away and added to a sheep farm, and the tenants got Griamacharry in place of it, which they continued to hold until three or four years ago, when a change was made by the Duke. The Duke put a herd there.—*Sir Arnold Kembull.* I know all about the Griamacharry case.

39280. They said Griamacharry was withdrawn?—Griamacharry was a pasture which was not common pasture, but on which they were permitted to herd cattle at so much per head. Now, the consequence of that was that the richer few at Helmsdale, adjoining the common pasture, bought a large stock of sheep, and by their means ate up the grazing of the pasture. The consequence was that the poorer people, who had nothing but horses, must either go and pay money to feed their horses, or forego the pasture of their own hill. The complaints were frequent that the sheep were eating them up, and that they had no means of getting pasture at all. Then the Duke decided that this pasture, which is too limited, should be exclusively devoted to the cattle and horses of the tenants who had the right to it, and that if, thereafter, more land was necessary, it should be provided in another form elsewhere. These were the instructions given at the time. I went myself and met the lotters at Helmsdale. Their remark was, 'How are we to get rid of our sheep; we cannot sell them.' I then, of my own authority, undertook to buy their sheep and pay the price for them, and that henceforward that ground should be devoted to the cattle and sheep of the whole of the lotters. Later on, Snisgill farm—Griamacharry being part of Kinbrace farm—was given over to them upon the terms which

SUTHERLAND. have already been made known to the Royal Commissioners, and that is how that matter stands.

GOLSPIE. 39281. What was done with Griamacharry when it was taken away?—Griamacharry is still unlet.

General Sir A. Kemball and Mr J. Peacock. 39282. The new pasture given to the people is nearer their arable land than Griamacharry?—I am told that Suisgill is nine miles distant, but there are many here who could tell us.—*Mr Peacock.* I think Griamacharry and Breacachy are equidistant from Helmsdale, and Suisgill is about half the distance—about nine or ten miles. Griamacharry is about twenty miles from Helmsdale.—*Sir Arnold Kemball.* Well, they have it at nine miles now, and they had it at twenty miles before, and they have got it on very much better terms. Mr Greig told you that £120 had been offered by one person, and £300 by another; and the Duke let it for £100 to them.

39283. Then there was a general statement made with reference to the parish of Loth, that when small holders became extinct, the land vacated by them was not distributed among their own class for the enlargement of other small holdings, but that it was consolidated with the farm of Crakaig; and a particular assertion was made, that, during the last twenty years, thirty small holdings had been absorbed by that farm alone?—I have no knowledge of that. It has come upon me by surprise.—*Mr Peacock.* I know there were some small holdings in connection with the farm of Crakaig. By an arrangement with Mr Dudgeon when he got the lease of the farm, as these holdings became vacant by the death of the tenant, they were to fall into the farm. That was the arrangement under which Mr Dudgeon took the large farm of Crakaig, but I am very much surprised to hear that there were thirty. I almost think there must be some mistake as to the number. If it had been three I could have understood it, but I cannot conceive of anything like the number of thirty.

39284. There is a statement with regard to the crofters in a township called Whitchill, that those crofters had been supplied with an extent of grazing for which they were charged 15s. separate rent, and that that grazing had been consolidated with the farm of Crakaig, and that the people had not received any reduction of rent?—That is part of the same arrangement I referred to just now; it is the same tenant and the same farm.

39285. But the piece of grazing, in this case, seems to have been taken from existing tenants, and not from those who had died out naturally?—I think the only grazing that fell into Dudgeon's hands is the grazing that appertained to the tenants now deceased. Having succeeded to their lots, he succeeded to their right of grazing.

39286. Then, there is a general statement with reference to the prohibition of keeping sheep, and the motive which prompted that prohibition?—*Sir Arnold Kemball.* That is the case of Griamacharry. That was the case in which the sheep were taken away for the reason stated, and now they may keep as many sheep as possible on the ground of Suisgill.

39287. But, if I understood the statement correctly the day before yesterday, it pointed to this, that all the small tenants at Helmsdale, and generally in the vicinity, were prohibited by a general estate regulation from keeping sheep, for some particular reason?—I never heard of that. After those three years, when this was done, all the sheep were taken off that ground in order that room should be given for cattle and horses which were legitimately entitled to the grazing—both to rich and poor alike. Then this place, Suisgill, was given, where they may keep as many sheep as they like. Indeed, Mr Greig informed you that they had not enough sheep to put upon it.—*Mr Peacock.* It is the West Helmsdale grazing, I

think, that you refer to, my Lord. As to the piece of grazing there, in 1880, and several years preceding that, there had been frequent complaints from some of the tenants who had no sheep, of the damage done by sheep belonging to the other tenants—that sheep came down from the hill and on to their arable lands. They complained very much of this, and said, 'We have no sheep; we don't want any sheep. Here are our neighbours on this part of the hill ground which was given for a grazing, not for their sheep, but for the benefit of the whole township.' The Duke had it carefully examined, and it was found that that piece of ground was about equal to the accommodation of the horses and cattle in these townships. Marrel had 22 tenants; West Helmsdale, 68 tenants; Gartamore, 59 tenants; and Port Gower, 30 tenants—in all, 179 tenants. Of this number, 111 possessed no sheep at all, and 68 other tenants had on about 356 sheep; and these 68 tenants I classify as follows, with reference to their stock:—46 owned among them 119 sheep, equal to about $2\frac{1}{2}$ each; 14 others owned 108 sheep, equal to $7\frac{3}{4}$ each; and 8 others owned among them 129 sheep, or about 16 each; making in all 68 tenants, with 350 sheep. In November 1881 correspondence and meetings took place with the owners of the sheep, and also with the tenants who had no sheep. Sir Arnold and I went down to Helmsdale on one occasion to urge that the hill was originally intended for the horses and cattle of all the township, not the sheep belonging to a part of the number. Sir Arnold offered to take the sheep at a valuation, for it had been explained that, in justice to their neighbours, they could not be allowed to continue the sheep. They ultimately agreed to put away their sheep, and Sir Arnold agreed to buy them. They agreed also to put them away by Whitsunday 1882, which they did not do—at least they were not appearing to do it. I went round among them with a memorandum of agreement, in order to put the matter into form, and some of them signed the agreement, but a great many of them refused. There were only eighteen that would agree to sign this formal agreement referring the valuation of these sheep to two practical men appointed, one by themselves and one by Sir Arnold. Many having refused to sign, in order to carry out what Sir Arnold had pledged himself to the tenants who had no sheep, that this change should be made, summonses of removal were issued against nine on the 21st of April 1882, and it was explained to the people that if they did put away their sheep and sign the agreement, these summonses should not take effect. There was no desire to put them out of their holdings, but there was a strong desire on the part of the Duke to carry out his promise to the people who had no sheep that they should be protected in that way. Ultimately the people agreed to carry out the agreement. I went down to Helmsdale with the valuers. The sheep were valued on the 20th April 1882, and the whole stock on the ground was handed over at a valuation and paid for, and since then the grazing has been kept for the horses and cattle only belonging to the whole of the tenants of these townships.

39288. Then I am to understand that the prohibition to keep sheep was a prohibition enforced in the interests more of a larger class of the tenants than of a smaller class?—Certainly, and it being a violation of the original compact. When it was given to them it was not intended there should be any sheep at all on the hill. It was by degrees that the sixty-eight tenants got sheep.

39289. But you say a certain class of the tenants were molested by the sheep trespassing upon their ground; was that upon their arable ground? —Yes.

39290. Then is there no sufficient fence surrounding the arable ground

SUTHERLAND.

GOLSPIE

General Sir A.
Kemball and
Mr J. Peacock.

SUTHER- and dividing it from the hill pasture?—None; no sufficient fence against
LAND. sheep or cattle.

GOLSPIE. 39291. What is the practice in this part generally; is there no surrounding fence at the back of the arable crofts?—No, there is an under-
General Sir A. standing among the tenants that they should herd their sheep and cattle
Kemball and off the arable when the crops are on the ground, and when the crops are
Mr J. Peacock. off the ground it seems to be the practice that the sheep and cattle are allowed to go on the arable land. But that has become a great hardship, because many of the improving crofters grow young grass. They crop their lands in a more systematic manner than formerly, and they have their young grass in the spring; and it is a great hardship that the sheep should come down from the hill and eat up everything; and not only have there been instances of their eating the little grass there was, but they have come down to the kailyards and eaten every green thing in the gardens.

39292. No doubt they will do so if there is no fence, but is it not usual to provide a boundary fence?—The tenants of arable lands—crofters—fence their own lands, and if they chose they might erect among themselves a fence to keep off the sheep; but they don't seem to think that necessary, and practically there is no sufficient fence between the arable and the hill ground.

39293. Is there any regulation on the estate by which, by the co-operation of the landlord and the small tenants, a substantial fence could be erected?—The Duke would be glad to see something of that kind done, but up to this time he has not felt called upon to promise assistance for the erection of fences.

39294. Are the people at all beginning to separate their holdings from one another by wire fences?—In one or two cases they have done so, but it is quite the exception, and not the rule.

39295. We have had several statements before us here, and also in other parts of the county, with reference to a system of increase of rental exacted upon the death of occupiers. There seems to be some misapprehension or a want of distinct understanding about that, at least so far as the subject has been brought before us. We would like to understand how the practice of increases upon the death of occupiers is regulated or limited. Some have represented to us that it was an unlimited and progressive increase. Others seem to be under the impression that it is a single increase taken and not to be exacted a second time. Can you state exactly how that is?—Sir Arnold Kemball. Mr Mackay has stated very accurately the rules of the estate, but he has given a colour to them and made one or two omissions which I am sure are quite unintentional on his part. He stated that a tenant and his widow would remain undisturbed in their lot during the period of their lives, and that the successor—the son—would then have his lot valued finally, and the rent charged accordingly. He seemed to think that, because the son worked with the widow, it was always a ground of claim to succeed; and therefore the son, having worked on that lot, and possibly made improvements, ought not to be charged an additional rent; but he forgot that the widow was probably paying a nominal rent, and that he had the benefit of that nominal rent during her lifetime. Had he been made tenant at once, he would have had to pay the increased valuation from that day. Now, there was an omission made by Mr Mackay in regard to wood and lime. These are given gratis to the tenants for the repair and construction of their houses. I am speaking in the presence of all who know our rules. The slates are given at prime cost on payment deferred—half down, and the rest by instalments, or by instalments from the first. The wood and lime are gratis.

