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 I.

PRESENTED TO BOTH HOUSES OF PARLIMENT BY COMMAND OF HER MAJESTY

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HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS COMMISSION.

SKYE.

BRAES.

BRAES, SKYE, TUESDAY, MAY 8, 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.

ANGUS STEWART, Crofter, Beinn-a-chorrain—examined.

Angus Stewart.

1. *The Chairman.*—Would you have the goodness to state what is your occupation?—A crofter.

2. Have you also been engaged in fishing?—Yes.

3. Were you born here, at the Braes?—Born at the Braes.

4. Have you lived here all your life?—Not all my life. I have been away, but not very far off.

5. From time to time?—From time to time.

6. But you are thoroughly acquainted with the feelings and interests of the people here?—Yes.

7. Have you been freely elected by the people to be their delegate?—Yes.

8. Now, will you have the goodness to state to me what are the hardships or grievances of which the people complain who have elected you?—Yes; but it is in Gaelic that I prefer to speak.

9. You desire to be examined in Gaelic?—Yes. [From this point the examination of the witness and of subsequent witnesses in Skye was conducted through Mr Dugald M'Lachlan, sheriff-clerk depute, as interpreter.]

10. Then you will have the goodness to state what are the hardships and grievances, if any, of which the people whom you represent at this place complain?—I would wish that I should have an opportunity of saying a few words before I tell that, and that is that I should have the assurance that I will not be evicted from my holding by the landlord or factor, as I have seen done already. I would not have a fire in my house at Whitsunday I want the assurance that I will not be evicted, for I cannot bear evidence to the distress of my people without bearing evidence to the oppression and high-handedness of the landlord and his factor.

11. Have you anything more to add to your preparatory statement?—No.

12. It is impossible for the Commission to give you any absolute security of the kind which you desire. The Commission cannot interfere

between you and your landlord, or between you and the law, but we trust that no act of oppression or severity would ever be exercised towards you or any one else by the landlord in consequence of your courage and goodness in telling the absolute truth. [Examination ADJOURNED.]

Mr ALEXANDER MACDONALD, Factor for Lord Macdonald—examined.

Mr Alexander Macdonald.

13. *The Chairman.*—You are at liberty to speak if you desire to make any observations?—In the first place, I may say that I am surprised at this man's statement, because he is not one of our crofters at all. He is a crofter's son; he is not a crofter. That is the first thing. In the next place, I do not think that he has any reason whatever, or that any person has any reason whatever, if he tells the truth, and nothing but the truth, to fear anything. In fact, we consider it rather insulting to us to insinuate anything of the sort. We despise to do anything of the sort. We expect and trust that the men will tell the truth and nothing but the truth, and the whole truth.

14. There is something rather ambiguous in the statement which you have made. Am I to understand that you publicly state that no proceeding will be taken against any tenant or inhabitant of this place in consequence of what they state before the Commission on this occasion?—I believe not.

15. You say you believe not, but do you engage that no proceedings will be taken?—*That is all I can state: on my own property certainly there* will not be, and, I believe, on no property. In fact, such an idea never entered our heads; but we expect the people will tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

16. *Mr Cameron.*—Would you engage on behalf of the proprietors for whom you act; for all properties with which you are connected?—Most certainly; but this I would say, if we hear any man making a grossly false statement against us, which we can prove to be false, I do not think that in human nature it would be found we should like to continue that man as our tenant. If there is any statement which is made by a man thinking and believing it to be true, even though we ourselves differ from it, we would never dream of using any power that we have, but if the man tells a parcel of unfounded lies—which I do not believe any man here or elsewhere in Skye will do until I hear it—that is a different matter altogether. So far as we are concerned the people have full liberty to tell everything they have to say, without any fear.

17. *The Chairman.*—If you are able to do so I would rather that you availed yourself of this occasion to make a distinct declaration that whatever the people say no proceeding will ever be taken against them on that account,—that on this particular occasion whatever they may say, however mistaken you may think them, however erroneous or false, no proceeding will be attempted?—These are my own personal feelings, and certainly so far as the properties for which I am factor are concerned they will never know or hear anything about it—so far as I, as factor, am concerned.

18. Then I am authorised by you to assure this gentleman before me that nothing will ever be done to his prejudice on this occasion?—I expect that he will tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, and so far as I am concerned as factor, I will visit in no way anything upon him, and I believe Lord Macdonald will do nothing.

19. *Mr Cameron.*—You have heard what this witness has said, that except under certain conditions he refuses to give us evidence. We have been appointed by the Queen to investigate this subject thoroughly, and it is impossible that we can do so unless we get proper evidence from witnesses such as Mr Angus Stewart. Now, I am sure you would not wish that the evidence should fail to be recorded from any disinclination on your part to give the assurance which has been asked by the chairman? —I give him the fullest assurance. Mr Alexander Macdonald.

20. And I think all we wish was contained in the observation which I formerly made, namely, that so far as concerns the estates under your management nothing shall happen to any witness in consequence of any statement which he may make, whether you consider it truthful or not, before this Commission. If you give that assurance we may at once proceed?—Certainly we expect the man to tell the truth.

21. *The Chairman.*—But let us come to a point on this matter. Will you state yes or no in reply to my question,—will you authorise me to state absolutely to this man that nothing will ever be done prejudicial to his interest or that of his family in consequence of anything he may say on this occasion?—I believe I am quite at liberty to say so. I believe I am perfectly at liberty to say so, and from the first I could have said so.

ANGUS STEWART—examination resumed.

22. *The Chairman.*—You have absolute security, on the word of Mr Macdonald, that nothing will be done to your prejudice or that of your family in consequeuce of what you state to-day?—I want to say a few words in English. It seems that Mr Macdonald objects to my evidence because I am only a crofter's son. My great grandfather was in Beinchoran. I do not say he was born there; but my grandfather was born in Beinn-a-chorrain, and lived in Beinn-a-chorrain eighty-six years. He died there. My mother was born there, and is living there yet, at the age of eighty-four. I am forty years of age, and am living in Beinn-a-chorrain. I am married, and have a family. I have been paying rent in Beinn-a-chorrain to Lord Macdonald for fifteen or sixteen years, and I think I have the right to bear evidence to-day. Angus Stewart.

23. You have been elected a delegate by the people of the place, and that is quite sufficient for us. Therefore, will you state now what are the grievances and hardships of which the people complain?—The principal thing that we have to complain of is our poverty and what has caused our poverty. The smallness of our holdings and the inferior quality of the land is what has caused our poverty; and the way in which the poor crofters are huddled together, and the best part of the land devoted to deer forests and big farms. If we had plenty of land there would be no poverty in our country. We are willing and able to work it.

24. I wish you first to finish the list of your grievances and hardships. You are now suggesting remedies, but I am asking you to state your grievances and hardships?—The principal hardship I see is that the people cannot take a crop out of the ground. The ground does not yield crops to them.

25. Having stated the hardships and grievances of which you complain, I wish you now to state what, in your opinion, and in the opinion of those whom you represent, are the proper remedies?—What would remedy the people's grievances throughout the island of Skye is to give them plenty

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of land, as there is plenty of it, and they are willing to work it. I have to complain also of the rent that is charged us. The rent is heavy.

26. That belongs to the grievances. Among the grievances you say the rent is too heavy?—Thirty-two years ago drainage money was laid upon us, and though in sixteen years both principal and interest was supposed to have been paid up, we are still paying the drainage money, and it is our being deprived of the hill pasture of Benlee which has thrown us back so much the past number of years. Though the hill of Benlee was taken from us, not only was there no abatement made in our rents, but the rent was increased to some extent; and in evidence that the hill was part of our original holdings, up to sixteen or seventeen years ago we were receiving £3 of money rent from the landlord as consideration for accommodation which we were making on the hill to Lord Macdonald's gamekeepers. I remember the factor clearing a township and devoting the township's land to the purposes of the deer forest,—clearing them out of their houses and settling them down among the Braes,—from Tormichaig, Sconser. He settled a widow and her family down on my father's lot with the intention that my father would share with her the peats and the half of the croft, and that without my father having been duly warned, and without his being in arrears of rent. When he went to the factor to complain of this proceeding the factor told him that if he would not give her room he would not have a sod on Lord Macdonald's property by the term.

27. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Who was the factor?—Mr Ballingall.

28. *Mr Cameron.*—What year was that?—It is thirty-one years since this township was cleared for the purposes of the deer forest.

29. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Was Lord Macdonald under trust at that time?—I cannot say, but I believe he was. When he could not force this widow and her family upon my father there was a poor weakly man in our township who was put out of his holding for her with his family. He was put out of his holding for this woman, and the woman was installed in his place. The poor man, with his weak family, was evicted, and he got the stance of a house outside the enclosure of the township.

30. *The Chairman.*—We want, at this stage, rather a statement in general terms of the nature of your hardships and grievances, and we would come to particular cases by asking questions afterwards. I am anxious that you should state, in general terms, any grievance, and then any remedies you recommend?—It is a great hardship that all our earnings at the fishing we have to put into meal for the support of our families, and that altogether because we have not land which will yield a crop, but land which has been cropped continuously for the past thirty years, within my own memory—continually cropping the same land—and as to the seed that we put into the ground, we cannot get back out of the ground two-thirds of what we put into it.

31. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—You do not get the seed back?—We do not get the seed back. We don't get more than two-thirds of the seed we put into the ground. I do not mean that that is so every year. Some years will be better than that. Last year we had not one-third of what we put into the ground, and the year before we only had one and a half bushel over and above what we actually put into the ground.

32. *The Chairman.*—But we rather want a statement at present in general terms. You have stated in general terms that your great grievances are confined to old land which has been exhausted, and which no longer produces a crop. Can you suggest, in general terms, any measure which the landlord or other parties could take in order to improve your

situation?—It is easy to answer that. Give us land out of the plenty of land that is about for cultivation.

33. Can you suggest no other remedy?—That is the principal remedy that I see. Give us land at a suitable rent—at a rent within our power to pay.

34. *Mr Cameron.*—Where does the land lie of which you say there is plenty suitable for cultivation?—There are thirty tacks in the Isle of Skye, and there are many of these capable of supporting hundreds of families in comfort.

35. But what land is there that would be suitable for the crofters in this neighbourhood?—The suitable land surrounds us on every hand—Scorrybreck, Glenvarigil, Sconser, Corrie, Broadford, and all the way down to the point of Sleat. The whole of that land is suitable land for cultivation.

36. Then, in point of fact, you wish that the people, who are too many here for the land in the immediate vicinity, should be migrated to other lands at some distance which are occupied by large farmers who hold large quantities of land?—Yes; unless we can get that, poverty will not be got out of the Isle of Skye for ever; we will always need a Joseph in the south country to send us seed unless we get an extension of our holdings in that way.

37. How far would the people be willing to migrate from the point where they now live?—I have not the mind of the people sufficiently to say how far the people would wish to migrate for that purpose.

38. Would they mind how far it was so long as they got good land to cultivate?—I, at any rate, would go any distance to get good land, and I think my neighbours would be of like mind.

39. How do you propose that houses should be built for all these people who would migrate?—If the landlord would not build houses for us the Government might assist the people. If we got the land for ourselves we would build the houses.

40. Do you think the land would fetch as much rent if the crofters were removed from where they are so thickly congregated together to one of these large sheep farms? If they left the land and went to some of those large sheep farms would they give as much rent as the landlord now derives from the sheep farmer?—I am very sure that if the people get the land just now in large farms given back to them at the old rent which they were paying when it was taken from them, they would pay it.

41. Do you know what the difference is between the old rent which they were paying and the rent now, taking the average?—I make out that there is a great difference within my recollection, because I see every time a new tenant comes to these big farms he always gives a rise of rent.

42. What other means would be necessary in order to carry out your scheme, besides that of building the houses?—I think it would be advisable they should get the assistance of Government to stock the land, if they could get it.

43. What do you calculate would be required by each crofter to stock his share of the land?—I think the crofter would be very well off who would have enough cultivated land to support his family in comfort, and that he should get as much money as would enable him to put between fifty and a hundred sheep on the ground.

44. And how many cows?—Four or five cows would do much good.

45. Would not a good deal of feucing be required to divide among a number of crofters what is now held by one man?—The erection of march dykes would not be very expensive as we now use them,—having a common outrun outside the cultivated ground.

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46. But the cultivated ground would require to be fenced?—Yes.

47. Would not draining or trenching be required?—That would be required for the ground we would get.

48. And you think that all that—that is to say, the building of the houses and any fencing and draining, and the providing of stock—should be done by Government?—I think that the small tenants would be much better in every way immediately under Government.

49. But that does not meet my point. I want to know if you propose that the capital required to start those small tenants should be provided by Government. In the first place, how many crofters whom you are acquainted with would have sufficient capital of themselves to do these improvements and start themselves?—I do not believe there are any who would be able to do that.

50. Then you propose that should be done by Government?—Yes.

51. To go to another branch of the question. You said that the people were very much huddled together; do you allude to this particular district or to the whole of Skye when you say that?—It is the townships of Skye generally that I allude to.

52. In your own particular district are they rather less huddled together or more huddled together?—I think that in other parts in Skye they are as closely huddled together as in the Braes.

53. Do you know if some of them are worse?—I cannot say, but they are worse in some parts than in the Braes.

54. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—What is the acreage of your croft?—I cannot tell the exact acreage of my father's croft, but I can say there is not one acre of it worth cultivating or worth putting seed into.

55. What kind of land is it?—Rocky, mossy land, where I might catch a deer, it is so boggy; and other parts of it are as hard as adamant.

56. What rent do you pay for it?—£5, 9s.

57. How long has that been the rent?—It has been the rent since the drainage money was laid on, but it was not so dear before that. I am not speaking about the rent of Benlee. I am not including the rent of Benlee in that.

58. What is your father's share of the rent of Benlee?—I think it is about £2.

59. Before that hill was given to the Braes people, what was the stock your father was able to keep?—Some years more, some years less.

60. How many cows generally?—Four cows oftenest.

61. How many sheep?—Nine or ten sheep on the hill.

62. How many stirks would there be?—Some years there would be a stirk, and other years there would be none, and some years we might have two stirks.

63. How did you do for feeding them in winter?—We were giving them fodder that was grown on the land, for there was no seed on it. We had to keep the seed to sow the ground. I have not tasted Highland-made meal for the past four years.

64. Do you know what was the number of tenants in the Braes in those three townships in your grandfather's time?—In my grandfather's time there were five tenants in Beinn-a-chorrain.

65. How many are there now?—Twenty-six or twenty-seven.

66. Were they brought there from other places?—Part of them were cleared off the present deer forest, and then there was an increase of the township.

67. When the land was subdivided among these new crofters, who built the houses?—The poor crofters themselves.

68. Did they get any assistance in building them?—May the Lord look upon you! I have seen myself compelled to go to the deer forest to steal thatch—to steal the wherewith to thatch our houses. If we had not done so we should have had none; and I went in the daytime for this purpose, and was caught by the gamekeeper, and I had to give him part of what I had—part for the purpose of thatching his own house.

69. Where was this?—In Sconser. I had to go across the ferry to Sconser for the thatch.

70. When a new house is built on a new lot given to anybody like these people that came among you, does the landlord give any assistance in building the house. Does he give wood or lime or anything?—No, no assistance. He would refuse us timber even should we go for it. I have seen us refused. It is from Raasay that we get our timber and the wherewith to make the creels for us to carry the manure for cultivation to our ground, and the crooked spade for tilling the land. We have to get it all from Raasay.

71. But the question is about new comers?—Sometimes they might get timber to buy from the landlord.

72. When have they been getting that wood from Raasay which you mention?—To the present day, during my recollection.

73. Were they paying for it?—Paying for some of it, and for some of it not. It is very little they were paying of it.

74. Do you know anything of your own knowledge of the possession of the hill of Benlee by the people before it was taken from them?—Yes, I do.

75. Was it not common to every person—to all those who put cattle upon it?—No, there was a bit of it at the back of the hill that was common to other townships than our township.

76. Was that near the Sligachan river?—No; on the Glenvarigil river. It was suitable for the purposes of the Sligachan market which was held there.

77. Did people that came to the market from a distance put their cattle upon it?—Yes, every one that came from the Long Island.

78. Were they charged for putting their cattle upon it?—No, all using that bit of Benlee for the purposes of the market got the use of it free.

79. Was there any tax sometimes taken from strangers who were putting there cattle there?—Not to my recollection.

80. What part of the hill was given to Lord Macdonald's gamekeeper? It was at the head of Loch Sligachan, about a quarter of a mile on this side of the hotel.

81. Are most of your people engaged in fishing?—Most of them.

82. Is there any fishing here off the coast?—A little.

83. What kind?—All sorts of fish; but some sorts we are not allowed to kill.

84. That is salmon?—Yes.

85. Are there cod and ling?—There are cod and ling to be got.

86. Do any of them fish it regularly?—Not regularly. We principally fish for herring regularly.

87. Has every crofter a boat?—Most of them have a boat each. There are a good number of them without boats. They are so poor that they cannot get boats.

88. Did any of their boats get destroyed in the storm the year before last?—Very few in the Braes were destroyed by that storm.

89. Have you full permission to cut the sea-ware on the shores?—We have sea-ware on our shores,—the shores of our own particular townships;

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but Balmeanach and Gedentailler have to go to Raasay for sea-ware; they have not got enough themselves.

90. And do they pay for it at Raasay?—I do not believe they pay for it in Raasay; the landlord is so good to them.

91. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—There was a dispute about the hill of Benlee, between the people and the landlord, was there not?—There was; but it was a small dispute, as it is now settled, in a sense.

92. Then, are they satisfied or are they not satisfied?—They are not satisfied.

93. Would you be kiud enough to tell us in what the dissatisfaction consists, and what is your remedy?—They complain that for the hill which was part of their holdings in time past, they have now to pay £74, 15s. *The hill they had seventeen or eighteen years ago is part of* their holdings they are now made to pay £74, 15s. for, and they complain of that.

94. Do they complain of the amount, or do they think they should have it altogether?—They complain that the sum is too large.

95. Then their only complaint now is about Benlee?—That is their complaint concerning Benlee, that they are charged too much rent for it; and I will now tell you two reasons why they offered rent at all for the hill. In the first place there was blood shed about it, and they were sorely threatened by the law of the land, and they offered a rent for the hill for peace's sake which they were not able, to pay and there was a gentleman who put a thousand pounds aside in order to make peace between Lord Macdonald and the crofters, and the most of the people were of opinion that this thousand pounds would be assigned for the purpose of stocking the hill when they got it, but that expectation failed.

96. With reference to a question which was put by Lochiel in regard to the moving of the people to other places, you said that so far as you were concerned you were willing to go to any part provided you got good land at a moderate rent, and that you believed most other men would do the same?—Yes.

97. Do you limit that to the island of Skye?—It is other parts of the island of Skye that I mean, but it is better that we should even emigrate abroad thau be starving as we are, but we would rather be in our native place.

98. You say that you expect the Government to help the crofters to build houses and help them with stock, and that you want Government, in effect, to he the landlord. I want to know whether they intend to pay the same as is in the habit of being paid for drainage, for whatever money the Government would advance?—Yes; it is not money for nothing that we are wanting at all.

99. By this process of getting the land here, you expect your positiou would be very much benefited as compared with what it is now, and that you would be very much better able to pay the rent?—I am sure of it.

100. In regard to the fishing, I understand that you and the people are more crofters than fishers?—We think the crofting better than the fishing.

101. Is there any part of the east coast of Skye with which you are connected which would be benefited by a pier or quay where boats could run in and out in stormy weather?—Yes; our small townships are mostly in need of such.

102. Have you any landing place at all?—No, no made place.

103. Would it be expeusive to make quays for the purpose of sheltering your boats where you could get in in ordinary and even in severe weather?—No, uot at our place at any rate.

104. Would you be disposed, if you had good accommodation, to pay a small toll or a small rent for the use of it,—a few shillings a year, or whatever it might be?—We did not think about that, and I cannot say much about it, but I believe the crofters would be willing to pay a small sum.

105. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—I wish to ask you first with regard to choosing witnesses. Did the crofters of the three townships gather together and elect you?—Yes; and, besides that, I declined to go, not because I would not tell the truth, but I was afraid that in consequence of the evidence I would give here the landlord might revenge himself upon me.

106. And you were one of the four people who were chosen by the first gathering?—I believe I am one of the four who were first chosen, but I was not present.

107. Who told you you were chosen?—My father told me. He was present; and my neighbours told me.

108. I suppose the people of the Braes have talked over this question of the want of land among themselves?—Yes. Every day, in my recollection, they have been talking about it.

109. You said you thought it would be better that they should be under Government. What do you mean, or what do the people of the Braes understand, by 'being under Government'?—That the people, if they were under Government, would not be shuffled here and there, as they are now, and that they would not be huddled on the top of each other.

110. Do you mean that the present landlords ought to be replaced by the Government?—What I mean is that the land laws should be altered.

111. Do you mean that the proprietors should be replaced by the Government?—Yes, that is what I mean. The queen should be the landlord.

112. Do you wish the queen to take possession of the whole country, or only the part of the land where the crofters are?—What I mean is that good landlords should be put on the land, and that the people should have the land given to them.

113. With regard to Benlee, if you had sufficient stock could you pay the same rent as anybody else was able to pay for it?—I do not know, but I think we could if the whole were stocked and a likely rent laid on it.

114. At the rent at which it pays one man to take it, would you be able to make profit out of it, if you had stock?—I do not know; I cannot say.

115. You speak of a continuous cropping for thirty years; is it from the scarcity of land that they crop the same land over and over again?—Yes; the reason is that we have not land sufficient. We cannot leave any part of our cultivated land out, we have too little of it.

116. Don't you think, if you left part of it out, and introduced a better system of cultivation, you would get more crop from the half of the acreage than you do now from the whole?—What would we cultivate if we were to leave half of it out; it would not be worth our while to cultivate it. What would feed the cattle for us if we were to leave half of it out of cultivation.

117. You say that part of your land is bog land; have you tried to drain it?—I have tried to drain it till my heart is nearly broken with it.

118. Do the crofters give corn and fodder to the cattle, or only fodder? Do you thresh it?—Yes, we thresh the corn.

119. The whole of it?—Yes, we thresh the whole of it. We may give an occasional sheaf to a beast unthreshed. I forgot something about the Benlee stock. I have to say that Mr Mackay, the former tenant, stated

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in my own presence and that of my neighbours, that Benlee never put a coat on his back, and how could we expect to make profit out of it.

120. With regard to building houses, you say that if you got the land for yourselves you would build houses on it. What do you mean by getting land for yourselves? Do you mean at a rent, or free?—I mean if we get the land free,—if we could get the land in property, and the Government to assist us to buy it.

121. *The Chairman.*—You alluded to drainage money which had been expended many years ago. Was that drainage beneficial to the land at that time?—It was beneficial.

122. Is the land which was then drained still better than it was before it was drained?—We now cultivate under the level of these old drains, for the land has wasted away, and the drains have come to the surface.

123. Then the land is now no better, in consequence of being drained?—No, the land that was then drained is even worse now than it was then.

124. How long is it since the pasture of Benlee was restored to the Braes people?—Last winter.

125. How much have they agreed to pay for Benlee?—£74, 15s.

126. How much did the farmer formerly agree to pay?—I think it was £128.

127. How much stock has been placed upon Benlee by the crofters?—Not a head, I think, but a few head which the people have been allowed to graze on it.

128. The people have not been able to stock it at all?—Some of them may have put more or less stock on the hill, but the most of them have not been able to stock it.

129. Have they any prospect of being able to stock it?—Unless they get help, outside, in some other way I do not know how they can do it.

130. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—I want to know if any people from Tormichaig, or their descendants, are now living in the Braes?—I think some of them are present here to-day.

131. Are any of them to be examined before us?—I am not sure.

132. Since the Tormichaig people were put there, have any other people been brought into the Braes at a later date?—Yes, there was a small township opposite Portree, the inhabitants of which were taken to the Braes.

133. Have not the townships got the land there still?—No.

134. Who has that land?—It is added to Benefiler. The Braes people have not got it, but the Benefiler people have it. The crofters of the township which was cleared—that is, Scor—were put in among the crofters of the Braes.

135. What was the name of the townships of the Braes that you were speaking of?—Balmeanach and Achnahannait.

136. *The Chairman.*—Within your recollection, about how many families do you think have been brought from other places to crowd in upon the ground of the Braes?—I know two families who were taken from Scor and were placed in Balmeanach, and a croft was taken from the tenants, and given to one of these families.

137. But I want to know first of all how many families from all quarters have been brought in and put there?—I cannot tell that.

138. Do you desire to make any other statement to the Commissioners before you retire?—I think I will let the other delegates speak now.

SAMUEL NICOLSON, Crofter, Balmeanach—examined.

139. *The Chairman.*—Before I take the examination of Samuel Nicolson, I understand it is the desire of Mr Macdonald to say something further.

[*Mr Macdonald.*—I wish to say, in case of any misapprehension, that witnesses have the very fullest opportunity of saying whatever they choose, true or false,—I leave it to themselves,—without any fear of anything whatever from anybody. I was rather taken aback at first, and was not prepared at the instant, or else I would have said that, but now I say it fully.

Witness.—I understand what is said.]

140. *The Chairman.*—Have you been present during the examination of Angus Stewart?—Yes.

141. Did you hear and understand everything that passed?—I heard and understood everything that was said.

142. Will you be so good as to make any statement on your own part corroborative or otherwise of what you have heard from Angus Stewart?—He was quite right in all he said.

143. Have you anything additional to state?—I would say somewhat differently from what he said in some things. As he said, we were very much crowded by other people being placed in our township—strangers,—and we were also in trouble through our holdings being made smaller and the rents increased. We have particular cause for speaking in our own interest as regards the hill of Beulee which was taken from us. I can point out to the present day the sheilings which the women had in my grandfather's time on the hill, and we were looking upon it that we had full right of the grazing on Benlee. Fifty-four years ago the then factor sent a ground officer from Sleat all the way to make up the summing of the hill for us, and that officer is still living, and it is he who told me about it. We were also much hampered by families from other townships being crowded in among us, and part of our land taken from us for their accommodation, without reduction of rent.

144. Can you state, within your own memory, within the last thirty or forty years, about how many families have been brought in from different places around and crowded in upon the soil of the Braes?—I am free to say that there are twenty such families at any rate.

145. Within the last thirty or forty years?—Yes, within my own memory—that is within the last thirty or forty years.

146. When the families are brought in and the land is divided, is there a fair reduction of rent made to the parties from whom the land is taken to be given to the new comers?—Not a penny of reduction in the township in which I live. There was no reduction.

147. What rent then do the new families pay? Are they charged rent?—Yes.

148. Do they pay the rent to the proprietor or to the old crofter?—To the landlord.

149. We have heard of the formation of a deer forest from the last witness; how long is it since the deer forest was formed?—Thirty or thirty-one years ago.

150. When the deer forest was formed, were there any inhabitants brought from that ground and put upon the ground of the Braes?—There were some of them who got no land and others went abroad.

151. Did any come to the Braes?—Yes.

152. To make the deer forest, was any pasture taken away from

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the Braes people or any other crofters?—I understand that grazing was taken from the tenants of Sconser for the purpose of the deer forest, but not from the tenants of the Braes.

153. *Mr Cameron.*—You say that the holdings were made smaller, and that the rents were increased; when was that?—It is seventeen years since the township in which I live was made smaller.

154. Do you mean that the common grazing was taken away?—The arable land.

155. Was the rent increased upon the remainder?—The rent was not increased on the township in which I live, but the hill was taken from us and that lot of arable land.

156. Did the rent remain the same after the arable land was taken away and also the hill?—Yes, the rent remained the same.

157. Who got the arable land?—One of the tenants who was taken from Scor.

158. What do you mean by one?—One family.

159. Do you speak of the hill as regards your township or as regards your particular farm?—It was of our own particular township that I speak.

160. Then there was only one family that came?—From Scor, and another stranger came, but he was instated in another man's place in our township.

161. How many crofts are there in your township?—Twenty-four.

162. Then, before this time that you are talking of, there were twenty-three?—I believe it was about that.

163. And only one family came, and the holdings of the other crofters were reduced by the extent of one-twenty fourth?—Yes; that is so.

164. And the rents remained the same?—The rent remained the same.

165. And one more family was added to the twenty-three?—Yes. There were nine whole lots in our township, and the ninth was taken from us, and that lot was held by the township as vacant ground before the family from Scor got it.

166. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—As pasture ground?—They were taking in that lot every third year. It was fallow ground, and was yielding, I believe, crop of the value of £16.

167. *Mr Cameron.*—How many acres of arable ground did this new family get which they occupied and tilled and worked?—I am not sure whether it is three and a half or four acres that is in our lots. That particular lot was the same size as the others.

168. So there were twenty-three crofters who had the same sized lots?—Yes.

169. And this one family came and took away the lot?—Yes.

170. With the right of grazing on the hill?—That particular lot had no right to the hill grazing.

171. They did not get any hill grazing?—No, they got no hill grazing; they simply got the arable land.

172. So that the other twenty-three crofters had their lots as they had them before, and the whole of the hill grazing?—Yes. There were thirteen lots cut out, but these were occupied by eight families at first. Then they increased till there were two families on each lot.

173. But eventually they came to twenty-three?—Yes, they eventually came to twenty-three families.

174. Of the twenty families who were brought in, when was the last brought in?—I mean there twenty families taken into the three townships, not into my particular township.

175. I am aware of that, but they were not taken in at the same time?—No.

176. Then, in what year was the last of these families taken in?—Fifteen or sixteen years ago.

177. Where did all these twenty families come from?—Two of them came from Scor to the township in which I am. Another came from Tormichaig. Others of the Tormichaig tenants were placed in Beinn-a-chorrain, the township which is next to mine. I cannot be very sure altogether from what townships the remainder of these twenty families came, but I believe some of them came from as far away as Nairn.

178. You have accounted for three; do you know of any more?—Five of the Tormichaig tenants were placed in the two townships.

179. Do you know why these people were shifted from Tormichaig to this township?—The principal reason I am aware of was that at the time of the Disruption the factor was very much against the Free Church, and some of the families were removed because of sheltering elders of the Free Church.

180. In Tormichaig?—Tormichaig and Kenchreggan, which is a township near Tormichaig.

181. From the point of view of these five families, were they better off in Tormichaig or better off where they came to?—They themselves were saying that they were very much better off where they came from, and they were very much lamenting their removal. As to those who were removed from Tormichaig I do not know, but they were removed for a deer forest.

182. Is Tormichaig in the neighbourhood of a deer forest?—Yes.

183. Had they any grazing which is now a deer forest?—Yes. The township of Tormichaig had their grazings in what is now part of the deer forest as well as the arable land of Tormichaig.

184. So you think they were removed partly for sheltering the elders and partly to make a deer forest?—That is the best opinion I can give.

185. *Professor Mackinnon.*—You stated that there are twenty-three families in your township, and that there were originally only eight lots. Has each of the twenty-three a lot now? Does each of the twenty-three pay rent now to the proprietor?—Yes, each of these twenty-three families is paying rent to the laudlord besides cottars.

186. Are there twenty-three crofters and cottars besides without any land at all?—The twenty-three include the cottars as well as the crofters.

187. Are they all paying the same rent?—No, they are not paying the same rent.

188. The crofters?—The crofters pay much about the same rent.

189. Then, of the twenty-three, how many are crofters and how many cottars?—Two or three are cottars; but each family does not pay the same rent.

190. What is the highest rent that is paid by any one crofter?—The lot in which I lived was paying £10, 5s. before the rent of Benlee was put on; but there are two or three families on the lot. I myself pay £5, 3s.

191. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—How much for Benlee?—Thirty-two shillings and a few pence.

192. *Professor Mackinnon.*—You say the croft is divided into two. If it were a £10 croft would you think that a good sized croft?—When the township had one family on each croft and the whole pasture besides they were making a living.

193. What is the stock of a double croft? What stock is it allowed to keep?—Four or five cows.

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194. For the whole £10?—Yes, but they got leave from the then factor to keep six cows.

195. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Before Benlee was taken from them?—Before Benlee was taken from us.

196. *Professor Mackinnon.*—And the number of sheep?—To the best of my recollection eighteen sheep.

197. That is without the hill?—We could keep thirty-six sheep on each lot, when we had the hill.

198. Six cows and thirty-six sheep. Do you consider that size of croft a suitable size, or would you prefer it to be bigger?—I would prefer a bigger croft if I could get it.

199. What would you consider a suitable size of croft in this place?—I think that one crofter should make a living out of eight acres of ground with grazing.

200. Grazing for how many cattle, and how many sheep and horses?—Four or five cows, forty or fifty sheep, and one horse.

201. Is there any horse kept in the place?—We are allowed to keep a horse.

202. But has each crofter a horse?—No, each crofter has not a horse.

203. Then, supposing you had that croft you speak of, capable of maintaining four or five cows, a horse, and fifty sheep, could you see your way to stock it?—Not now; I could not stock such a croft now.

204. Are there many in the place who, you think, could do so?—I do not think there are many who could stock it.

205. As rents are going in the place just now, what do you think should be the rent of such a croft?—In my opinion £5 or £6 would be quite enough.

206. That is to say the rents at present are too high?—The rents at present are too high.

207. But though you consider them too high, what would be the rent of such a croft as rents are going just now?—I cannot say, as I have no experience.

208. Do you think the rents are too high just now, on this estate?—Yes, I consider the rents are too high on this estate.

209. And you think a rent of £5 or £6 for such a croft would be reasonable?—I do not think that the rent which I named would be dear for such a lot.

210. Do you think it would be cheap?—I think a man could make a good living out of it.

211. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—I think you said you were something of a fisherman. Do you think it would benefit you considerably to have some quays where boats could run into?—I believe in my own township a great deal of money is lost through the want of a quay. They have to go elsewhere with their fish to sell them, though it is considered that is the best place for disposing of their fish to the fish-curers.

212. Could such quays be erected at a moderate expense?—I do not think there is a place thereabouts where a quay could be easier constructed than in my own township of Balmeanach.

213. Would you be willing to pay a reasonable rent for the accommodation of such a quay?—Yes, as I see is being paid for accommodation at other quays.

214. Is the fishing here a moderate degree of fishing all over the year, or is it at certain periods of the year that there is fishing opposite Balmeanach?—There is fishing to be got for the most part during the whole year, except a month or two in the spring time—herring fishing.

215. They would not have to go very far away from the shore, I presume?—No, they would not have to go far from the shore.

216. And of course no distance from their own dwellings?—No distance from their own dwellings.

217. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Would a quay of itself be an advantage although no curer established himself at Balmeanach?—We need the quay principally for the purposes of the fishing. We could do without the quay so far as our other purposes are concerned.

218. And if no curer were there it would be of little advantage?—There is no year in which a curer does not come—four of them.

219. Where to?—To our township of Balmeanach.

220. Can your boats land in all weathers?—We cannot draw our boats up in all weathers.

221. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Are there often such days?—Every second week almost we cannot draw up our boats.

222. What sort of land have you in Balmeanach?—Bad land.

223. What kind?—The half of it consists of a depth of two inches of soil on rocks.

224. How long does your crop of potatoes generally last you?—My whole crop of potatoes and corn will not sustain my family for one-third part of the year.

225. Was the potato crop a failure last year?—Yes, the potato crop was a failure last season.

226. Have you got any assistance here?—Yes, we got some assistance.

227. Are you satisfied with the mode in which it was distributed?—I think so; I think we are satisfied with the way in which it was divided.

228. Is there any rich person in the Braes?—I am not aware of any.

229. Do you know of any who has money in the bank?—Yes, I know a few; I know some who have a little money in the bank.

230. *The Chairman.*—You stated that the croft belonging to your family was divided. Why was it divided?—The father of my predecessor in the lot gave the half of it to his son by order of the factor.

231. Was it divided against the wish of the family or by the wish of the family?—It was with the wish of the family that the croft was divided.

232. During your occupancy has your rent been increased?—No, it has not increased.

233. What do you sell off the croft to get money? Do you sell a stirk or a lamb, or what?—Some years I sell one stirk and perhaps two sheep, and some years I am not able to sell anything at all.

234. Has the value of the stock or animals you sell increased or decreased during your occupancy?—The price of stock rose about the time I got the lot, or shortly before I got it.

235. Are the prices now, in the present year, higher than they were at the time you got the lot?—Much about the same.

236 Do you sell any butter?—Never.

237. Or anything else off the croft?—Nothing, I am not able to sell any of the produce of the croft other than the stock, but I am under the necessity always of buying. I have spent £18 this year upon meal alone.

238. Are the prices of commodities necessary for your family dearer now than at the time when you entered into possession of your croft?—Yes.

239. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—How many bolls of meal have you got for your family with the £18?—About eighteen bolls.

340. Was that consumed by your own family?—Food for the family.

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241. What is the size of your family?—There are nine of us in the family.

242. *The Chairman.*—Do you desire to make any other remark or give any further information to the Commissioners before you retire?—I do not know that I have anything more to say.

NEIL MACPHERSON, Crofter and Fisherman, Gedentailler—examined.

Neil Macpherson.

243. *The Chairman.*—Have you been in the room during the examination of the other delegates?—Yes.

244. Have you heard and understood what they said?—Yes.

245. Do you agree with them?—I fully agree with all that they said.

246. Is there anything you wish to add to their statement?—I have to say that during all my recollection we got no work from the landlord.

247. How long have you been a crofter?—Upwards of twenty years.

248. The croft has been in your possession about twenty years?—Yes.

249. What is the rent you pay?—£3, 13s. for half a lot.

250. What more have you to say in addition to your complaint about not getting work from the landlord?—To get land, as much as we could make use of. That would do us and our families good. The land which we have got is too shallow. In some places it is not more than one inch in depth, and other parts of it are so rocky that it cannot be called land. We can make no use whatever of it, and we are paying rent for it all the same.

251. Is there any land immediately near your township which would be useful to the crofters if it were given to them?—Yes, there is such land. There is plenty of land on the farm of Scorrybreck, plenty of land at Tormichaig, plenty at Moll, plenty at Kingsburgh and Skeinish, and Glenvarigil and Corrie. There is plenty of land for every crofter on the estate if they got it.

252. If the land were offered by the landlord to the crofters, would the crofters, in your opinion, be willing and able to take it and make use of it?—We could not stock it at the present time, we are so poor. We have been obliged to spend our all for food, and we in our township especially are poor because of our having been deprived of the hill pasture, and having no land upon which we could live, and what land we had dear. In some parts when I put down the seed I am obliged to take earth with the spade from other parts to cover the seed.

253. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Potato seed?—Potato seed, and oats as well. Even should the landlord order us to put more stock upon our land, what could we do with them? We could not feed them, unless we would put the one inside the other. When we have to buy food for our families and food for our stock, how could we stand to it, and the stock few? Our holdings on the land were serving no other purpose to us than affording us a home to which we could resort from our fishing,—fishing at Kinsale and the east coast,—where we were earning the wherewith to pay the landlord and feed our families. Some years our fishing would succeed with us, and other years it would not, and what caused the rents to be so very high in this part of the land was that it was so close to the sea—sea that was open to all the people in England, Ireland, and Scotland as well as us,—and then, oftenest, it was people from those countries who were making better use of the fishings than we were. They would have more fishing material than we had. It was their trade. The little bits of land

that we had were spoiling us for fishing. We had to give our time at home to cultivating the land,—land out of which we were taking no good. I see the whole district around us in the same circumstances in which we are, and that they all have their cause of complaint according to their circumstances, because they have been crowded upon each other, and have no elbow room. The same land that is being tilled by us has been in cultivation, from year to year, since the time of our great-grandfathers. My grandfather was ninety-five, my father eighty-four, and I myself have been fifty years here. I remember seeing my grandfather, and I have heard him say that the land which we are now cultivating had been cultivated in his time and before his time.

254. *The Chairman.*—You have stated that the people here are inferior to the east country people as fishers. Can you suggest anything which the Government could do to improve the fishing in this country?—If we could get assistance from Government to get as good boats as other places have. The fishing will not be about our coasts at all times.

255. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You mean that at certain times, when there was no fishing here, you would go away to the Irish coast and other places?—Yes, some of them could do that. If they had better boats and better fishing material they could go elsewhere when the fishing at home failed them.

256. Supposing they had good boats just now they would be in danger of being wrecked, as they have no place to draw them up?—That would be the case. They would be in danger of being broken. There are some townships about where the boats could be drawn up with safety.

257. *The Chairman.*—Have you anything more to say before you go?—I have nothing more to say. If we had the land at a fair rent; and besides that I think the land has been sufficiently paid for already—paying rent since the time of our forefathers.

258. *Mr Cameron.*—Do any of your neighbours go away to the mainland of Scotland to get work?—Plenty of them go to the south country to work. It is by their work in the south country that they are making a living.

259. Do they go as much now as they used to go a few years ago?—They are now going more to the south than they used to do in days gone by.

260. What is their favourite place to go to?—Anywhere in which they hear that work is going on. A man who follows the sea, wherever he hears seamen are in demand, goes there, and the man who is up to land work goes wherever he hears there are wages to be earned in that way.

261. Then how many months will he spend away in the year?—When we go to the east coast fishing we stay away for two months.

262. I am not talking of the fishing, I am talking of those who take to land work?—Some of them leave the country about this time of the year and will be away until about Martinmas, and others of them stay away till the next spring season comes.

263. They stay away the whole year?—Yes.

264. Do many of your neighbours go away in that way for a whole year?—Yes, some of them. I myself have been in the habit of being away a whole year, ever since I have been able to work.

265. Then how do you come to be here now?—I mean, after my spring work is done. I am away from home the whole year except the spring time. Last year I stayed at home expecting there would be fishing about, but there was no fishing.

266. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—I believe there is an unusual number of widow women in Gedentailler?—Yes, there are some poor widows in our township.

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Neil Macpherson.

267. How many?—There are six at any rate.

268. How do they happen to be there?—Through some of their husbands getting drowned at the east coast fishing.

269. Have most of them families?—They all have families.

270. How do they live?—They live very poorly; it cannot be otherwise.

271. Have they crofts?—They have half crofts.

272. *Professor Mackinnon.*—I think you said that the crofts were so bad that you would be better without them?—Yes, we would be better without them unless we got more land.

273. And that the croft prevented you from prosecuting the fishing?—Yes; if I have not more land it would be better for me to be at work earning wages than to be hanging about a croft.

274. And what you want is a good croft elsewhere and at a fair rent?—Yes; what I want is a good croft at a fair rent.

275. What is your stock just now?—Two cows.

276. What is the summing?—Two cows and a two-year-old.

277. No sheep?—Nine or ten sheep.

278. How many have you?—Seven or eight. I do not know if they are alive to-day, but I think I have that number.

279. Could you stock a good croft?—No, I could not.

280. How many acres of arable land have you?—I cannot tell the number of acres, but there is no more than one acre of it arable.

281. How much rent?—£3, 13s., and my share of the hill pasture of Benlee.

282. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—You said you thought you had paid rent long enough; do you mean that you think the land should belong to you now?—Yes, I think the land should belong to ourselves now.

283. Were you one of the delegates chosen by the people of the Braes here?—Yes, I was elected a delegate.

284. Was it at the first gathering?—Yes.

285. And is that the feeling of the people of the Braes generally to which you have given expression?—I think so.

DONALD BUCHANAN, Crofter, Lower Olach—examined.

Donald Buchanan.

286. *The Chairman.*—Are you a fisherman as well as a crofter?—No.

287. How long have you been in possession of your croft?—I have been all my life on the croft which I now have, and I am fifty-four years of age. I have seen the reigns of three Lords Macdonald in succession, and seven factors.

288. What is the rent of the croft?—I have half a croft, and I pay £2, 13s. of rent.

289. Has your rent been increased during that period?—The rent has been increased to me. I am the seventh of my name in possession of the lot in regular succession.

290. How much has your rent been increased since your father's time?—Nearly one-third of the present amount.

291. For the same ground?—For the same ground which I now occupy.

292. You have heard the testimony given by the previous delegates? Yes.

293. Have you anything to add to their statements?—I have to bear testimony to the poverty of the township in which I am. I was for a number of years thinking it would be better for me to give it up than to be

cultivating it at all. The land was rocky, and was yielding no crop without manure in the way of sea-weed, which we could not get.

294. Is there any charge made for gathering sea-weed?—We were at one time paying for sea-weed, but we cannot get it now for payment.

295. When you paid money for sea-weed, to whom did you pay the money?—To the late Mr Rainy of Raasay, and on the island of Scalpa. Then for a number of years past we could not get it either at Raasay or Scalpa for love or money.

296. What did the crofters pay for the right of gathering sea-weed to the laird of Raasay or the laird of Scalpa?—From 1s. 6d. to 2s. a small boat-load, which would be equal to two cart-loads or thereabouts.

297. Since you have been acquainted with the place has the landlord ever made any expenditure whatever upon work for the benefit of the place, or any building, or for any other purpose?—He did not spend any money on improvements on the place. We got, at one time, half a year's rent remitted to us in consideration of drains we were making, and we were paying 1s. 6d. in the £ for the amount so remitted to us. Then there was 12s. added to our rents for a bad bit of hill ground that was added to our grazings when Beulec was taken from the other three townships.

298. What township do you belong to?—Lower Olach.

299. Will the restoration of Benlee to the crofters be a benefit to them?—Yes.

300. You heard the statements made by the previous delegates; did you understand them?—Yes.

301. Do you agree with them?—I do; but there is one thing I wish to say I do not think there is much use of the herring fishing we get about here to support the people, for it has been backward and doing not much good to the inhabitants about for the past twenty years.

302. Can you suggest anything which the proprietor or Government could do to improve the condition of the place?—If we could get more land, so as to let our present land rest and get heart.

303. Is there land immediately contiguous to the crofts here which could be given by the proprietor and which could be used by the tenants for that purpose?—I do not know; there is no such land other than what I have named already—such as Scorrybreck and these places.

304. Have you anything further to say before you retire?—I have to say that I have not for the past number of years taken three months' good out of the land which I occupy; and I have never taken out of it as much as would pay rent to the landlord,—I may say, not even half rent.

305. How do you support your family?—By fishing on the Irish coast, and here and there on the east coast.

306. Are you a fishermen?—I am not a fisherman at home. I fish away from home. There was no fishing at home for me to engage in.

307. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Is there no sea-ware belonging to Olach which you could get?—No, there is no ware on the shore of Olach. This shore is a perpendicular cliff.

308. With regard to the work of the landlord, who maintains the road that leads to this place?—We pay road money.

309. Is it kept up by the county or the district?—It is a district road.

310. In keeping your cattle during the winter do you give them corn and straw in the sheaf?—No, we give the cattle the fodder, not the corn in the sheaf. I have only one cow, and I cannot feed the cow off what grows on my lot. I have to buy feeding for her.

311. *The Chairman.*—How many sheep?—I think there are three or four sheep.

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Donald Buchanan.

312. *Professor Mackinnon.*—What is the summing?—The summing of my lot is four cows and thirteen or fourteen sheep, but the lot is not capable of supporting so much stock.

313. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Do you refer to the wintering or the summering of them?—The summering itself would not be very good, but they could not do at all to be wintered.

314. *The Chairman.*—Your family have been seven generations on the lot; have you heard it stated, from old times, that the land was much more fertile and productive than it is now?—I have both heard it stated that the land was more productive in past times, and I know it to have been so in my early recollection. In my early recollection there were no merchants in Skye bringing meal to the country, and the men who needed meal would simply have to go to the north end of the island, to what is now Captain Fraser's property, and get meal there.

315. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—It used to be called the granary of Skye?—Yes; and another evidence of the state of the tenantry of Lord Macdonald is, that there are no mills going on Lord Macdonald's property at the present time.

316. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—How many mills were there?—I cannot tell very well. There was one at Stenscholl, and one at Camusmore, one at Uig, one at Romisdale, one at Snizort, one at Portree, one at Broadford, and I am not sure whether or not there was one at Knock, in Sleat.

317. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—How many of these are now going?—The Portree mill is doing a little, and possibly the Romisdale one, but I know of none of the others. I do not know what they are doing on Captain Fraser's property now-a-days.

318. Do you mean there is no business doing, or that they pay no rental for them?—What I mean is that there is no seed to grind.

319. The mills are there?—The mills are there, so far as they have not fallen into decay and ruin.

320. *The Chairman.*—The meal was formerly made in the country, but now it is imported from Scotland?—That is the case.

321. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Are they paying rent still for these mills? Are they being worked by the proprietors?—I do not know whether or not the mills are being paid for to the landlord at present, but the Portree mill is principally used as a wool-carding mill.

322. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Do you know whether there are millers at those places, separate from crofters, or are the two businesses carried on conjointly?—I believe some of the millers do, so far as I know.

323. *Professor Mackinnon.*—How do you account for this change? Is it because the land has gone out of cultivation, or because it is bad, or the times are bad, or what?—In my opinion, the cause is that the land is run out—exhausted; and a stranger passing by cannot tell the quality of the soil by merely looking at it, it is only those who work it.

324. *The Chairman.*—Do the people still grind the bere or oats in hand mills or hollow stones?—These are not used now-a-days at all. One of these querns ought to be in the Braes.

325. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Would you put it as one of the grounds for the stoppage of these mills, to some extent, that arable land which is now included in large sheep farms has gone out of cultivation?—No doubt of that. The land we have has lost its substance, and does not give crop.

326. *Professor Mackinnon.*—You mean there is less under cultivation, and the little there is is not good?—Yes.

327. You say that your own people have been seven generations on the same croft. Has it been made any bigger?—No.

328. Was it larger in the old times?—Yes, six times.

329. How was it made less?—The lots were subdivided by order of the factor as the family of the crofter increased.

330. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—You mean, with the consent of the factor?—It was done by the will of the factor. It could not be done, in these days, without the consent of the factor or will of the factor.

331. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Is that going on yet?—I am not aware of any place that is not so subdivided already that it is not capable of further subdivision.

332. *The Chairman.*—Would it be a good thing to prevent the subdivision of crofts below a certain value? Would it be a good thing to fix a certain value below which crofts should never be subdivided?—If the crofts were not subdivided, the one half of the people would have no land at all.

333. Then, would they not, perhaps, go away and make a better subsistence elsewhere?—That is not possible to them.

334. Do you remember to have heard that about the year 1841 there were 500 or 600 people who emigrated from the parish of Portree to America?—I well remember a ship going with the people to America.

335. Did you afterwards hear how those people got on in America?—From some not good accounts at all were coming, but others got on well.

336. Have any of them come back to see their friends and relations in Skye?—I am not aware that more than two returned. They came to Sconser.

337. Did they give a good account of the country in America?—They were giving a good account of America, but for the closeness of the winter.

338. Who paid the expenses of the emigration about forty years ago?—I believe the emigrants themselves.

339. If the Government or proprietor offered encouragement or assistance, would some of the people be inclined to emigrate?—I cannot speak as to that. I do not know the minds of the people as to that.

340. *Professor Mackinnon.*—I suppose when the people were discussing the question that was not one of the points which they discussed?—We were not speaking among ourselves of emigration as one of the remedies.

341. *The Chairman.*—Do you desire to say anything more before you retire?—I have nothing further to say.

JOHN MATHIESON—examined.

John Mathieson.

342. *The Chairman.*—Are you a crofter?—I never got a croft.

343. Are you a cottar?—Yes, I am a cottar at Achnahannait.

344. Are you a fishermen?—Sometimes. I am not able to fish now.

345. Have you heard what has been stated by the previous delegates? Do you agree with what they have said?—Yes.

346. Have you any remarks which you wish to add to what they have said?—I want to say that it is the want of land, and the dearness of it that is leaving the people so poor. My own great-grandfather was tenant in Achnahannait, and had a fourth part of it to himself. My grandfather succeeded him, and had a fifth part of Achnahannait. My father succeeded my grandfather, and had an eighth part of the land, and in his lifetime he came to be reduced to a sixteenth of the land. My father had six sons, of whom I am the eldest, and not one of them would get a sod from

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John Mathieson.

Lord Macdonald. Only the youngest of them was left with his mother, and is not that a great reason for the poverty of the people?

347. How have you supported your family?—As best I could, working day and night sometimes.

348. In whose employment have you worked,—in the employment of the landlord or in the employment of the crofters?—Working not much in the Isle of Skye, but earning wages elsewhere.

349. When you were a young man working in the Isle of Skye, what were your daily wages?—About 2s. a day, or the like of that.

350. And what are the wages now?—I am not very sure what the wages are going now for I am seeing very little work going on at all.

351. Are you quite sure that you received 2s. a day twenty years ago?—I am sure I was working at a shilling a day at that time.

352. What are the wages that able-bodied young men are now getting for common work?—About 2s. 6d. I think; that is the wage that I got from a farmer for a day's work in spring.

353. You spoke of the gradual subdivision of the land for three generations, what caused the subdivision? was it the multiplication of families, or were there other families brought from outside and put upon the land?—Both causes went together.

354. *Mr Cameron.*—Your father had a croft, how did he lose it?—The croft was not taken from my father, he died.

355. Who succeeded your father to the croft?—My mother is still alive and my youngest brother.

356. Who is the eldest of the family?—Myself.

357. Then you will succeed your mother eventually?—It is not my mother. It is my step-mother.

358. Do you ever expect to get the croft?—I have no expectations of getting the croft.

359. How many brothers had you?—We were six altogether.

360. What became of the other five?—They have scattered. Some of them are hereabouts, and as for the rest I cannot tell where they are.

361. Where do live yourself?—In Achnahaunait.

362. In what house?—In the north end of the township.

363. Who put up the house?—I built the house myself.

364. Did you get leave from the factor to build the house?—I got leave from the township. I did not ask the leave of the factor.

365. Did the factor not object?—No, he never said anything to me about it. I got a bit of ground from the township, for which I pay 30s. to the township.

366. Does not the factor object when this is done on the township by other people?—I cannot say.

367. May anybody build a house who makes arrangements with the township?—No.

368. Who was the factor at that time?—M'Kinnon of Corrie.

369. Was he very easy about the time?—No, he was not very easy. We had not much to say in his praise.

370. But what I meant to ask was, did he interfere with anybody putting up a house upon the township without any land,—making their own arrangements with the township?—Corrie would be finding fault with the crofters for doing that—for allowing outsiders to build houses.

371. Do you know why he did not find fault with you for doing it?—I cannot be very sure; but I was paying the one-third of the rent of a croft before then, and the factor put me out of that in order to divide the croft into two halves.

372. How did you have to pay rent for this croft? How did you get

hold of the croft?—My mother-in-law gave me the one-third of the lot when I was married.

373. Would this building of houses without land on the township be allowed now under the present factor?—Not without his own order.

374. But does he often allow these houses to be built?—I am not aware, but in the last instance I have seen the house could not be built without the order of the factor.

375. But I want to know as to whether these houses are built at the present day without the order of the factor?—So far as I know, these are built without the order of the factor.

376. There is no subdivision of crofts and houses established?—No.

377. Do you know what wages the people get who are paid by the road contractor for keeping up the road here?—I am not sure what they get.

378. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—How much land have you?—It is just a little field—a little corner.

379. Do you raise any corn or potatoes?—Very little.

380. How long does it keep you and your family alive?—Not very long—shorter than I would need to.

381. Then, when you are not away working, of course you have no means of subsistence?—No, I have no means of supporting myself but for the help of two daughters I have. My wife has been for the past ten years an invalid, and is now confined to bed. I sent two applications, signed by myself and my neighours, to the parochial board for aid, but I was not allowed any. The reply to my application was—Her children were to support her.

382. Have you any sons?—No.

383. Who was chairman of the parochial board?—The factor, I have been told.

384. *The Chairman.*—What factor?—The factor for Lord Macdonald.

385. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You don't look well; what is the matter with you?—I got my trouble bringing sea-ware from Raasay. Our boat foundered, coming with a load of sea-weed from Raasay, and I was two or three hours in the sea. That was the commencement of my ailment.

386. How old are you?—A little over fifty years of age.

387. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Are your daughters married?—No.

388. What are they working at?—They are house servants at Nairn.

389. *The Chairman.*—You stated you had built your own house and acquired a small piece of ground, and paid your rent to the township. Your rent is 30s. When a man hires his land from the township, does he generally pay a higher rent than he would if he paid it to the landlord?—I do not think the rent would be higher getting the land from the township.

390. About how much do you get for 30s.? What is the extent of the piece of land?—I cannot tell the measurement.

391. Is there enough to feed a cow?—No.

392. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—How far from here is your croft?—About one mile from here.

393. What was the cost of erecting the house?—I do not know what the house would cost to build, if I had others to pay for building it, but I built it myself without expenditure of money.

394. Did you not buy the wood and so on?—I had to buy the roof.

395. What did it cost?—About £1.

396. Was that the only money you laid out?—Yes, for the timber I got the timber in Raasay.

397. For £1?—Yes.

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John Mathieson.

398. How long did you take to erect that house? How much labour did you put into it?—I think six or seven weeks.

399. Have you no neighbours?—Some of the neighbours might give me a little help,—not a full day's help, for they were not getting paid for it.

400. What is the size of your house?—There are six couples in it.

401. *The Chairman.*—That would be about 12 feet long?—There are about 2 yards between each couple—a fathom between each couple.

402. How much money have you altogether expended besides your labour on the whole house? There was the door, for instauce?—I do not remember.

403. You said you got £1 worth of the timber for the roof, but that did not include the doors and windows?—No; there is a small window of four 'lozeus' in the wall, and another small window in the roof.

404. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—What did you pay for them?—I got the window for the wall second hand at 3s. and the roof window cost me 1s. 6d.

405. And the door?—The door cost me 6s.

406. *Mr Cameron.*—What do you grow on your bit of ground?—A little corn and potatoes.

407. How much potatoes?—I could plant three barrels of potatoes in it if I had full manure for it.

408. Besides the corn?—The more I would plant of the one seed the less I would have of the other.

409. Do yon think it is a whole acre or more?—I believe there is a full acre in it; but it includes bits of heathery grouud—stony pieces.

410. If you pay 30s. for that, do you think it is a very high rent?—I am sure it is too high.

411. Then, do you adhere to what you said before that the rents paid by the crofters to the landlord are in the same proportion as the rents you pay to the township?—I believe so. I believe that the rent which the tenants pay to the landlord is as dear as the rent which I pay to them. The lot which my father had was £4, aud now it is within 5s. of £8.

412. *The Chairman.*—Do you pay school rate and poor rate on your house?—No, but the rest of the township pay that.

413. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—What stock are you allowed to keep?—One cow.

414. Sheep?—Four or five sheep, if I had them.

415. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Do you know how many barrels of potatoes will be raised on your ground?—I cannot tell.

416. *The Chairman.*—You have one cow?—Yes.

417. Is that grass included in the 30s.?—Yes.

418. Do you wish, before you retire, to make any further statement?—No, unless I am asked.

JOHN M'LEOD, Crofter and Fisherman, Camustionavaig—examined.

John M'Leod.

419. *The Chairman.*—Are you acquainted with the circumstances under which the crofters were removed from Sconser for the purpose of forming a deer forest?—I was born in Sconser.

420. How long is it since the deer forest was formed?—There was a deer forest before I was born.

421. How old are you?—I am fifty-seven.

422. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—What place are you in?—Tormichaig.

423. *The Chairman.*—Did deer forests exist there in ancient times?—I cannot say, but it was there in my earliest recollection.

424. When you first remember the deer forest were the crofters living in it and near it?—Yes, I remember the people of three townships being removed for the purpose of their land being added to the deer forest.

425. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Name the townships?—Aracharnoch, by the side of Loch Eynort, Moll, Kenchreggan, and Tormichaig. The township in which I was born was the fourth township.

426. *The Chairman.*—Can you state approximately about how many families there were in the four townships who were removed?—I am not sure; there were two families in Aracharnoch, eight families in Moll, and four in Kenchreggan. There were twelve of us in Tormichaig paying rent, and besides these there were cottars.

427. Then there were twenty-six families, besides cottars. When these families were removed, was no payment made to them by the landlord in consideration of the loss to their houses and building, and for their loss by disturbance?—I have not heard that there was any such allowance. Some of them went to America.

428. Did the landlord assist them on their passage to go to America?—I do not know.

429. What became of the remainder of the families?—They were placed in other townships, as the factor saw fit.

430. Was any assistance given to them to build their new houses in the other townships?—No, I do not believe there was; we did not get any at any rate. The ground officer valued the houses which we were leaving, and the houses into which we were entering. Our new places were also valued.

431. Who built the new houses?—I built my own house. It was only a barn that I got when I went to my new lot; I built a new house, and bought the timber for it.

432. Then when the other crofters moved into the new houses, were these existing houses? or did they build their own new houses?—That is so. When two families of us would be entering a lot on which there was only one house, one of the families had to build a new house.

433. When you were moved into the new place, were you given new land which you took in, or were you put upon old crofts already cultivated?—They were old lands which we got.

434. Was there much hardship and sorrow connected with the removal of the people from the deer forests to the place?—Of course there was. There were no new places ready for us, and the factor was threatening he would cut the couples from above our heads if we would not quit. Mr Ballingall was the factor.

435. When the deer forest was extended and improved, was it then reserved in Lord Macdonald's hands, or was it let to a stranger?—Lord Macdonald kept the deer forest himself.

436. Was there any common pasture on the deer forest as well as arable ground?—Yes, we had grazing for our stock as well as arable land.

437. Why were the new houses which they left valued, and why were the new houses valued into which they came?—The houses we were leaving were valued for the landlord, and as we were leaving them, and were refusing to leave unless we got value for them.

438. When the house which the crofter left was valued more highly than the house into which he moved, was an allowance made to the crofter in the payment of his rent for the excess of value of the old house?—Yes.

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439. And when the new house was more valuable than the old house, then had the crofter to pay the landlord the excess of value?—Yes, that was the case.

440. Were the new houses generally more valuable than the old or less valuable?—Yes, of course, the new houses we were entering into were worth more than the old houses which we left. Perhaps the house into which we might enter might happen to be worse than the house we had left. Generally speaking, the house which we got was worse than the house which we left. The barn which I left at Tormichaig was better than the dwelling-house which I got in the new township.

441. Then, had you an allowance made to you in the payment of your rent on account of the new house being worse than the old one?—Yes, there was an allowance made.

442. How much?—I cannot remember that very well, as it is thirty-one years since I was removed.

443. *Mr Cameron.*—Do you know any case where the house that was left being worse than the house gone into, payment was made to the landlord?—I cannot tell that, as the tenants have been scattered into every place. I can only speak with regard to the tenants who were located in the township in which I myself was located.

444. In that case was any payment made to the landlord?—I cannot say.

445. What was done with the land that was taken and added to the deer forest? Has it ever been cultivated since?—It was put into grazing. It has not been cultivated since.

446. It was left in grass?—Yes.

447. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Was there a mutual valuation of the houses?—It was a mutual valuation.

448. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Did the people who migrated get their stock valued, in like manner, and paid for?—They made a roup of their stock.

449. *The Chairman.*—Do you desire to make any further statement before you retire?—I have to say that I have been put to disadvantage since I went to my present place. The rent has been increased on me, and the summing has been lessened. Ten shillings of increase was made on my rent, and the allowance to keep a horse was taken from me.

450. Do you mean the permission to keep a horse?—Yes.

451. What stock do you now possess?—Two cows. My summing when I entered my present lot was two cows, a two-year-old, fourteen sheep, and a horse.

452. How much do you now pay?—I pay £5, 10s. of rent, and with other assessments I pay £6.

453. *Mr Cameron.*—No horse?—No horse. I have sheep.

454. *The Chairman.*—How do you support your family?—I have been for eighteen seasons going to the east coast fishing, and going south, besides, to work for wages.

455. Would you be better off without your croft, or are you better off with your croft?—I would not be better off without the croft. I would rather have the croft. I would have no home without the croft.

