The people are of short stature, robust, and healthy. They generally profess the Protestant religion ; but education is in a very low state. In 1831, one half of the population were unable to read in any language. Great numbers have lately emigrated to America. The towns in Skye are of no importance. The population in 1821 amounted to 20,627; and in 1831, to 22,796, of whom 11,883 were females.

There are two or three fairs held annually at Portree, the principal town, to which almost every part of Skye sends cattle. The commodities which arc sold there are horses, cows, sheep, goats, hides, butter, cheese, fish, and wool. In Skye appear many ruins of Danish forts, watch-towers, bea­cons, temples, and sepulchral monuments. All the forts are known by the term Dun ; such as Dun-Skudborg, Dun- Derig, Dun-Skeriness, Dun-David, and so on.

SLACKEN, in *Metallurgy,* a term used by miners to express a spongy and semivitrified substance which is mixed with the ores of metals, to prevent their fusion. It is the scoria or scum separated from the surface of the former fusions of metals. To this is frequently added limestone, and sometimes a kind of coarse iron ore, in the running of the poorer gold ores.

SLAVERY is a word, of which, though generally under­stood, it is not easy to give a proper definition. An ex­cellent moral writer has defined it to be “ an obligation to labour for the benefit of the master, without the contract or consent of the servant.” But may not he be properly called a slave, who has given up his freedom to discharge a debt which he could not otherwise pay, or who has thrown it away at a game of hazard ? In many nations, debts have been legally discharged in this manner; and in some savage tribes, it is no uncommon thing for a man, after having lost at play all his other property, to stake, on a single throw of dice, himself, his wife, and his children. That persons who have thus lost their liberty are slaves, will hardly be denied ; and surely the infatuated gamester is a slave by his own con­tract. The debtor, too, if he was aware of the law, and contracted debts larger than he could reasonably expect to be able to pay, may justly be considered as having come under an obligation to labour for the benefit of a master with his own consent ; for every man is answerable for all the known consequences of his voluntary actions.

But this definition of slavery seems to be defective as well as inaccurate. A man may be under an obligation to la­bour through life for the benefit of a master, and yet that master have no right to dispose of him by sale, or in any other way to make him the property of a third person ; but the word slave, as used amongst us, always denotes a per­son who may be bought and sold like a beast in the market.@@1

As nothing can be more evident than that all men have, by the law of nature, an equal right to life, liberty, and the produce of their own labour, it is not easy to conceive what can have first led one part of them to imagine that they had a right to enslave another. Inequalities of rank are indeed inevitable in civil society ; and from them results that ser­vitude which is founded in contract, and is of temporary duration. He who has much property has many things to attend to, and must be disposed to hire persons to assist and serve him ; whilst those who have little or no property must be equally willing to be hired for that purpose. And if the master be kind, and the servant faithful, they will both be happier in this connection than they could have been out of it. But from a state of servitude, where the slave is at the absolute disposal of his master in all things, and may be transferred without his own consent from one proprietor to another, like an ox or an ass, happiness must be for ever banished. How then came a traffic so unna­

tural and unjust as that of slaves, to be originally introduced into the world ?

The common answer to this question is, that it took its rise amongst savages, who, in their frequent wars with eacn other, either massacred their captives in cold blood, or con­demned them to perpetual slavery. In support of this opi­nion etymologists observe, that the Latin word *servus,* which signifies not a hired servant, but a *slave,* is derived from *servare,* to preserve ; and that such men were called *ser­in,* because they were captives, whose lives were preserved on the condition of their becoming the property of the victor.

That slavery had its origin from war, we think extremely probable, nor are we inclined to controvert this etymology of the word *servus ;* but the traffic in men prevailed almost universally, long before the Latin language or Roman name was heard of ; and there is no good evidence that it began amongst savages. The word עכר, in the Old Testament, which in our version is rendered servant, signifies literally a slave, either bom in the family or bought with money, in contradistinction to שביו, which denotes a hired servant ; and as Noah makes use of the word nay in the curse which he denounces upon Ham and Canaan immediately after the deluge, it would appear that slavery had its origin before that event. If so, it may be plausibly conjectured that it be­gan amongst those violent persons whom our translators have called *giants,@@2* though the original word נפלם literally sig­nifies *assaulters of others.* Those wretches seem to have first seized upon women, whom they forcibly compelled to minister to their pleasures ; and from this kind of violence the progress was natural to that by which they enslaved their weaker brethren amongst the men, obliging them to labour for their benefit, without allowing them fee or reward.

After the deluge the first dealer in slaves seems to have been Nimrod. “ He began,” we are told, “ to be a mighty one in the earth, and was a mighty hunter before the Lord.” He could not, however, be the first hunter of wild beasts ; nor is it probable that his dexterity in the chase, which was then the universal employment, could have been so far superior to that of all his contemporaries, as to entitle him to the appellation of “ the mighty hunter before the Lord.” Hence most commentators have concluded, that he was a hunter of men ; an opinion which they think receives some countenance from the import of his name, the word Nimrod signifying a rebel. Whatever be in this, there can be little doubt that he became a mighty one by vio­lence ; for it appears from Scripture, that he invaded the territories of Ashur the son of Shem, who had settled in Shinar ; and, obliging him to remove into Assyria, he seized upon Babylon, and made it the capital of the first kingdom in the world. As he had great projects in view, it seems to be in a high degree probable that he made bond-servants of the captives whom he took in his wars, and employed them in building or repairing the metropolis of his king­dom ; and hence may perhaps be dated the origin of post­diluvian slavery.

That it began thus early can hardly be questioned ; for we know that it prevailed universally in the age of Abraham, who was born within seventy years after the death of Nim­rod. That patriarch had three hundred and eighteen ser­vants or slaves, born in his own house, and trained to arms, with whom he pursued and conquered the four kings who had taken captive his brother’s son.@@3 And it appears from the conversation which took place between him and the king of Sodom after the battle, that both believed the conqueror had a right to consider his prisoners as part of his spoil. “ Give me,” says the king, “ the *persons,* and take *the goods* to thyself.” It is indeed evident from numberless passages

@@@, The Roman orator’s definition of slavery, Parad. V. is as accurate as any that we have seen. “ Servitus est obedientia fracti animi et abjecti et arbitrio carentis suo;" whether the unhappy person fell into that state with or without his own contract or consent.

@@@2 Gen. vi, 4.

@@@» Gen xiv.