39296. I want, first, exactly to understand the extent of the limitations

SUTHER.
LAND.

GOLSPIE.

General Sir A.
Kemball and
Mr J. Peacock.

upon the increase of rent, and I will put it in this way. I will suppose for instance a widow, who dies, and she is succeeded by a son, and this son at the expiration of the old tenure at a nominal rent obtains the land at increased rent. Well, suppose by some unfortunate accident this son dies, and is succeeded by a brother within three years, would there be a second increase of rent?—Certainly not; and not only so, but the rents and valuations are fixed, and as far as I know, up to any future number of years they will be maintained at that rate. They were fixed in 1866 and 1867.

39297. Then the limit of the increase is defined by the valuation?—By a valuation actually existing, and said to be a very moderate valuation

39298. And how long is that valuation prospectively supposed to last—I cannot tell you. I received it as taken in 1866 or 1867, and so far as I know, there has been no intention to increase it. In the course of time, I suppose, there may be a change.

39299. How was the valuation made?—By two persons appointed—Mr Macdonald and Mr Mackenzie—experts, who were employed especially for the purpose of examining the holdings locally, and who sent in a regular roll of valuation.

39300. And who heard any representation which the crofter or occupier made?—I must presume that. The fact is that that is what I have received as the valuation roll.

39301. There was one particular case alleged of which, perhaps, Mr Peacock knows. When I asked whether there was any case known of a double increase of rental within a limited number of years, the witness instanced the case of a certain Margaret Macdonald, upon whose croft two increases had been taken within seven years?—*Mr Peacock*. I don't remember that case. Macdonald is a common name, but I shall be glad to look into the case and give all the particulars.—*Sir Arnold Kemball*. Have you any objection to take the case of a rental that was mentioned here—Alexander Gunn's case—because it is one in point?

39302. He says—'When my mother died twenty years ago my eldest brother on getting possession of the lot had to pay death premium, or £1 'of a rise of rent. This rise was put on on the recommendation of two 'of the Duke's ground officers who valued our lot. Three years after- 'wards my brother died, and I became his successor, and I was to pay a 'death premium of 4s., that being 4s. more than the Duke's servants or 'ground officers valued my croft at. Four years ago I received a summons 'of removal, when, on making inquiry, I found that this was an introduc- 'tion to another £1, 1s. of a rise of rent, which I had to pay and pay 'still. The actual fact is that I pay £1, 5s. per annum more than what 'his own servants valued my croft at.' That is an assertion of three rises, but not a rise on a change of occupancy?—*Mr Peacock*. He succeeded his brother in the first place, and then, of course, he was treated as a new tenant, and his rent was increased. It was also increased at a subsequent period. There had been some irregularity in that part of the parish and some inquiries were made, and there was very good reason for believing that this man was implicated in some irregularities that had been going on there, and the Duke really had it in view to put the man out of possession of the place altogether, but his Grace decided to leave him in possession, putting up his rent to the valuation as a sort of mild punishment in his case.

39303. It was a case of a penal increase of rent?—Well, it was rather of that character.

39304. But I wish to get at the general impression. The general rule is that there is no successive or unlimited rise of rental?—Not since this

SUTHER- new valuation; but before Sir Arnold's time, and during the late Mr
LAND. Loch's time, my instructions were that on each change of occupancy a
GOLSPIE. nominal change was to be made on the rent, and these changes were some-
General Sir A. times no more than 1s. or 2s.; the change was made just to mark a change
Kemball and of the occupation from one name to another, but they cannot be called in-
Mr J. Peacock. creases of rental. They were merely nominal increases.

39305. That is all I have to ask at present about the points stated at Helmsdale. I would now desire, Sir Arnold, to ask you to make a general statement of the expenditure of the Duke of Sutherland for the benefit of crofter's holdings during the last thirty years?—*Sir Arnold Kemball.* This is a point of which no mention was made by Mr Mackay. In the course of the last thirty years the expenditure by the proprietor on crofter holdings has been as under:—Wood and lime, £15,519; repairs to houses, £5986; meliorations, £835; free, £22,340. Advances at 5 per cent., £6768; total, £29,108; average for year, £970.

39306. This is an expenditure for the specific benefit of the crofters' holdings?—Yes; but apart from that there has been an expenditure in the way of works—wage-bearing works.

39307. If you allow me, I should like to understand about the expenditure on crofters' holdings specifically. There is an average annual expenditure of £970 upon the crofters' holdings?—Yes.

39308. Can you tell me what the aggregate rental of these holdings would be on which the £970 was expended? About what rental, in general terms, would that be on?—It would be very difficult to find out the particular class of holdings on which it was spent. It would be the poorer class of holdings.

39309. Then this expenditure, for the benefit of small holdings, is an expenditure in buildings?—Lime and wood, and repairs of houses. Wood and lime are given where a man wishes to construct a house. There are repairs to houses separately. With regard to meliorations, where there is an entirely new succession, a man has a claim to meliorations, but these successions are very rare indeed. A man and his wife having a life tenancy, and being succeeded by a son, there arises no question of meliorations for improvement. These are extremely rare, and in this case they amount in the Dunrobin district to £660.

39310. When these advances are made in timber and lime for the improvement of the houses, is any charge made upon them?—None; they are gratis. On advances for reclamations interest is charged.

39311. One or two witnesses have spoken of the sums advanced for reclamation as Government money?—I am surprised to hear it. Government money means the Duke's money, as I understand it.

39312. There were Government loans for improving land?—It has nothing to do with that. It is money given by the proprietor, on which 5 per cent. is charged, for reclamation; I should presume they prefer doing it and retaining the life tenure of all their improvements. On the whole estate, for the last thirty years there was £6768 for improvements, on which interest is charged.

39313. Is that exclusively in the form of trenching and draining?—The usual way is that the ground officer goes and makes a valuation of what he thinks it has cost for trenching and draining, and the tenant pays the interest upon the sum he receives. If it is supposed to be worth £10, he pays 5 per cent. upon it.

39314. Are any fences put up between the common pasture of the crofters and adjacent farms? We have had one or two complaints about the aggressions of the sheep of the farmers upon the crofters, and so on?—I am afraid there is a good deal the other way. There ought to be

wire fences, but it is more probably the sheep farmer who has complained very largely of the encroachment of the tenants.

SUTHERLAND.

39315. There are probably mutual complaints?—Well, I think so.

GOLSPIE.

39316. But with reference to the erection of fences, do you consider it would be a valuable improvement that the farms should be divided from each other and from the crofters' lands by fences?—Certainly; but if such a thing were done, the tenants should have some sort of responsibility in keeping it up, because it is the interest of the small tenant to see that fence put down. His sheep will find grazing elsewhere, and therefore it is better some sort of responsibility should attach to the maintenance of that fence.

General Sir A
Kemball and
Mr J. Peacock

39317. Most undoubtedly, if a fence is put up, it should be maintained; but we have sometimes heard that when the small tenants' sheep encroach upon an adjacent farm they are very liable to be impounded, and the small tenant to be fined?—I should like to know any instances. I am not aware of anything of that kind in my time; on the contrary, on the other side I have heard great complaints—in fact, there is one case pending now that is likely to give us some difficulty with regard to the Suisgill grazings. It appears that horses and sheep graze over into the Culgower farm, and I have heard very serious complaints; and I believe it will have to end in a fence being put up. But in putting up a fence there must be some responsibility attaching to its maintenance, or that fence will not be maintained.

39318. You don't find, in fact, that the small tenants press you for fences between them and the large farms?—No, I confess I have not. I have had plenty on the other side; and I daresay there are some farmers here who could tell something about it.

39319. So much for the co-operation of the landlord in the improvement of the small tenancies as they exist. I would like now to ask you what has been done, or whether anything is being done for the expansion of the existing small holdings, either with reference to the arable or with reference to the common pasture?—In my time there have been three or four cases. There were two on the west coast, in the Strathan and Inverkirkaig townships. There have been proposals for some time with regard to expansion on the Armadale side, but as the lease is not out that cannot be effected. That is being submitted to the Duke's consideration. At Doll there has been a place attached to them, and also at one or two points—Breacachy and Golspie Tower—but otherwise none at present.

39320. Am I justified in stating that there is an inclination on the part of the proprietor, if it can be properly done, to afford an expansion of pasture to the crofting communities?—If you take those five instances as an earnest of the fact, I think I may say it is so.

39321. In the cases you mention, have the small tenants been found capable of supplying the stock?—There is an expansion of ground for their existing stock. It may lead to further increase of stock, but the expansion of ground is for the existing stock.

39322. But if they had more ground, we may presume they would keep more head of stock?—Certainly, I presume they would.

39323. In fact, you have not found they could use the additional ground given to them?—No, I know you would not find that, because it would not come before you. This is not adding a piece of ground at a distance under lease, but adding it on no charge at all, because you must bear in mind that no hill pasture is charged for on the Duke's estate. It all goes in the form of charge on arable land; therefore, when you see a man's rent is eight acres at £6 or £5, that is understood to include his share of the common grazing without further charge.

SUTHER-
LAND.

GOLSPIE.

General Sir A.
Kemball and
Mr J. Peacock.

39324. Then, in case of a piece of common grazing being withdrawn, there would be a reduction of rent?—Certainly now that would be the case, but I know of no instance. But what I mean is that the rent is per arable acre, and that there is no specific charge for the grazing.