456. Do you wish to state anything more?—Nothing more. I consider it a particular hardship to have the rent raised upon me, and my summing lessened. We had great liberties when we entered our present township. Our horses could graze up to Sligachan. Our fallow cows and our horses could graze up to Sligachan.

457. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Does your township make any claim to the grazing of Benlee?—We never said anything about that, but we were claiming the right to it when we entered Camustionavaig. It was Corrie

who was factor at that time, and when he saw how high our rents were, he pointed out a little spot on the hill, where we could graze our horses during the summer and harvest. John M'Leod.

458. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Was that on Beulee?—I do not say we had a right to Benlee, but that our stock had the liberty of grazing there.

DONALD M'NEILL, Crofter, Glenmore—examined.

459. *The Chairman.*—How long have you been in possession of a croft?—Since sixty years back. Donald M'Neill.

460. What is the size and rental of the croft?—It is a half croft. There are only seven crofters at present, and two of these perhaps have only a quarter of a croft.

461. What is the rental?—£15 and some odds for each croft; and a half croft is £7, 10s.

462. During the period of sixty years during which you have had a croft has the rent been increased?—Yes.

463. How often, and how much?—Once lately by Mr Macdonald, Tormore; and he laid upon the Glenmore tenants heavier than in any other part of the parish, and, I believe, of the estate of Lord Macdonald.

464. How much?—£2, 3s. on each croft.

465. What was your half croft before?—£6, 10s.

466. And it has been increased to £7, 10s.?—Yes, rather a little over it.

467. Besides the money rent, are there any services or obligations in labour or payment in kind?—Nothing of the kind.

468. In former times was there any obligations of that kind?—No.

469. Why was the rent increased from £6, 10s. to £7, 10s.?—It was just the will of the factor or Lord Macdonald. I am not sure what was the origin of it.

470. Have you any lease?—No, no lease.

471. Are there any leases used at all among the crofters?—No; I do not know of any.

472. Would you like to have a lease if it were offered to you?—Well, I would prefer certainty and fixity of tenure, if a fair rent.

473. What stock do you keep?—We are allowed to keep five cows.

474. How many sheep?—About twenty-six or so in all.

475. How many acres of arable land?—I cannot ascertain that, because the measurement was never properly made. But all that is arable of it might be from four to five acres.

476. Then do you think that £7, 10s. is an exorbitant rent for land carrying six cows and twenty-six sheep, and four or five acres of arable land?—The only grievance on that is that we have not enough of arable land.

477. But that is no answer to my question. Do you consider a rent of £7, 10s. for five cows, twenty-six sheep, and four or five acres of arable land too great?—I think it was dear enough at the old rent.

478. Is there any other particular hardship or grievance of which the people at the Glens complain?—Of the crowding, which is a general grievance throughout Skye, and subdividing.

479. *Mr Cameron.*—You said there were seven tenants?—There were four families formerly, but now there are fifteen families. There are seven crofts for fifteen families.

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480. And the crofts are divided into half crofts?—Yes, and some into quarter crofts.

481. But taking the rest of Skye into consideration, is not five or six acres of arable land rather a considerable croft?—It is too small, because it is contiuually turned, and unless it is continually turned we cannot feed our cattle in the winter; and it is a very mountainous place, not yielding crop; and another thing is, that we have no artificial manure unless we cart it from a long distance over very bad roads.

482. I suppose you could do very well with double the size of croft?—I might say this, that if there were a wise legislation on the land question, certainly we would require more to be more comfortable.

483. You seem to be well calculated to give us some assistance in this matter. Perhaps you would indicate what legislation should be adopted in order to secure this desirable result?—Just to make a minimum and maximum in the rental book.

484. But how would that give you more land?—Certainly, there is plenty of land in Skye.

485. But is there plenty of land in Glenmore?—No, there is not plenty in Glenmore, if we are overcrowded already with fifteen families instead of four.

486. You would like to have double the land, in fact?—Yes, or treble the land.

487. At the same rate of rent?—I said before, without the last advance made upon the rent.

488. But I suppose you will admit your case is by no means the worst case in Skye—there are far smaller holdings?—I am quite aware of that.

489. And if this wise legislation takes place, it will affect other holdings than yours—yours will not come first?—Well, most likely. What I say in regard to wise legislation—if there were such a thing taking place over Skye—is, that you would very soon get a very prosperous and populous tenantry in Skye, and they would swell the British army as in times past, and destitution and the cry of destitution would be for ever swept from our island; and besides, pauperism would be diminished, and the poor-house of Portree might be converted into some manufacturing establishment,—there would be no more need for it,—and Mr M'Tavish of Inverness would never be called upon to serve edictal summonses in Skye.

490. Do many people in Skye enlist into the army?—Very few indeed.

491. Why don't they enlist now?—Because they are impoverished and sunk down, without any spirit of enterprise whatever.

492. But, there is a large population in Skye?—Well, they have very much diminished, certainly.

493. But does it not appear to you that, if they are poor and do not find any other occupation, and are disposed for a military career, there is a military career open to them now?—There is this idea amongst them—why should we fight for our kingdom when we see so much poverty, and neglect by our sovereign and legislators? That is the idea which has sunk in the minds of Skyemen so very much.

494. Do you seriously think that if instead of having five acres and paying £6, 10s. you had treble the amount of land—that is, say, fifteen acres—and cows and sheep in proportion, that would induce men to go into the army?—They would get populous in Skye, and there would be a rising generation, and why not at present as formerly? I would think they would be just induced by the same spirit as in former times to help the country to swell the British army, as I said, to defend their country and their land.

495. Have not the crofters in Skye got very much subdivided of late

years?—I am not sure. They are subdivided now and again throughout Skye, but we are not, certainly, the worst.

496. But would there not be a much greater temptation to subdivide if the crofts were larger than they are now, and therefore would hear subdivision much better?—Yes, certainly.

497. Would there not be rather a tendency to go on to subdivision again and restore the same state of things which there is now?—But I think there is plenty of land for this generation and the generations to come, supposing they were multiplying ever so much.

498. And you don't care for the generation after that?—Oh! yes, it is the making provision for that generation that I am speaking just now, and not for my own.

499. *The Chairman.*—How old are you?—I am over sixty years. There is another grievance which we have to complain of—want of road—and I am glad Sheriff Nicolson is here. He went once to the Glens with the Rev. Mr Reid, Portree, and I met him on the top of the hill, and he asked why we had not good roads here, and I answered that we were rather behind the age for claiming what was our right.

500. Is there in the Glens any example of common pasture being taken away from the crofters?—None. We are quite free from that.

501. Do you remember any case of evictions by the landlord—anybody violently removed from the occupancy?—None, we give that credit to the factor and to the landlord, that they have never removed except one family which had run very deep into arrear, and that family was removed.

502. Then you do not complain distinctly of any particular grievance, except one rise of a rental in sixty years?—One rise of rental and the road—and it is most astonishing how bad the road is. Indeed, there is not a road, but we have a footpath which we call a road. Animals are endangered every time and many times, and recently three parties lost their way on the hill and passed the houses, and unless they had heard the crow of a cock, I do not know but some of their lives might have been lost.

503. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Do you pay road money?—Yes, we do; and this is what we claim—if we pay road money, why not get the same privileges as our neighbours in Skye? I think we are entitled to it, and in all places, except a very small fraction, they have access by sea and land, but we have neither.

504. Did you make any claim to the trustees?—We made a claim two or three times to the local committee and twice to the county committee, and lately our petition was returned back to the home committee—the local committee?—We are at their mercy whatever they will do with us; but I wish to cry loudly just now for the want of a road, that it may come to the ears of the legislators.

505. Do you pay the same rate as others pay?—Yes, the same rate as the highest tenant in Skye.

506. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—How many miles are you off the high road?—About four miles.

507. *The Chairman.*—If the landlord was prepared to give additional arable ground, and additional common pasture, would the existing crofters be able to cultivate it and stock it?—That depends greatly if the legislators would give us the same kindness as they showed to the Irish. We want may be a few pounds of money and we would pay that in instalments with interest to the Government. That would accommodate us greatly.

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BRAES.

Donald M'Neill.

508. You mean the Government should advance the money?—Yes; we would pay that money in instalments, with interest.

509. For what purpose? In order to provide stock?—Yes, in order to stock a larger proportion of ground.

510. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—You have a school there?—Yes.

511. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—What may be the population altogether wanting this road?—Close up to 200—may be something less than 200.

512. They want these four miles of road?—Yes. There is another thing. It is generally boasted that the poor man can get the same justice with the rich in Scotland, but there is an exception in Glenmore.

513. *The Chairman.*—With regard to the road?—Yes, for if there was a gentleman there like Tormore, or any of these, they would get a road there immediately.

514. But what measures have you taken to agitate for a road?—Applying to the local committee and to the county committee.

515. But, do you go on applying every year?—Yes, every year.

516. How many years have you been trying to get it?—I believe we began four years ago.

517. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—And who opposes it?—There is a certain party in the local committee against it. I do not charge it to the factor. He is not against it, but I say in honour to the Rev. Donald Mackinnon, Strath, that he is the best friend we have at court, and our factor, I believe, is likewise inclined to accommodate us.

518. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—The nearest church to you is at Portree?—Yes.

519. And the nearest doctor?—Yes; and even supposing we need the doctor, the roads are so bad that it is through much fatigue the doctor gets there; and he is not inclined to go there unless he is very well paid for it.

520. *The Chairman.*—Have you anything else you particularly wish to say about the state of the Glens?—I have said all I have to say with regard to that.

521. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—How far are the Glens from Portree?—About six miles.

522. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—The increase of the population in the Glens is merely due to the place itself. There are no people coming in from the outside?—They have not increased in the meantime, but there is an increase since the time I mention when there were only four families.

523. And they are all relations?—I believe so.

524. They have not any from outside?—No.

525. Born in the place?—Born in the place.

526. Have any people emigrated from the Glens?—They have.

527. Have they been successful?—Well, I suppose some of them were successful, and good accounts came from them.

528. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Where from?—America and Australia.

529. *The Chairman.*—Do you remember a time when there was an emigration to America about 1840?—I remember that, but I cannot give a date for it.

530. Has there been an emigration of late years?—There are always advertisements in the papers about emigration.

531. And do people sometimes avail themselves of it?—Yes; we hear that some of them from Uist and Barra are intending to emigrate to some of those colonies.

532. But not from Portree?—Some left Portree last year for Queensland.

533. If the Government offered facilities for emigration, would they

find any persons disposed to avail themselves of these?—I would like very well if those who are wallowing in wealth would go away, and go where no crofters would obstruct their wishes in land, but, for the poor people of Skye, at present they are blasted with permanent poverty, and that takes away from their courage to go away any length,—pulled down under debt and poverty in many ways which those who are at ease cannot understand, and that weakens their hand and weakens their courage so that they cannot think of emigrating anywhere.

534. Do any of them enlist in the royal navy?—Very few that I know of. I don't know of any from Portree in the navy. There are one or two individuals in the army, but I don't know of any in the navy.

535. Have any families in Skye sent their children on board the Government training ships to be brought up for the navy?—Yes, some of them go there voluntarily.

536. If the government had a training ship in the vicinity of Skye, among the islands, do you think many of the young people would go on board to be prepared for service in the navy?—I may say there are some at present training in these ships.

537. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—You are thinking of the naval reserve?—Yes.

538. *The Chairman.*—I mean boys who are sent on board Government training ships, where they receive a gratuitous education, and are brought up to the navy?—I cannot say. I cannot speak for that.

JOHN NICOLSON, Crofter and Fisherman, Cuillimore, Sconser—examined.

539. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Have you croft land at Sconser?—Yes.

540. Have you pasture lands with them?—We have hill pasture, but we are only allowed to graze a cow upon it, and we are allowed to keep a cat, but we are forbidden to keep dogs. The hill pasture is not a day without from 100 to 200 sheep grazing on it, and we ourselves are not allowed to graze a head upon it. Two or three years ago the only sheep in our townships was one that was a pet, and this sheep was found at the fanking time by the gamekeepers and marked with crosses on all sides, hoofs, and horns, so as to distinguish her from the rest. The sheep on the farms of Camusunary and Glenbrittle and Drynoch are allowed to winter on our grazing, and we ourselves are not allowed even to have this one sheep. There were five of those sheep on the ridge of my own house last Tuesday. I kept oats which I had for sowing till the first day of summer and could not sow them earlier for the sheep. I have only two acres or thereby of land, and when I rose one morning last week I counted 54 sheep upon it. There are some of our families down with fever and the lands are untended, and the sheep wander all over. The four nearest townships to us were cleared for the purpose of a deer forest thirty years ago, and the inhabitants of those townsbips were placed among us.

541. What townships were these that were cleared?—Moll, Kenchreggan, Tormichaig, and Ballahuist. A great many of those who occupied those townships are located among us to-day.

542. How many lived in Ballahuist?—Two of them are among our crofters to-day.

543. How many altogether lived in Ballahuist that were removed?—There are seven cottars; they had no crofts.

6 E 7 S.

SKYE.

GRASS.

John Nicolson.

544. How many families are there at Sconser to-day?—Forty-four.

545. And Coillmeore?—Forty-four.

546. How many were there formerly?—Thirteen large tenants and fourteen smaller. My grandfather had occupied the land which these occupied between himself and three others. Coillemore is only about one mile in length and about 600 yards broad of arable ground. I was three years that I could not put a seed into the ground with the deer, and I would have to pay the rent.

547. How long since?—About seventeen years ago. I had to sell my cow to pay the rent, which was £3, and all the while I could not put a seed into the ground. I was not allowed to keep a dog to help me to keep my cattle from the stockyard. I then made my stackyard where it could be seen from my window, and I got a puppy, and then the forester and the gamekeeper and the ground officer came to me and insisted that I should put out the dog that they might kill it. I put the dog into a barrel. The ground officer told me that if I did not put it out I would be put off the land. I was then going to leave the country, and I told them I did not care should they put my family on the Black Rock, if they did not drown them,—that they should not get the dog. I was twenty years away from home, only that I would be about one month at home at spring-time. The places I knew in my young days where the grass could be cut with the scythe are now as bare as possible with deer and big sheep. A wild ass could not get a bite off it. At half valuation we would calculate that during the past forty years the value of £2000 of crops has been destroyed upon us by the deer. The English sportsman would be shooting them in our corn. The women who would be quietly herding would have to fly home for fear of the bullets. I could not tell the history of it. It would give the apostle Paul himself enough to do to tell it; I leave it to some of the others to tell.

548. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—What time are you speaking of?—During the past forty years.

549. Is it going on now?—It is not so heavy on us during the past two years.

550. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—If they are forbidden to keep sheep themselves why are these other sheep allowed to trespass upon the ground?—The hill was a very good hill—the best grazing in Scotland—and the foresters advised Lord Macdonald to stock it with sheep himself, and Lord Macdonald accordingly had a sheep stock upon it for several years. The last gamekeeper we had—Mackenzie—only brought to our township a cow and a horse, and when he left, he himself said that he took away £3000, which he made on our hill by sheep stock—he himself keeping sheep on our hill.

551. But I want to understand as to those sheep which you say are there now; are they Lord Macdonald's, or are they sheep which are trespassing?—Trespassing sheep.

552. Whose business is it to keep those trespassing sheep off?—It is the gamekeeper's duty; but I do not know.

553. Would the gamekeeper object to your stock being on?—Yes, he would object.

554. Is there any fence to keep the deer off the arable land?—There is a fence, but it will not keep the deer out, nor the sheep.

555. Is it not high enough?—Part of it is high enough and part of it is not. Part is low. They break the fence.

556. When it was new would it keep the sheep and deer out?—Yes, at times. When Corrie, eighteen years ago, saw how we were being spoiled with the deer, he cut the township into twenty-seven lots, and left us the rest of it for grazing. When Tormore came, he located the crofters on our

pasture, and the place that was in my own time rented at £9 is now rented at double.

557. *The Chairman.*—Whose factor was Tormore?—Lord Macdonald's.

558. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—There were twenty-seven people before Tormore put these others on?—Yes, but there were three or four on other lots who had no land.

559. Of those twenty-seven how many were originally there, and how many were brought in from other places?—I can point out seventeen myself of the forty-four.

560. But of the twenty-seven how many came in?—I cannot tell, only that there are very few in our township of those who should be there. They are mostly strangers.

561. What arable land have you?—The arable land which I have is about one and a half acres. It is rocky. I was deprived of the good land, and it was given to strangers who came. Part of my land is now in the possession of four people. There was not a penny of arrears on my grandfather or my father or myself, and we have been paying rent for 100 years in the township in which I am. Seventeen years ago, in spring, half of the land I had was taken from me. I was not allowed to take up the potatoes that were left to me in the potato ground. I was compelled, at the following Martinmas, to pay the rent of this half of my lot which was taken from me. I told the factor I would not pay it. 'If you do not pay 'it I will take your name out of the book; you must do as I tell you.'

562. Who was your factor?—Corrie was the factor then. I then did a little work on the land that was left to me, and at the end of three years my reward was that my rent was raised 5s. in the £. I ceased; I did no more to it.

563. What is the rent now?—£2 is my present rent. My first rent was £1, 12s. and it is now £2. It was only rocks and rocky ground, and I was digging it myself. The land I had at first was worth £8.

564. *The Chairman.*—What animals do you keep?—It will not do more than feed one cow. I am allowed to keep two cows and a stirk. Each succeeding factor changes our holding, but the last factor has made no change.

565. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—How long is it since you lost the right to keep sheep?—Forty-seven years ago; but the hill ever since then was not without sheep.

566. Whose sheep?—Everybody's sheep that chose to trespass. No sheep was forbidden but ours.

567. When was it the factor advised Lord Macdonald to keep sheep for himself?—About thirty-five or thirty-seven years ago.

568. And did he keep a stock of his own then?—He kept a stock of his own upon it for a long time.

569. How long?—I cannot be sure. Mackenzie, the gamekeeper, then had the stock upon it.

570. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Was there any abatement of rent on account of the hill?—When my grandfather lived the township was about £50, it is now more than £100.

571. Was the hill with it in your grandfather's time?—Yes, and more than the hill.

572. And now the same ground, less the hill, is over £100?—Our marches are in the hill, and we are paying for it.

573. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—As they were?—As they ever were; and we are not allowed to keep stock upon it.

574. Are you allowed to keep cattle?—It is so bare with sheep and deer that it will not feed cattle.

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John Nicholson.

575. Does not the township keep a herd?—Yes; to keep the cows out of the deer forest.

576. Cannot the same herd keep the sheep from trespassing?—The herd is not allowed to keep a dog. The sportsmen tip him to compensate him for not keeping a dog?—They give him 5s. as a present, for fear of disturbing sheep and deer.

577. Your sheep?—No, sheep that come that way.

578. What objection had the shooting tenant to disturbing the sheep?—That if the dog would go after the sheep the deer would be disturbed.

579. *The Chairman.*—Who occupies the deer forest?—Mr Kettlewell.

580. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Who built the house you are living in?—I bought it with my own money from a man who went to America, and I left my father's house to my sister.

581. Do you know of any difference between the Sconser houses and those in any other parts of Skye?—Our houses would not stand a night in winter. They would be blown to the elements in a night of storm.

582. Are you aware that they are among the most miserable houses in Skye?—They are worse than any houses in Skye.

583. What is the cause of that?—The deer are eating our crops.

584. How does that spoil the houses?—Poverty. We have no sheep, no horses. We are carrying mud on our backs 8 miles—4 miles going for it and 4 miles returning, and doing the work of a horse—spring, summer, and autumn.

585. Did any factor or ground officer ever say anything to you about improving your houses?—No; the factor never said anything to us about improving our houses. I am sure they would rather see us out on the sea, in my opinion. I would like to find out if I could get my own hill clear of other people's stock.

586. Are you a fisherman?—Yes; a sort of fisherman.

587. What sort of fishing is it?—Herring.

588. Where do you fish?—At Ireland, the east coast, and everywhere.

589. Is the fishing in the neighbourhood profitable?—No, it is not profitable.

590. Are your boats and nets good?—Very middling

591. What is the reason of that?—That there is no fishing, and no occasion for keeping boats, and from poverty.

592. Have you no boat?—What need would I have of a boat and me twenty years away from the country?

JOHN M'INTYRE, Crofter and Missionary, Sconser—examined.

John M'Intyre.

593. *The Chairman.*—Will you describe to us the condition of the place where you live, and the hardships and grievances which the people suffer or are alleged to suffer, particularly in connection with the deer forest?—The principal grievances of which they complain are the smallness of their holdings, the want of sheep on their common grazing, and the way in which their crops are yearly destroyed by deer. That destruction is not so much now for the past two or three years owing to the present factor's liberality in repairing the fence about the township. They complain very much of the way in which people from other townships—removed for the sake of enlarging the deer forest—have been crammed upon them, adding so many to the already too thickly peopled townships. They think

it is the poorest township in the parish, and especially owing to its connection with the deer forest. They complain much of the way in which they are dealt with by the gamekeepers. They are strongly under the impression that the gamekeepers are far more severe than their instructions from their superiors allow them to be. They blame the gamekeepers most for all the ills they suffer. The remedies they are anxious for in the meantime are, that they get the liberty of keeping sheep upon the common grazing, larger holdings at a fair rent, and fixity of tenure, so that the proprietor cannot remove them without just cause, such as being so many years in arrears of rent. That is all I am instructed to inform the commissioners.

594. Might I ask whether you have yourself personally witnessed the ravages caused by the deer among the growing crops?—Yes.

595. If the proprietors were disposed to give to the people larger holdings of arable ground, is there available ground in the vicinity which could be given to them?—Yes.

596. Would it be possible to put a wire fence round the crofters' pasture so as to protect the pasture from the incursions of sheep and deer and enable them to keep their own sheep upon it?—Yes, but at a great deal of expense, which the crofters are not able to pay.

597. What would be the extent of the wire fence necessary for the protection of the common pasture?—About 3 miles.

598. If such a fence could be put up, and the waudering sheep and deer excluded, would that give great satisfaction to the crofters?—Yes.

599. Would an ordinary wire fence of six or seven wires in a great measure exclude the deer, or would the deer pass over it?—In some cases the deer would pass over such a fence. Round the arable land there is at present a fence of seven wires and the deer in some cases get over it, and they are so vicious—more so than deer I see anywhere else—that they twist themselves between the wires so as to get into the corn. I have seen it with my own eyes. They go on their sides to get in between the wires—especially the hinds. I never saw stags doing it.

600. Are the houses of the place more than usually bad?—They are very bad. Some of them are about the usual style of houses in the island.

601. Do you attribute the present prevalence of fever in any degree to the bad houses?—I could hardly answer that.

602. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—What kind of fever is it?—Typhoid.

603. *Mr Cameron.*—You said the factor had repaired the wire fence for the crofters. What sized fence was that?—The wire fence that was formerly round the cultivated land.

604. Was that a fence that would keep out sheep and deer from your own pasture?—It was very well for keeping out the deer from the pasture.

605. Was that the fence you spoke of which was 3 miles long?—No.

606. An inside fence?—Yes.

607. But an outside fence including your pasture would require to be 3 miles long?—Yes.

608. Have you ever seen a deer fence?—Yes.

609. What height do you consider sufficient to keep out deer?—They are not the same height in all places.

610. Where did you see this fence?—At a place called Cluny, in the possession of Earl Cowper.

611. How many miles long was it?—I cannot say.

612. Was it sufficient for its purpose?—It was sufficient.

613. Was it about 6 feet?—Between 6 and 7 feet.

614. Do you think 6 or 7 feet should be enough?—It should.

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John M'Intyre.

615. Do you know anything about any other deer forest in Scotland?—Yes.

616. Have you ever heard that fences have been erected in other forests?—Yes.

617. And of much greater length than you talk of here?—Yes.

618. In fact, there would be practically no difficulty except finding money to make a 3 mile fence?—That is all.

619. Has any application ever been made to the proprietor or factor to make this fence?—I do not think so.

620. If it were made quite efficient, I suppose it would remove all the grievances about the deer eating the crops?—Yes, it would.

621. Does the gamekeeper annoy you by shooting your dogs?—He did; not now.

622. Cats?—Not cats.

623. Does he annoy you in any other way?—Yes, in many a way.

624. In what sort of way?—In preventing people taking thatch out of the forest.

625. Do they have to go far into the forest to take thatch?—Yes.

626. How far?—In some cases a mile or more.

627. Is there anywhere else they can get thatch?—No; and it is a thing very much used in the district to keep thatch on the houses, and they are not allowed to cut it in the forest. They are allowed in a certain part of the forest, but they cannot get all they require, because the Braes and Sconser people get all their thatch from that forest. There is a certain part of the forest put out to them to get thatching, but it is not near enough to supply all.

628. Is there any other grievance they have against the gamekeeper except not allowing them to get thatch?—Not that I am aware of just now.

629. So, if you had these three miles of fence you would have no grievance against either the shooting tenant or the gamekeeper, with the exception of the difficulty of getting thatch?—No, not the least.

630. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—As to this fence which was repaired by the present factor, how long is it since it was first put up?—Fifteen or sixteen years ago.

631. And I suppose when it was first put up it was a benefit?—I do not think it was ever a benefit.

632. But it is now?—No, it is not. It did a little help last year, but not to the extent necessary.

633. Was it never repaired in those twelve years?—No, until the present factor came in.

Rev. Mr REID, Portree—examined.

Rev. Mr Reid.

634 *The Chairman.*—Have you any statement to make to the Commission?—I have been appointed by the people as one of their delegates, and I allowed myself to be so chosen to encourage people to come forward and give frankly and freely that information you desire to have. I allowed myself to be nominated for the very purpose, and I am prepared to do all I can to inaugurate any movement that might benefit their condition, and promote more friendly relations between the proprietors and the tenants generally amongst us. But though I was prepared to make a little statement, and answer some questions if required, I find it

quite unnecessary, because the general strain of the information you have recorded to-day is quite in accordance with my previous knowledge and information. I have been in this island for thirty years, and have known the people well, and I know personally a great many of the changes referred to. I feel it quite unnecessary on that account to detain you, who have been so patient and considerate to all parties here to-day, and if I wish to make any suggestions hereafter, as to the mode or manner in which I would improve things if I am not in Portree when we shall have the pleasure of seeing you there, I shall use the privilege of committing a few words to paper, and you can make any use of it you like. I have to say here, in conclusion, that some of the elections of delegates have been interfered with outside; but so far as this parish is concerned, there has not been a shadow of outside influence brought to bear on the crofters in their election of delegates. I say that to the credit of all parties.

635. As we are not quite sure of seeing you again, there are one or two questions I would like to ask you. How long have you been actually resident as a minister in this parish?—Within a few months of thirty years.

636. And your congregation of the Free Church is dispersed over the whole surface of the parish?—Yes.

637. So you are acquainted with every part of it?—I am acquainted as well as can be expected with the people and their circumstances generally.

638. There was a curious statement made to account for the removal of certain crofters at an early period. It is contained in the evidence of Samuel Nicolson, who stated that people had been removed, I think from their crofts at Sconser, in some degree on account of the Free Church agitation, for having given an asylum to certain parties belonging to the Free Church. Did you ever hear that mentioned as a tradition in the country before?—It was not a tradition with me at all. I had people in my congregation who were removed for taking a prominent part in the way of collecting or office-bearing or taking an interest in that great movement. They had to part with their lots, and it is only within the last two years that one of the most excellent men died, who took to being a porter at the steamer in Portree after being tenant of a lot, and who had been turned out simply because he had taken an interest in the Free Church movement. It was not a matter of hearsay with me, because several of my people have been so dealt with. Of course, feeling ran very high, and one must make allowance for that; and several parties suffered severely, and lost their lots in consequence of giving countenance to the cause, and sheltering those who had the courage to stand by the cause in that respect. I could give instances here and there through the Braes, if required. But all feeling of that sort has now disappeared; so far as I know, I think there is nothing of the kind.

639. In fact, the crofters do not suffer any injustice on account of their religious persuasion?—Not that I am aware of.

[ADJOURNED.]

SKYE.

SKEABOST.

SKEABOST, SKYE, WEDNESDAY, MAY 9, 1883.

(See Appendix A, I. and II.)

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.

William M'Lure.

WILLIAM M'LURE, Crofter, Glen Bernisdale—examined.*

640. *The Chairman.*—What is your occupation?—I work at the roads.

641. Have you a croft?—Yes.

642. You are a crofter, and work at the roads?—Yes.

643. Are you also a fisherman?—Yes.

644. Are you a native of this place?—I was born in the parish of Strath. I live in Glen. Bernisdale.

645. Have you been freely elected by the crofters in this place to be their delegate?—Yes.

646. You are perfectly acquainted with their interests and their wishes?—Yes.

647. Will you be so good as to state what are the grievances or hardships, if any, of which they complain at this place?—Any statement I make I would rather make in Gaelic. The first cause of the peoples' poverty that I can mention is the smallness of their holdings and the dearness of them, and that the soil is so poor that it does not yield crop. As a proof that our holdings are too small, our only implement of agriculture is a stick with a crook at the end of it. We call it a *cas-chrom*, and if the stick has not a natural bend we have to nail a piece to it. Anyone capable of thinking must know that a man in two or three weeks cannot work sufficient ground with this implement to support a family of seven or eight. The place in which I reside was a pasturage that was taken from the people of Bernisdale forty-seven years ago. At that time twenty-four families were placed in the pasturage that was taken from the Bernisdale people, and what was habitable of it was made into lots, and we got a share of the hill that was taken from these people along with it. We had not that hill pasture long when the landlord took part of it away from us again.

648. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Who was the landlord?—Donald Macdonald, late of Tannara. He did not reduce our rents, but he gave us sea-weed as compensation for the hill pasture of which he had deprived us. He did not leave us the right of cutting sea-ware long before he charged us for it. The landlord then came to poverty, and he lost the estate, and was put under trustees, and when the trustees came into possession they made some reduction of our rents, but we continued to pay for the sea-weed as we had been paying. When the late Mr Kenneth M'Leod of Grishornish got the property we got back the right to cut sea-ware free, but our present landlord makes us pay at present.

649. Who is your present landlord?—Mr Lachlan Macdonald, Skeabost. We have, however, some sea-ware connected with our land

* See Appendix A, II.

free, but we pay for the rest. He commenced to make us pay for the sea-weed when he was at law about the shore. He was preventing us from gathering shell-fish—oysters.

650. With whom was he at law?—He was at law with one of his own tenants; and he did what was worse to us than that at the time. There was a yair in the loch which was good for catching herring. I have seen in one night more than 300 barrels of herring caught in it. The loss of the yair was worse to us than anything that was done to us since we came to the place. The landlord ordered the yair to be destroyed, and the reason for that was that the people would be catching in the yair white fish, —salmon,—and since the destruction of the yair not one-fifth part of the quantity of fish that used to be caught in the river has been caught. I have not much more to say, but that the people are crowded upon each other here. Skeahost and Bernisdale fifty years ago were in a very prosperous condition. Since then the tenants were taken from Skeabost and located in Bernisdale. When the tenants were put out of Skeabost I had two lots. One of these was taken from me to accommodate another man. When the late Mr Kenneth M'Leod came into this property he laid five days' work upon each crofter. He did not long continue to exact this labour from them; but he laid an equivalent in money upon them—10s. upon each croft—and the payment of that sum in addition continued till last Martinmas, when the present proprietor gave us down that sum in name of reduction of rent. As there are other witnesses to speak after me, I have nothing further to say, unless I am questioned.

651. Have you any remedies to suggest whereby your condition, and that of your fellow crofters, might be improved?—I do not think there can be a more suitable remedy than to get more land at a suitable rent, and security that we will not be evicted so long as we pay the rent, and compensation for improvement.

652. Anything else in the way of remedy?—Hill pasture as well as arable land.

653. Is there any suitable land upon the estate, suited for this enlargement, for yourself and the other crofters?—There is not sufficient land for that purpose on this property, to make comfortable the whole of the crofters upon it.