39325. But with the accessory benefit of the grazing?—With the accessory benefit of the grazing without charge, in this sense that the rent he pays includes both.

39326. Can you give me examples of the creation of new holdings as a whole—not only the expansion of the grazing, but the addition of arable ground, or the concession of new arable ground, to small tenants for the purpose of forming new holdings?—Certainly I can give you many instances of people improving their ground. I can give you one, and I believe the man is in this room—John Murray. I should like you very much to inquire how he has done it. Adjoining him there is a piece of ground which has been laid out for the purpose of being converted into crofts of ten acres, but he is the only one who possessed that portion of ground, and as yet we have had no offers for them. What is preferable, and what has occurred in many instances, is that they have improved the waste land of their own crofts. One of the persons you examined this morning mentioned that he had only five acres of arable land, for which he was paying, he said, £3; but he forgot to mention that he had four acres of waste which was termed waste improvable, not hill, belonging to himself exclusively, and that the extra £1 he paid was on the advance of £25 he received for improving this land.

39327. You mentioned a block of land which was to be divided into crofts or holdings of ten acres each?—I think ten acres each.

39328. I want to know whether you have experienced a difficulty in finding tenants for those proposed new buildings?—*Mr Peacock.* Yes. The Duke has a property called Langwell—East and West Langwell—and between these two townships there is a very considerable extent of ground susceptible of improvement; and the Duke, about fifteen years ago, with the view of encouraging the people of the neighbourhood, who had expressed their anxiety to get more land, employed a surveyor to make a report upon this specific piece of land. It was done, and the lots were all marked out on the ground by pins, and the people were made aware that these lots were to be let if they chose to come forward to apply for them, and I have only had applications at long intervals for crofts in that direction. I have sent the parties there to look at the land, and said I would be very glad to see them back again, when we could discuss the terms of their entry, but the thing has never gone further than their going to look at the land. They have never come back to make proposals for reclamation.

39329. Was it to be let on improving leases?—It was to be let at a nominal rent.

39330. But with a lease or at will?—The Duke probably would not have objected to give leases if they had desired them, but the tenants on this estate think it better to be without leases.—*Sir Arnold Kemball.* We should be only too glad if they would take it under lease, but of course where they get a life tenure they are generally opposed to taking leases, because a nineteen years' lease would place them on the commercial principle, and they might be liable to an increase of rent at the end of the nineteen years, irrespective of themselves or their widows. It would be a hard case if you imposed a lease. I may tell you that leases were imposed many years ago, but on their expiry none of the tenants would renew them. They prefer the life tenure; but if any of them wish to have leases, I believe the Duke would be perfectly willing to give them on the same

conditions under which they could get them in any other county. But suppose the two cases of a man with a life tenure and a man with a nineteen years' lease, both working for the improvement of their land. At the end of the nineteen years the man who has occupied on a lease loses all the benefit of it, but the man who has a life tenure retains it for himself and his wife during the natural term of their lives.

SUTHERLAND.

GOLSPIE.

General Sir A
Kemball and
Mr J. Peacock.

39331. Have the people regarded their position as one of actual life tenure?—I have never heard a doubt expressed about it. Perhaps the best way of putting that is to see how many evictions have taken place since the Duke came into the estate. They are absolutely limited to eleven crofters, and many of these cases were on account of family quarrels. I make that statement here, and it is quite open for anybody to refute it. I believe no such thing is known as evictions, and that life tenure is the rule.

39332. We heard to-day—referring to the question of consolidation—of a small farm of eighty acres which had been constituted in the middle of the township, the area of which had been withdrawn from the small holdings in favour of a Mr Crawford, an inn-keeper!—Yes, and the farm is below here. I know the farm, and I know the man, but as to the particulars of how that land was used I must refer to Mr Peacock, for I was not here at the time.

39333. When this farm was constituted we were told that there was no reduction of rent in favour of those whose lands were taken for the purpose?—*Mr Peacock*. The reclamation of that farm was undertaken immediately after the completion of the railway. The railway passed along the one side of a piece of very wet, boggy, useless ground. Even the small tenants themselves attached very little value to it, and on the completion of the railway it became a very prominent eyesore. Everybody coming from Lairg saw this wretched piece of ground, and the Duke was desirous of improving it, and expended a very considerable sum on the improvement of that land. It extends from the plantation on the west side up to the railway fence on the east side.

39334. But the land on which the farm was formed was withdrawn from the occupancy of the small tenants?—In so far as they chose to avail themselves of it; but it was so wet and useless that I am sure I could not have found any tenants in Lairg that would have given any appreciable rent for it.

39335. You saw no value put upon it?—I don't think it was susceptible of any value. There were some little bits of arable land that are now absorbed in the farm, and that were cut off in the making of the railway, and there was an allowance made to the tenants for the actual arable land that was taken from them.

39336. What is the area of the whole farm?—Under eighty acres.

39337. What is the rental?—£92 or £93.

39338. As you say this land was of a very valueless character, there must surely have been a very large expenditure upon it to make it worth £93 a year?—There has been enormous expenditure upon it.—*Sir Arnold Kemball*. It is part of our reclamations. The total amount of our reclamations is £254,900.

39339. What do you suppose the expenditure upon the land was to reclaim it?—About £40 or £50 an acre. At Lairg it was £80 an acre.

39340. And this farm, which has been thus constituted, and rendered worth £93 a year, has been rendered so by an expenditure of what?—£80 an acre; that is, taking it at the same rate as the Lairg reclamations were taken at, with the additional houses.

SUTHERLAND. 39341. It was subjected to the same process, in fact, as the rest?—Steam ploughing and trenching, the same as the rest of the lands.

GOLSPIE. 39342. Then the value of £80 a year, though it may be worth that to the present tenant, does not represent the value withdrawn?—According General Sir A. to my calculations, it represents 1 6 per cent. of the outlay—the actual Kemball and return on the three farms of Embo, Ballone, and Dalchork.

Mr J. Peacock. 39343. Then you will kindly go on to the expenditure of the proprietor in wages for works indirectly profitable to this class?—In one of the returns asked by the Royal Commission, I was required to state what was the rise of the revenue of the estate in a period of thirty years. This table which I now hand in shows the result:—

Sutherland Estate.

Revenue and Expenditure, 30 years, 1853–82.

Dunrobin Management.

Revenue.		Expenditure.
£564,555	Estate rents,	
124,145	Sporting rents,	
	Estate works,	£677,671
	Miscellaneous,	19,768
		£697,439
	Reclamations,	254,900
	Brora works,	47,516
		302,416
	Sutherland railway,	94,200
	The Duke's railway,	72,100
	Sutherland and Caithness railway,	60,000
		226,300
	General management, law expenses, donations, and sundries,	58,967
£788,700	Totals, Dunrobin management,	£1,285,122
121,636	Surplus from Tongue management.	
129,412	Do. Scourie management.	
£1,039,748		£1,285,122
£245,374	Deficiency otherwise provided for.	

39344. This is the expenditure on the estate during thirty years, as against the revenue?—Yes. The deficiency, after devoting the whole of the rental of the estate to works on the estate, was £245,374.

39345. You mean that, during the course of thirty years £245,000 has been expended in excess of the rental of the estate?—Yes.

39346. Including the outlay upon the railway?—Yes, and this is without making any allowance for the domestic expenses of the ducal establishment in Scotland, which you may take at a considerable sum every year.

39347. And those works, so far as labour is concerned, have given employment to the local population?—Yes, and I think the result is seen in the improved condition and the material comfort of the tenants generally.

39348. Can you say what the returns have been in connection with this great expenditure?—I have calculated that on the reclamations it is *nil*, and on the railways, taken in conjunction with the whole railway system, it is only 2 per cent., and that on a capital of £350,000, because the other portion was invested in the Highland Railway system, which does yield a return. The Sutherland and Caithness never yielded anything. The Duke of Sutherland's railway has yielded, on the last occasion, 2½ per cent.; the Sutherland railway has yielded 1½ per cent., and that since 1875 only.

39349. Is the result of this great expenditure at all evident in the

improvement of the general rental of the estate?—Certainly, the general rental of the estate has increased very much, but totally incommensurate with the vast outlay which has been made to produce that increase.

39350. Has the increase of rental upon the estate been in the direction of shooting and sporting profits?—Yes, I suspect mostly sporting. But General Sir A. Kemball and Mr J. Peacock. that must not be taken entirely as increase without outlay, because lodges and other expenses connected with it go a long way to reduce any interest on the outlay.

39351. Has there been of recent years any withdrawal of land from profitable occupation—such as sheep farming and otherwise—for the constitution of deer forests?—Yes, in two instances. One was at Loch Inver, where, on the lease falling out, and being unable to let it again, except at an enormous depreciation, after taking away portions to give to the townships it was made into a deer forest, but unhappily we lost the rent for three years, and it will probably take some time still before we can let it as a forest.

39352. In constituting any ground as a forest, has any ground in the occupation of crofters—either arable or pasture—been taken up?—No, certainly not.

39353. No ground has been withdrawn from small tenants?—No, not in any form whatever. I am speaking of my own time, because we had never had any forest here before except the two old forests of Dunrobin and Reay; but, with regard to the forests that have been made in the last thirty years, there have been only the two that I have mentioned.

39354. And what has been done has not been in any sense to the prejudice of the small tenants?—In no sense whatever. Will you allow me to refer to the question of population? Mr Mackay talked of the congestion of it, and he seemed to regret that there is a reduction of the population, but I think that must be a sign of prosperity, particularly as represented in his own person. If there are means of occupation and employment, and if the railway furnishes that, it is surely a matter of congratulation rather than that the lots themselves should be divided and subdivided. I don't enter into the question of the clearances, whether they were right or wrong. They took place eighty years ago, and we have to deal with facts as they are. Now, we can imagine what would have been the state of matters if that population had remained to subdivide and subdivide lands declared at present to be too small, though, by the way, in Rogart the average is about seven acres to each person.

39355. *Mr Cameron.*—Will you just answer one question about the labour that is prevalent here? What labour is there for the crofters? Is there plenty of it, easy of access?—I should say that now they must go some distance to get it, because the reclamation works are stopped. All the railway works have ceased.

39356. Do you find as a rule, that they go distances to get labour to make money to bring home for their families?—Yes; and I will give an instance of a very recent case of smelters coming from the west coast to the east coast large arable farms. They have no proper arable farms on the west coast, and they come over and get wages. They are paid their expenses to and fro, and get 2s. 6d. a day.

39357. I am afraid that smelting is going out of fashion owing to the low price of wool. Don't farmers take more to dipping than smelting?—I daresay it may be so. I am merely giving that as one instance. There are no public works now except the Brora works, and a wool factory, where there is some small employment of labour, but all this large employment—such as the reclamations and the railways—has for the moment ceased.

SUTHER-LAND.

GOLSPIE.

SUTHERLAND. 39358. Do you anticipate from that cause much distress in the immediate future among the crofters?—No, I hope it will give them a spur in improving the waste land attached to their crofts. It is quite in their power to do that, apart from the hill grazings. It is called improvable land, and some have done the work very well indeed. I can instance a case at Helmsdale of a man named Mackintosh, and Murray whom I mentioned before, and others who have done the work very well indeed.

GOLSPIE. 39359. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Can you state what has been the rise of rental in the last thirty years upon the Sutherland estates all over?—I am afraid I cannot give that just now.

General Sir A. Kemball and Mr J. Peacock. 39360. I observe by the valuation roll of 1882-83 the total of the county, exclusive of railways, is £91,000. Do you think the Duke has £80,000?—I should think so. I would not commit myself to figures, but I think it is more than £80,000.

39361. I want to contrast the expenditure with the increased value of the estate now; has it risen £20,000 in the last thirty years? In 1855 the valuation of the county was £44,789, and at the present time it is £92,564?—*Mr Peacock.* You may take it that the Duke has 80 per cent. of the whole county.

39362. Then I would like to know what you think it would be twenty years ago; would it be £40,000?—*Sir A. Kemball.* Take four-fifths of £44,000, and it will give you the Duke's rental.

39363. That is about £35,000. Then, dealing in the same way with the £92,000, we have £73,000. Taking one from the other, we find that it is practically doubled?—Yes.

39364. Now when you state that, with all these outlays on the part of the Duke of Sutherland, there is a deficiency of £245,000 in the matter of revenue and expenditure, must you not fairly consider the increased value of the estates?—Most undoubtedly.

39365. Well, what is the value of the property in Sutherland; is it thirty or thirty-five years' purchase?—I suppose it would be thirty years, under present conditions.

39366. At that rate, don't you see the estate has risen in these thirty years to the extent of one million sterling?—On an expenditure of more than a million to do it.

39367. You say there is only a deficiency of £245,000?—But a deficiency of all laid out on the estate—not a deficiency of £245,000 with the rental employed to his own purposes, but actually laid out on the estate. I have given you the railways and the reclamations, and these bring the deficiency above the rental. The rental has gone to pay that.

39368. But in this valuation the railways don't appear on the roll?—They do appear on the roll.

39369. Yes, to a certain amount, but that is merely the land and not the value of the stock the Duke holds in them?—But the value of the stock is *nil* for the Sutherland and Caithness railway at present; and, as to the others it is 2½ per cent., since 1875, on the Duke of Sutherland's railway, which is seventeen miles long; and 1½ on the Sutherland railway.

39370. You admit that, within the last thirty years, the Sutherland estates are worth one million more than they were then?—With an outlay of nearly a million to get it.

39371. Will you explain what you mean by saying that you regard the decrease of the population here as a sign of the prosperity of the locality?—I am speaking of the population of the particular district, because the actual population since 1801 is an increase, not a decrease, over the whole county. But when Mr Mackay suggested that the place was congested,

and that they had not room enough, though they had seven acres on the average, I suggested that those who would otherwise have been thrown upon this land, and the lots divided and subdivided, had found a good living by being able to emigrate—as represented in his own person. I don't mean to say it is an advantage that there should be a decrease of population anywhere. General Sir A. SUTHER-LAND.
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39372. You stated that the rule upon the estate of Sutherland was a life tenure; whose life?—The tenant and his wife, during their respective lifetimes. Mr J. Peacock Kemball and

39373. Suppose the Duke were to die during the lifetime of the tenant, what then?—Nothing whatever. Their tenure would be as good as ever. I take three generations to prove it.

39374. Are you aware that a lease is not binding upon a successor if it is only from year to year?—But there is no lease. It is the rule and practice of the estate.

39375. Are you aware that in Scotland the successor is not bound to keep on a tenant who has no lease longer than a year?—I don't deny that. I say it is so, and if you go further, the Duke has the power now to eject them by law; but the rule of the estate—and a rule universally understood—is that a man and his wife shall have undisturbed tenure of that lot.

39376. As long as the Duke pleases?—I think that is a most unfair way of putting it. If it is as the Duke pleases, instance any cases in which he has not pleased—either he or his predecessors.

39377. Recollect we are not discussing it in any heated or offensive manner. I merely put it as showing what legal eventualities might arise. I am not making it in any way personal to the present Duke?—I thought your inference was that the Duke would do such a thing, because you said that, if the Duke should die, it might be done, or, if the Duke chose at the present time, there is nothing to prevent him by law. I say that for three generations they have not chosen to do so, and I appeal to this assembly in proof of what I say.

39378. *The Chairman.*—Excuse me; you must not appeal to this assembly?—I merely wish to say that my words are accurate.

39379. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—I will leave the question at this point by putting one particular illustration to you. You said the tenants, as a rule, as soon as they have their names in the roll, are safe for their lives. At Helmsdale, on Saturday, we were told that certain tenants in a town called Marrel, because they refused to sign a certain paper presented to them on the part of the estate, were served with summonses of removal?—I go further than that. They would have been removed if they had refused to do what was an act of justice to other people who were suffering from the want of their pasture.

39380. Are you aware that, while the estate management has deprived those tenants who had sheep of the privilege of grazing upon their own commony, the sheep of the large farmers, at this moment, pasture upon that commony without any check whatever?—I am exceedingly sorry to hear it, if true. I should like to know if they mentioned names.

39381. I don't know if they mentioned names. I think there is one adjoining large farm?—Is the inference from that that we have wished the large tenants to graze their commony.

39382. No; but that when you took it from some of them you have not taken steps to prevent them from being overrun by the large farms in their neighbourhood. I put the question to the tenants who stated so, 'Did you bring the question to the notice of the estate management,' and they said they had not?—I am glad they said that, for this is the first time I have heard of it; but if the inference is that we wished the sheep taken off, I beg to say that is utterly unfounded, and that they have had another pasture given to them at a reduced rent, where they may have as many sheep as they please.

SUTHERLAND.—39383. But they stated that they did not tell the estate officials?—It is possible that the people may think that, having removed these sheep, we are now favouring the large farmer, because it has always been a complaint that he is favoured at the expense of the others—that we have allowed the large farmer to go and trespass upon the commonalty. Now, that is an inference wholly unjustifiable; and, not only so, but wholly unknown to me.

GOLSPIE.—39384. *The Chairman.*—Perhaps Mr Peacock would state whether he ever heard it alleged that the stock belonging to the large farmers adjacent, probably owing to the want of a fence, had trespassed upon the commonalty of the people who were deprived of the sheep grazing?—*Mr Peacock.* I have heard of cases on both sides; and, where there is no fence it is practically impossible to keep the sheep from straying from one side to another. It may be that one day the large tenants' sheep are on the one side, and the next day the small tenants' sheep are on the other; and, unless there is some good feeling between the large and the small tenants, a great deal of difficulty will arise. There is no fence, and it would be, in the case just mentioned, the duty of the small tenants to protect themselves. It is their grazing. The Duke, when he gives this grazing for nothing, does not say he will protect them from their neighbours. They have as much right to protect their grazing as the sheep farmer has to protect his large farm; and, if they were to come with a complaint to us, that Mr A. or Mr B. or Mr C. had been upon their ground, I should at once say, I would be very glad to communicate with Mr So-and-so on the subject, but they must understand it was their duty to protect their own common pasture.

General Sir A. Kembell and Mr J. Peacock.—39385. May you not draw another inference that it might be desirable to co-operate with the people in erecting a fence?—That is a very large question—the erection of fences between the common pasture and the large farms.—*Sir Arnold Kembell.* It will have to come. It is a large question, but it will have to come.

39386. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—About this large farm at Lairg that was taken in and reclaimed at the enormous expense of £9600; don't you think it would have been more prudent to have given something to the tenants themselves to improve it?—I am not competent to express an opinion upon that. Unfortunately, the milk is spilt, and I have nothing to say about it.

39387. But you hear they are grumbling about it being taken away from them?—Well, it is a different thing from pasture. New arable is a very difficult thing to work. As regards the arable land at Lairg, we calculated and considered this—and I think Mr Greig told you it would be impossible for crofters to take farms on that new land—we calculated, and we found that, if you did divide any of these sheep farms, you would have to expend at least £200 for houses, and £250 to make these lots, and then, certainly, for some years the crofters could not make much out of it.

39388. Are you not aware that it is impossible to conduct any kind of farming profitably and well without fencing?—I am not prepared to deny or admit that fact. I may think fences of importance. I don't deny it, but I am not prepared to discuss the point whether good farming requires fences. I should say it did, as a private opinion.

39389. But surely one in your position—administering a very large estate—is bound to set an example to the small people, and I would have thought, perhaps, that fencing was one of the first things you would have devoted your attention to—the fencing of the people's arable lands?—I don't doubt it, but if you know what that means in money you will perhaps make some allowance in that matter.