654. Are you a fisherman?—I am not a fisherman.

655. Are any of the people here now engaged in fishing?—Yes, down at Bernisdale there are fishermen.

656. Could the fishing be improved and developed if they had quays where they could run up their boats and take shelter?—No doubt the fishing would be improved to those who are accustomed to fish, if they had quays.

657. Is this bay a good place for fishing?—At one time it was a good place, but now it is not so good.

658. Can you explain why it has fallen off?—I cannot answer that question.

659. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Do I understand there were twenty-four families on this pasture ground to which you and the people alongside of you were moved twenty years ago?—The pasturage was taken from the Bernisdale people, and twenty-four families were located on that pasturage.

660. Where did they come from, these twenty-four families?—They came from different places.

661. Chiefly from where?—That was before the people were removed from Skeahost at all.

662. Then, from what property did these twenty-four people come?—

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From different properties. Most of them came from M'Leod of M'Leod's property.

663. Where did you come from? Did you come yourself or did your father come?—I was born in the parish of Strath, and came here when I was about three years of age.

664. Your father came from the parish of Strath?—Yes.

665. On Lord Macdonald's property?—My mother was a widow woman, and the croft there was too heavy for her to keep, and she came to this quarter.

666. Whose property were you on at Strath?—Lord Macdonald's property.

667. How many tenants were taken from Skeabost to Bernisdale?—I cannot exactly say, but I think there were about twenty tenants in Skeabost the last time they were removed.

668. How long is it since their removal took place?—I cannot say.

669. But you lost half of your land at that time, and you should know?—It will be between seven and eight years, so far as I can mind.

670. And you lost half of your land at that time?—Yes.

671. And your rent was paid at that time?—Yes.

672. You had no difficulty in paying rent?—Not at that time. Twenty families were removed from Skeabost. I do not know whether the whole of them were sent to Bernisdale or not.

673. And that land at Skeabost is now in the proprietor's own occupation?—Yes, that land is now in the proprietor's own occupation.

674. He does not let any of it?—No.

675. You mentioned that the late Mr Macdonald of Grishornish put five days' labour upon you. To what purpose was that labour applied?—It was called duty work.

676. What work was it?—Any work he would have to do.

677. Such as?—Working land, and whatever work he would have to do.

678. But was it for your benefit or for his?—For his own benefit.

679. You did not make roads for yourselves or piers or anything of that sort?—No.

680. Were you reaping crop for him?—Yes.

681. You said that one of the remedies for your poverty would be an increased holding—have the people of Bernisdale sufficient means to stock increased holdings if you got holdings large enough to please you?—Well, I believe they have not in the meantime, for what stock they have is not their own.

682. Is it not their own now?—No.

683. Whose stock is it?—It belongs to the merchants and to the proprietor.

684. In what way to the merchants?—For meal. I was speaking to a man outside before I came in, and he told me he had upwards of £400 on the Skeabost estate for meal.

685. They are in debt to the merchants?—Yes.

686. And how does it belong to the proprietor?—For arrears of rent.

687. Were they ever clear of the merchants and the proprietor?—Well, I cannot say whether they were all clear of rent, but I know they were not so much sunk as they are at present.

688. How long will it be since you think they were clear or nearly clear?—About forty-six or forty-seven years ago—before the pasture was taken off.

689. Has no new pasture been given you of late years?—No.

690. I have understood, not to-day but previously, that there was stock

put on here for which the proprietor advanced the money?—I did not hear of that.

691. How is your stock managed? Has it any common mark?—We have a joint stock and mark; and our summing of sheep in Bernisdale is sixteen sheep, and in Glen, where I live, it is eight sheep.

692. Are the sales made in common, or do you each sell your own?—There are two managers of the whole of the stock—two of the crofters.

693. Are the stock sold in one lump, or does each man sell his own?—It is sold in one lump.

694. And the money is divided?—The money is divided.

695. Managed like a big farm?—The very same.

696. How many cows are you entitled to keep?—Two cows and two stirks.

697. Is that for the whole croft or the half?—It is for the whole croft in the Glen. We have the same summing of cows as in Bernisdale, but they have double the summing of sheep.

698. And how many horses?—One or two, but the ground officer has two horses.

699. How much arable land have you?—Well, I cannot tell the exact acreage, and in case it might be said afterwards that I gave false evidence, I would rather not say anything about that.

700. Do you know how many barrels of potatoes you plant each year?—Sometimes four and sometimes four and a half, up and down, as I can manage to get manure.

701. And how much corn do you sow?—About two bolls.

702. What is a boll here?—Six bushels.

703. Is that oats or barley?—Oats.

704. Do you sow any barley?—No barley; barley would not grow.

705. Nor bere?—No, the soil being so poor.

706. What rent do you pay?—Till last Martinmas I was paying £5, but when the 10s. for duty work was taken off me I only pay £4, 10s. now.

707. For the whole croft?—For the whole croft.

708. You have then eight sheep, two cows, and two stirks, and land that will plant four or four and a half barrels of potatoes, and two bolls of six bushels—that is one and a half quarters—of oats; and the rent is £4, 10s. now?—Yes.

709. Have you a full stock?—Yes, but I buy from £2, 10s. to £3 worth of provender for winter, for the croft will not produce so much as will winter the two cows and two stirks.

710. Do you give the corn to the stirks along with the straw?—I thresh some of the corn. Owing to the scarcity of it, I must give some to the cattle without threshing. It would be cheaper for me to buy seed oats.

711. How deep do you dig your crofts?—In some places we cultivate the croft to the depth of 2 inches, and in some places to a depth of 1½ inch, and in some places perhaps 6 inches.

712. But you can get below 6 inches?—No, it is seldom we can get that.

713. Would a spade go down deeper?—A spade would not go through the rock.

714. But the rock is not in every place?—Where there is no rock there is gravel.

715. A good deal of it might be drained, might it not?—I believe it could be made better by improving it.

716. By trenching?—Yes.

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717. And by draining?—Yes.

718. Does anybody in your place drain or trench at all?—Well, I have seen when trenching and draining were going on, but the result would be that they would be fined by the proprietor.

719. A rise of rent?—A rise of rent; and if they refuse to give the rise of rent they would be deprived of their holding, and it would be given to some one else who would give the rise.

720. Do you remember how long it is since a case of that kind occurred?—Well, it was not during this proprietor's reign, nor that of the proprietor before him.

721. Would the proprietor give you a lease? Did anybody ever ask for a lease?—I believe they did, and he gave a lease to a few.

722. *For what length of time?—I think it was ten years.*

723. Not more?—Not more, but we could not improve the land, for the production of the land would not keep us during the time we would be improving it. We had to be at other work, to support our families.

724. But you are at home most of the winter?—No, I cannot be at home any day I can work, owing to the kind of work I have.

725. What is the work?—Keeping a piece of the road in repair.

726. You have constant employment?—Yes.

727. *Mr Cameron.*—You say that no improvement has taken place on the land held by the crofters?—Not of late.

728. How long ago is it since the last improvement was made? You say it was not in the time of the present landlord or the landlord before him?—No, I do not think it was.

729. Can you fix any date?—No, I cannot fix any date.

730. How many years is it since the last land was improved do you think?—I believe it will be as far back as twenty years ago—at least no improvement I know of. There might be a little, but nothing worth speaking of.

731. And the people do not improve the land for fear the rent would be raised upon them?—I know it was the case in former times.

732. But, if it is not the same proprietor that used to raise the rent upon them when they made improvements before, what is the cause of the fear of the people that the rent will now be raised?—It is not the fear of making the improvements, but they cannot stay at home to make the improvements.

733. *If you never tried the present proprietor to see if he would raise* the rent upon you, why is it that the people are afraid to make improvements, for fear of the rent being raised?—I have no doubt but this proprietor would allow compensation for improvements if the people could stay.

734. I am not speaking of the question of compensation for improvements, but you said the people would not improve the land for fear of the rent being raised, and you told us that that had not been done either during the present proprietor's time or his predecessor's, but that it was twenty years ago. Now why do not the people improve their land for fear of the rent being raised when they have had no experience of the rent being raised in the present proprietor's time?—I know the present proprietor would not raise the rent.

735. Then you modify your answer, that the fear of having their rent raised influences them?—It did in former times, but not now.

736. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—You said that you had constant employment, and therefore had not spare time to improve your croft. But your neigbbours go away for work in the summer time, and are at home in winter, and if they are not afraid of having their rent raised, why

is it they idle away their time and don't do something to improve the land?—I did not say they idled away their time in the winter time.

737. But they are not generally away from home in the winter?—No.

738. What are they doing?—In the township where I live, some of them are in the service of the proprietor and some away working at other places. They will be thinking that far better than improving the land.

739. Then, from the new year till they begin to crop the land, what are they doing?—It is very seldom they can do any outside work in this quarter on account of the weather.

740. *Mr Cameron.*—Now, coming to the question of compensation for improvements, you say you would like to have compensation promised for improvements?—I do.

741. You have told us that for the last twenty years no improvements have been attempted?—Not that I am aware of.

742. Do you think that improvements would have been attempted if there had been a reasonable prospect of compensation?—Yes, and the holdings enlarged.

743. But if there had been reasonable prospect of compensation?—Yes.

744. Now, how would you propose that should be given? In what form?—Compensation when the present tenant would leave.

745. But would any of the present tenants ever be likely to leave?—Well, I do not know; if they could find better places I believe they would.

746. I mean, of their own free will?—Yes, if they could find better places, I am quite certain they would leave.

747. But in the actual condition of affairs in Skye, such as we find existing, would any of the crofters be likely, of their own free will, to leave, and therefore ask for compensation for having improved their land?—That is a question I cannot answer.

748. Would they be likely to emigrate to America?—They would get nothing in America but vacant land, and they have plenty of that in their own country.

749. But they would not like to go to America?—No, they would not like to go to America. I know that.

750. Then how would occasion arise to get compensation if the people do not leave? You were asked just now the remedies you would suggest for the existing state of things now complained of, and you suggest that one of the remedies would be compensation for improvements. You first told us that no improvements have been made here for the last twenty years, and that when I asked you when compensation should be given, you did not seem to know exactly?—Yes, fixity of tenure and compensation for any improvements.

751. But we want to know what you, as representing the crofters, actually wish? We do not want the mere catch words "fixity of tenure" and "compensation for improvements;" but we want, being on the spot here, to find out exactly what it is you want. Now, with regard to this compensation, if you went away it would be reasonable to expect you should get compensation; but suppose the crofters do not leave the country of their own free will, in what way would you wish the proprietor to give you compensation, or how would you bring it about?—By giving me a reduction of rents according to the work I did.

752. That is to say, for every acre of land you improved, he should give you a reduction on the old rent?—Yes.

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753. Of course, I was talking of your going away of your own free will. I suppose you are not afraid here of being arbitrarily evicted?—No.

754. Would you like to have fixity of tenure, or leases?—It is all the same,—fixity of tenure or perpetual.

755. Long leases?—Yes.

756. What do you call a sufficiently long lease?—Thirty or forty years.

757. Are you and your neighbours in fear of being arbitrarily evicted by the present proprietor?—No.

758. But you think, viewing the possibility of another proprietor or somebody in whom you would not have the same confidence, you would like to have long leases?—We would.

759. Would you like more land?—Yes.

760. Now, how do you propose to stock that land?—Well, we could not stock the land in our present position, but through time we would be able to stock the land if we got it.

761. But how would you do in the meantime?—We were thinking Government would be allowing some money to improve the land, and that we would try some other means of stocking it.

762. What other means could you try? Would the merchants allow you any more money?—The bank might allow us money, and get the stock for security.

763. The bank might advance the money?—Yes.

764. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—But does not the stock already belong to the laird and the merchants?—This is new stock.

765. *Mr Cameron.*—Do you think the bank would advance you money to stock a farm when they knew that the stock you already had was mortgaged to the merchants?—Well, it is not the case with the whole, though it is the case with some.

766. It is not the case with the whole?—No.

767. And in the case of those whose stock is not pledged to the merchants, have these people any little amount of ready money at their hand to deal with?—Well, that is a question I cannot answer. It is the banker who knows that. I know some who would stock the most of their crofts if they got larger holdings, and that would give more room to the rest, and maybe would improve their condition.

768. So you think some of the crofters,—those who are tolerably well off,—might get other farms, and leave their places to be added to the crofts of those who remain, and so increase the holdings all round?—Yes.

769. As a proof of the poverty of the people here, you state that they use the *cas-chrom*?—Yes.

770. But, as I understand, the arable land which each crofter has, measured by the quantity of oats and potatoes that are sown, amounts to 3 or 4 acres?—I believe between 3½ and 4—some larger and some less.

771. But is that not rather a large amount of land to work in the old-fashioned way with the crooked spade?—It is too large, and in some cases we must take a horse's work out of a woman; we get them to harrow,—and while slavery is done away with in other countries, it is likely to continue here.

772. But what I want to ask you is why you use the crooked spade and the woman's labour. Why don't you work your crofts in the usual way with horses and plough?—We have no horses.

773. And that is why you so use the crooked spade?—Yes, and in some cases we have to wait. We are prevented by climate and weather from getting our seed in. We have to get a day and two days of a plough from other estates, and we pay at the rate of £1 a day for a pair of horses,

and you might call it additional rent, though we do not pay it to the landlord.

774. But could not two neighbouring crofters join together as they do in other parts of the country, and then each would have what they call the "side of a horse," and work the land in that way?—But we have no keeping for the horses.

775. In fact, you are too poor to have horses?—All too poor to have horses. If I cannot winter two cows and two stirks, how would I keep a horse?

776. *Professor Mackinnon.*—What about your own croft before it was halved? Was it big enough?—It was not enough at all. It was never subdivided.

777. I thought you said you had only half a croft?—I had two crofts, and one of them was taken from me.

778. Were those two crofts not big enough?—No, they were not big enough.

779. Had you a horse at the time?—No, for there was not a horse allowed on the estate. There was no grazing for horses.

780. Suppose you got an opportunity of stocking a good enough croft, would you be able to do so?—No, I could not. Perhaps, through time I might try it.

781. I think you said also there was not sufficient room on this estate for the tenants upon it to make them comfortable?—No, I know there is not.

782. What do you propose to do with the rest?—Give them crofts in neighbouring places. There is plenty of land there.

783. But suppose the neighbouring places require all they have for themselves?—No, they do not.

784. At what places would you say there is land where there are no people?—There is plenty of land at Skerrinish and Scorrybreck, and Kingsburgh.

785. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—But does not that belong to Lord Macdonald?—I know that. On every side there is plenty of land fit for cultivation, for most of it was cultivated before.

786. *Professor Mackinnon.*—And the fixity of tenure you mean is just a long lease?—Yes.

787. And if removed at the end of the lease, then compensation for improvements?—Yes.

788. Do you consider the rents at present too high?—I do, in some cases.

789. But I believe some of them are not so in Bernisdale?—I know some are too dear in Bernisdale.

790. That is the place you know best?—Yes.

791. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—What do you consider a proper rent for your own present half croft?—My present croft is £4, 10s., and I know it would be dear enough at £3.

792. Does it support your two cows?—It is not wintering for them, and I buy between £2, 10s. and £3 worth of provender yearly for them.

793. Have you asked for a lease?—No.

794. Why not?—Because I do not see a place worth asking a lease of.

795. And your land was not improved?—I could not improve it; I was working.

796. Is the work you are accustomed to engage in, upon the roads, more profitable—better for your family?—Yes, for my family would starve if I should stay to improve the croft.

797. Then, if you got more land, would you give up working at the

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roads?—I do not know. If I found the land sufficient to support my family I would give up any work except the land itself.

798. *The Chairman.*—You spoke of two occasions on which people were brought in from other places and located at Bernisdale—twenty-four families from various parts of the country, and about twenty families from Skeabost?—Yes; but I did not say that they all came to Bernisdale when Skeabost was evicted the last time.

799. But you think the first time there were twenty-four families; and about how many do you think came to Bernisdale from Skeabost?—I cannot exactly say.

800. Do you think there were ten?—I think there were more.

801. Suppose there were ten, that would be thirty-four families here, brought into Bernisdale from other places?—Yes.

802. Were the whole of these thirty-four families located upon the common pasture ground formerly belonging to Bernisdale?—Yes.

803. All located upon the common pasture ground?—Yes.

804. Then, when these new families were placed upon the common pasture grouud of Bernisdale, what pasture ground remained to the people of Bernisdale?—Just a small portion of what they had formerly.

805. How were the uew families provided with houses?—They built buts for themselves. They were not houses.

806. You say each built his own house?—Yes.

807. Did they receive any assistauce from the proprietor in the form of timber or windows or doors, or anything of that sort?—Well, I do not think they did; I do not know of any case where they did.

808. On these particular occasious you are not aware that the proprietor gave them any assistance towards the building of the houses?—No.

809. Or any assistance given them towards making the fences round the arable ground?—No. They make their fences themselves. These were turf dykes.

810. When they were removed from their former dwellings, especially when they were removed from Skeabost, did they get any compensation for the houses which they left and which were pulled down?—The roofs of the houses were valued, and they were paid the prices.

811. How much is the roof of an old house valued at?—It depends upon what kind of roof is on the house. Some are valued at £3 and some at £2, and some are not worth 30s.

812. Do you think that any of the Skeabost people bought the timber of the old houses to make the roofs of their new houses here with?—That is according to how the proprietor and themselves would agree about the roof of the house.

813. Then the proprietor would give them 30s., £2, or £3 of compensation for the roof of a house?—Yes, according to valuation.

814. And the crofters would buy wood with that money for the roof of their new houses?—Yes.

815. No other form of compensation?—Not that I am aware of.

816. When these people came and were settled upon the pasture land of Bernisdale, did the crofters, of Bernisdale, who formerly enjoyed the common pasture, have their rent reduced in consequence of the pasture being taken away, or did they continue to pay the same rent for the reduced ground which they had paid for the whole ground?—I think they continued to pay the same rent, but you will hear witnesses from the place.

817. When the new people were brought in and located upon the common pasture, and while they were preparing their arable ground and

making the necessary improvements for their subsistence, were they allowed to sit rent free, or was the rent exacted from the moment of their arrival?—From the moment they entered.

818. Was the amount which they paid in the beginning on the same scale as the usual rents for land already improved?—The very same.

819. Were any of the new people located upon the arable ground belonging to the old people of Bernisdale? Was the arable land of the old crofts subdivided at all?—No, I do not think it, but the pasture was taken off the Bernisdale people, and what was fit for arable land was cut into crofts and given to the new people.

820. But the old arable land was not subdivided and reduced?—I do not think it was.

821. Now, supposing that more land were given to the crofters for arable, and supposing they got the leases which you spoke of, what description of improvements would they be likely to make?—By getting the land stocked, they would come to improve the land through time, for I see other people who are keeping large families and thriving on these farms.

822. Would they, for instance, buy lime for the improvement of the soil?—If they would be able to buy it they would, or if the proprietors would buy lime for them, they would pay interest on the capital, and instalments.

823. If additional land were given them would they be likely to make tile drains and stone drains?—If they could afford to buy tiles, and I believe they would make stone drains.

824. Would they, if the landlord would advance money for such improvements for drains, pay interest upon them?—They would.*

825. Is all rent payable in labour—all obligation to labour—now abolished?—Well, it is abolished here.

826. All obligation to labour is now abolished here?—Yes.

827. And the compensation money which was exacted, instead of the labour, is that also abolished?—It is abolished.

828. Is it suspended or abolished?—I think it is done away with altogether.

829. You complain that there are no horses to perform the work of the crofts?—No horses.

830. Does the landlord forbid people to keep horses, or is it merely their poverty which prevents them keeping them?—They have no grazing for the horses. They cannot keep them.

831. But does the landlord forbid it?—It was forbidden here, for I knew people in Bernisdale fined for keeping horses.

832. What is the reason there is a greater objection to keeping horses than to keeping cows?—Because they do not get any work out of the horses except in the spring time for a few days, and they get use of the cows all the year round.

833. That is the objection of the people, but what objection has the landlord to your keeping horses?—The landlord knows well enough there is no keeping for the horses. One horse will require as much grass as two cows.

834. Suppose that the landlord was not able to increase the area of arable ground for the crofters, would it still be of advantage to the crofters that the area of the common pasture should be increased?—It would be of advantage.

835. What stock would they put upon it if they had an increase of common pasture?—Sheep.

836. They could not keep horses merely on the common pasture?—

* See Appendix A, II.

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They could not keep horses, and they could not keep any more cattle, for they would have no wintering for the cattle.

837. But they could keep sheep?—Yes.

838. I want to ask you about the fishing. You stated that there was a yair which in former times existed, and by means of which a great quantity of herring was caught. Where was this yair placed, and what was the nature of it?—It was placed on Lord Macdonald's estate, on the other side of the loch, just opposite this church.

839. What was it like?—It was a stone dyke, but one end of it was on dry land, and going out with a semi-circle into the sea, and at ebb tide, if the herring went in there, they were caught by the dyke.

840. Was it destroyed by the proprietor of Skeabost or by Lord Macdonald?—By the authority of Skeabost and Lord Macdonald's factor together.

841. Why did they destroy it?—For fear the people would be catching salmon.

842. Did they ever catch salmon in the place?—Yes, very often.

843. Then, did they bring the salmon to the proprietor, or did they keep the salmon to themselves?—They kept the salmon for themselves, for they had more need for them.

844. If such a yair were re-established here, do you think they would still catch herring in it?—I do; for the herring would stand the same chance of being there as in former times.

845. And do you think, if they were allowed to rebuild it, that they would bring the salmon honestly to the proprietor or not?—That I cannot answer, but it is my opinion they would not.

846. I want to ask you something about the method of cultivation. In former times we are told there used to be a run-rig system—the land was divided every three years, in new portions between the crofters?—I believe that was the case, but I do not mind of that.

847. There are no remains of that system of cultivation now?—No.

848. Did you ever hear the people say they regretted that that system was abolished?—Yes.

849. You have heard them say they regretted its abolition?—Yes.

850. What do you think about it?—Well, I don't know, for I did not see that method in my time, and therefore I cannot make any distinction.

851. Did you ever see it in any other part of the country?—No.

852. Do you think that any of the people would like to see that system brought back again?—I am not sure.

853. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Do you work under another, or are you a contractor?—I am a contractor.

854. *Mr Cameron.*—What wages do you pay?—From 2s. to 2s. 6d. a day.

855. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Are you aware that yairs are prohibited now by Act of Parliament as a means of catching salmon?—I was not aware of that. They knocked down some pieces of that dyke, so as to let out the salmon fish, and they would be allowed to rebuild it again when the salmon fishing was over, and then it was knocked down entirely.

856. Have the houses of the tenants about here been very much improved?—Yes.

857. Does the landlord lend any assistance in doing that?—The landlord pays the whole expense of the house, and charges 5 per cent. of interest upon the houses he builds; and in the case of any one who builds a house at his own expense, the proprietor will give him compensation according to valuation, in the event of his leaving or being removed.

858. Does he give any assistance for improving the outside of the houses?—He gives them lime.

859. For pointing the walls?—Yes.

860. Is that given free of charge?—I do not know whether they bought it themselves or whether he gave it them; but I know that is the charge he makes for the money expended on the houses.

861. Are there any regulations on the estate with regard to the houses?—There are no regulations, except that they have to pay the interest for the houses along with the rent.

862. *The Chairman.*—I have been reminded, since I spoke to you about the yair that a yair is now prohibited by law for the purpose of catching salmon. Now, I want to know if the yair was put up for the purpose of catching herring, and if salmon got into it, would the crofters or the fishermen allow the salmon to go free, and be contented to take the herrings and other fish?—During the summer season there were very seldom any herring got in the yair, and the people would allow the wall to be broken down in some places so as to let the salmon out, and then, when the salmon season was over, to rebuild it, and it would catch the herring then.

863. Then do you think it might be so arranged that the yair should be re-established without injuring the salmon fishing?—I think it could.

864. But would the people honestly accept that, or would they use it for the purpose, occasionally, of catching and keeping salmon?—The people would not be against breaking the yair in some places so as to let out the salmon, and so that they could not catch the salmon. I do not know whether they would have the honesty of going to the proprietor with the salmon or not.

865. But it is against the law to take salmon in that way. Would they let the salmon go free into the sea?—Yes, the salmon would go free in spite of them, where they got a place to escape.

866. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—As matter of fact, were the salmon you caught a very small proportion of the quantity of herrings caught in former times?—Very small.

867. *The Chairman.*—How many years have you been here?—I have been settled where I live at present for forty-four years in the same croft.

868. Speaking generally, since you can recollect, do you think that your neighbours—the people round here—are poorer, worse dressed, worse fed, and worse in their circumstances now than they used to be, or do you think they are better off, and live better than they did?—I know that they are far poorer than they were in former times when I came here.

869. What about the food?—As to the food, I do not know what food they eat; I see very few of them taking their food, but I know they are poorer in circumstances, for they are sunk in debt.

870. Do you remember the state of the people before the great potato loss in 1846?—Well, it is very little I mind of that.

871. But do you believe the condition of the people was much deteriorated by the disease in the potatoes?—I believe it was.

872. Now, speaking of the cottars, labourers, what was the daily wage of the labourer thirty years ago?—Working to the proprietors round about here they would get 1s. a day; and in some times of the year, during the cutting of the hay and harvest, a man would get 2s. and a woman 6d. or 9d. At this moment a man gets 2s. from Skeabost, and a woman 1s.

873. Now, are the labourers and cottars worse off than when they got

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1s. a day, or is it only the crofters that are worse off?—They are worse off than when they got 1s.

874. What as to the cottars?—As to the cottars, I cannot say much about them, but the only thing I can say is that the cottars are a burden on the crofters.

875. Have you any other observation you wish to make before you retire?—I do not know of any observation I have to make. I have made the only suggestions I know of for improving our condition—that is, plenty of land and reasonable rent.

876. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—You talk about reasonable rents. You mentioned just now that you saw the large farmers all make money. Do you think the large farmers all pay reasonable rents?—The large farmers have a better chance of making money than the small farmers, where they have great tracts of land well stocked.

877. But that is not the question. I am asking about the rent. What do you think a reasonable rent?—I would think a reasonable rent for a croft capable of keeping five cows and a horse and between forty and fifty sheep should be about £7.

878. And if you put two of them together, what would you think a reasonable rent for the two of them?—Double that rent.

879. And you say the same thing if you put four together. You think four times the amount a reasonable rent?—Yes.

880. But now the large farmer pays a much bigger rent than that. How far would you go on at that rate of rent?—Well, I do not know how far I would go on, but I would think that reasonable.

881. It is very much lower than the large farmer pays?—I know that people coming from better places buy land in the Highlands free for about twenty-five rents, and we are here after paying twenty-five rents for our land and we have to pay the same yet.

882. You don't pay the twenty-five rents in one year?—Not in one year.

JOHN BETHUNE, Crofter, Bernisdale—examined.

John Bethune.

883. *The Chairman.*—Have you got a croft at this moment?—Half a croft.

884. How long have you had it?—More than forty years.

885. Have you been a fisherman?—Yes, I was a fisherman from my youth.

886. Have you heard all the previous delegate said, and have you understood what he said?—I heard the most part of it.

887. Do you wish to add anything with reference to the hardships alleged to be suffered by the people, and as to the remedies which have been suggested?—Our place is divided into three portions.

888. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—What place?—Bernisdale. I am in the centre of Bernisdale. My successor is now located in the pasturage which belonged to the holdings on which I am now. We are much straitened by the smallness of the holdings and the crowded state in which we are. There are many half crofts on which nine souls live—eighteen souls on one croft—and twelve on some, and from that downwards, and the population is double what I have seen it to be in my young days. The only thing that would remedy our ills, as the previous witness alluded to, is that we should get more land. As for me I am getting old, and I will not

need it, but the rising generation will need it. The land is all gone. We are cropping the land for the last sixty-eight years every year, and the soil is just gone, and should I sow a boll or two of oats, maybe I will not have what I sow in the ground. Last year I had not what I sowed, and the most of the people are in the same condition. I am speaking for the people as for myself. If they had what land would support their families they would be very well off. They might leave a piece of the ground out, and sow it down with grass. That would make strong ground, and it would produce good corn again. When I was here first, in the year 1830, before old Mr Macdonald bought the place, we were very well off. We were not in need of buying any meal or anything, because we had plenty of ground. We had all the Glens that man possessed, and some other glens, and we are toiling that ground every year. We had a fold for our cows and plenty corn at that time. I never saw my father buying a boll of meal all the time he was in the place.

889. What family had he?—Four sons and a servant. How bad the day is that we have not a hill to keep a cow or a horse! We cannot keep any cows on the hill, or a horse? We have to till the ground ourselves with a crooked spade, as a man told before, and women are harrowing the place without a horse. But there is a thing worse than that altogether—we will not get the ground toiled till May, because we have no horse. The people hereabout who have horses labour their own ground before we can get any horses. Should I get a horse here, I would keep a horse myself,—I saw in the place here some years ago a man who had a horse, and he had grazing in another place summer and winter, and he brought it back here to the village, and he was fined £4, 10s. by the factor and ground officer for taking the horse to plough the ground. There were two of them fined for doing such a thing.

890. *Mr Cameron.*—How long was that ago?—When Mr Robertson was factor for M'Leod. It was not by this proprietor at all. They got a summons of removal, and they paid £4, 10s. for that. Another bad thing that was done on the people here was this. When M'Leod got the estate —Kenneth M'Leod, who bought the place twenty-two or twenty-three years ago—there were only twenty-two crofts on Bernisdale. Well, they had a cow, a piece on the hill, and a bit of the hill was left. The best part of the hill is in the hands of the proprietor himself, where we used to have our cows and horses. When M'Leod bought the estate, we had only a cow, and a piece on the hill. We are obliged to put sheep on the hill, and the people, when they sold their cattle, were in debt, and most of them could not keep sheep on the ground at all. He told them he would give them sheep till they would pay it, or else that he would pay the grazing. So he put sheep on the hill ground himself, and when he saw there was some profit in the sheep—some years they would have £4, £3, or 50s.—he never gave them a shilling for the grazing. They were obliged to pay the rent, and he had the profit of the grazing himself. Mr Macdonald, the landlord that is here to-day, followed the same state as his uncle. He promised to pay the people for the grazing of the sheep, and when he went over again he would not do it at all. He would not pay them a shilling, and that money is lying in the hands of Mr Macdonald yet for eight or nine years. When he removed the people from Skeabost he gave a few of them sheep gratis for removal.

891. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Do you refer to the present landlord?—Yes, he removed them from Skeabost, eight or nine families, and gave sheep to them, but he never paid the grazing to the people. There is nothing left us but to get more land, and how can any man live upon a small hit

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of land, say 3 acres, when there are nine souls upon that 3 acres? When the people till the ground they are obliged to go away to the south country or to the fishing to pay the rent and to pay the meal their family use all the year. Another thing is done here, too. Surely, if any of you gentlemen is a proprietor—and I see one proprietor here, but he never did any ill to his tenants, that is Mr Macdonald of Treaslane—surely you will allow the tenants to manage their own cattle and sheep. Surely there is no man who can manage my stock better than myself. Mr Macdonald has put a man over our stock to manage them.

892. *The Chairman.*—Which Mr Macdonald?—The present one. We are not allowed to buy or sell anything, but the manager he sends over us to manage our sheep. Surely the proprietor has no right to take possession of the land that I am paying for to him. If the people allowed a man to build a little house on the pasture, he paid £2 to the proprietor for that. The people are not allowed to get a farthing of that. When Mr Robertson was factor when Mr Macdonald was here, there was a man out of our pasture, and he charged £2 of rent upon him on the ground we paid. Is that right?

893. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Can you tell us anything about the taking away of the right to the shell-fish?—Yes, I saw a poor crippled man here that gathered a few oysters on the shore here, and they put him in jail—a poor crippled man, with one leg, put in jail for gathering a score or half a score of oysters!

894. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Is the sea shore not open to anybody, then?—No, I do not think it.

895. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Who arrested that man? By whose orders was it done?—I believe it was by the orders of the present proprietor, Mr Macdonald. He was proprietor at the time, at any rate.