39390. Can you tell me how many crofters under £30 are upon the

estate?—I must refer you to my returns to the Commission for that. I SUTHERLAND.
think there are 2232 crofters proper.

39391. Under £30?—Yes. I am giving these figures to the best of GOLSPIE.
my knowledge; I believe I am right in saying so.

39392. Then I will take 2000 for the question I am going to put to General Sir A. you. You have told us that, for the last thirty years, £970 a year has been laid out directly upon the crofters. That means 10s. a head upon each crofter?—Not quite so much. I think it is well to say that this is not a donation of 10s. a head for a special purpose, but a gradual improvement of the whole estate by the tenants receiving in their turn these allowances to enable them to improve their houses and their condition. It is not a gift at the rate of 10s. a head. There is a certain allowance made in the case of crofters requiring to reconstruct, and they are always encouraged to do it, and to slate their houses, and I think the evidence is found in the country itself.

39393. I am quite aware, but this is only an illustration of the very question I put to you. I did not at all mean that each tenant got £1 or 10s. a head, but what I mean is that it comes to this—that there has been an average of 10s. laid out upon each crofter for the last thirty years. Now is it not a fact that a great deal more than 10s. has been laid upon the crofter in his rent during the last thirty years?—I can give you the actual statement. Taking it at 3 per cent. instead of 5, the advance upon their rent has been 24 per cent. That is the major one.

39394. I want to ask you now about what is commonly called the death premium. I understand that two men—Mr Macdonald and Mr Mackenzie—have made a valuation within the last few years?—Yes, in 1876–77.

39395. Are we to understand that when their valuation is arrived at that increase is to cease?—Certainly, until perhaps thirty years, or whatever the term may be when the new valuation may be made. As far as I know, there is no intention of altering it.

39396. Is it a fair question to ask whether the rate that these gentlemen have fixed has been arrived at now, or is it nearly arrived at, or is it exhausted?—I should say very nearly, in fact I will give you the exact sums. I think there may be 20 per cent. more, but there are some that are nominal rents. These nominal rents will become the valuation rent on a succession; therefore you cannot take it on an average; you must take it on a large class that are nominally rented at 5s., and these will have to pay £1 or £2 as the case may be, on a succession; but the way to put it is, how many crofters remain who don't pay that rent?

39397. You stated that these gentlemen went about and examined carefully every case?—I cannot tell you, because I was not here; but I daresay Mr Peacock can inform you.—*Mr Peacock.* These two gentlemen got instructions to go over the whole of the estate. They were not limited as to time or directed as to the manner in which they were to do it; but they were to go over the whole of the estate, and give in a detailed report of what they considered to be the fair value of every holding on the estate.

39398. Large and small?—No, only the small tenancies.

39399. Do you know whether or not they spoke to the tenants and went over all the ground?—I know they were a great many weeks at the work, and I believe they went into every township. I don't mean to say they called at every door, but they spent a good deal of time over the matter, and I have every reason to believe they did the work very carefully.

39400. I suppose they got every information you could give them?—I gave them the Ordnance acreage and the names of the tenants, and that sort of thing.

39401. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Do you wish to make any explanation about the case of those two old sisters?—*Sir Arnold Kemball.* I

SUTHER- should wish it very much, and I shall be very glad to ask Mr Peacock to give you full information as to all the points that were brought forward, because Mr Mackay was good enough to say that the Duke could do no wrong, but everybody else might do so. I maintain that, even though the Duke can do no wrong, no wrong should be done either in his name or without his knowledge. These things are now brought to notice, and let them be fully investigated.—*Mr Peacock.* The case you refer to was, I believe, the case of Janet and Christine Ross. They were sisters, both infirm, and quite unable to work the land. They became paupers, applied for relief from the Parochial Board, and it was explained to them that they could not be admitted to the poor's roll as long as they were the tenants of this land, and that they had better give up the land. It was quite apparent that it was impossible for them to work the land, and they were doing nothing to it; in point of fact, they got notice that they must give it up. Summons of removal were issued against them to compel them to give up the land of which they were making no proper use, and they were put out of legal possession. The two sisters were left in the house till another new house was built for them at the Duke's sole expense, quite close to the previous house. One of the women—Janet—is still living in it, and has been living in it ever since she went in. The other sister is dead. The present sister, and the other sister as long as she was living, got an allowance from the Duke of £3 to make up for the loss of that land, and that allowance has been continued down to the present time.

39402. How long was it before the new house was built?—As soon as it could be conveniently done, within a few months.

39403. The statement was that half their old house was pulled down while they were living in one end of it?—It may possibly have been done in connection with the building of the new house, but it is some distance of time, and I don't recollect the circumstances connected with it accurately just now; but I know they were put under summonses of removal, and that a new house was built for them, and that the Duke gives an allowance of £3 a year.

39404. A comparison has been made between the rents paid by large tenants and small farmers, and it has been said that the large tenants pay very much less than the small tenants?—*Sir Arnold Kemball.* The reverse is the case.

39405. Taking the arable ground, you heard it brought out that 10d. per acre was paid by large tenants and 1s. 10d. by small?—He probably made the mistake of reckoning it all as arable ground, and then comparing the one with the other. If you take it all as arable ground you take it all as of the same value. But the rate of the arable ground of the crofters is 13s. as against 15s. and 20s. an acre in the case of the large farmers. In calculating the pasture of the small tenants the arable land is included, for which they pay 13s. 9d. an acre.

39406. But the statement is that in the large farms there is a quantity of land that was once arable and could be cultivated again?—Very likely—what is called green land. I have no doubt these were old townships, and they form what is called green land, and it is included in their pasture.

39407. And it is let at the rate of pasture land?—Yes, it is all included in the sheep farm. The total number of tenancies in this district is 978. These are crofters' holdings, and are classified according to the Royal Commissioners' directions. The total acreage of their arable land is 6060, which brings out an average for each tenant of 6·2. With regard to their live stock, according to their own returns obtained from them to enable me to fill up the returns for the Commission, they have 881 horses, 2494 head of cattle, 3313 sheep, and 350 pigs; and their total rents, including

**General Sir A.
Kemball and
Mr J. Peacock.**

GOLSPIE.

LAND.

the common pasture for which no charge is made, amount to £3156, and that brings out the following average:—On the whole, an average of 9s. 11d. per acre; and, taking the parishes separately, it brings out for Clyne, 8s. 10d.; Creich, 12s. 3d.; Dornoch, where I may say they have no common pasture, 8s. 1d.; Golspie, 9s. 4d.; Kildonan, 10s. 2d.; Lairg, 12s. 2d.; Loth, 16s. 3d.; Rogart, where they have 1900 sheep on their own common pasture against a total for the whole county, of 3313, 10s. 10d.; the total average for the whole district being 9s. 11d.

39408. Have you any idea what they pay for pasture?—*Mr Peacock.*
We don't charge them for pasture!—*Sir Arnold Kemball.* The rent is calculated on the arable land.

39409. According to your method of calculation, it is impossible to arrive at it?—Yes. If you estimate it at 6d. you will find what the actual rate for the arable land is, but the rent is charged on the arable land.

29410. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Mr Mackay told us there were fifteen large farmers in the parish of Rogart, and that the crofters whom he was here to represent desired to have more land; that they had not enough. Are any of these fifteen sheep farmers non-resident?—They are all resident.

39411. Then it is not possible, in the meantime, to take any of their land to increase the holdings of the crofters?—Not during the leases.

39412. According to Mr Mackay's calculation, the crofters are more profitable tenants than the big farmers?—I heard that statement, but I have never been able to reconcile that statement with the facts.

39413. It was based upon a calculation that they pay more per acre than the big farmers do?—I have never been able to reconcile that with the facts. If you assume this, that there is a teeming population in the county, and that the land which is now worth 6d. an acre as pasture is arable land fit for crofters to occupy, and that they are all settled on that land—which is represented by so much on the Ordnance map—I have no doubt you will find the small tenant is a better bargain than the other, but taking the land as it is, you cannot put crofters on land that has no arable on it, and therefore you must take things as they are; and as such, I am unable to reconcile the facts with the statement that the small tenants pay more than the large tenants. The large tenants pay more for their pasture, and they pay more for their arable land; but if you convert it all into arable land, and cover it with a teeming population, of course you have a greater number of tenants paying a lower rent than the present number of tenants paying higher rent.

39414. Do you think it would be possible, when some of these leases expire, to extend the holdings of the crofters from them?—It is not in my power to say anything on that point. I merely show what we have done during the last three or four years as an earnest of what may be done in the future; but I cannot commit myself to anything. I say everything has been in that direction for the last three years, and I have instanced cases in which this extension of land has been made. The Duke, I know, wishes well to his people, and will do what is good to them, but I cannot pledge myself to anything.

39415. So far as you have observed the style of agriculture practised by the small tenants, do you think it is creditable; do you think they are making the best of the land?—No, not on the whole. I think there are instances in which they have done it very well in Rogart—down on the low ground—but I should not say they make full use of it, and I am inclined to say also that possibly they may not have the means to do it. They must improve by degrees. If you allow me to draw a comparison between what this country was thirty or fifty years ago and what it is now, I think it will be admitted that there is a vast difference in the housing and comfort, and in the social and economic position of the people; and I

SUTHER-
LAND.

GOLSPIE.

General Sir A.
Kemball and
Mr J. Peacock

SUTHERLAND.—hope, thirty years hence, you will see a different state of matters still. Nobody allows it is perfect by any means. Everybody admits very much remains to be done; but what has been done, I believe, is an earnest of what will be done. There is another thing I want to point out in connection with this expenditure, showing the rates and taxes paid by the Duke

GOLSPIE.—
General Sir A. Kemball and Mr J. Peacock.—in proportion to the rental. The charge for rates and taxes is leviable half from the proprietor, and, of course, the major part of the rest is leviable from the larger tenants. In the Dunrobin district the amount to be paid by his Grace represents 52 per cent. of the whole of the crofters' rent; in the Scourie district 54 per cent., and in the Tongue district 59 per cent. The proportion is more than 50 per cent. of the actual rental we receive from the crofters, both poor rates and school rates being for their special benefit.

39416. *The Chairman.*—There is just one point I wanted to refer to with reference to something that was said before. Speaking of the diminution of the population in a particular district, a previous witness seemed to regret that there was this large diminution in the population, but you seem to think that the departure of the people for more profitable scenes of employment was rather an advantage than otherwise?—Yes, provided it did not amount to depopulation.

39417. But what I understood the previous witness to say was, that he regretted to see so many people going away who might be profitably employed in the development of their own country?—That is perfectly true. What has failed to be done on one side may be done on another; but if no more profitable employment is forthcoming, and as the land is certainly not available at present without subdividing, I look upon it as for their benefit.

39418. But when you say 'without subdividing,' though the subdivision of a small holding may be a misfortune, the subdivision of a large holding might be an improvement?—Certainly, but are holdings to be made in a day?

39419. That is what I wish to refer to. If you could hold out the hope that this surplus population should be hereafter gradually employed in the development of their country, that would be to me very satisfactory?—I have no doubt the tendency is that way at present; but to make holdings for a surplus population, say, double the present one, is a work of great time; and the population increases in very much larger proportion. If you lay down at the present time, say ten holdings, it will take a man ten or twelve years before he could make these profitable. He gets them at 2s. and 2s. 6d. The question is one of time.

39420. Now, Mr Feacock, I should like you to deal for a moment with the individual cases of hardship which were produced by the second delegate from Rogart. We have already dealt with one or two cases—Gunn's and another?—*Mr Peacock.* Yes. I think there remains a third case—that of John Sutherland, whose father had joined the army. I did not follow what was the particular complaint—whether the son and grandson expected to remain at the same nominal rent at which the father held the land. The fact is that there was a John Sutherland, Muie, whose father joined the army. The widow continued as tenant till January 1880, at the same rent, and now her son is tenant of the lot.

39421. The son of the wounded soldier is still in possession?—Yes.

39422. Then there is the special grievance of Alexander Bain; will you kindly explain that case? He says he was removed from his holding with his delicate wife and children?—This Alexander Bain was a lodger or squatter upon that place. George Mackenzie was the tenant of the lot, and this Alexander Bain was married to a niece of the old man, and lived there in a small house attached to, or not very far from, Mackenzie's house. It was this Alexander Bain who worked the lot. He was the

man who always came and paid the rent, though he got two receipts—one in the name of Mackenzie, and one in his own name. He was practically tenant. Then he wished to have his name put in the rental in place of Mackenzie's, to which I could not agree till Mackenzie's rents were paid, more especially as in this case it was Alexander Bain who wanted to get into the lot. He said that George Mackenzie had been bedridden for many years, and that he was the man who was responsible for the management of the lot, and he wished to have the management of the lot, and I said I could not agree to that until George Mackenzie had paid up the arrears on the lot.

39423. You looked upon Alexander Bain practically as responsible for the rent of the holding?—Practically, I did.

39424. And you refused, therefore, to include his name till he had paid the arrears, which you regarded as his own arrears?—I did.

39425. He being the husband of the niece of George Mackenzie?—Yes.

39426. You considered practically speaking, that the arrears were hereditary in the family?—Well, they had been so in that case unfortunately.

39427. And Alexander Bain now has got the holding?—Yes.

39428. At a rent reduced to £6?—Yes.

39429. And he has paid his arrears?—I believe the arrears were paid up, but I cannot tell without referring to the rental.

39430. Are you in the habit of taking arrears from the incoming tenant?—No.

39431. Arrears are not transferred?—They are not transferred from the outgoing to the incoming tenant.

39432. But they would be inherited by a member of the same family?—Yes, children and near relatives coming in. One would expect them, as they had been practically the tenants of the lot or deriving benefit from it, to make up the arrears; but the arrears on the estate are very light, and hardly worth speaking about. In one paper that is given in I think you will find the arrears stated.

39433. Was there any other special grievances?—There were only two cases that Mr Mackay brought forward. It was said—though my name was not mentioned, I understood myself to be the person referred to—that I did on one occasion so far forget myself as to lift my stick to a minister. I most indignantly deny it, and say there is not a word of truth in it. I am ready to admit that, in a very heated discussion at a School Board meeting, I did emphasise some argument I was using. Happening to have an umbrella in my hand, I did lift it up; but, good gracious! the idea of my lifting a stick to any minister of any parish in Scotland is ridiculous. There was another case, in which I am surprised that Mr Mackay did not make himself more perfectly acquainted with the facts, and that is the case of an assault committed in my office on a tenant. [Mr Mackay.—I only referred to one case.] I believe you referred to two. You said that a factor was unfit for his position who would do such things, and two cases were referred to. One was a case of irritation in my office. The case is perfectly well known. A man came into my office, and gave me the lie direct as to a matter about the facts of which I was perfectly well informed. He so far forgot himself that he chose to use a very offensive expression to me, and I ordered him out. He refused to go out, and then I did so far forget myself as to take him by the collar and put him out; and when it was represented to me, as it was a day or two afterwards, that it was a mistake on my part, I at once wrote to the man and apologised, and he was perfectly satisfied; and I am very much surprised that a thing of that sort should have been brought up by Mr Mackay.

39434. I have now recovered the complaint of John Sutherland, the soldier's son. The complaint is not that the soldier was evicted, but that he was deprived of a portion of his holding?—I am sorry I cannot give a

SUTHERLAND.
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GOLSPIE.
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General Sir A.
Kimball and
Mr J. Peacock.

SUTHERLAND. positive answer to that matter without having time to make the necessary inquiry. I shall be glad to supply your Lordship with the facts of the case. I do know, as a fact, that the widow was tenant till January 1880, and the son is now the tenant. I don't say there has been no diminution of the holding. It may be or it may not be.

GOLSPIE. 39435. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You said there were little or no arrears due by the crofters in this district?—Very little.

39436. They pay their rent regularly?—Very regularly indeed. Last year the parish of Rogart was more in arrears than any other parish in the district.

39437. Did not the Duke give some abatement within the last few years on the estate?—Not to the small tenants.

39438. But he did to the big tenants?—Yes, for the very severe winters of 1879–80.

39439. How much did he give on the average?—50 per cent. on one year's rent, and that has been followed by some reductions of rent in cases where large sheep farms were taken when prices for sheep ruled at the very highest. They have gone down so much that it was thought necessary to reduce the rent.

39440. But you did not think it necessary to reduce the crofters' rents?—No, seeing that they are so very moderate already.

The following tables were handed in by Sir Arnold Kemball:—

Population of Sutherland.

	Total.	Increase.	Decrease.
Census of 1801, . . .	23,117
" 1811, . . .	23,629	512	...
" 1821, . . .	23,840	211	...
" 1831, . . .	25,518	1678	...
" 1841, . . .	24,782	...	736
" 1851, . . .	25,793	1011	...
" 1861, . . .	25,246	...	547
" 1871, . . .	24,296	...	950
" 1881, . . .	23,316	...	970

Population of the Several Parishes and Districts in 1801 contrasted with 1881.

	1801.	1881.	Increase.	Decrease.
Clyne, . . .	1643	1812	169	...
Creich, . . .	1974	2223	249	...
Dornoch, . . .	2362	2522	160	...
Golspie, . . .	1616	1548	...	68
Kildonan, . . .	1440	1935 } *	...	295
Loth, . . .	1374	584 }	...	
Laing, . . .	1209	1354	145	...
Rogart, . . .	2022	1227	...	795
	— 13,640	— 13,205		
Farr, . . .	2408	1930	...	478
Reay Parish, . . .	865	994	129	...
Tongue, . . .	1348	1933	585	...
	— 4,621	— 4,857		
Assynt, . . .	2395	2773	378	...
Durness, . . .	1208	968	...	240
Eddrachilles, . . .	1253	1523	270	...
	— 4,856	— 5,264		
Totals, . . .	23,117	23,326	509	

* Boundaries altered 1847.

Sutherland Estate—Dunrobin Management.

Return of Crofters' Holdings, Live Stock, and Rents, according to the Classification fixed by the Royal Commission, with Averages thereof.

SUTHERLAND.

GOLSPIE.

General Sir A. Kemball and Mr J. Peacock.

Parishes.	No. of Tenancies.	Total Acreage Available.	Average Acreage Available.	LIVE STOCK.*					Total Rents including Common Pasture, £	Average per acre Available, except Grazing held individually.		
				Horses.	Cattle.		Sheep.	Pigs.				
					Over 1 year.	Under 1 year.						
Clyne, .	212	1048	4.9	165	233	198	264	59	467	s. d.		
Creich, .	14	98	7	21	36	11	126	11	60	12 3		
Dornoch, .	189	1596	8.4	197	292	166	358	69	727	8 1		
Golspie,	49	221	4.5	33	58	39	96	9	106	9 4		
Kildonan,	174	621	3.5	113	185	79	21	14	320	10 2		
Lairg, .	95	794	8.3	109	260	130	516	60	490	12 2		
Loth, .	47	103	2.2	20	51	11	4	5	84	16 3		
Rogart,	198	1579	7.9	223	539	206	1928	123	902	10 10		
	978	6060	6.2	881	1654	840	3313	350	3156			
						2494						

Poor and Schools Assessments 1882-3.

Paid by the Duke of Sutherland, as owner and part occupier :—

	Poor.	Schools.
Clyne, .	£284	£53
Creich, .	75	55
Dornoch, .	281	141
Golspie,	176	109
Kildonan, .	231	142
Lairg, .	133	83
Loth, .	73	30
Rogart, .	126	116
	1379	729
		= £2108

His Grace's share as above, being nearly 55 per cent.
of the rents paid by small tenants.