896. Was the shore formerly a good place for oysters?—Yes, but they are all gone now.

897. Did the people use all to lift them?—Yes, they lifted them from all quarters here.

898. And the laird put a stop to that?—Yes. Speaking about the sea-ware here, when we had the sea-ware before, it was divided into shares. It was the best sea-ware, and they would cast lots for it, and that was very good for the people to manure their ground. To-day we will not get a dust of it unless I am a favourite with the ground officer of the proprietor. A favourite will get plenty of it; and it is not this year or last year or many years back.

899. *Mr Cameron.*—Are you a favourite?—Oh, sometimes.

Sheriff Nicolson.—Have you got any of the sea-ware?—About two years ago they appointed me a bit of it, and when I went there were only eight or nine creels of it, and I left it to themselves.

900. Are there any oysters now at all?—Very few.

901. What has become of them?—I do not know.

902. Do not the people take them all away?—No, they don't; but they went away themselves someway or another. I do not know what is the reason of that.

903. Don't you know that an oyster bed will be destroyed if the oysters—young and old—are taken away?—Surely.

904. Was not that the case?—I do not think it.

905. If people from all directions were taking the oysters, there would not be many left?—No, they would take them all; but there are a few left. I was there about a month ago and I saw a few oysters there, but there are not many.

906. Were the people prohibited from lifting any other shell-fish except

oysters?—I do not think it. They were not prohibited from collecting any other shell-fish except the oysters.

907. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—In regard to the management of the common pasturage, how long is it since the proprietor put a man on to manage the stock for you?—The ground officer is managing our sheep stock since we joined them all together.

908. How long is it since you joined them all together?—It is only a few years back. Since then the proprietor put a manager over us. In the year 1861 we joined stock.

909. Twenty-two years ago?—Yes; it was M'Leod at that time.

910. Before that each man had his own stock; Yes, they had cattle on the hill and a few sheep.

911. And after that time they each had a share in one stock?—Yes, each had a share.

912. And the proprietor gave the sheep to some of them?—Yes, he possessed about seven or eight shares of the hill.

913. And he put his manager on to help to manage it?—He had a manager on the place, and he had grazing himself. He never paid a shilling to the people for the grazing. They paid all the rent besides that. In the case of a man who pays £8 of rent, maybe M'Leod would get £8 or £3 or £4 for that poor man's grazing.

914. Whom did he get the £3 or £4 from?—From the income of the sheep. Mr M'Leod had a share of the stock himself.

915. What is the stock on the hill?—There were about 400 sheep on the hill.

916. And how many shares were in it?—There were twenty-two shares at that time, and M'Leod had seven or eight at any rate of those twenty-two shares, and when the people could not stock the place he told them he would keep sheep on the hill for the people, and that he would give them the sheep until they would pay it. No, he did not give them that, but when he saw there was a little profit on the income of the sheep when they were sold as wool and wedder, he did not give them anything. He kept the profit to himself. He said 'they pay the whole rent,' and they did not get any.

917. But the stock was one whole stock? Was not the rent paid and all expenses paid before the profits were divided?—Yes. The profit was £80,—£4 on each share. Every man would get his share, and M'Leod would get seven or eight shares.

918. But you only find out the profit after paying the expenses?—The rent was paid.

919. And all the expenses?—And all the expenses.

920. And then, what was over was the profit?—We were wanting him, because he had the sheep on the farm, to pay the grazing of the sheep to us. The grazing belongs to the tenant. Every crofter had sixteen sheep. The grazing belongs to the people when they pay the rent. They would require to get payment for their own grazing from Mr M'Leod—2s. 6d. for every sheep. That would make £2 each he put in his pocket belonging to the people for eight or nine years,—eight shares—so he had £16 that the sheep would make—£4 in the year.

921. *Mr Cameron.*—Does that system go on now?—No. It was carried on by Mr Macdonald too. He promised to pay the grazing to the people, and he did not do it.

922. Does that go on still?—No, because when he removed the people from Skeabost he gave eight sheep's grass to every one he removed.

923. But this, which you describe as a grievance then, is not a grievance now?—No.

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924. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Did he give eight sheep as a present to each of those he removed?—To seven of them.

925. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—I want to find out from you about the manager who arranges about your stock. Are the tenants not allowed of their own will to choose their own manager?—The tenants appointed two men to look after their own stock—two of the tenants. Mr Macdonald said he must send a man over them too, and so he did.

926. Does he do so yet?—Yes.

927. Who is that man? Does he control the other two men?—He is the head man. He will do what he thinks proper himself.

928. Does he do the selling?—Yes.

929. Of the wool?—Yes.

930. And the whole of the sheep?—I know that about two years ago he gave the wool to the ground officer. The ground officer charged £4, 4s. on the people for sending the wool to Glasgow. Another thing that the proprietor is doing, very bad on the people, is that he is allowing the ground officer to have horses along with their poor cattle. Is that right? Would any of you proprietors allow your ground officer to put one or two horses on the tenant's land, grazing? Surely, it is not right.

931. Are these horses upon any other people's land than your own township?—I do not know. When they go to work at some other place they will have it there.

932. *Mr Cameron.*—What kind of work do these horses do?—They work for the ground officer, and the ground officer is working for people, ploughing the land, and it will be about £1 a day for a pair of horses.

933. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Has this ground officer a place of his own?—He has a croft, but he had only a share of the pasture as I had.

934. But is he allowed to keep his horses anywhere on the hill?—Along with the poor milk cows, and the grassing for the milk cows was only like a market stance. The grassing was not worth 10s. for every cow. There is no grassing at all. We are obliged to cut the corn for the cattle in August, and whatever is my crop I must leave a good piece of it for the cow, or else she will die.

935. *Mr Cameron.*—Were you selected as a delegate by the people to represent their views?—No, the ground officer had an objection against me, and would not allow me to be there at all, but the last day here, the people selected me—not the first day.

936. But the day after, they selected you?—Yes.

937. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—What had the ground officer to do with the selection?—I do not know.

938. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Has he a croft?—Yes.

939. *Mr Cameron.*—Do you consider you are a fair representative of the people, your neighbours?—Yes.

940. They chose you freely?—Yes.

941. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—What objection has the ground officer to you?—Because I am always speaking about what is going wrong in the place. My tongue is too long.

942. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—What happened that first day? Were you there?—Yes.

943. What happened the first day you met to elect delegates?—The first day the ground officer had a number of men,—six men he selected himself,—and one of the men rose and said they would select me. "Well," said he, "I will not part with any that I have at all," and the people did not say any more to him at that time. The people were always speaking about it, after that, that they would select me, because I was here for a

long time. I was here when General Macdonald was here about thirty-three years ago.

944. How old are you?—Seventy-four.

945. *The Chairman.*—You spoke of the hardship of not being allowed to keep horses?—Yes.

946. When you were a very young man do you remember that the people had horses then?—Yes, my father and the family had two crofts in Bernisdale.

947. But do you remember long ago that some of the people really had horses?—Yes, every one that was in the place except two men. There were twenty horses in Bernisdale.

948. You saw it yourself?—Yes.

949. You complained, as a proof of the poverty of the people now, that the women are obliged to draw the harrows and work in the fields. When you were a young man did women never work in the fields and draw the harrows?—No, they did not, and as for those two men who had no horses, the people of the place ploughed their ground gratis.

950. Do the crofters consider it a great hardship that the women should work in the fields, and draw the harrows, and carry the sea-ware, and so on?—Yes, it is miserable, and very bad for the weakest member of the family to carry a creel of ware upon her back, and draw a harrow after her.

951. Did you ever hear it said that it injured the health of the women to carry those burdens and do those works?—No, I did not hear that; but I know that old women cannot do it.

952. Had the people in those days better food than they have now? were they better fed?—In my younger days I think we had better food than we have to-day.

953. In what respect was it better? Was there more of it?—Yes.

954. Were there more potatoes in the house?—Yes. There were more potatoes, and they could at a time take home a sheep and kill it; and in winter time, most of the people here would kill half a cow or a hail cow through the winter. They would have plenty of potatoes and plenty of meal when they had ground.

955. Do you remember whether there was more milk in those days for the use of the children?—I remember my sister coming from the hill after milking the sheep, with three or four pints of milk every day.

956. Ewe's milk?—Sheep's milk.

957. Do you think they had more milk for the use of the children than they have now?—I know they had three times as much milk.

958. Do you hear frequent complaints of the want of milk for the children now?—Oh! surely I do in my place to-day. They have no milk, but very little. Mr Macdonald is giving milk to the people here about.

959. Do you mean he sells it?—No, he gives the milk gratis.

960. Do they ever kill any sheep and salt them for the winter?—A few of them do, but very seldom.

961. Do they ever kill a cow?—Well, they seldom do that.

962. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Are the people in arrears of rent just now?—Not to the proprietor, but they are in arrears to the bank. A good many of the people are going to the bank every year to pay rent.

963. At the time you were alluding to, when you were a young man, were the rents regularly paid?—Yes.

964. And the people were not in debt?—Not in debt; when I was young in the place, at the time of the markets, three or four or five of the

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drovers would come to Bernisdale, and go to the hill and buy a good cow from the hill, and that would pay the rent in the meantime.

965. Did the dealers come to your door?—Dealers came to the door for the cows and went to the hill to buy them. There were no lads going to the fishing at that time, or to any place. I am sure there were only three or four young strong lads going away in my young days out of the country at all.

966. Their own districts supported them?—This place supported them,

967. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—How many people were in the place then?—There were only twenty-two at the centre of Bernisdale, but there was another place near Aird.

968. How many are there now in Bernisdale. How many families?—In the Glens and on the estate of Bernisdale there are about ninety families.

969. And it will keep twenty-two well?—It would keep twenty-two very good. There are seventy-three I believe paying rent, and there are twenty-nine poor that do not pay rent at all. In my days there was not a poor man in the place but four small houses, and these men were better off that day than I am to-day, and I will tell you the reason. They would get plenty of potato ground and they would get their ground sown with corn the next spring again, and they were getting that gratis. They would have a few sheep on the hill gratis.

ANGUS MACFIE, Crofter and Fisherman, Aird, Bernisdale (52)—examined.

Angus Macfie.

970. *The Chairman.*—Have you been freely elected a delegate by the people in this place?—Yes.

971. How long have you been settled here?—For fifty years.

972. Has your employment been chiefly that of a crofter, or a fisherman, or a trader?—Fishing the most part of the year, and in the spring time doing the work of the croft.

973. Do you practise any trade or work any contracts?—No.

974. Have you heard what has been said by the previous delegates and have you understood it?—I heard most part of it.

975. Do you agree generally with what has been stated?—For the most part it was applicable to the circumstances of the people.

976. Do you desire to add anything on your own part?—Only in regard to the circumstances of the people among whom I am. The smallness of their holdings is the cause of their poverty, and the want of pasturage. My place was originally occupied by sixteen crofters, and a few years afterwards these were increased by eighteen more, who were located on the grazing which belonged to the township. Of the sixteen original holders, only three were paying above £2 of rent; on the thirty-four who subsequently occupied it the rent was increased to an average of £3 each. This was done by the landlord who succeeded him in whose time it was occupied by sixteen crofters; he was Mr Macdonald of Tannara. The trustees succeeded him, from whom the tenants got some reduction of rent. Mr M'Leod of Grishornish succeeded the trustees, and in his time 5s. of rise was made in the rent in lieu of five days' duty work. This continued to the present year, and they were relieved of this sum by the present proprietor, and a further decrease was made in our rent also on our part of the property. The people are so poor from want

of room for themselves and for their stock, and they have to go in the summer time with their stock—with their cows—they have to lead those cows with a rope between the corn rigs to keep them in life for want of outside pasturage. Instead of pasturage they have only the peat mosses. Of the corn crop which they grow they have to devote a third part to the feeding of their cows. They have a cow on each lot and a stirk, and they must part with the stirk whenever it can walk to the market. Besides, whatever crop they have to use in feeding their stock, they have to buy fodder. There is no reason for me to occupy more time saying what has been said already. What the people desire is that they should get more land and hill pasturage, that they might be able to keep a stock that would support them.

977. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—In your young days were the people better off than they are now?—Yes.

978. Are things getting worse and worse with them?—They are getting deeper into debt yearly?

979. Were there no poor people in your younger days?—They were not so poor as they are to-day.

980. Were there no cottars?—Yes.

981. Were these people better off than the same class now?—They were then kept up by the tenants, and they are not so now.

982. Are many of them on the poors' roll now?—Yes; many of them are on the poors' roll.

983. In regard to the wages in your younger days, what is the difference between men and women, outdoor workers, then and now?—The women used to get 1s. and the men 2s. a day.

984. How long?—Not more than twenty years ago.

985. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Are most of the people at Aird engaged in fishing?—Yes.

986. They have all boats?—They have not all got boats.

987. What fishing do they prosecute?—Herring fishing and long lines—cod and ling.

988. Where do they go to fish?—Chiefly in the Minch.

989. Do they generally make good fishing?—Some years they do well, and other years they do not.

990. What sort of fishing had they this winter?—There was no fishing at all this year.

991. Was that on account of the weather?—Not altogether on account of the weather.

992. What else?—Because there was no fishing to be got.

993. Who takes it from you?—The dealers—the one who gives most price.

994. It is not all salted and brought here?—Some of us would be salting the ling and cod fish, and others not.

995. What price do you get for cod and ling?—Sometimes 9d. and sometimes 1s.

996. For the ling?—Yes.

997. How much for the cod?—6d. and 8d. and 9d. for cod.

998. Has the price risen within the last twenty or thirty years?—Yes.

999. What used it to be then?—4d. for cod, and 6d. and 8d. for ling.

1000. I suppose a good many of your boats were destroyed by the storm the year before last?—Yes.

1001. Did you all get new ones?—No, not all. Those of the old ones which were mendable were repaired.

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1002. Have you any good harbours at Loch Snizort?—We have a quiet beach generally.

1003. Is there any particular need for a pier or quay?—If there was a fishing trade, a quay would be necessary.

1004. I suppose there is no such a thing as a pier or a quay all round Loch Snizort?—No, not worth calling a pier.

1005. Do people from here go south to the mainland to get work?—They would be going south to work and to the east coast fishing.

1006. How long do they stay south when they go to work?—The young lads stay as long as they like. Those who have families require to come back to look after them.

1007. Do they go more than they used?—Yes, of course; there were very few if any who left the country for work formerly.

1008. Do they bring back more money than they used to do?—No, it is not easy for them to lay money by, and for everything is so expensive—living is so expensive.

1009. In the south?—Wherever they may be.

1010. So that though the people go in greater numbers they do not bring back more money than they used to do?—That is the case.

1011. Have the wages in the south increased?—I am not very sure. I never worked in the south.

1012. Do you know if they have increased in the same proportion as they have in this district?—Very likely.

1013. But still the people do not bring back so much money as they did before?—I am quite sure of that.

1014. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Do many of the young women go away to the Lothians?—Yes, many.

1015. Does it do them any good?—Some of them it does no good to. It is sheer necessity that compels them to go.

1016. Do some of them remain there?—Very few.

1017. *Mr Cameron.*—Do they make more money in the east coast fishing than they used to do?—No. Some fish on shares, and if the fishing is good, they do better.

1018. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Was it good last year?—I was not at the last year's fishing, but I do not think it was good.

1019. Or the year before last?—It was not good the year before last.

1020. Was there much destitution here last winter?—Yes.

1021. Do you know of any people who were actually in want of food in any part of Bernisdale?—Yes.

1022. Have supplies of corn and potatoes been sent here?—Yes.

1023. Are the people satisfied with the way in which these were divided?—Some are, and some are not.

1024. Who had charge of it on this estate?—Mr Lamont had the oversight of the division of it here.

1025. Were you employed in fishing when you were a young man?—Yes.

1026. Do you remember what kind of boats, nets, and apparatus were in use in those times?—The boats were not so good then. They were smaller.

1027. The boats used now are better than they were then?—Yes.

1028. And the nets?—The nets are better too.

1029. And lines?—Better.

1030. Would it be useful to the fishermen to have boats and nets of a still superior description?—Doubtless, if the fishing would turn out good.

1031. If they had big boats would they go further to sea, and catch a superior description of fish, or more of them?—We cannot tell if we would

get better fishing, but we would try it; at any rate, we would go further, but we cannot say if we would get better fishing.

1032. Do you remember of boats of a superior description having been at one time given to the people?—A few biggish boats from the south country were given about the time of the great potato failure.

1033. Did the people make use of them?—The fishing was very slack at the time the boats arrived, and the venture did not turn out well.

1034. Is there absolute freedom among the fishermen to use any sort of tackle which they please, or have the fishermen among themselves any restrictions?—There is no restriction upon our mode of fishing.

1035. *The Chairman.*—I have read that in former times, fishermen did not allow one another to use a line beyond a certain length. They had a fixed length of line which they were not allowed to exceed. Is there any restriction of that kind now?—There is no such restriction now. We have an understanding among ourselves that our herring nets will be of the same length.

1036. Do you ever practise trawling?—No, there is no trawling here.

1037. *Sir K. MacKenzie.*—Do they limit the number of nets put together, or do you mean that each net you buy is of a certain length?—When we buy nets we can buy them any length we desire, but when we are three in a boat we would each require to have the same length of net; but there is no restriction as to the amount of nets which each boat is to use.

1038. *The Chairman.*—Have you any other statement you wish to make before you retire?—Only that the people will not be pleased unless they get more and better land and hill pasturage to enable them to get out of their poverty, and a reasonable rent for the land.

1039. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Have you anything to suggest that would improve the fishery here?—Better tackle, better fishing material and boats, would no doubt improve the fishing.

FINLAY M'INNES, Crofter, Glen Bernisdale (52)—examined.

1040. *The Chairman.*—Are you a native of this place?—Yes.

1041. Do you possess a croft?—I have a croft.

1042. Have you any other employment?—Yes. I am a farm servant to Mr Macdonald, Skeabost.

1043. Have you been freely elected a delegate by the people?—Yes.

1044. Was that at the first election or at the second election?—At the first one.

1045. You have heard all that has been said by previous witnesses?—Yes, mostly.

1046. Did you understand it?—Some of it.

1047. Have you any remarks to make upon it?—No.

1048. Have you any remarks to make upon the condition of the people generally?—That is what brought me here.

1049. Will you be so good as to make a statement?—The cause of our complaints is that we have so little land and so much of the Isle of Skye waste, and though our landlord would wish to do us justice, he cannot. I have no more to say.

1050. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—What rent do you pay yourself?—£3.

1051. How many cattle do you keep?—Two cows and two stirks.

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1052. And sheep?—The summing of the sheep should be eight sheep, but I have not got them yet.

1053. Do you think your rent too high?—No, but although I had the land for nothing it would not support me.

1054. How long do the corn and potatoes you can raise upon it feed yourself and your family?—Not a single day this year.

1055. How is that? Had you no corn at all?—Yes; but the wind destroyed it, and I was obliged to give all that was left to the cattle.

1056. There were great storms last autumu?—Yes.

1057. And the potatoes?—The potatoes are all gone this year. We had nothing left at all.

1058. Had you no potatoes at all?—Not a single potato.

1059. Have you got seed?—Yes, I bought 3½ barrels of potatoes and a boll of oat seed.

1060. Did you get it yourself?—Yes.

1061. Did you get any of the destitution money?—No.

1062. Are you constantly engaged with Mr Macdonald?—Yes, since eight or seven years ago.

1063. Who works your croft?—Mr Macdonald has given me a day of the horses to plough it, and the rest of my family work it and I myself work it after hours, for we get liberty at six o'clock when the work is not very busy.

1064. Are you able to keep it satisfactorily in order?—Middling well, but I am just doing all the best I can in hope my family will grow up to assist me to keep it in order afterwards; and we hope the Royal Commission would see good to give us some of that land that is wasting in the Isle of Skye to support us.

1065. Was there a great crowding in of people from other parts into this property?—Yes; as you have heard before. The grazing belongs to Bernisdale, and when Mr Macdonald came into the estate in 1830 he let these two places to tenants, and eight people came from Macleod's country—Roag and Harlosh. They came to the upper Glen, and some from Borve came to this estate, and they rather crowded it.

1066. What was the reason he took more people in?—Just to get rent out of them.

1067. Was there anything in this place that attracted the people more than other parts?—Yes, because the late Rev. Roderick M'Leod was the minister preaching here, and people liked to be near him.

1068. *The Chairman.*—You stated you are a farm servant to the proprietor?—Yes.

1069. What are the wages which you receive from the proprietor?—£18 a year and 6½ bolls of meal.

1070. Do you pay any rent for your croft, or do you get your croft for nothing?—I am paying for my croft out of my wages.

1071. Have you any other wages besides the money wages and meal?—None, save one day of his horses in the spring time to plough my croft.

1072. Going back twenty years in your recollection, what would have been your wages in the same position or for the same service twenty or thirty years ago?—From £10 to £12, and perhaps £8.

1073. With the same amount of meal?—Yes.

1074. Then, do you thiuk that a man in your position is better off now than he would have been twenty years ago, or worse off?—It is a hard question to answer, but I think they were every bit as good on the £10 at that time as they should be to day at £18.

1075. Explain the reason of that?—There is more extravagance going among people at this time.

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1076. Is there much tea consumed?—A great deal.

1077. Do the people wear better clothes than they did?—Far better clothes.

1078. Are the female members of the family more extravagant?—Yes, two times. They require elastic-sided boots instead of laced boots.

1079. You are a farm servant, or have you got labourers who work under you? Are you a grieve?—Just a servant.

1080. There are no servants under you?—No.

1081. Have you anything more to say before you retire? Have you any suggestion to make?—No, that is all we were talking of. That is all our complaint—the land is too little to support us.

JOHN NICOLSON, Pensioner and Crofter, Tote—examined.

John Nicolson

1082. *The Chairman.*—Before we go further, Mr Alexander Macdonald wishes to make a communication to us.

1083. *Mr Alexander Macdonald.*—I am sorry to hear that some of Lord Macdonald's tenants were a little afraid about giving evidence. I stated my own belief yesterday that there was no danger to any man for anything whatever that he said. I stated my belief, and since this I have seen Lord Macdonald personally, and told him that some of his tenants were perhaps a little afraid or backward, and his lordship authorises me specially to inform his tenants that they have full liberty to state anything they choose to say, whatever they think proper themselves to say, without any fear of any consequences or any prejudice either from his Lordship or from me, or from any factor. They have full liberty and scope to say whatever they think proper.

1084. *Witness.*—We did not expect anything less from you.

1085. *The Chairman.*—You are a crofter?—Yes.

1086. What are you besides a crofter?—A fisherman.

1087. For what do you receive a pension?—For the Crimean campaign and Indian mutiny.

1088. You were all through the Crimean campaign?—Yes, the whole time from beginning to end.

1089. And all through the mutiny?—It was working when I arrived, and I saw the campaign over before I came home.

1090. And you received a pension, and came back to your native place?—Yes.

1091. Have you got a croft of your own?—Half a croft.

1092. Did you have it while you were in the public service?—No.

1093. You got it after you came home?—Yes.

1094. You have heard what has been stated by previous witnesses?—Yes.

1095. You have understood what they have said?—Yes.

1096. Do you agree in the main with what they said?—Yes, generally, upon the same complaint that is going with the whole of us.

1097. Have you any suggestion or remarks to make in addition to what they stated?—Not much; we belong to a different estate from those that were here before us.

1098. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Which estate?—Lord Macdonald's estate.

1099. What is the name of your township?—Tote. As regards Tote

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and Benmore, the crofts are poor in soil and rocky, and not fit to give good crops, owing to the poorness of the soil. In the best harvests it only gives two returns, and frequently about one and a half. We are given three cows and two stirks on each croft, but pasture ground is so bad, small, and poor, that one cow and one stirk would be plenty for the grazing ground so as to keep them in condition as in other places. Frequently cows are two years without having a calf in this town, and often cows will only have calves every second year. The cattle are hand-fed all the year round, feeding them in summer and harvests with grass and corn to keep them alive. To keep the three cows and two stirks we would require three times as much of grazing ground. It is the smallness of the crofts and grazing grounds that keep us here so poor. If we would get more land with reasonable rent, we know we would be well enough off. Us and our forefathers were sub-tenants for the last thirty-six years; this includes the whole of Unikillie. There are ten crofts in Tote and Benmore, and eight cottars in the place. The reason why so many cottars are here is, in the years of '45 and '46 the potatoes failed, and the late Mr Martin took some of them to the place, and used to give them patches of ground for potatoes, and also to he near the yairs. At that time the Fishery Board gave permission to have the yair put in good repair, and those employed at it got one pound of Indian meal per day, and the yair was a great boon to the poor far and near. A few years' back the yair was broken down by orders of Mr L. Macdonald, Skeabost, and Tormore. Frequently at that time families would have nothing in the house at nigbts; they would go to the yair, and have plenty for their families in the morning. In this place sea-ware is not to be got from tacksmen without payment. When Mr Martin, tacksman of Tote, come to Unikillie in 1839, of the rents on the crofts in Tote, the cheapest croft was £4, 10s., and the highest rent was £6. At the present time the rent is,—cheapest £7, 8s., the highest £10, 18s. We have a club stock of sheep among thirty-niue cofters, but it does not pay well; there is too many about the stock. Wet grouud, and most of it too exposed; also too small for the number about the stock.

1100. Have you anything more to say in addition to that?—I may mention that in Tote there are ten crofts, and sixteen families on the ten crofts, and eight cottars besides them on the place now. To give pieces of ground to the cottars comes too heavy on the ten crofts, there are so many of them. The yair was the reason so many crowded to Tote; it supplied them constantly with fish.

1101. Anything else?—Regarding the hill pasture, the neighbours wish me to state that formerly it was made a tack of by one who was in Lyndale, that in the course of three years he lost his stock, and had to leave it, although he had a place which pays very well; and another thing which we have been in dispute about for the last eight years is, that we have been paying for a piece of the hill pasture, and the tenants in Glenmore have claimed the place, and we never got it yet. So we must take it in hand ourselves, and compel them to leave. The factor promised to do it, but it was always shoved off till now, and we cannot bear it any longer.

1102. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Have they a great piece of grazing there?—Thirty-nine crofts, and a nnmber of them in halves and quarters.

1103. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Have you anything more to say?—I need not say anything more, because what we would say has been told before—scarcity of ground and pasture.

1104. I see you have got some clasps and medals, what services are they for?—Sebastopol, Balaklava, the Alma, Lucknow, and the Turkish

medal. I have only one clasp for India, but I should have had five, for I was in five engagements.

1105. How old are you?—Sixty-six years of age. I was in the 42d regiment all the time.

1106. Why are there not more Skye men enlisting, as you did?—Where are they to be found?

1107. Look around,—the whole people about you here?—Not many of them would pass. There are sheep and deer instead of soldiers.

1108. That is a bad account of your neighbours?—They are old and worn out.

1109. But what really is the reason they don't come forward? Are they physically incapable?—They don't care about going. The place is cleared of men; there are no young men now.

1110. Have you any other reason?—I have none, because from the way the people are used here they don't care to go. They have to make a living in other ways.

1111. Has the small pay anything to do with it?—No, but the way the people are used here.

1112. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—How does that make the army disagreeable to them?—When they see how their people are used there.

1113. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Explain what you mean?—Formerly the places would support their families behind them; now if a young man goes he has to keep his old parents alive, he must remain at home and keep his father alive. From the way crofts are divided, the ground is run out by tilling it every year, and it does not give crops, supposing the seasons were good. And then they go to some other better country, and those at home take their places.

1114. At the time you entered the 42d were there many from Skye along with you?—Yes, a good number. Several from my own place, here, died in the Crimea. I think there were a dozen in the same company with me from this part of the island.

1115. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—And at this moment, so far as you know, how many Skye men are in the army?—I have no idea; but none from the island came through the Indian campaign and mutiny, except one man over at Dunvegan.

1116. Do you know how many pensioners are in Skye?—No.

1117. *The Chairman.*—What rank did you attain? Were you a sergeant?—Yes, but I was discharged.

1118. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—There are delegates here from three localities?—Yes, and perhaps four.

1119. Are any in those four places in the army at this moment?—Yes, there is one from Tote, I know.

1120. Any more?—I am not aware of any more.

1121. Then out of the four townships represented here to-day, there is only one in the service of the army?—That is all that I know.

1122. You had no reason to complain of the service when you were in the army?—I had plenty of reason to complain.

1123. But when you were in it?—Well, for one time I had two years and four months without ever stripping or going to bed. From the time I left Portsmouth till I returned, I never stripped. I was in clothes all the time, and it was hard enough work for all I got.

1124. Well, do you say that if the people got larger crofts and easier rents, the old military spirit would revive?—There is no doubt about that. It would show there was some care for the people, and not to keep them about the corners as they are now. I am here in a croft, and have nothing but rock and brae, and if all the good soil were gathered together,

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I do not suppose it would make more than an acre and a half of good natural soil.

1125. One of the witnesses said that the laird of Skeabost, if he wanted it, had really no bounds on his estate to accommodate all the people on it properly. Where could they be accommodated?—Well, there is no way to do but breaking up the tacks.

1126. Upon some other property?—Upon Lord Macdonald's property at Skerrinish.

1127. *The Chairman.*—Could you suggest anything Government could do which would make the service more popular and encourage people to enter it?—They are well off now in the service compared with the time when I was in it; but still it is a large family, and there are always discontents in it—I mean the service. There are in the army every class, gentlemen and blackguards together—they do not care.

1128. But do you think the Government could do anything which in your opinion would encourage people to enlist to a greater extent in this country?—This is the only thing I know of, because young men, as soon as they come to work, must work to get money to support those at home, and formerly little farmers were independent. They could live without the assistance of their children, and the young men could go to list if they liked. Now, since they can do nothing, they must stay.

1129. *Mr Cameron.*—If the farms were made larger, that would give more work for the young men?—Yes, but they would make more money and get more stock.

1130. Will your people enlist more when they are comfortable than when they are not comfortable?—Certainly, when there is nothing behind to care for.

1131. But do you think they would be induced to enlist in that way?—I do not know. Generally, when a man enlists he does not look for anything.

1132. When the recruits came into your regiment were they from a class well-to-do and prosperous, or from a class of young men who probably could not find anything to occupy them?—Both ways.

1133. Which most?—I cannot say. They were very much mixed; all classes, farmers' sons, and so on.

1134. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—The 42d is a crack regiment?—Yes, but I think they are destroyed now.

1135. They used to be?—Yes, in former times.

1136. *Mr Cameron.*—How have they destroyed it?—By this mixing work. It is a great thing in the service to have a regiment from one district, and it would be good for them in different ways, because if I saw there a comrade from the same place as myself, I would be afraid to commit myself in any way, in case they would write home and tell my friends of what I was doing and how I was going on. That was the strongest motive ever I saw, and it would make young men take care not to commit themselves. But when they are mixed up this way—Irish, Scotch, and Lowlanders mixed—they don't care so much. There is no person to tell.

1137. Do they like the short service or the long service best?—Well, some think the short service spoils them, because when they are properly learned their time is up, and there is nothing more dangerous in a campaign than too many young soldiers. They are of no use.

1138. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Did they not do good work in Egypt?—But if they had to meet Prussians or French it might have been different. I have seen young soldiers in the trenches at Sebastopol who were more a hindrance than an assistance. They were afraid, and the work was so wild that it fairly frightened them, and if the whole trenches had been

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composed of them they would not have stood one night. I have seen labourers go out there to assist in the trenches. Well, sixty went in one night, and we had only three in the morning. They went away through the night. We found them at Balaklava next morning.

1139. *The Chairman.*—Were you freely elected to be a delegate?—Yes, I was elected here the other day.

1140. In the second or first election?—The second.

1141. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—What arable land have you got?—I suppose about four acres, between three and four.

1142. In the half croft?—Yes.

1143. What is your rent?—£7, 12s.

1144. Is that the rent of the full croft?—£7, 12s. for the whole croft.

1145. And you pay half of that?—Yes, £3, 16s.

1146. What stock do you keep?—I keep two cows, but if they have two calves I have too many.

1147. Two cows and one stirk?—If I have two cows and a calf I have a calf too many for the land. The whole croft for three milk cows and two stirks.