Amount paid by other occupiers, 1837

Total, £3945

Which, in comparison with the total small rents received in 1882, 3839

Shows an excess of rates over rents of, £106

WILLIAM SUTHERLAND FRASER, Procurator-Fiscal, and Factor for the Estates of Achany and Gruids, Dornoch (82)—examined.

39441. *The Chairman.*—Have you a statement to make or put in with reference to what has passed here to-day?—The first paper put into my

William
Sutherland
Fraser.

* Numbers of live stock as returned by tenants.

SUTHERLAND.
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GOLSPIE.
—
William
Sutherland
Fraser.

hands is unauthenticated by the signature of any person. I have read it carefully, and I find it is nothing but a tissue of falsehoods.

39442. Will you please substitute the word inaccuracies?—Well, exaggerations. I have looked at another, and I may almost state the very same objection to the statements contained here, and I am quite sure of this, that whoever produced this as a witness here to-day had not the sanction or concurrence of the tenantry—the crofters upon the estate of Gruids—for a more orderly set of people never existed, who pay their rents regularly, never have been in arrears for the last fifty years, and never made a complaint or stated a grievance to me personally, or to the ground officer to communicate to me. It certainly astonished me to see such a long array here of grievances that I never heard of, and I do not believe there is a single grievance that can be stated from that particular part of the parish of Laig. The man Black, who gave in this statement, pays a rent of £13. He has about ten acres of arable land. He has his share of a large pasturage, and keeps horses and cattle, and he sold this very year £30 worth of hay and about £37 worth of cattle—in all, £67. That is my information; and he had the whole of the crop for the main tenance of his family,—the crop of corn and potatoes and turnips, or whatever else he had. He is a stranger, and is not a native of the district. During the fifty years I was factor on the estate I never incurred a shilling of law expenses against one tenant on the estate. I never removed a tenant. They continued to pay only the old rents that were exacted from them fifty years ago, so that I was very much taken aback by finding they had complained without previously making some statement to me of what their grievances were. I think that applies to the whole statements that appear in these papers. I only regret I was not aware they were to have been examined so soon, for then I would have had an opportunity of cross-questioning any person regarding the statement made.

39443. As far as I remember the tenor of this paper, the principal grievance that was complained of was this, that at a rather distant date, twenty-five or twenty-six years ago, the people were deprived of a considerable portion of their common pasture?—That I deny. The ground officer is here to confirm what I say.

39444. Am I then to assume that since the property passed into the hands of Sir James Matheson's family there has been no diminution or withdrawal of common pasture from the crofters?—None, not an atom. They have not been deprived of a single yard of common pasture or arable land.

39445. And no increase of rental?—No increase of rental. The old rent was continued.

39446. There was another statement or complaint, that under the former proprietor an assurance had been given to the people that they would receive compensation for a certain class of improved houses in case such houses should be built; are you cognisant of that old agreement?—No, and I do not believe it.

39447. Well, there is a paper put in which pretends to be a copy?—Yes I saw it.

39448. Did you ever hear of it before?—Never; I never heard of it, or any person on the estate.

39449. You mean the point was never brought under your consideration before?—Never.

39450. So if it is a hardship or grievance, it is one that was unknown to you, and of which the tenants have never complained?—Never. There is no tenant alive on the estate that knows anything about it—it is dated so far back.

39451. It is dated 1834. In fact this agreement or this promise has

never been repudiated by you in your administration?—No, and never intimated to me, and I don't know whom it would apply to.

SUTHERLAND.
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GOLSPIE.
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William
Sutherland
Fraser.

39452. There was a statement made which I think it right to mention, though I do not see how it exactly affects the present property, and that is that for sometime you united the offices of tenant and factor?—That is not the fact. My father died in 1853, and I succeeded him in the factorship. He had a farm, but shortly after his death it was given up, and was never held in my name.

39453. So you practically never were a farmer on the estate?—No. My mother succeeded my father in it, and upon her death it was given up. I would not take it myself. It was a small sheep farm. There are two sheep farms in addition to the crofts. I brought a gentleman from Ross-shire two months ago to go over these crofts, and he is willing to be examined and give his opinion of the comfort in which he found every tenant on the estate, and no grievance stated either to him at the time or to any other person on behalf of Lady Matheson, who has had it for the last five years.

39454. Were you made aware of a statement that a man who was engaged in the improvement of ground had been stopped in the execution of his improvements?—Yes. It was no part of his lease, and he took possession without any intimation to Lady Matheson, or to me as factor. He took violent possession of that bit of ground, and commenced to trench it.

39455. It did not form part of his holding?—It did not form part of his holding.

39456. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—With reference to what one of the delegates stated, he said there was about 1000 acres that was once arable upon the estate of Gruids, that is under sheep now and waste?—I deny that. I don't believe there was six acres. I knew no arable land there in my time, and that goes back not only to the fifty years I had charge of the estate, but to ten years before, when I knew it.

39457. I show you a holograph document. Do you know Sir George's writing?—Yes.

39458. But it has never been presented to you before?—Never; I never heard of it.

39459. *Mr Cameron.*—There was a plantation mentioned by a man John Ross, who said that when it was made it did not give any employment to the people in thinning or draining, or anything else; do you know anything about that plantation?—I know that I planted it myself in the year 1848, and it might have been thinned, and was thinned, but it was under the charge of the ground officer, and he never employed any people on the estate for any work except the tenants themselves that were willing to work. I know the man John Ross, one of the most indolent tenants on the estate.

39460. Then you don't even admit the statement about the plantation?—No.

39461. You say there was thinning carried out?—There was thinning carried on by the people on the estate.

39462. *The Chairman.*—When you mention there was no arable ground upon the property, do you dispute the affirmation that there were large evictions at a remote period, seventy years ago?—I never heard of them. There may have been, but I never heard of them.

39463. Was this a wild country at one time, without small tenants?—There were always both small tenants and large tenants in my recollection. There may have been evictions 100 years ago, but I had not arrived in this country at that time to know anything at all about them.

39464. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—What property are you referring to

SUTHER-
LAND.

GOLSPIE.

William
Sutherland
Fraser.

when you say you think there were no evictions? The statement made to us was that seventy years ago, in 1813, there were evictions?—I don't know anything at all about them.

39465. You don't deny they took place?—I don't know; I never heard of them.

37466. *The Chairman.*—Is it true or is it not true that since the Matheson family came into possession the small tenants were deprived of a large portion of their common pasture without reduction of rent?—I have answered that—not a single yard.

39467. And you are perfectly confident of that?—Perfectly confident of that. They came into possession in 1848.

39468. *Mr Cameron.*—Do you know anything about the case of James Robertson, crofter and miller, Gruids? ‘Having about two acres in his ‘croft which was not cultivated, he employed men to trench it. After ‘he trenched one acre of land and fenced it in, he received strict orders ‘to stop improving his land, and he was compelled to pull up his fence, ‘and this land is now only a common waste, but he has to pay for it?’— That was what I alluded to as not belonging to his croft at all. He usurped and took possession of that ground, and he was stopped. Besides, it was part of the common pasture belonging to the whole tenants.

39469-70. But you had intended to plant it?—It was intended to plant it.

DONALD SIMPSON, Crofter, Achrimsdale, Parish of Clyne (63)—examined.

Donald
Simpson.

39471. *The Chairman.*—You are a delegate?—Yes.

39472. Have you got a written statement?—Yes. ‘The township of Achrimsdale, which I am delegated to represent, consists of sixteen families, numbering forty-eight persons, with an area of about forty-nine acres, and is divided into allotments ranging from two to six acres for each family. Thus, there is an average of only one acre for each person, upon which it is almost impossible to subsist without other means of livelihood. Besides increased holdings, we desire to have fixity of tenure secured by Act of Parliament, and not as at present being dependent on the goodwill of the landlord as represented by his factor. We also desire to have our improvements credited to us, and not calculated as a reason for adding to our rents, when one of the family succeeds the parents. Some of us have built substantial houses without the slightest assistance from his Grace, except in cases where they are slated, when wood and lime are granted. This grant is given to assist in the erection of the dwelling-house only, and does not apply to steadings, whether slated or otherwise. In my own case I got wood and lime to the amount of about £16 in value, to assist in the erecting of dwelling-house which cost £120, the steading £35. I am here showing the little assistance we get, and the sacrifice we are asked to make in return. After we succeed in building our houses from the few materials supplied by the landlord, we are supposed to yield up all claims after one year's occupancy, and afterwards live on the hope and assurance that if we are good and obedient tenants we will be permitted to dwell in undisturbed possession in our houses. We possess in common with three adjoining small farmers and twenty-one crofters belonging to another township, the right of grazing on a hill near our crofts. This hill is supposed to carry from 250 to 300 sheep, besides horses and cattle, but is of such sterile nature and so unfit for pasturage, that those of us who can afford

' doing so are compelled to send our horses to graze elsewhere. This entails a cost of 25s. for each horse. During the winter and till the middle of spring part of us have to provide and cut whins to keep life in them, with a little straw and hay. We find the struggle for subsistence is getting sharp and severe. Some of us have also to complain of the manner in which we have to pay for a small burn, which had to be deepened to keep the overflow off a few of the crofts, which we think we are not entitled to pay, as the adjoining farmer pays for the half and his Grace used to pay the other half. Part of us have paid upwards of 10 per cent. annually since two years for the cleaning of it, owing to the factor threatening that we were tenants at will.

39473.—We hear from the commissioner that the tenants generally upon his Grace's estate would rather sit without a lease as life tenants than have a lease for a certain number of years; what do you think about that? Would you prefer to have a lease, or would you rather sit upon an understanding?—I would rather have a lease, but a substantial lease—not a nineteen years' lease, because I have got £16 worth of lime and wood there, and I have sacrificed £189 if I am evicted any time. I cannot say whether we may or not. It is hardly worth their while to do it to an old man like me.