1148. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Sheep?—Thirty for the whole croft.

1149. I mean the summing?—Well, it is a common stock we have—what we can keep on the ground.

1150. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—You divide the sheep. How many are there who have shares in the common stock?—Thirty-nine.

1151. And you have about 1200 sheep?—Yes, about 1200 at Martinmas. I do not know how many there are to-day.

NORMAN M'KENZIE, Crofter, Uigshader—examined.

Norman M'Kenzie.

1152. *The Chairman.*—How long have you had your croft?—I have not had a croft long, but it is thirteen years since my father got it.

1153. Is your father alive?—He is not alive.

1154. Have you been a fisherman as well as a crofter?—I have not been a fisherman. We are too far from the sea.

1155. Have you heard what has been stated by previous witnesses?—Part of it.

1156. You understood what was said?—Yes.

1157. Will you be so good as to add any remarks you wish to make?—What I have to say is, that I do not think, should Lord Macdonald give them the whole land they have from him free gratis, it would not free them from their present state of poverty.

1158. What matter are you speaking of?—I speak of the people of the district in which I reside. I mean the district comprising the seventeen families among whom I live; and the cause of that is this that the years have come to be so poor, and they have run out of their effects through having to buy food for themselves and their families and their stock. I believe that the people are seven times worse than if they had nothing—are empty—if every thing were put in its place. If the people paid their debts, they would be seven times worse than nothing. The people have come to be so poor that they are not able to work the land as it ought to be worked; and again they have so little of the land. We don't blame the landlord for their poverty, but there are no works going on in the place. They must needs go elsewhere to work, and they cannot attend to their crofts; and when they go elsewhere and are not able to attend properly to

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their crofts, they have to buy food for themselves and their stock elsewhere; and though they are trying to keep stock, not a head of the stock belongs to themselves, but to their creditors and to the landlord. When that is so, the people cannot but be poor. They are occupying land which has not been manured for twenty-five years, though they must needs cultivate this land for the very poor return of the little corn and weeds that it yields. They pay equal to their rent in money for the wintering of their stock besides what the land yields. When Mr Martin came to be our tacksman, we were paying the multures; we were paying the equivalent in money, along with our rent, so much on each croft; and when we became tenants of Lord Macdonald, Tormore was the factor, and that payment continued, and it is included in the rent still,—these old multures,—and should any of us have to use the mill for grinding our meal we have to pay multure all the same, so that we have to pay double.

1159. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Where is the mill?—At Tote.

1160. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—What are the miller's dues?—So much on each boll.

1161. How much?—The miller is here present, and will speak for that.

1162. Do you never take corn to the mill?—I have taken corn to the mill, but I could not tell the quantity the miller took out. I do not know the capacity of his measure.

1163. What amount of corn ought to make a boll of meal?—We have not more than half a boll with the sort of oats that we have. The worst kind of our oats would not yield more than three stones to the boll. In a good year, and with oats from a strong ground, a boll of oats might possibly yield seven stones on the average.

1164. *Professor Mackinnon.*—That is after potatoes?—Yes.

1165. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Does it come better out after potatoes than after grass?—We have no fences, and have no experience.

1166. *The Chairman.*—You stated that the crofters on your township originally paid their rent to the tacksman?—Yes.

1167. And that they now pay their rent direct to the proprietor?—Yes.

1168. Are there many crofters still paying their rent direct to tacksmen?—Not in my district.

1169. When they paid their rent to the tacksmen, were they better or worse off than they are since they paid their rent to the proprietor?—No, we are not better off now. We are becoming poorer each year. We are worse off now than we were then.

1170. Do they generally consider in the country that it is better to pay the rent to the tacksman or to the proprietor direct?—We consider it better to be paying the rent to the proprietor direct. When we pay to the proprictor direct we have only to make money payment, but when we had to pay the rent to the tacksman we had other duties laid upon us as well as the money obligation. The services which we used to render to the tacksman, in addition to the money payment, are now included in the rent which we pay to the landlord.

1171. What was the nature of the services rendered to the tacksman?—We used to give him in spring a day's harrowing, and in autumn two days' reaping his corn. So we and the crofters would be cutting the tacksman's peats also, and those of whom no service was required had to give compensation to the tacksman in the shape of the value of a lamb. Then the value of the lamb at first was stated at 2s. 6d., and as the price of sheep was increasing it came to be 5s., and that is included now in the rent which we pay.

1172. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—The 5s.?—Yes, the 5s. is included.

1173. *The Chairman.*—Are there still crofters paying rent to tacksmen and rendering those duties and services?—Unless such are in M'Leod's country, there are none of them in this part of the country. We are complaining also of the smallness of our holdings. I believe that even should they get enlarged holdings, they are so much sunk in poverty, that unless the Government would assist the people to stock the enlarged holdings, they would be as badly off as ever.

1174. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—If they have difficulty in getting stock for their holdings, would any of them be willing to emigrate to another country, where there are more openings?—I cannot say that, but there is plenty of land in this country itself which could be apportioned to them, and which would support the whole of them.

1175. But if they cannot stock this land without Government help, or the help of charitable people; if they are not in a position to avail themselves of this other land, even if it were given to them, would they be willing to go to another country where they could benefit themselves by the land?—I cannot answer that question for the others, but I know the greater part of them would not be able to stock the land unless they would get assistance.

1176. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Can you speak for yourself?—For my own part, should I get an enlarged holding, I would be able to stock it.

1177. Where do you send your childreu to school?—I am not putting them to any school. We have no road to the school, and we are far from the school.

1178. Do any of the Uigshader people send their children to school?—None of them who are on the upper side of the watershed.

1179. How far are you from the nearest school?—The school of Borve is the nearest. I believe it is about 3 miles from some of us. How can you expect weakly children to travel 3 miles in the dead of winter, without a road and without any sheltering place intervening?

1180. Is there no road between you and Borve?—No.

1181. How far are you from Glenmore school?—There are mountains between us and the Glenmore school.

1182. How far are you from the nearest church?—This church in which we are met is the nearest to it.

1183. Is there a road from you to the church?—No, and we pay road money, and yet all that we carry to our townships we have to carry on our backs.

1184. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Of school age, how many children are there in your district?—Upwards of fifty children, if not above fifty.

1185. How long is it since any of them have been at school?—At times an odd child might be coming for a week or two to school; but they had a little school among themselves, some years ago, and they used to attend that school regularly.

1186. *Mr Cameron.*—Is there any compulsory officer?—Yes.

1187. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Does he ever visit you?—He frequently visits us.

1188. Have any of you ever been summoned before the sheriff for not sending the children to school?—I cannot say that; I do not know that; but I think none of us have been summoned before the sheriff.

1189. Are the children getting taught at home?—No; no education at home.

1190. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—The children, do they go to church?—No, not out of our township; none of them ever go to church.

1191. Does a catechist come round?—Yes, a catechist comes once

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a fortnight to hold a meeting. The minister sends him once a fortnight.

1192. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Though the children do not go in the dead of winter, could they not go in the spring and summer months, especially the older ones?—Yes.

1193. Why don't they go?—I cannot tell. They are in want of shoes and clothes, and they cannot go naked to school. Very few of them can go to school in comparison with the number who cannot.

1194. *Mr Cameron.*—Can none of them read or write at all?—Some of them can read and write, who learn in this school.

1195. *The Chairman.*—Is there anything further you wish to say before you retire?—No more.

ALEXANDER LAMONT, Crofter, Keistle (59)—examined.

Alexander Lamont.

1196. *The Chairman.*—Are you a fisherman?—I am not a fisherman.

1197. How long have you been on your croft?—For thirty-three years.

1198. Were you freely elected by the people here to be their delegate?—Yes. I was born at Henisdale. When I was young I have seen seventeen crofters there in that Glen, and three of them had double shares. There was no school in the Glen at all. They were able to send their families to other places to give them education. Well, any of the rest here in the Glen could not do that, because they had single crofts and half crofts. But I think those who had a double proportion were able to send their families to give them education. I was removed from the place to another glen,—to Keistle up here. I have seen that those who have double crofts are better off than those who have single crofts and half crofts. They are more able to pay their rents than those who have single or half crofts; and I think that would give peace to themselves and their proprietors, when they would have double shares. And I think, moreover, if people would have double shares, they would be more able to pay their rents than with single shares. It would be a bad year when their crofts would not be worth anything; they would have their stock to pay the proprietors; and, as some of the other men were saying, if they had more land at a reasonable rent, the poor people would be far better off. When they could not raise crop they would have stock. When I came into the croft, the first rent I paid was £7, 17s. 6d. Corrie was alive at the time, and he was the factor then; and I continued in that state for twenty years, paying to Corrie; and my neighbours and myself were in use to go with their rent to Corrie. Well, Corrie died, and the proprietor who was factor to old Lord Macdonald (Tormore) came in, and the rent was raised, and the second year after Tormore came in my lot was £9. That was £1, 2s. 6d. of rise. There were fourteen tenants, who had fourteen shares; and there was another man, Peter Macdonald in Portree who had two shares. There were sixteen tenants in the place then, and when that man died the low land he had was joined into Skerriuish farm, and we had the hill that he had, and he laid 15s. a piece on the fourteen shares, and my lot was £9, 15s., and the rest was greater. It is a kind of a narrow strip we have of the hill, and we are surrounded with tacksmen on each side, and they are giving us very bad justice. The man who was at the

march—William M'Leod in Scorrybreck—was very hard upon us, and we are obliged to pay more than £20 for poinding our sheep in one year, on the fourteen tenants.

1199. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Had you a shepherd?—Yes, we had a herd for the sheep, and we had another herd for the horses, and another herd for the stirks; when this low land was joined into Skerrinish he raised 15s. on the fourteen shares for his hill, and that piece was put in the Skerrinish farm.

1200. Why was that piece of low land put into Skerrinish?—I cannot tell you. It was not fair at all to take it from us.

1201. Was it offered to you?—No; I was not at home at the time.

1202. Was it offered to the township? Was it offered to any of the tenants that are here? [Cries of "No."].—We stood out upon the factor—Mr Macdonald of Portree—that we would not pay the old rent because the land was taken from us; but it was Tormore who took it from us, and any alteration this factor made upon us was on our side. He took £5 of the rent down of this last rent we paid. We cannot blame him for that. He took £5 off the whole fourteen shares. Any alteration he made was on our side.

1203. *Mr Cameron.*—You said that if you had double crofts, the people would be better able to pay their rent?—That is my opinion.

1204. How do you propose to get double crofts without taking somebody else's from him?—You cannot double them unless you would go into other places.

1205. You mean that by removing half the people you would be able to double the crofts of those left behind?—No; to give more land at other places.

1206. How many crofts are there at your place?—Fourteen.

1207. How would you propose to give twenty-eight crofts to those fourteen? Suppose you had the power to do it, where would you get the land?—You could not get it in that place.

1208. Then you would have to move the people, and give them new crofts? It would not be doubling the old crofts?—No, you could not double the old crofts.

1209. Then, how would you set about it?—Well, it is my opinion they could get land beside them—farms occupied by other people. There are plenty of tacks about them.

1210. Quite touching their crofts?—Yes.

1211. You mean you could take a slice out of a farm, and add it to each croft all the way along?—Yes, if the people would get it in other places. If the tenants would have double shares they would be better off. That is what I mean.

1212. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Have you a double share yourself?—No, a single share.

1213. *Mr Cameron.*—Where is the land you think might be added to the crofts? What farms adjoin Keistle?—Scorrybreck and Skerrinish.

1214. Which is the nearest?—Glenhaultin and Skerrinish.

1215. Would that make more arable land or only pasture?—Arable land.

1216. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—What was the reason given for raising the rent from £7, 17s. 6d. to £9?—I cannot say it.

1217. Had you a lease before that?—No, I have never had a lease.

1218. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Did you just get notice from the factor that the rent was to be raised?—Yes, we got a writ from him that he was going to raise the rent.

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1219. Did some of you go down to the factor and protest against it?—We had to pay the rent.

1220. Did you say anything against it?—No.

1221. Did you speak to Tormore and say it was hard?—No.

1222. Why did you not object to the rent being raised? Didn't you say a word about it?—We didn't say a word against it.

1223. *Professor Mackinnon.*—What is your present actual rent? What did you pay last Martinmas?—£9, but I did not pay it altogether.

1224. What is your stock?—Three cows and three stirks and a horse.

1225. How many sheep?—About 40 head of sheep.

1226. And you think that just about as much again would make a comfortable croft?—Yes, that is what I think.

1227. And just about as much again of rent?—No, a reasonable rent.

1228. What would you call a reasonable rent for a croft twice the size of your own?—The thing that I have seen was that those who had two crofts when I was young were paying £12 for the two crofts.

1229. And you would think that a fair rent?—Yes, I would think that a fair rent.

1230. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Are the Glen Henisdale crofts the same size as those you have now?—Very near the same size.

1231. *Professor Mackinnon.*—You say you paid £20 on account of sheep straying upon Mr M'Leod's farm? Do his come upon you?—Not very much.

1232. Why don't you poind them?—Because he would have advantage over us: they would be running to him.

1233. They would run to the better pasture?—Yes.

1234. Have his never strayed to you?—A few, but never many of them.

1235. Why didn't you catch them?—Because we were afraid for the bigger men.

1236. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Are you quite sure you paid £20 and that it was not given back to you?—Yes.

1237. Was that £20 in the course of one year?—In one year for poinding the sheep.

1238. Did any other of the big farmers exact poinding money from you?—No, the man who is there to-day never took a penny from us, nor Skerrinish, nor Kingsburgh.

1239. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Was it the shepherds who took the money off you?—Yes.

1240. *Professor Mackinnon.*—When this double lot was given away, what was the rent of the double lot which the merchant in Portree had? was it twice yours?—Yes, he had more arable land than we had.

1241. Was it his arable ground that was joined to the neighbouring farm?—It was a kind of pasture he had on the low ground; there was none of the arable land at all.

1242. And each of the fourteen of you paid 15s. for what was left?—Yes, for the whole he had left.

1243. Did you think that too much?—It was too much for us. We spoke to the factor, and he took half of it off. The factor thought it too much.

1244. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Would that land that is now part of Skerrinish be of any use?—Yes, it would be very useful to us.

1245. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—I suppose it was given to Skerrinish to make a better march?—It was given unknown to us and nothing said about it.

1246. Would it make a better march with Skerrinish?—No, there is water between that and Skerrinish.

1247. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—It is on the other side of the Snizort river?—Yes.

1248. And the river is the natural boundary between you and Skerrinish?—Yes.

1249. *The Chairman.*—Who was it that took the £20?—It was the shepherd in Scorrybreck farm.

1250. When they exacted that money from you, did they do it at once for a first offence, or had there been many complaints before of your sheep going upon the farm?—Yes, there would be a little complaint between us and the shepherd, no doubt.

1251. Have you anything more you would like to say?—No.

1252. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Have you a souming on your hill,—a certain number?—Yes, we have a certain number.

1253. Have you more than you ought to have?—No, back and forward between fourteen shares.

1254. Was the trespassing upon Scorrybreck because there was overstocking on your own hill?—No.

1255. *Professor Mackinnon.*—If your holdings were made larger, as you wish, would these fourteen people be able to provide the additional stock?—I think they would.

1256. You think they would be able to put stock on if they got the land?—Yes, at the place where I was brought up, those who had a double share were better off than those who had a single share.

1257. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—The more land a man had the better he was off?—Yes, more land at a reasonable rent to help the poor people.

1258. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Where did you spend the most of your life?—On Lord Macdonald's estate; I was never out of the island.

EWAN MORRISON, Crofter, Drumuie (74)—examined.

1259. *The Chairman.*—Have you been freely elected a delegate by the people of Drumuie?—Yes.

1260. How long have you been upon your croft?—I am that age upon it, and my father before me.

1261. What is the size of your croft, and what is the rent you pay?—£5 is my rent, exclusive of rates.

1262. How many cows and how many stirks?—Four cows, without followers, and a horse.

1263. How many acres of arable ground?—I think about 4 acres; much of it useless for crops.

1264. How much was the rent when you were a boy?—£5.

1265. When was it raised?—A short time since it was raised by Tormore 3s. in the pound.

1266. What are the complaints which are made by the people whom you represent at Drumuie?—Their one particular complaint is that they are in a confined townsbip, without sea or hill pasture, and we had hill pasture before now.

1267. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—How many crofts are there in Drumuie?—Six crofts, and six families occupy the six crofts.

1268. *The Chairman.*—No cottars?—Not many.

1269. About how many?—Two cottars, but they don't pay anything to

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Ewan Morrison.

us at any rate. We particularly want hill pasture; we cannot live without it.

1270. When was the hill pasture taken away?—The factor took it from us, and added it to another township.

1271. What township?—It was added to the farm which is now occupied by Mr Mackay, the home farm of Portree.

1272. How long is that ago?—A long time since; I believe fifty years ago. A little reduction was made at that time in our rent. We made some work on our lots; we got some rent remitted to us on account of that. We are paying the interest of that money till now, though it should have been paid out in sixteen years. But the pasture connected with our township is so bad that it is not worth walking over. Our families cannot exist in our townships for want of sheep stock—buying everything that the family needs, and having no sheep, and the only thing we want is the hill pasture.

1273. If you had a hill pasture would you find stock to put on it?—Yes.

1274. Could you pay rent for the hill pasture?—Yes, every crofter in our township could do that.

1275. Have you ever asked the factor or the proprietor to give you hill pasture?—We did not ask our present factor. We never asked hill pasture—I did not at any rate; but we intended.

1276. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Do you complain at all of the rent?—We do not complain anything particularly of that, if we would only get the hill pasture. We want the late increase in our rents to be taken off; about 3s. in the £.

1277. Are the crofts worse than they were, or are you able to get crops still on your land?—Our crops are much worse than they used to be. It is not much use over and above feeding our stock. It will not altogether feed our stock. We have to provender for them otherwise.

1278. What provender do you buy generally?—£3 to £4 worth of corn.

1279. Straw or hay?—Just as happens to be most obtainable.

1280. *The Chairman.*—Have you anything more you wish to state before you retire?—Nothing more.

ALLAN MATHIESON, Crofter, Drumuie (50 or 55)—examined.

Allan Mathieson.

1281. *The Chairman.*—Did you hear the statements made by the previous witness, and did you understand them?—I heard and understood all that the preceding delegate said.

1282. Do you agree with him? have you the same opinions, or do you wish to add anything?—I agree with what he said. I saw my neighbour letting out two stirks in the morning, and these stirks were taken home dead at night owing to the badness of grazing.

1283. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—What time of the year?—In summer.

1284 *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Where is that grazing? is it above or below the road?—It is below our crofts in the big moss. Is it not very hard now to be paying heavy rent in such a place as that?

1285. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Was it in the moss they were lost?—Yes.

1286. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Drowned?—Yes. I have seen the same man

getting a beast out on another occasion, and bringing it home dead from the same place.

1287. *The Chairman.*—Do you mean the beasts were smothered in the moss?—They were smothered in the moss.

1288. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Was there no herd to look after them?—No.

1289. Don't you keep a herd?—No.

1290. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Have you anything else to say?—We are so much confined in the place; we are so bounded that we have no elbow room on any side, and I may say there are four tacks about us. We are surrounded by four tacks, and shut in by them, so that we have no escape on either side, as if we were shut up in a fold. We want a slice of hill pasturage that we may have a sheep stock. I have been nearly forty years in the place, and I have not fleeced a sheep, and sometimes I am reduced to twine a thread to darn my stockings for want of wool. It would be very unfair if we do not get a piece of hill pasture.

Hugh M'Nab, Kildonan, Lyndale—examined.

1291.—*The Chairman.*—What is your occupation?—My son is a crofter, and I am in my son's place. Will I begin my story with the previous landlord or with the present landlord?

1292. How far back with the previous landlord?—Thirty-four years ago.

1293. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—We will take the present landlord?—The present landlord raised our rent 31s. and I am in the land in which I was settled by Mr M'Leunan; and others of the crofters have had their rents raised £2, 5s. and some £2. £4, 4s. at first was the rent of my croft, and there was a rise of 31s. upon that £4, 4s. of rent. One or two paid the original rent for one or two years after the present landlord entered, and then it was raised. The rent was raised on others from £2 to £2, 2s. He took the sheep from the poor tenants. Our present landlord took our sheep and lambs from us at 4s. 6d.

1294. *The Chairman.*—Will you state the amount of stock which your own croft keeps? How many cows, stirks, and so on?—In summer and autumn we could keep two cows and a stirk if we had them; but in winter, owing to the bad crofts we have, we can only winter one cow. We have no sheep and no horse.

1295. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—When were the sheep taken from you?—The landlord took the sheep stock from us a few years after his entry into the property, and we were obliged to sell them to him at 4s. 6d. the ewe and lamb.

1296. *The Chairman.*—When the sheep were taken away was the rent reduced, or did they continue to pay the same rent as they did before the sheep were taken away?—The rent was raised. Then he took the hill pasture from us as well as that, and left us with only a little bit you could call a pin-fold.

1297. Why did the proprietor take the hill pasture away?—His own will.

1298. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Did he take it into his own hands?—He took it into his own hands, and stocked it himself, and let it to the others for rent. He treated the Brebost tenants in the same way.

1299. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—To whom did he let part of the land?—To his own nephew—Peter Campbell. The proprietor himself

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has it now stocked with sheep, and as to the pin-fold left with us he took a bit of it from us again, and settled two other tenants upon it at a rental of £11. One of these tenants is dead, and the remainder is in possession of the other; and we have only a very small bit of pasturage. We are continually trespassed upon by the propietor's sheep. In winter his sheep are constantly trespassing upon us, and eating up our crops—corn and everything; and I have often had to rise up at night and cover myself with my bed coverlet in winter to drive the sheep away. But, by the Queen's authority, I have a dog this year, and with the assistance of the dog I am keeping the lands cleared now. We are making our living by fishing. I never could get a boll of meal out of my crops, for every boll of meal I could take out of my land I had to replace it in seed time. If I make a boll of meal I have to replace it with a boll of seed.

1300. *The Chairman.*—If the proprietor could be induced to give back the hill pasture, or some other corresponding piece of pasture, would the crofters be satisfied?—We would be satisfied if we could get grazing on which we could keep a stock of sheep and cattle, and arable land which we would work with the *cas-chrom.* There are seven cottars between our townships and Flashader. Three of these cottars are on our ground and four on the ground of Flashader.

1301. Do the cottars pay rent to the crofters?—No, nothing.

1302. Do they pay rent to the landlord?—No.

1303. Instead of rent, do they work at harvest time or render any other service to the crofters?—No service whatever.

1304. How do they live?—Some of them are on the poors roll.

1305. Who gave them leave to settle upon the croft?—The proprietor.

1306. Have you anything more to say?—We used to be cutting peats for the landlord at first at 7s. 6d. an iron. The last year we performed this service he sent his grieve to measure our work and he instructed the grieve to double the measurement, and in that way he lost one iron's work. We were working five years cutting his peats, for which he gave us nothing.

1307. *The Chairman.*—What do you mean by an iron?—120 yards in length, 2 peats in depth, and 6 peats broad in the lower and 7 in the upper row. We want pasture for stock and ground in which we can plant crops; a place in which we can keep sheep and cattle, and a horse. We would be the better of it. We have no shore, and the proprietor takes payment from us for the sea-weed. We had no means of planting this ground this year had it not been for Dr Fraser. He gave us a boll of the seed oats each. My own son and another young lad were getting plenty of fish in Loch Grishornish with the hand line. They went to get mussels, and Mr Robertson summoned them to Portree, I cannot get fishing because of Mr Robertson of Grishornish.

1308. Do you say you are prevented gathering mussels on the shore for bait by Mr Robertson of Grishornish?—Yes.

1309. Does Mr Robertson allow you to get the mussels for payment, or does he prevent it altogether?—I do not know. We are not going the way of his shore now; but before Mr Robertson ever came to the country I was getting as many mussels as I liked without let or hindrance there.

1310. How far are you from the shore?—The shore is below me.

1311. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—How far are you from Mr Robertson's shore?—Mr Robertson lives on the other side of Loch Grishornish.

1312. *The Chairman.*—How far are you from the place where you used to gather the mussels?—Ten minutes' sail by boat. The beach is two and a half miles from me.

1313. But there is an oyster bed upon that shore?—Yes.

1314. And Mr Robertson has got the right to those oysters?—I do not know.

1315. That is why he prohibits people from getting mussels?—I did not know that. Mr Robertson has got oyster beds there, but if he has a right to the shore, he ought to put up public notices that we might know his marks. It is plenty of land that we want, on which we can rear a crop and sheep, as the Gaelic proverb says—'It is time about that the bellows 'are worked.'

DONALD STEELE, Crofter and Fisherman, Kildonan (46)—examined.

1316. *The Chairman.*—You live in the same place as the last witness?—Yes.

1317. Have you been freely elected by the crofters as their delegate?—Yes.

1318. Did you hear what the previous witness said?—Yes.

1319. Did you understand it?—Yes.

1320. Do you agree generally with the substance of what he stated?—Yes.

1321. Will you explain what the hardship was about gathering mussels upon the shore, of which the previous witness spoke?—I believe it is owing to the oyster beds being there that we are not allowed to gather mussels or bait.

1322. Does the shore belong to the same proprietor as the crofts, or to a different proprietor?—The shore belongs to another proprietor.

1323. Does the other proprietor allow his own crofters to gather mussels upon the shore, or does he forbid it to every one?—He had forbid it to every one.

1324. Is it necessary for the preservation of the oysters that people should be forbidden to gather anything upon the shore? Would they destroy the oyster beds?—No, they would not. The oyster beds are not so high up on the shore as the mussels.

1325. Is the withdrawal of this freedom to take the mussels prejudicial to the crofters? Does it hinder you in your fishing, or otherwise?—Yes, we are sure it does.

1326. In what respect?—We cannot go to fish for want of bait for our lines.

1327. Do the crofters upon the proprietor's land suffer the same inconvenience that these crofters do?—The same.

1328. Have the crofters on the proprietor's land complained of it?—They have not come in here to complain yet, but likely they will.

1329. Do you make the same complaint about the crofts and the want of hill pasture which M'Nab did?—Yes, the same.

1330. Have you anything to add to those complaints on your own part?—No. I have nothing particular to add to M'Nab's evidence at that point.

1331. Will you explain the complaint about cutting and measuring the peats which the former witness mentioned?—I cannot explain much about it. I was not in the company. The man said that they were cutting peats for six years, and got nothing for it,—neither food nor wages; but the imposition of that work ceased last year.

1332. How long had that work existed? Was it part of the original conditions of the crofter's occupancy?—In the present proprietor's prede-

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cessor's time they had to give several days' work, and the present proprietor remitted the labour and exacted an equivalent in money from them, and added it to the rent.

1333. What did the proprietor do with the peats? Was it for his own house, or did he sell them?—For his own house.

1334. How much money payment did they pay instead of it?—I am not sure.

1335. When did the service of the peats commence?—Six years ago.

1336. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—How was it that it commenced six years ago?—It was just the proprietor's will.

1337. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Were you ever asked to do it?—I was cutting peats myself one year.

1338. How many days did you cut them?—Two days. Each family had to cut an iron, and to cut that would take two days' work of two, and that was imposed upon each crofter—every one that was paying rent.

1339. *The Chairman.*—But that obligation is now abolished altogether?—Yes.

1340. And it will never be put back again?—We don't know that.

1341. Is there anything you wish to state in addition?—No, but, as the preceding delegates wanted—extended holdings. We have neither horses nor sheep, and the hill pasture was taken from us. I was not paying rent when the hill pasture was taken from us, but I am paying now.

1342. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—What rent do you pay?—£5 a year, and others pay £6.

1343. What stock do you have?—Two cows; some years I may have a stirk, and some years two.

1344. How much are you allowed to keep?—Two cows and two stirks.

1345. Any sheep?—No.

1346. What is the acreage of your croft?—About two and a half or three acres of thin, poor, hard soil.

1347. What return do you get for your seed?—Sometimes a double return, and sometimes half a return—sometimes double what we put in, and sometimes only half as much.

1348. Is it that amount in addition to the seed?—Half as much again as the seed put in.

1349. What return do you get of potatoes?—Sometimes two barrels out of a barrel, and sometimes five.

1350. Do you put sea-ware on them?—Yes; but we have to buy the sea-ware.

1351. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—From the laird?—From other lairds. There is not much sea-ware on our landlord's ground at all.

1352. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Do you never get more than five returns of potatoes?—Perhaps, if it was a good growing year.

1353. When you get sea-ware on the beach of your own proprietor's land, do you pay your own proprietor for it?—Our township has a right to a bit of shore, but, besides that, we buy sea-ware from our landlord.

1354. Did you have a piece of shore on which you could gather sea-ware without paying for it?—Yes.

1355. Is there anything more you wish to state?—I do not think there is.

SAMUEL NICOLSON, Cottar, Skerrinish (64)—examined.

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1356. *The Chairman.*—Are you a fisherman as well as a cottar?—I am not a fisherman.

1357. On what croft do you live?—There are three of us, and we live on a piece of ground that was appointed for us in a corner of the tack of Skerrinish—an out-of-the-way and rocky place—a wet, mossy place.

1358. How much ground have you got?—It would not make two acres of proper ground.

1359. Do you keep a cow?—I have one cow.

1360. Potato ground?—I plant both potatoes and corn on the bit of ground I have.

1361. Any sheep?—No.

1362. To whom do you pay your rent?—To the tacksman of Skerrinish.

1363. How much rent?—£5, and that in work.

1364. How many days?—One hundred days for a male and two hundred for women.

1365. Who is the woman who does these two hundred days?—My own daughter, and she gets only 6d. a day.

1366. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—What is the amount for yourself?—One shilling a day for myself. I got no food with that. The place will not support myself and my family.

1367. *The Chairman.*—When you work to another person, not the tacksman, what wages do you receive?—When I was strong, and was leaving the country to work, I would get sometimes 6s. a day.

1368. But when you worked in the country?—3s. a day.

1369. And when your daughter works outside to anybody here how much does she receive?—Not less than 1s.

1370. Do you sometimes work for the tacksman voluntarily besides your obliged work of one hundred days?—Yes.

1371. How much do you get for that?—The same pay—1s. a day.

1372. If you preferred to pay the tacksman his rent all in money instead of labour, would the tacksman accept it in money—the £5?—No, he would not take the money.

1373. How did you get the house? Did you find it there or build it yourself?—I built the house myself.

1374. Did you build it with your own hands?—With my own hands.

1375. How much money did you spend in the purchase of materials in order to complete the house?—About £6.

1376. Expended by you, not including your labour?—I spent £6 upon it, besides my work.

1377. How long did it take you to make the house?—It took time, as I had to carry the stones. I had to bring the stones, some of them, 400 or 500 yards.

1378. Did the tacksman help you to build your house?—No.

1379. How long ago was this?—Forty years ago.

1380. When you die, to whom will the house belong?—The house would belong to my representatives.

1381. Have you a son?—Yes, I have three sons and three daughters.

1382. If you went away, and left the house behind you, would anybody pay you the value of the house, or give you any compensation?—If a person came in my place, he would take it at a valuation.

1383. How much do you think the valuation would be?—Perhaps not more than £2.

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SKEABOST.

Samuel Nicolson.

1384. Have you anything else to complain of?—I have to make this complaint, that in winter time we only get 8d. per day and women get 4d.

1385. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Then that means it is possible you may have to serve more than one hundred days?—Yes.

1386. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—It is one hundred days of ten hours?—Yes, ten hours.

1387. *The Chairman.*—Are these the usual terms for a cottar inhabiting a tacksman's land?—No, I do not know a tack in Skye or elsewhere where so little pay is given.

1388. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Was it the same with the tacksman before this one?—Yes, we had additional privileges from the predecessor of the present tacksman—Mr William Macdonald. We could keep a few sheep. When the present tacksman's predecessor came I had to part with the sheep, but he allowed me to keep two sheep. At the first term he charged me 6s. a head for the grazing of them, and he sold the lambs for me, and at last he took away the sheep altogether from me.