39474. But you don't think it probable you will be evicted?—No, I don't think it would be consistent with any generous man, and I make no doubt that his Grace is a very benevolent man; but I am sorry to say there are some who have to do with him that are not so.

39475. But what I want to understand generally is whether a lease would be more agreeable to the people than trusting to the benevolence of the best proprietor?—No, I don't prefer a lease unless it is a substantial one. It would require to be a ninety-nine years' lease or a perpetual one.

39476. What has prompted you to lay out so large a sum of money upon a house without security? That surely shows you have great confidence in the management of the estate?—Well, I had been forty-seven years in business, and as I had a little capital about me I thought I would make myself commodious in my later days, but I find it the reverse. If I was a young man, I would prefer to put 3000 miles of the Atlantic between me and the estate.

39477. You would prefer emigration?—I would, in one sense.

39478. In what sense?—That I would not be annoyed, because it is not easy for a spirited man to put up with what he feels. I stated about a drain there.

39479. Is the drain not useful to you?—No, not useful at all.

39480. But it is useful to the township?—To two parties, no more; and we pay 10 per cent. The cleaning only cost £10, and the adjoining farmer paid £5, and the factor thought proper we were to pay the £5; and as he saw we would not do it I signed, but it was under protest I put down my name; and then we pay 10 per cent., and he charges that along with the rent.

39481. Ten per cent. upon what?—Upon the £5. We pay 11s. between us for it.

39482. How much do you pay yourself?—I had 2s. to pay, but I would have to pay £1 if I was to pay it all.

39483. You have to pay 2s. every year?—Yes. Besides, there is another drain to the west that men complain of very strongly. They are paying since thirty years for a drain, and there is one that paid £1, 17s. 6d. since that, and he thinks it should come off him.

39484. The Commissioners cannot enter into discussion of drains or

SUTHERLAND.
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GOLSPIE.
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Donald Simpson.

SUTHERLAND.
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little things of that kind. Your complaint generally is that you would like security of tenure?—Yes.

GOLSPIE.
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Donald
Simpson.

39485. *Mr Cameron.*—Do you represent the people of the parish of Clyne?—No, only my own township. The principal man is away; he had to go to Caithness.

39486. Were you elected to represent them?—Yes,

39487. Did they tell you to say all you have said to-day?—Yes.

39488. Do they agree with you about the 3000 miles you would put between you and the system that exists?—Oh! it is just a word of my own; but it is not pleasant for any spirited man to have to do many things.

39489. Do you hear the people talking much in your part of the district about emigration?—No.

39490. They don't seem to take any particular interest in it?—Well, they are pretty old people there.

39491. There must be some young ones?—Not to marry. They have no encouragement now.

39492. You mean they get no encouragement from the young women to marry?—Well, unless they be fixed by a young woman.

39493. Where do the young men go to?—They generally go to the south to work.

39494. Do they remain there?—Very often. Most of them stay and assist their parents, and that is the way they build themselves houses of their own. There are a considerable number of slated houses in the parish now.

39495. And do the young women go out into service in the parish now?—They do. It is not easy to get a woman to stop.



ANDREW SUTHERLAND (72)—examined.

Andrew
Sutherland.

39496. *The Chairman.*—Are you a crofter?—No, I am only a sojourner. I was a crofter on the Sutherland estates from 1835 to 1854, and then I emigrated to Australia, where I remained for twenty-seven years.

39497. Have you got a written statement to make?—I have.—‘At a meeting of crofters of Lower and Upper Doll on 14th September, Mr Andrew Sutherland was delegated to represent our grievances before the Royal Commission to be convened at Golspie on 8th October, which are these, viz. (1) Want of pasture sufficient to graze our few cattle; (2) the smallness of our crofts; (3) no fixity of tenure; (4) no remuneration for improvements; and lastly, being taxed for improving our holdings, a tax which we consider unjust, and for which we pray our legislators to repeal. In the Doll district there are fifty crofts, average seven acres, and only two of these are able to keep a team of horses. All this area is cultivated by manual labour, and the major part of which is bleak and gravelly. Population of district at census 1881—112 males, 127 females—total, 239 (which speaks strongly of the anti-amorous disposition of the Doll bachelors).’

39498. If the proprietor was inclined to enlarge the pasture, are there farms from which it could be taken—adjacent farms?—The Duke has plenty of land in South Brora.

39499. Is it adjacent to your township?—Quite adjacent, and the people are willing to take it.

39500. You have been in the colonies for a long time?—Yes, I was in Victoria for twenty-seven years.

39501. Do you think it, on the whole, better that a man should have a new croft or an enlarged croft in this country, or that he should emigrate and take up land in Australia?—It is much better for those who emigrate to go to Victoria—all those who can better themselves—but it is much worse for those they leave behind, because every shipload of emigrants that goes from this country there brings a shipload of grain here, so that the American and Australian farmers will be able to undersell the English growers in their own markets. Then I see these sheep farms in Sutherlandshire, from which there have been exported millions of tons of wool and carcasses. Of course the pasture must be deteriorating. Unless you replenish the land, you may calculate upon your produce being very low. I say the same in regard to sheep pasture. Hundreds of tons of wool and carcasses have been taken from the Sutherland estates, and the land must be deteriorated of course.

39502. But you think it would be an advantageous thing for their own interest for the people to emigrate?—Undoubtedly; it has been my experience.

39503. May I take the liberty to ask why you have come here; was it to see your friends?—I suppose it was to get a consecrated grave in my native country.

39504. You feel attached to your country?—I do.

39505. How long have you returned?—Two years.

39506. Are you living with your own people?—Yes, with a sister.

39507. Do you find the people improved since you went away?—Considerably in dress and in manners, but in regard to pecuniary matters I don't think they are much better. The daily wages are considerably improved. I was surprised to hear a brother delegate from some other parish say he thought the Duke could do no wrong, but it is *vice versa* in our parish. The people are under the impression that officials can do no wrong, because if I am a servant of the Duke I am answerable to him for anything I do. My impression is that the officials of the Duke do their duty.

39508. You think they do their duty?—I think they do.

39509. But I am interested to hear that you think the people are, on the whole, improved?—Much improved in dress and in manners, but if I speak of morals I am afraid I will have to say different. I can say this in regard to Sutherlandshire—and I say it for the youths, because I am sure the press will take it up and give it publicity, and the Royal Commission will not meet another case of the sort in all broad Scotland, England, and Ireland. The Duke of Sutherland is one of the best landed proprietors in Scotland, and he has the best law-abiding people to deal with. My grandfather was born in 1735, and from that day to this there was no man or woman belonging to Sutherlandshire hanged or transported but one man, and a white flag was waving over our county jail without one man either for debt or crime, and the Royal Commission will not find the like of that in all broad Scotland.

39510. Mr Cameron.—About those who emigrate, you say it is not a benefit for those who remain behind, because those who go to the colonies help to lower the prices of grain and cattle on those who remain?—They do.

39511. At all events, you admit the people themselves who go obtain a benefit?—Yes.

39512. Then one portion of the community receives a benefit—those who go?—Yes.

39513. Now, supposing that these people did not go, and that their places were filled up by foreigners—Germans, Swiss, and so on—both

SUTHERLAND.

GOLSPIE.

Andrew
Sutherland

SUTHERLAND.
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Andrew
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portions would suffer loss—those who did not go and those who remained? —Yes, but when you see that those people who were evicted to the barren shores of Sutherland could make homes for themselves, don't you think that those who emigrate to a land of milk and honey make a comfortable home?

39514. But I am talking of those they leave behind who suffer loss, because the price of grain and cattle is lowered on those who remain. What I want to draw attention to is this, that supposing the emigrants did not go from this country, and that their places were filled up by Germans and Swedes, both parties would be losers—both those who might have gone and those who remained, and who still have the prices of cattle and grain lowered to them; so it is a benefit to the whole community that some should emigrate? —Yes, but if the thing continues a few years longer, every shipload of emigrants that goes to Australia and America will be able to send shiploads of produce and cattle here, so that the American and Australian farmers will be able to undersell the English farmers in their own markets; and more than that, I know that in a few short years, if things continue as they are doing, the crofters will have more land on their hand than they want, and the landlords will have more land on their hand than they can dispose of.

Rev. ALEXANDER MACKAY, Free Church Minister, Rogart—examined.

Rev. Alex.
Mackay.

39515. *The Chairman.*—You have a statement to make to us? —Yes.
Grievance as to the State of Education in the Parish of Rogart.—As a member of the School Board of Rogart for the last nine years, and chairman of the present board, I beg to submit to you Royal Commissioners a grievance which has seriously affected the education of the young in the parish. During the nine years ending June 1882, the factor of the Duke of Sutherland was chairman of the School Board. Among the first acts of the first board elected under the Education Act of 1872, was the decision that the parish, which had always three schools, should be put upon two. The chairman invariably managing to have a majority of the board to follow him in every proposal, moved, and carried, that a school in the north part of the parish should be closed, and that the children should be compelled to go down to the old parochial school in the centre of the parish—an unreasonable distance. The parents and ratepayers joined the minority of the board against this finding, and appealed to the Board of Education. An officer of inquiry, who, by order of the Board of Education, visited the district, reported in the same line as the minority of the board, that the proceeding of the School Board was injurious to the interests of education in the district. The Board of Education, acting upon this report, at once recommended the School Board to reopen the closed school. The Board of Education failing to get the local board to comply with its decision, sent down its secretary, Dr Taylor (August 1874), who, after visiting said district, peremptorily ordered this school to be reopened, which was accordingly done. Previously to this quarrel between the chairman of the board and the people of the district, this house had been offered by the authorities to the people at a rent of £1 a year, but ever since this quarrel took place the rent charged is £5 annually. Another contention originating in the same way, but proving much more serious, arose respecting the west end of the parish in the district of Strathfleath. Two old school buildings existed in this district within $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles of each other. They were both unfit for the teaching of children under the Act,