1389. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Have you anything to suggest that this Commission could recommend in order to better your condition?—To get a bit of land at a fair rent.

1390. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Had you ever a croft?—I never had a croft, but my predecessors had a croft.

1391. Where?—At Borve.

1392. Were they removed from there?—Yes.

1393. Where did your father go when removed?—He came to Skerrinish. It was the farm of Skerrinish that had added to it the townships from which the crofters were cleared.

1394. Did your father get a croft when he came there?—Only a bit, the same as I have.

1395. What other means of living have you?—Only my own labour.

1396. Are you able to make a living?—No.

1397. You are not in good health?—I am strong enough to do a little work about the place.

1398. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Do your sons live with you?—No.

1399. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Could they help you if you got a little land?—Yes, they could; they are helping me a little now.

1400. And the daughters?—One of the daughters is with me, and another is married. I have a son and a daughter married, and they have enough to do for themselves.

1401. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—How long can the corn and potatoes you raise on your bit of ground keep you alive?—About three months.

1402. And you have to buy meal, and everything else, all the year round?—To buy everything else all the year round—food and clothing for myself and family.

1403. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Are there other two cottars on the same footing alongside of you?—Yes, on the same footing.

1404. How long have you been established on the farm?—Forty-two years.

1405. Since your father went there?—Forty-two years since my father was cleared off the township of Borve.

1406. I suppose 1s. a day was the common wages in those days?—There were no money wages at the time we went; but we had as much ground as we liked, and grazing, and food twice a day, in order to be at the tacksman's disposal to work for him when he wanted us, at any time.

1407. And you got food when you worked for him?—Yes.

1408. When did this 1s. a day commence?—Twenty years ago. When the 1s. was allowed us, and the rent imposed, we had a good bit of ground, and we were taking food out of it. That was taken from us, and we were then put into a bad corner—a corner tack contiguous to the township lands. One thing we want is to get a little bit of land, and to pay for it to the landlord.

NEIL SHAW, Crofter, Eyre (60).—examined.

1409. *The Chairman.*—We understand you have a particular statement to make to us of some personal grievance. Will you have the goodness to make it?—I am situated at Eyre six years Whitsunday coming. We are complaining of narrow bounds. We have a small stock of sheep in common.

1410. Are you speaking for yourself, or also on behalf of others?—On behalf of others—for the whole township.

1411. Have you been elected as a delegate by the people of the township?—Yes. Neil M'Leod is not at home, and I have been put in his place. We are complaining of the narrow bounds of hill pasture we have. Our pasture is only half a mile broad, from the bounds of the tack on the one side to the boundary of the township on the other side of us. This entails upon us a great deal of herding at these boundaries. We cannot let a beast pass beyond the boundaries. We are in danger of having them poinded. We are in danger of losing our place. Kingsburgh is on the one side of us; Scorrybreck on the other. We are complaining again of the arable land—it is so bad. It is shallow land. We are keeping a few cows and a horse, and a few sheep, and we are losing the lambs for want of a wintering place; and the food that we ought to be using ourselves we are obliged to expend on our stock in winter to keep them alive. These are our particular hardships. The soil does not yield crop to us, and we have no ground that we can leave out in rotation. Our ground has been cropped for the past hundred years, and we have no ground to afford rotation.

1412. Would you state whether the amount of hill pasture has been altered during the memory of man?—No, the hill is as it was, but part of our arable land was taken from us, and given to others.

1413. Was it given to the tacksmen or given to the other crofters?—To other crofters. Part of our ground was taken from us, and two families were settled upon it by the late factor, Tormore,—three families, in fact,—and no corresponding decrease was made on our rents; on the contrary, our rents were raised.

1414. Where were the other crofters brought from?—Two women came from Sleat, and another woman belonged to the township, and a smith who had been for some time in the township also.

1415. Why were they removed from their previous homes?—They were shifted out of the way because there was something about one of these women who came from Sleat that made it convenient to remove her.

1416. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—How many crofters are there in Eyre?—There are nine.

1417. What rent do they pay?—I pay £13, 10s.

1418. What stock do you keep?—Three cows, two stirks, two two-year-olds, and about twenty sheep, and one horse. The summing is four cows and no stirks.

SKYE.

SKEABOST.

Neil Shaw.

1419. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—How long have you been in your present place?—Six years.

1420. Where were you before that?—I was previously in Bracadale, and then the factor sent us to the lower part of Duirinish. My father and grandfather were in Ebost, as cottars, paying £11 of rent.

1421. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—To whom were they paying rent?—Kenneth M'Leod. Mr Gibbons, the tenant, when he came, took a tack, and removed the tenants.

1422. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Where did you go then?—To Lowergill, a part of M'Leod of M'Leod's estate, now part of the lands of M'Pherson's trustees. I was five years in Lowergill. Then the new factor came—Hugh M'Askill of Tallisker. We were only five years under him as factor. Bad times and bad prices came on us, and the plan he took with us was that he made a market for us himself, and he and his officer would come and gather our cattle together, promising he would get much better prices for them than the tenants could get. He carried this on for two years. Before the two years were out the ten tenants of us were paying ten guineas each, and in two years the tenants had got so much into debt that they were unable to keep their holdings, and the factor took the lands himself, and five of the crofters went to Australia. Five remained, and I am one of those five. We then got a bit of the township that was laid out to us at £40 of rent. We were there until another factor came.

1423. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—How long?—Five years. We were thirty-three years between the two places. It was £40 for this bit of ground; seven of us were located upon it. Some were getting into debt, running out of their means, and as they ran out we were taking their land. At last there were only five of us; we were paying the rent. There was not a penny of arrears on us. Then Tormore became factor. The factor got some vacant township lands that were adjoining ours on the estate of Orbost, and when Tormore came he never rested, and nothing would do until he became possessed of our lands. He removed the five families of us, and I believe that they did not owe a sixpence of arrears among them.

1424. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Were you not wishing to go?—We were not wanting to go. I offered him, when he was saying the rent was too heavy for us and the place too big for us, that I would be one of two to take it, and my saying so was the cause of my being removed to Eyre. There was a vacant lot at Eyre, and he himself was then factor for both estates—for Lord Macdonald's estate as well—and I was promised I would get everything I would need if I would only take his advice. I need not tell how affairs turned out, but I left Lowergill and went to Eyre, where I am now.

1425. Where were the rest of the people sent to?—One of these Lowergill tenants is in Pabbay, one at Broadford, two are in Glendale; and the one that is in Pabbay, when removed from Lowergill, was sent to Ramasaig, which is a township alongside Lowergill, and from Ramasaig he was shifted to Pabbay. Tormore cleared the crofters off the two townships of Ramasaig and Lowergill. There were twenty-one crofters in Ramasaig and five of us in Lowergill.

1426. Were you there when they were removed from Ramasaig?—I was in Eyre at the time the Ramasaig people were removed. They were removed two years after we were.

1427. *The Chairman.*—Are you personally worse off than you were in your last place?—I am a good deal worse off than I was in Lowergill. I am considerably more in debt now; in fact, I was free of debt when I left Lowergill. That is the difference, and it is a great difference. The

year I came to Eyre turned out to be a bad year. I got largely into debt before I managed to pull myself and family through.

1428. Have you anything else to state before you retire?—I have one thing to say if it could be done for us—if we will get land near its value. I believe I am paying double rent for the land which I have, and I would ask, if we got that good land which we might improve, that neither landlord nor factor would have the power to remove us.

1429. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Would you take a lease?—No. They would put us away at the end of it. I built new houses wherever I went, and I had to leave them all without getting compensation, and I know too much of factors' work now. If it could be done—and we are hearing it is being done in other places—we wish that we could buy the bit of land we occupy, and that Government would help us to buy it. If the latter cannot be done, and in the event of our getting land at a fair rent, we would need to be assured against eviction when we improved it.

1430. *The Chairman.*—Do you believe, supposing the Government were helping the crofters to buy land, there would be many crofters willing to purchase the land, and to pay the Government back by gradual instalments?—Yes, I believe more than half of them would. How many times over does the amount that my father and my grandfather and I have paid of rent amount to?

[ADJOURNED.]

UIG, THURSDAY, MAY 10, 1883.

(See Appendix A, III., VI., XX., XXI., XXII.)

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 GILLIES, Crofter, South Cuil (60)—examined.

1431. *The Chairman.*—Are you a fisherman as well as a crofter?—No.

1432. You have been freely elected by the people as their delegate?—Yes.

1433. Have you been always resident here, and are you well acquainted with the condition and the wishes of the people?—Yes, to the best of my judgment.

1434. Will you have the goodness to make your statement of the grievances and hardships, if any, of which the people whom you represent complain?—Want of sufficient land to support their families, and that at a reasonable rent, as the place would afford. We are wanting that we should be treated as we hear other parts of the country are treated,—that we would not be removed from our holdings. These are the desires and the grievances, and I have not much more to say.

SKYE.

Uig.

John Gillies.

1435. Can you suggest anything which could be done to remedy these grievances?—More land, out of which we could support ourselves.

1436. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—What amount of land do you possess?—Two acres and a half, I believe. Six stones of meal is all I have been able to make during the last sixteen years.

1437. Do you thresh all your corn?—Yes, we thresh all the corn, unless we give a sheaf to the beasts.

1438. Do you give half the sheaves to the beasts?—Yes, and more.

1439. Do you take to the mill all that you thresh?—No, it would not be worth while. I would not have half a boll of oats altogether.

1440. What do you do with it when you thresh it?—I give it to the stock after threshing it. I must needs do that.

1441. Then you have made six stones of meal in the last sixteen years?—Yes.

1442. And the rest you have given to the cattle?—Yes, I sow seven bushels of seed oats.

1443. How much potato seed do you plant?—About four or four and a half barrels. My land cannot plant more.

1444. Is it all under crop?—Not altogether. Some of it cannot be cropped.

1445. Is it in grass?—In the sort of grass in which it ever was.

1446. Do the cattle graze the grass, or do you cut it?—The cattle eat it.

1447. What stock have you?—A cow and a two-year-old I am entitled to keep, and I cannot winter the cow on the croft.

1448. What do you buy for it?—About £2 worth of feeding, besides the crop of the ground.

1449. Have you any sheep?—A few.

1450. How many?—About twelve.

1451. Any horse?—I have a horse. I am the only one in the place who has a horse.

1452. Does the £2 worth of fodder you buy include the keep of the horse?—The keep of the horse is exclusive of what I have mentioned.

1453. What do you buy besides for the keep of the horse?—I spent about £3 more for the keep of the horse besides the £2. That would not feed him, but he gets food when out at work with others.

1454. Do you make a profit of the horse?—That was what I had in view in keeping it, but the principal profit which it is to me is that it does my work.

1455. Of course for 2½ acres you do not want a horse's labour. Do you employ the horse otherwise for hire?—Yes, that is the case. I use the horse to take home my fuel.

1456. How far are you from the moss?—Three miles.

1457. Do you bring home peats for other people too?—Yes.

1458. For payment?—Yes.

1459. What is your rent?—£4, 12s. 6d., but I got a reduction about four years ago. We got 5s. in the pound.

1460. What do you pay now?—About £3, 11s.

1461. You spoke about being treated like other parts of the country. What other parts of the country do you refer to?—I do not mean in the country in which I am; I refer to Ireland.

1462. Do you want a lease, or to have the land for your own?—I do not want a lease at all; I wish that we would have the land to ourselves.

1463. At what rent do you think you ought to have it?—I cannot say until I would see the amount of land we would get. I would require as much as would keep up a family.

1464. Where would you expect to get this?—Unless I would get it on the land where I am.

1465. But in any place?—There is plenty of land. I do not see any land in possession of the crofters which is not too small for them already. I would take the land which we require from those who have got too much of it.

1466. Supposing a large farm taken and divided among the crofters, would the crofters pay the same rent that the large farmers pay?—I cannot say much about that, but I believe it would be heavy on them to pay it.

1467. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—How long have you been where you are?—I have been five years in the spot in which I am now.

1468. Where were you before?—In a spot near it.

1469. Why were you moved?—To give my land to another.

1470. Who?—The innkeeper here.

1471. What were you paying before?—The rent was raised twice on me; I was removed twice.

1472. Where were you removed from the former time?—From North Cuil first.

1473. Why were you removed from that?—Because the landlord was wanting that land for himself.

1474. How much were you paying in that first place?—£3, 10s.

1475. What stock had you there?—A cow and a calf.

1476. How much did you pay in the second place?—£9, 15s. at first.

1477. And was that raised?—It was not that the rent was raised, but I was put out of the land.

1478. Had you been paying your rent regularly?—Yes.

1479. Was there any complaint against you?—I am not aware there was any.

1480. What stock had you?—Seven cows, a horse, and I do not remember how many sheep. I could keep about thirty sheep.

1481. Did that support you and your family comfortably?—I was middling comfortable on it.

1482. Are you not so now?—No.

1483. What other means of living have you besides your bit of croft?—Only what I earn with the help of the horse, unless I buy and sell a beast.

1484. Is there any work to be got here?—Some.

1485. What kind?—Field labour.

1486. Is there any regular work?—No, not every day.

1487. What wages are given?—I cannot say from personal experience.

1488. Have more of the people been removed from that same place which you were in?—Yes.

1489. At the same time with you?—Yes, the last time I was removed.

1490. What year was that?—Five or six years ago.

1491. How many tenants were removed?—Five, I think.

1492. Where were they sent to?—Two of them are still in Bensoraig, one in Glen Hinisdale, and another in Idrigill.

1493. Were any others removed within a few years back?—There were no removals since then, but at that time five were removed from the other side of the loch.

1494. Why were they removed?—I do not know of anything but the will of the landlord.

1495. Who was the tenant?—Donald Ross has got their land now.

1496. Who got the land of the other people in Bensoraig?—Mr Urquhart, the innkeeper.

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John Gillies.

1497. Are the two men in Bensoraig living on land left to them?—One of them has got land, and I do not think the other has got any.

1498. Had he before?—*No; it was not good crofts before; there was not* a good croft in it.

1499. Has any hill pasture been taken away from the people about here in your recollection, which they had before?—Not about here.

1500. Have you any difficulty in paying your rent?—Yes.

1501. Are you in arrears just now?—Yes.

1502. Have you ever given a bill for payment of the rent?—Yes.

1503. Who would sign the bill for you?—A brother of mine signed it once.

1504. Is there a good deal of that done on this property?—There was at any rate at one time. I was signing plenty of them myself.

1505. Was that when you were in the other place?—When I was in the other place; but it is not my having been removed that has left me so unable to do what I could do before.

1506. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You say that when you were first removed it was the landlord who wanted the place. Has the landlord that place still?—Mr Urquhart has now got the land from which I was first removed, under a tack.

1507. Who was in the place where you now are before you were put there?—The man who occupied it before me is not living.

1508. Then you went into an empty croft?—Yes.

1509. Have these removals been prejudicial to you? Have you been falling off at each removal?—Yes, falling off, and that not little.

1510. Are you able to say, from your own observation in regard to other people who have been removed and shifted in this way, whether it has ever been for their benefit or whether it has been the reverse?—Possibly there may have been one who was bettered, but I do not remember an instance but *it was worse for every one of them.*

1511. Is the population upon this estate or in this very neighbourhood increasing or decreasing, or stationary?—The population is increasing, I believe, but *many have to leave the country because of the smallness of* the holdings.

1512. With regard to the fishings in this bay, are you well acquainted with the fishing in this bay and neighbourhood?—Yes, I am acquainted with the fishing in this bay, but there is no fishing now.

1513. Why?—The fish are not there. I believe there are three years that they have got no fishings. They have spoiled their tackle in their endeavours to fish during that time.

1514. What do you mean by that?—Using the tackle and no fish in it.

1515. Are there no herring?—No herring is to be found here.

1516. Then a quay for landing their boats and going off would practically be of no use in this particular spot?—I have seen fishing here before, and there may be fishing yet, and the quay would certainly not be in the way here. A quay would be of good service to us, for we could get our supplies landed without loss or damage, as it is from the south country we are getting our supplies.

1517. Suppose you could have a quay where you could go in and out in all ordinary weather, would people go to some distance to fish?—Yes. I cannot say they would go out in all weathers, but they would go out in any likely weather.

1518. They would do that?—Oh yes; they are doing so now; they use their endeavours now in very unlikely weather.

1519. Is this bay very much exposed to the west winds?—Yes; the shelter would be on the other side, on the north side, in such weather.

1520. *Professor Mackinnon.*—When you had that croft from which you were removed last, the £9, 15s. croft, did you consider the rent too high?—Not at the time.

1521. Was the croft big enough?—A good part of it was of use to me.

1522. And with regard to the croft which you have now, do you complain that it is too small or that the rent is too high?—The rent is too high. Should I have the croft for nothing it would not be of use to me.

1523. The rent is too high, but the worst thing is that the croft is too small?—Yes.

1524. What about the houses?—When I left the first place I got £7 as the value of the house I left. The wall of that house cost me £15 to build.

1525. Then the second?—At the next place from which I was removed, I quarried all the stones for the house which I built, and I got no compensation for it.

1526. And did you build the house in which you are just now?—The house in which I am just now I found built,—the wall of it at least. I myself put the roof on it, and I am asked to pay 15s. of rent for the bare walls, and I got nothing for the walls that I left behind.

1527. To whom have you to pay this 15s.?—To the factor.

1528. Did you bring the roof you had in the previous house to this house, or did you have to buy the wood?—I brought the roof from the last house.

1529. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—How many crofters are there in the place where you are?—Eight.

1530. What do they pay?—One pays less than I do, and the rest pay more.

1531. *Professor Mackinnon.*—You want more land. Is there land about here which you might get?—Yes, not far off, if we could only get access to it.

1532. Where?—There is a beautiful glen out there—Glen Uig.

1533. Who occupies it now?—Mr Urquhart.

1234. Is that the same Mr Urquhart whom we have been hearing about?—Yes.

1535. Was that place in possession of small tenants before?—Yes.

1536. How long ago was that?—Fifteen or sixteen years ago.

1537. Do you know of any people coming from other places into the crofts about here, or were they merely people of the place?—There were no strange crofters taken in.

1538. So it is just the clearing of the place for a big farm, and the natural increase of the population that has caused the overcrowding?—No doubt of that.

1539. *The Chairman.*—Suppose that the proprietor was disposed to allow the people to make new crofts in Glen Uig, and that these were to be made crofts of £10 value, would the crofters here be willing and able to go out to Glen Uig and build houses, and fence the land, and stock it and cultivate it?—They would be willing enough to do that, but I do not know they would be quite able to do it without help.

1540. If the proprietor was to allow them to do it for the first year at a smaller rent, would they be able to do it?—Not without help to stock the ground, and if they could but once get the crop out and take food out of it, I believe they would be able to pay on ever after that.

1541. If such crofts were constituted in a new place, do you think it ought to be prohibited to divide them afterwards into half crofts?—I think it should be prohibited. I believe that such a subdivision has caused a good deal of loss already.

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John Gillies.

1542. But would not the people themselves press the landlord to be allowed to subdivide, for the sake of their families?—I believe the crofters would ask the landlord to allow them to do so. I think the landlord should not accede to such wishes.

1543. Then you would approve of the creation of £10 crofts, with a prohibition ever afterwards to divide them?—Yes, I would approve of that.

1544. Would it be better to have them £20 crofts, or do you consider a £10 croft a good sort of croft?—A £20 croft would be better, and such a croft would be likely to do, and the people of this place are not likely to ask more, for such a croft at such a rent would support their families comfortably.

1545. You stated you were in the habit of earning your subsistence by working for other people. When you work for other people without your horse, how much do you get per day?—I only work with the horse.

1546. When you work with the horse, how much do you get?—In some places 5s. a day, and I feed myself.

1547. Do you sometimes work with your horse for the proprietor?—I never worked for him but one day.

1548. Do you ever work for some tacksman or gentleman?—No, I may work for the poor people who have no horses themselves.

1549. If you had constant work with your horse at 5s. a day, would you rather earn a subsistence that way, or would you prefer to have a larger piece of land and work on the land for yourself?—I would rather have the land. I would need the piece of land to enable me to feed the horse. I would prefer the piece of land.

1550. *Mr Cameron.*—What is the smallest size of croft on which you think a family could be maintained all the year round?—That is according to the place where I would see the croft.

1551. But in your own district, how many cows and how many acres of arable ground at the least?—A croft of 9 or 10 acres, and I would keep six cows on that.

1552. What do you think would be a fair rent for that?—In my experience in former days, such a croft would be had at £6.

1553. Do you think that would be a fair rent now?—I do not say that would not be accounted a small rent now-a-days.

1554. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—In the days when that was considered a usual rent, what was the rate of wages?—There was not much day's work going on in those days.

1555. *The Chairman.*—Have you any other remark you wish to make before you retire?—I have nothing more to say further than I have said already—that I know of no likely remedy to improve the condition of the people, but to give them sufficient land to keep their families in comfort, and if they do not get that they will be very much worse than they are. I myself, whatever way I may be able to procure it, have to spend £16 a year on meal from Glasgow.

PETER M'DONALD, Crofter, Glen Hinisdale (51)—examined.

Peter M'Donald.

1556. *The Chairman.*—You have a written statement to read to the Commission?—Yes. 'At a meeting of crofters in Glen Hinisdale on 2d May '1883,—Malcolm M'Leod, crofter, in the chair,—a resolution was passed 'and carried. The principal cause of our grievance is the repeated rising

'of our rent. When Major Fraser got the estate, our rents were from £5, '3s. to £5, 10s., and he raised it to £11 and £13, 10s., with the exception 'of two crofts, whose rents were when he became proprietor £11, and he 'raised them to £24, 10s. and £25, also an assessment of 2s. 5d. per £1, 'rendering our condition such that, should our rents be reduced to the sum 'it was when Major Fraser became proprietor, it would take a considerable 'time before we could clear ourselves from our just debts. Of fifteen 'crofters our liabilities amount to over £600 sterling, and with but few 'exceptions our credit is gone also; our stock is unsaleable at this time, 'owing to their impoverished condition. Our grazing will not carry more 'than half the stock assigned to it; the death-rate is excessive both summer 'and winter; some of us at times lose perhaps the half of his small number. 'Concerning the cultivating land, the soil is so poor, that on an average for 'six years back, if any of us makes a boll or two of meal from his own oats, 'he must buy sowing seed. Our houses are scarcely habitable, which we 'cannot repair owing to our being so poor, and for want of lime and wood. 'We also suffer great inconvenience from the want of our roads, which were 'destroyed by the great flood of 1877, and never was repaired, although we 'pay for roads, and have done so for a considerable time. We pray that 'the Royal Commission will give us the land in a way that we can live on, 'and in such a way that the proprietor cannot raise our rent or remove us, 'although we would improve our lands. (Signed) MALCOLM M'LEOD.'

1557. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Were you present at the meeting when this was agreed to?—Yes.

1558. Is Malcolm M'Leod, who was in the chair, present to-day?—He is here to-day.

1559. Who chose you for examination to-day?—The people of Glen Henisdale.

1560. Did they select anybody besides you?—Yes.

1561. Is Malcolm M'Leod one of them?—No.

1562. So far as you know, does this express the view of the people of the glen?—A good part of their wishes.

1563. You mean to say they all agree in this so far as it goes?—Yes.

1564. In the whole of it?—Every man of them.

1565. And in the whole of the paper?—Yes.

1566. Is there anything else that you would like to say?—Yes. Our holdings are too small, even if they were of their value.

1567. How many holdings are there in Glen Henisdale now?—Fifteen.

1568. How many were there when Captain Fraser got the property?—Fifteen.

1569. Then they are not increased in number?—No.

1570. No land has been taken from them?—Not since the captain came.

1571. Was there land taken from them before that?—Yes, the hill.

1572. How much hill?—A great piece.

1573. How long ago is that?—It may be sixty years ago.

1574. What became of the hill?—It was added to the Kingsburgh tack.

1575. What stock are they able to keep on the hill they have now? In the first place, what are they allowed to keep?—Four cows and fifty sheep and a horse.

1576. Has each of them got that?—Each of us have not got that, or the half, but that is the summing.

1577. What will the place keep?—The place will not keep half that number.

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1578. What have you got yourself?—I have six cows and seven young beasts. I buy grass every year.

1579. Have you a horse?—Yes, two horses.

1580. And sheep?—Yes, about fifty old sheep and twenty hoggs.

1581. What rent are you paying?—£24, 10s.

1582. Is yours a double lot?—Yes, mine is a double lot.

1583. Then the other tenants will have about half the stock that you have?—Yes; the other tenants have a little more than the half that I have.

1584. There are thirteen crofts and two double ones?—Yes.

1585. What stock are the single crofts keeping?—Two cows, two young beasts, and about twenty or thirty sheep.

1586. Including hoggs?—Yes.

1587. Any horse?—They have a horse also.

1588. Whom do you take the extra grass from?—I get the grazing of a cow for 2s. 6d. in any part of the estate; that is to say, not in any part, but in most of it.

1589. Do you get it from the crofters or the large farmers?—From the crofters. You will not get it from the large farmers.

1590. Is that in summer?—Yes.

1591. For how long do you get the grass for half a crown?—For half the year, from Whitsunday. The small tenants, many of them, have not got cows. They have become so poor, and they are glad to let their grazing in this way.

1592. Then it is not the case generally that the people cannot keep the summing of their place?—Because they have not got the stock on it. They have become so poor; they have not got cattle, and they make use of it in this way.

1593. How do you keep these cattle in winter that you graze out in summer?—From those who have got no cattle themselves.

1594. Do you buy fodder?—Yes.

1595. How much fodder do you usually buy?—Two stacks sometimes, or one stack of corn.

1596. What do they cost you?—According to the year, £3 or £4.

1597. Is that for one or two stacks?—For one stack, and sometimes £2.

1598. You spend from £2 to £4 usually upon fodder in the year?—Yes, often.

1599. The crofters ask that they should get the croft in such a way that the proprietor could not raise their rents if they improved the land. Would their lands bear improvement?—Yes, some of them are improvable; the land is bad, but some of it is improvable.

1600. Would they improve it if they were not afraid the rent would be raised?—Yes, no doubt of that.

1601. Have any improvements been effected within your memory?—Yes.

1602. Was the raising of the rent due to these improvements having been made?—I cannot say that, but it was when we had improved our crofts that the rent was raised.

1603. Was the rent raised more than once?—Yes.

1604. How many times?—Three times, I think.

1605. When was the first?—Shortly after the captain got the property.

1606. Were there improvements made after their rents were raised the first time?—Yes, some of them. Most of them were improved a little.

1607. In what way? Did they trench the ground?—Drains and trenches.

1608. They do trench the ground?—Yes.

1609. Was there the same rise upon each of the fifteen?—Not altogether.

1610. Did those who improved most suffer the greatest rise?—I do not think so with regard to Glen Henisdale, but it was the case in Glen Uig where I first was.

1611. Then it is not the same fifteen tenants who are in Glen Henisdale now who were there from the first?—No.

1612. How many of them are changed?—There are five new tenants. What became of the five who occupied these places before?—They became so poor that they preferred leaving the place.

1613. Where did they go?—Some to Portree, some to Glasgow, some to Australia.

1614. Are they doing well in Australia?—Yes, those who are in Australia are doing well.

1615. Are there any people in this country who would care to go to Australia if there were means provided?—I do not know, but I believe there are.

1616. You mentioned they are £600 in debt. Are those debts to the meal-dealers, to the landlord, or to the bank principally?—Both to the landlord and the meal-dealer and the bank.

1617. To go back about five years, what would be the amount of the debts on the place then?—I cannot say; not the third part of that.

1618. What is the difference between your own indebtedness now and your indebtedness five years ago?—I was not in debt at all five years ago.

1619. You have got into debt now?—Yes.

1620. To others besides the proprietor?—Yes.

1621. Has it been the custom for some time to pay the rent by bills drawn upon the banks?—Yes, some of them.

1622. Had they anything to pay for these loans of money, besides interest?—Yes.

1623. To the persons who granted the bills?—Yes.

1624. At what rate was it,—how much per pound?—Some 1s. or 2s. in the pound. They say so.

1625. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.* Do you mean for first granting, or for a renewal?—I cannot say particularly about that.

1626. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Were the rents regularly paid in Glen Hinisdale?—Yes, till about a year or two ago.

1627. Was there a proposal last year to remove the people to Australia?—Yes.

1628. What was the proposal made by Captain Fraser?—He was going to give us two years' rent back, and to take our effects at a valuation.

1629. Where was it proposed you should emigrate to?—Some of them were thinking of going to America and to Australia, and others could not emigrate at all. There were those who could not pay the cart to take their effects to Portree.

1630. Were some of you willing to go?—Yes.

1631. Most of the people, I think?—I believe so.

1632. What was the reason why the thing was broken off?—I do not know. Some of them drew back. We believed that those who drew back had been bribed to do so,—bought to do so.

1633. By whom?—I do not know.

1634. Did you agree to go on condition that the whole of the people should go, and sign a paper to that effect?—Yes, they agreed to go if all would go.

1635. And some then refused to go?—Yes.

1636. And then you considered that the agreement was broken by that, and

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that you were not bound to go?—The landlord drew back from his promise.

1637. Because you would not all go?—Yes.

1638. How many people were there that drew back?—I do not know; about half of them.

1639. Have you anything to go upon except suspicion in regard to the alleged bribery of these people?—I have only suspicion.

1640. Have these people shown any difference in their means or condition from the others since that time?—No.

1641. You have a schoolhouse at Glen Hinisdale?—Yes.

1642. One of the board schools?—Yes.

1643. Is it well attended?—We have no schoolmaster just now.

1644. How long has it been vacant?—From last winter we have not had a schoolmaster.

1645. What is the reason of that?—I do not know.

1646. Is there a school board in the parish?—Yes.

1647. Who is the chairman?—I do not know but it is the Rev. Mr Lamont.

1648. Who is the clerk?—Mr Macdonald, Portree, factor.

1649. Have any members of the board ever visited the school or had a meeting upon the subject there within the last year?—No, none of them visited us. They hold their meetings at Kensaleyre.

1650. Have you a board officer?—Yes.

1651. Where does he live?—At Uig.

1652. How often does he visit you?—I do not know.

1653. Did you ever see him there?—There is no occasion for him to visit us when there is no schoolmaster.

1654. About how many children are there in the place between the ages of five and thirteen?—I should think there are twenty-five; perhaps there are more than that.

1655. And have these been getting no teaching for the last half year?—They have been getting no teaching for the last half year.

1656. *Mr Cameron.*—Did you hear the evidence given by the last witness?—Yes, I heard the most part of it.

1657. Do you agree that a croft of 10 acres, with six cows, is the least upon which a family can maintain itself for the whole year in comfort?—It would be little enough. Ten acres of ground will not on any part of this estate keep six cows. It would not keep three cows with us.

1658. Of course arable land is meant,—the wintering?—Yes.

1659. Now, on your croft you have six cows and what you have told us. Do you consider that enough to keep a family for the whole year?—It would not support a family for a month, without live stock.

1660. But you have your sheep. I am speaking of your whole holding?—Our township is the worst land on the estate.

1661. What do you sell off your croft in the shape of cattle and sheep and wool?—About three wedders, each tenant, on an average. That was the case last year.

1662. How many cattle?—Our whole township only sold four cattle last year. We are only two of us, and the two of us sold of the increase of our stock three stirks and one two-year-old.

1663. Out of that, what came to your share in money value?—About £15 or £16.

1664. Was last year a bad year, or an average year, or a good year?—Some years the yield might be worse than that, some years might be better.

1665. A good average year, in fact?—Yes.

1666. How many acres of ground are there on the double croft?—Not more than 10 acres.

1667. Do you consider the 10 acres of arable ground, with the produce of your cows and £16 derived from the sale of beasts, is sufficient to keep a family comfortably during the year?—No, it would not keep my family in comfort.

1668. Would it require to be doubled in order to keep the family in comfort, or would half as much again be sufficient?—We would need double that.

1669. Is all your ground alternately planted with potatoes and corn, or do you ever lay down grass in rotation?—We can only leave out very little of it, and it would require very much manure to put it in heart to yield any crop. It would go back to heather in three years.

1670. As a matter of fact, do you sow it out in grass at all?—No.

1671. Do you ever put on any artificial manure or lime?—We put guano on potatoes and turnips.

1672. There is no sea-ware about?—We have no sea-ware. It is too far away from us. We use a little.

1673. Does anybody ever put any lime on their land?—No.

1674. Is lime expensive where you come from?—Yes.

1675. Very dear?—Yes.

1676. What do you mean by the statement in the resolution you have submitted that the death-rate was excessive. Is it cattle or people?—Sheep.

1677. Do you consider your rent too high?—Yes.

1678. What would you consider a fair rent for your holding?—I cannot say what would be a reasonable rent for the ugly place. If you ask me what would be a reasonable rent in the place which I had before, it was £8 when Captain Fraser became proprietor.

1679. And you thought that a reasonable rent?—Yes; that was in Glen Uig.

1680. What stock had you then?—Seven cows, big and little.

1681. How many acres of arable ground?—Between 9 and 10 acres.

1682. Any sheep?—Up to fifty a piece.

1683. Why had the people any suspicion there was any bribing or undue influence used to induce the half of them to draw back from their undertaking to go to Australia?—I was thinking that the landlord could keep them to the agreement when every one of them had signed it.

1684. But whom did you or the people suspect of having used influence? Who got them to change their minds?—I thought it was from the landlord it came.

1685. What interest could the landlord have had in not wishing the people to emigrate?—That the place was dear, and I do not think anybody else would give the rent for it,—that he would not not get the same rent for it.

1686. But you think nobody except the landlord could have had any interest in endeavouring to dissuade the people from going abroad?—I did not think that anybody else had influence.

1687. And you never had any suspicion of anybody else having influence?—No.

1688. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Who has got the land from which you were removed when you went to your present place?—The innkeeper, Mr Urquhart.

1989. Were you benefited by the change, or the reverse?—I was much the worse of it.

1690. Did you go to the place which you call the worst part upon the property, because there was no other place open to you?—Yes.

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1691. Who was there before you?—A crofter who left the place and went to Glasgow.

1692. Was that man starved out, or what made him go?—It was getting poorer he was.

1693. Who is Mr Urquhart, whom we hear about? Does he belong to the locality, or is he a stranger?—He does not belong to this island.

1694. Where did he come from, and when?—He came with the captain; I do not know from where.

1695. Can you give us any idea how many people have been dispossessed for the sake of Mr Urquhart?—It was not Mr Urquhart who had the place then.

1696. Who was it?—The landlord himself had the land first which Mr Urquhart has now.

1697. How many people were removed in consequence of the landlord coming here, from the lands now occupied by Mr Urquhart?—Twenty families were in the upper part, and more, and cottars besides; and twenty-three families from the lower ground.

1698. And all that has occurred within a comparatively recent period?—It was in Captain Fraser's time.

1699. Can you say of your own knowledge, in regard to those people who have been removed, that their circumstances are better or worse by this removal?—I know that they are not the better of their removal.

1700. I suppose there is no fishing about your place?—It is far from the sea.

1701. I think you made some complaint that you have no road. Will you explain that?—We are two miles from the country road. There is a cart track, but the floods spoiled it, and carried away a sort of bridge that was on it.

1702. *The Chairman.*—You stated that the rent of the crofts in your place had been raised two or three times. Is that the case?—Yes.

1703. When the rents were raised, did the crofters make an earnest remonstrance to the proprietor, and represent that it would be a hardship?—We were not seeing the landlord at all. It was the factor who was raising the rent upon us.

1704. Did they make an earnest remonstrance to the factor?—Yes.

1705. Who was the factor?—Mr Alexander M'Donald.

1706. Do you consider that the rent of the crofts generally on this estate, and particularly at your own place, are higher than the rents of the corresponding crofts on other estates in the island?—Yes.

1707. You spoke of certain improvements that had been made at a previous period on the croft. Did the landlord contribute to make those improvements, or were they made by the crofters?—We got a little help from the landlord.

1708. In what respect?—He sent the ground officer to value the work when he raised the rents last.

1709. Did he make any payment?—I got £6.

1710. Has the landlord been in the habit of visiting the place himself and interesting himself in the condition of the people, or are your relations entirely with the factor and the ground officer?—I have seen the landlord once or twice in our place.

1711. When you are in debt to the bank, what rate of interest do you pay to the bank for advances?—*About* 1*s. in the pound.*

1712. Do you make any other payment to the bank except the simple rate of 5 per cent.?—No.

1713. Are the crofters in the habit of getting their neighbours or other people to be their security to the bank?—They say so.

1714. When they obtain other persons to be security, are they in the habit of paying anything to these other persons?—Yes.

1715. How much have you heard they pay?—I heard that some were getting 2s. in the pound, and others 1s.

1716. What class of persons are these who became security? Are they friends or neighbours, or are they tradesmen or other persons outside?—Any one who may have money in the bank and whom the bank will accept.

1717. Does the ground officer or anybody connected with the estate ever become security for the people?—No, I have not known a case of that kind.

1718. Did you hear the former witness say it would be desirable to make new £10 crofts in some other place?—Yes.

1719. In case new crofts were made in new places, and if the Government was inclined to assist the people in purchasing these crofts for themselves, do you think that any people here would be inclined to accept the offer and repay the Government by instalments?—I know that they would be willing.

1720. Would they be able to pay the Government the interest of the money which the Government advanced, and would they be able to pay instalments to cancel the debt?—I should think it would be easier for them to pay that than as they are.

1721. Speaking of the hill pasture attached to the crofts, is the hill pasture ever fenced round against the neighbouring farms?—No.

1722. Would it be a great convenience to the crofters if fences were put round the hill pasture?—Yes.

1723. Would they be disposed to contribute to the expense if the landlord undertook part of it?—I am sure they would, if they had the place in such a way that it would pay them.

1724. Have you any other remark that you wish to make before retiring?—No.

DONALD BEATON, Crofter, Earlish (74)—examined.

1725. *The Chairman.*—Were you freely elected to be a delegate here?—Yes.

1726. Will you be so good as to state what are the complaints of the people at Earlish?—That the rent is so heavy that we cannot live on the land, and we have to go everywhere to earn money to support us. I have here a receipt for the rent I was paying in 1852 and a receipt for the rent just now.

1727. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—The same lands?—The same lands.

1728. *The Chairman.*—Is that half a year's rent or a full year's rent?—A full year's rent. In 1852 it was £3, 17s. 8d; and in 1880 the rent was £9; poor rate, 9s. 9d.; school rate, 6s.; roads, 3s.; interest, 2s. 3d.; in all, £10, 1s.

1729. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Have you not got a reduction on that £9?—Yes, I got a reduction of £1 last year.

1730. Besides the rates?—The £9 includes rates and taxes.

1731. Do you know what the rent was without the rates and taxes?—I cannot say, but that is the amount of the rent with the rates.

1732. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Did you pay any rates or taxes in 1852?—No, not at that time. I paid no rates and taxes in addition to the

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£3, 17s. 8d. We cannot live paying our present rent with two cows. If I had five followers from them this year I would have none next year, the place is so bad. There is no feeding for them. I have only two of a family now, and it is more than a year since my family or I ate any produce of our soil,—buying everything from the merchant, even seed. We got seed this year from the landlord. We got 4 bushels of seed oats this year, and a barrel of potatoes, from the landlord, and we will have to pay it back. We wish to have as much of the land as would keep us alive and would enable us to pay the landlord, instead of going from country to country as slaves. There is plenty land in the Isle of Skye, if we could only get it, which would support double the population. We have only got the remnants of the land which the tacksmen have,—remnants which the tacksmen would not take. The land is very bad and very thin,—very shallow. My holding is very poor indeed when I cannot support three of us out of it. As to the rent, we have not the promise that the reduction shall continue.

1733. *Mr Cameron.*—Where would you like to get other land to add to your farm?—Any place where I would get it. Is there not land all about us,—big tacks?

1734. Mention one?—The nearest tack is Cuiderach, next to Kingsburgh.

1735. Would you be able to pay for the stock if you got those lands?—No. I have two cows and two two-year-old's, and a stirk, and none of them belong to myself.

1736. Where do you propose to raise money to pay for the stock that would be necessary to put upon this new farm?—From the charitable gentlemen outside of the island of Skye,—and perhaps they may be present here to-day,—who are sending money to help Skye people; and perhaps we might be able to get money till the place would enable us to repay it. There are people among us who are as willing to repay any such advances, and their honest debts, as can be.

1737. Have you heard that in the rest of the Isle of Skye there are similar complaints, and that the crofters want more land?—I do not know, but I know that we have such a complaint among ourselves.

1738. What is the rate of wages in your district?—No wages unless it be 1s. 6d. a day, between that and 2s.

1739. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—What are the men getting who are employed on the roads?—I do not know. I do not think they are getting much. There are very few men working on the roads. I have been going to Kintyre for the past ten years, remaining there at work until winter time, while the work is to be done, and when my spring work is over I expect to leave the country again this year.

1740. *The Chairman.*—How much does it cost you to go to Kintyre, and how much to come back?—£1 going and £1 returning; and the gentleman was giving my companions and myself 35s. each to meet the expense.

1741. How much do you get per day while you are there?—2s. 6d. a day, and lodging, but we have to feed ourselves.

1742. *Professor Mackinnon.*—How many crofters are there in Earlish?—Twenty lots, and two of the lots have two families each.

1743. What stock are they allowed to keep?—The summing of the croft is three cows, ten sheep, and a horse, but I have only seven sheep. I have a horse.

1744. The rent in 1852 was £3, 17s. 8d., and two years ago £9. How often was it raised?—Three times.

1745. Was that all during the present proprietor's time?—Yes. I believe we have been paying rent more than a hundred years.

1746. At what date was the rent raised, before the present proprietor came?—I do not know that there was any rise in the rent previous to the time of the present proprietor.

1747. What was the rent in your earliest recollection?—The same rent for which I have produced a receipt.

1748. Your complaint is that the croft is too small and the rent too high?—Yes.

1749. You say that the reduction which was given last year is not promised for the future?—It may be continued, but no promise has been made.

1750. What reason was given for making the reduction?—That the landlord saw the rent was too high, I suppose.

1751. Was it because the times were bad?—Partly owing to the badness of the times.

1752. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—You said there were twenty crofts, and two crofts had double families. How many crofters were there when you first recollect?—Twenty,—the same number; but in times past it was four, and then the ground was cut into lots. My father got one of these original lots, and I succeeded him in the lot.

1753. Your father was a sub-tenant of the four who held it originally?—He was not one of the four; he was one of the twenty who got the subdivision of the four.

1754. But these twenty were living on the land at the time, though they had not a share?—They were taken from other places.

1755. Where was your father before he came to Earlish?—At Keistle.

1756. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Since the lots were subdivided in that way have the marches of the arable land and of the pasture land remained the same?—The same marches.

1757. Both arable land and pasture land?—Yes.

1758. There was no pasture land taken away?—A piece of the hill pasture was taken from us, but it was added to another township which was as needy as we were, where there were crofters.

1759. It was not added to a big tack?—No.

1760. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—What was the date when this division took place?—I was not born when that was done.

1761. And the lands are not smaller now than they were then?—No.

1762. And the people are not more numerous?—No, but there are poor among us who have not got land at all.

1763. How many of these are there?—A good number. There are seven.

1764. Were they born in the place, or did they come from outside?—They were not all born in Earlish.

1765. Have they gone there with the proprietor's leave or without it?—It was with the proprietor's leave that some of them came from Uig.

1766. Does it help to impoverish the place that those people should be settled there?—The township is not at all the better of it. Though we are paying poor rates, those poor people are coming about the houses the same as before.

1767. You said the land was very thin, shallow, and bad. Has anything been done to deepen the land in the way of trenching?—Those of the tenants who had wet land were draining it, and we are taking the sand from the knolls and spreading it where the soil is shallower. My son and myself were working the whole of last winter at that work, and doing a little of it every year.

1768. Do you lime the land?—No, we cannot get it. There is

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not limestone on the place. In Lord Macdonald's time there were several lots that were cheaper than mine.

1769. Have they been all raised?—They were all raised the same as mine was in Captain Fraser's time.

DONALD ROSS, Crofter, Idrigill (68)—examined.

Donald Ross.

1770. *The Chairman.*—Have you been freely elected a delegate of the people of Idrigill?—Yes.

1771. You have a statement to read to the Commissioners?—Yes. 'At a meeting of crofters at Idrigill, on 7th May 1883,—William Campbell 'in the chair,—the following resolution was agreed to:—That it is abso- 'lutely necessary that additional land should be given to each crofter in 'order to enable him to live, as our present holdings are utterly inade- 'quate to support us for two months in a favourable year. Our existence 'depends on the immediate enlargement of our crofts. We also feel it to 'be a great grievance that we are prevented by the smallness of our crofts 'from keeping a horse to help us with the tillage, as it is laborious and even 'degrading for our women and men to have to carry all manure and sea- 'ware on their backs. The want of hill grazing is very much felt by us 'in various ways. First the want of hill grazing prevents us from keep- 'ing some sheep. The result of that prevention is that many of us have 'no better bed clothes than old bags formerly used in conveying whelks 'to Glasgow. We also desire to bring under the notice of the Commis- 'sion that we are under the necessity of keeping a herd to keep away the 'sheep of neighbouring tacks, which often do damage to our little crops. 'We dare not complain for fear of eviction. The sea-ware on our fore- 'shores is not sufficient for the manuring our several crofts. We often 'have to go to the outlying tenantless islands to cut sea-ware. The pro- 'prietor Captain M'Donald, Waternish, prohibits us from doing so. We are 'thirty-seven families in Idrigill. For many years back we often have to 'go to the banks for our rents, and to other money lenders, so that our pre- 'sent debts are nearly £700. Our credit with but few exceptions is gone. 'We welcome the Commission, and these our truthful grievances we leave 'with confidence in their hands.'

1772. Do you wish to add anything to that statement?—Not much further than what is expressed in the paper. We want more land, to pay a rent. The land we have is too small. We cannot support our families on it. We have just about two and a half acres each. We have a cow and a stirk, but no sheep and no horse.

1773. What is the rent?—Our rent is £4 and a few pence.

1774. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Does that include the rates?—Inclusive of rates. It used to be £5, until the last reduction.

1775. *Mr Cameron.*—Do they all pay the same?—Two or three of us are paying 2s. 6d. more than that.

1776. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Is it paid, or mostly in arrear?—Some of us are in arrear. Some of them had to use the money in buying food. The summing is one cow, one stirk, no sheep, no horse.

1777. *The Chairman.*—No hill pasture?—No.

1778. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Is there no place that the cows graze upon?—Yes, there is a place out at the back for the cows.

1779. *The Chairman.*—How much arable land?—About two and a half acres. We go to Waternish to get sea-ware, but the proprietor forbids us.

1780. How much was the rent at the earliest period you recollect?—£2, 17s. 6d. Then, by act of Government, we made drains, and 1s. 6d. was laid upon our crofts for drainage interest.

1781. That is, 1s. 6d. in the pound?—It was 1s. 6d. on the whole sum that was expended on the drains.

1782. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Then what next?—The rents were raised three times. It was in three successive rises raised to £5, and it was reduced to what I now pay two years ago. I cannot remember each step of the rise.

1783. *Mr Cameron.*—Over how many years did the rises extend?—The first rise took effect nearly twenty years ago. Then the doctor's money was laid upon us, and was included in the rent.

1784. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Do you get the benefit of the doctor in your rent now?—We pay the doctor's money along with the rent.

1785. Does the £4 cover the doctor?—Yes. This last reduction that took effect two years ago is not promised to continue. We are still charged the old rent, and the reduction is credited to the amount.

1786. *Mr Cameron.*—What do you mean by credited?—The reduction is not permanent.

1787. Do you expect it to be treated next year as arrears, or do you expect it to be permanent?—We do not know.

1788. Do you expect the reduction of this year—the odd £1—will be asked for next year?—We do not expect the actual reduction made during the past two years will be asked from us again.

1789. *The Chairman.*—Have you any other remark to make before you retire?—We want more land at a fair rent, sufficient to support our families.

1790. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—How do you live?—On credit; and now those who have been supplying us with credit cannot supply it any further. Their own credit is gone.

1791. But you have got 2½ acres, and that does not occupy you all the year. Surely you do something else for a living?—When we are able we go to work for wages, but I am now getting too old for that.

1792. How long in the year used you to go to work for wages?—Half the year.

1793. And the other half of the year you spent at home?—I would need to be working about the land.

1794. Were you at sea or land work?—Both, as opportunity offered.

1795. Had you ever a boat of your own?—I had once a boat of my own, but I have not now.

1796. Are you working as a hired man?—Yes.

1797. What may you make in the course of the half year you are away?—Wages alter.

1798. How much do you make, one year with another?—£8 or £9.

1799. And that is all you have in addition to the croft?—Yes.

1800. Do you sell a stirk most years?—Not every year. The year we would have a stirk to sell we sold it, and the year we had not we just went deeper into debt.

1801. How much food do you get off the croft? How long will it keep you?—If potatoes were growing as they used to grow, they would keep us four or five months; but the potatoes do not grow with us now,—the land has got exhausted.

1802. Do you mean this year only, or before?—Potatoes have been getting gradually worse for some time back here.

1803. Have you changed your seed?—Yes.

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1804. Did it do no good?—For a time that did good. They have got deteriorated since then.

1805. Then, if the croft keeps you for four months in the year, you have to live upon £9 for the other eight months?—Yes, but the year we have not potatoes good it would not keep us alive for that length of time.

1806. Have you any family to help you?—I have one daughter able to help me with her wages, but she cannot get away to earn wages.

1807. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Has the number of crofters in Idrigil been increasing during your time?—No; our family has a lot as it was in our earliest recollection.

1808. Has any of the grazing been taken from them?—A little hill of ground was taken away for planting wood.

1809. Have you got sea-ware?—Yes, all that our shores afford; but we have not enough.

1810. Do you pay for it?—The payment of the sea-ware is included in our rent.

1811. Where do you get other sea-ware?—In Cuiderach.

1812. Do you get it there without payment?—Some were taking full payment for it from us, and others were giving it gratis.

1813. *Do some of the Idrigil men engage in the cod or line fishing?*—The fishing is gone, but there are some who would fish if there was any to be caught.

1814. Are there any big boats?—Two or three have big boats, going away to Ireland and elsewhere.

1815. Did you get any boats after the potato failure of 1846?—No.

1816. Was your crop destroyed by the storms last year?—Yes.

1817. Was there any left at all?—Part of it was left, but was threshed out by the wind.

1818. Did the potatoes go altogether?—Yes.

1819. Did you get assistance from the relief committee?—We got no assistance from relief committees. We got a bushel of seed oats from Mr Lamont.

1820. For your own family?—Yes.

1821. Are you the only person in the place who got it?—All the crofters got one bushel. We bought seed oats and seed for potatoes from the captain.

1822. What did you pay for it?—It is not told us yet. We have heard the potatoes would be 10s. a barrel on us.

1823. *The Chairman.*—Have you anything further to say before you retire?—I do not think I have.

MALCOLM NICOLSON, Crofter, Shiader (51)—examined.

Malcolm Nicolson

1824. *The Chairman.*—How long have you had a croft?—It is eighteen years since I got the croft which I have at present.

1825. You have a written statement which the people have entrusted to you to present?—Yes. 'At a meeting of crofters in Shieder, on 4th May '1883,—Donald Campbell in the chair, the following resolution was carried: '—*That our principal grievance consists in our rents having been raised* 'three times during twenty-seven years, our original rents being £7, 10s. 'to £8, 10s., our present rent from £12, to £12, 15s. Originally we occu- 'pied more fertile crofts, but these we were deprived of, and were sent to 'other crofts less fertile than any on the estate. Our present crofts are

'in close proximity to a rapid cataract, which is most dangerous and 'destructive when in flood, often carrying away considerable portions of 'our crops. We have been incurring liabilities for a considerable time 'back. Should our creditors urge payment, we would be left almost 'pennyless. Our original crofts were turned into a sheep farm beside us. 'There were forty-two crofters of us in all in the place. We were all 'removed—some to Australia and some to America and to various other 'parts. When we were in our first crofts we were comfortable; we feel 'now quite the reverse. It was Major Fraser who removed us. And 'what we staud in great need of now is an addition to our hill pasture, as 'it is quite evident that the spot pointed out to us in company with other 'four townships is quite inadequate to keep up the summing ordered by 'Captain Fraser. Our stock is starving in the hill, and getting bad usage 'keeping them from tacks right and left, without fence or dyke to keep them 'on our own ground; but the truth is, they are forced to trespass when 'they have hardly anything to eat on their own ground. We welcome the 'Commission, and leave with confidence our truthful grievance in their 'hands—TENANTS of Shiader, Uig, on the Kilmuir estate, Skye.'

1826. *Mr Cameron.*—How many crofters are there at Shiader?—Eight.

1827. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Are there forty-two families?—Yes.

1828. Have you anything to add upon your own part to the statement which you have presented?—Our land is open to the north wind, and it is the same way in ripening the harvest, and then I cannot have seed upon it. We did not put a stone of meal into the mill this year in the Glen, and we bought seed oats forby that.

1829. Have you any further statement?—The people are complaining that the place is very dear, and does not yield a crop, being on a cold place and late in ripening.

1830. Has the rent been raised in your recollection?—Yes.

1831. What was the rent at the earliest period of your recollection?—It is eighteen years since I came to Shiader, and I was paying £8, 10s. then, and it was raised to £12.

1832. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—How soon after that?—In 1877; the year of the flood.

1833. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Was it only once raised?—There was over 5s. added to each lot betwixt the two. We got 5s. in the pound of abatement.

1834. *Mr Cameron.*—And some of the tenants' rents were raised more than yours in proportion?—We were paying between £7 and £8 on the other side of the river at Tallautain.

1835. How many times were you shifted?—Once.

1836. *The Chairman.*—What was the first rent you paid in your present croft?—£9, 10s.

1837. How often has that been raised?—Twice.

1838. How much was it raised the first time?—I think 5s. was the first rise, which was laid upon us in name of the doctor's money.

1839. Does the doctor exist, and does he come to see you?—Yes.

1840. Do you grudge the money for the doctor, or are you satisfied the doctor is useful?—We are satisfied with that payment.

1841. Then you do not complain of that?—No.

1842. What was the second rise?—Our rent was next raised to £12.

1843. What was the reason for raising it to £12?—We had no reason other than the landlord's will.

1844. Did you make a remonstrance to the landlord's factor against this

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rise of rent?—We remonstrated with the factor, and the factor told us we would have to leave our holdings if we would not pay.

1845. Has the proprietor or the factor ever done anything to improve your holdings or to better your condition in any respect?—We were not asked by them to improve our holdings, but we were improving them voluntarily, and we then got a little assistance from the landlord.

1846. In what form?—The ground officer was sent round to look after the work, and what the officer thought proper we got.

1847. What kind of work did the improvement consist of?—Drains.

1848. How long ago is it since the drains were made?—Ever since we came to our present holdings.

1849. Were the drains useful? did they improve the ground?—Yes, they improved the ground. It was quagmire when we came to it.

1850. Has the improvement been a permanent one? Does it still exist?—Yes, it still exists.

1851. Is the ground as well worth £12 since it has been improved, as it was worth £9, 10s. before it was improved?—No, and it is not worth £9, 10s. even with the improvements. It is as good value now at £12 as it was before at £9, 10s. when we entered; but the croft never was worth £9, 10s.

1852. Have you been deprived of any hill pasture?—No, when we were shifted to Shiader we got hill pasture along with the crofts.

1853. Is the hill pasture you got at Shiader as good as the hill pasture at the former place?—No, the land that we formerly had had a sunny exposure, and what we now have has not. We have seven weeks of the year that the sun does not shine at all upon us.

1854. You stated there has been a reduction from the rent of £12; how much is the reduction?—Five shillings in the pound.

1855. How much was your rent last year—1882?—About £9, exclusive of assessments.

1856. Therefore, you are now paying for the improved croft the same that you formerly paid for the croft before it was improved?—That is the case.

1857. Then you would not have any reason to complain of the landlord if you continue to hold it at the present rent?—Only that the rent ever was too high.

1858. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—What extent of improvement did you do? Did you trench or drain your croft?—Drainage.

1859. *Do you know what extent of trenching you did?*—About 800 rods.

1860. Did you get wages for that?—No, nor half wages. I drained my present holding at intervals of five yards three feet deep, otherwise it would not be dry.

1861. Do you know what sum you got altogether for that?—£6.

1862. The whole sum you got?—Yes.

1863. And your rent was raised from £9, 15s. to £12?—Yes.

1864. Did the landlord supply you with tiles or any materials?—No, he gave us no material.

1865. The sole outlay by the landlord was £6?—Yes, that is all I got.

1866. Were your neighbours paid at all for their work?—There were some of them who did the work, but who did not get any remuneration, for the ground officer did not go to see their work.

1867. Was the work sufficiently extensive to make it worth the ground officer's while to go to look at it?—I do not know, but they themselves are saying they got nothing for their work.

1868. And their rent was raised?—Yes.

1869. When you say there were forty-two crofters at the place you were in originally, was it at Shiader or Tallantain?—Between Tallantain and North Cuil, which is included in the Glen.

1870. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You went to your present place against your own will, and not with your own consent?—Very, very much against our own will, and many of us weeping at leaving our former places.

1871. Who has the place you were at formerly?—Mr Urquhart has it now, but the landlord himself had it at first.

1872. Who was in the place where you now are when you removed into it?—It was unoccupied land.

1873. Then, did you put up your own houses?—Yes; every stone to quarry out without any assistance; but we got £1 of assistance.

1874. Is it a fact, then, that this original rent of £9, or whatever it was, was a rent that was fixed upon you, and that you must accept the place or leave it?—We had the choice of going to a township here and there, if we did not want to go to Shiader.

1875. Were you consulted about the rent you were to pay at Shiader?—We were asked to make an offer of rent.

1876. Did you make an offer?—Our predecessor was paying £65 for the land before we entered it, and we offered £68 for it, and our offer was rejected. We then offered £70. The £70 was agreed to by the landlord, but when we got our lands we found we had to pay £75.

1877. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Does that include rates?—No.

1878. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Then, in fact, they paid £10 more than the previous big tenant?—Yes.

1879. *The Chairman.*—When they came to the new place, did they pay the full rent for the first year of their residence?—Yes. We entered our lands at Whitsunday, and at Martinmas we paid the full rent.

1880. Did you pay any rent before you got any crop or any profit from the ground?—Yes; only that we had the half-year's grass out of it.

1881. Did the proprietor grant you any compensation or any assistance or gratuity on account of the trouble or expense to which you were put in moving?—£1 was all the compensation; and when two crofters occupied one lot they each got 10s. of compensation instead of £1. The £1 was divided.

1882. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Did you all build your houses at Shiader?—Yes.

1883. What did your house cost?—I do not remember just now; we had great trouble, forbye the expenditure on mason work.

1884. Had you to employ mason work, or did you do the work yourself?—I paid the masons, and carried the stones a good piece to the ground.

1885. Where did you get the timber for the roof?—I had the roof of the house I had before, and some more added to it.

1886. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Have you any idea of the amount of money you had to pay out in addition to your own labour and trouble?—No.

1887. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Would it be several pounds?—It would, and I was working day and night. We had to move out the very day, and we were staying in broken houses till we got out.

1888. What is your present stock?—My present summing is four cows and a horse and about thirty sheep.

1889. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Do you keep all that number?—I have only a quarter of a lot. That arose on account of a marriage in the family. My relations were in the lot before I went into it.

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1890. *Mr Cameron.*—Did you ask leave of your proprietor before you divided the lot?—No.

1891. Was he aware of it?—I am sure of it.

1892. *The Chairman.*—Have you any other remark to make before you retire?—No.

ANGUS M'INNES, Grocer and Merchant, Beinsoraig (60)—examined.

Angus M'Innes.

1893. *The Chairman.*—Have you been long here?—Since 1857.

1894. Have you been elected a delegate by the people?—A delegate from South Cuil.

1895. You produce a statement with which you have been entrusted?—Yes. It is as follows:—'We the tenants of South Cuil, eight in 'number, beg to state our grievances and our demands before the Royal 'Commissioners, which are the following:—(1) We want an increase of 'land, our lots being inadequate to support our families. (2) The ground 'is so weak by perpetual tillage that it does not yield crops as it was 'wont to do, the weather having very much changed of late years, so that 'the fertility of the ground is washed down by incessant rains towards 'the Uig Bay. (3) We also respectfully request a permanent lowering 'of the rents, fixity of tenure, compensation for improvements, and 'payment of unexhausted manures in case of removal. (4) We would 'also respectfully suggest that it is essential to the well-being of a 'tenant that he would have as much land as would enable him to keep a 'horse, otherwise he will often find himself compelled to do the work of 'that useful animal. The number of our stock was taken, but betwixt 'obligations to our proprietor, meal-dealers, shoemakers, and merchants, 'it will be soon exhausted.—ANGUS M'LEOD, MARY M'LEOD, Widow 'STEWART, RODERICK M'DONALD, JOHN GILLIES, ANGUS ROSS, JOHN 'CAMPBELL, HUGH MACDONALD.'

1896. Have you any statement which you wish to make besides on your own part?—No, I have nothing, unless I confirm what is already stated, that the people require more land, and that the ground is very much deteriorated in wet weather.

1897. What is the nature of the trade you do here? What do you sell?—I sell tea, sugar, and general groceries; I am a general dealer, only I have no soft goods at present.

1898. From your experience, can you state that the people are poorer than they were at a previous period?—Yes, I can. They are getting poorer every year.

1899. Do you think that the amount of their purchases is diminished?—Their purchases, of course, are scattered. They deal only with me in smalls, and they get their larger requirements from Portree, Glasgow, and other places.

1900. But do you find that the inhabitants here purchase less—that they buy fewer commodities which you sell than they formerly did?—I am sure they do.

1901. They buy less?—They buy less.

1902. Do they pay as readily, or are they less able to pay than they were in former times?—Less able, but they are as willing, if they were able to do it.

1903. Do you sell meal and tea?—Yes.

1904. Have you any land yourself?—Not just now.

1905. You live entirely by trade?—Exactly so.

1906. *Mr Cameron.*—Is the population less than it used to be in former times?—No, I do not think it, for some time back.

1907. Have you many bad debts in your books?—Yes, a good deal.

1908. More than you used to have?—Not of the production of this year, or last year, but from perhaps ten or twelve years ago.

1909. Do the people in this district get much work?—No, there is no work at all, unless they do it for themselves. There is no public work. That is one of the great evils the people complain of.

1910. Do many of them go south to get work?—Yes, a great many, especially to the fishing stations in Ireland, the Isle of Man, and on the east coast.

1911. Do you find they bring back more money to the place than they used to do, or less money?—Less money, because the fishing has been a failure for years past.

1912. Do many go to the herring fishing at the Long Island?—Not so many to the Long Island as to other places.

1913. And the fishing this year has been less productive than it was formerly?—Almost a failure.

1914. To what other places do the people go to get work besides the fishing?—To the south. They used to go to the south—to the railroads and other public works.

1915. Do they go less than they used to go?—Yes, because the railroads are mostly finished, compared with what they were in 1846 and 1847.

1916. Are they fond of working on the railways?—They are fond of working at anything remunerative.

1917. But not many of them go south to get ordinary field work—farming work?—A good many of them, both male and female.

1918. Do you find they go there as much as formerly?—No, because the work is not so general there as it used to be in former times.

1919. And those that go, do they bring back more money than they formerly did?—I do not think so, because the times are not what they were when the railways were busy.

1920. What did they use to get when the railways were busy?—I wrought on the railway for 13s. a week, and I wrought on it for 5s. a day.

1921. It varied from 13s. a week to 5s. a day?—Yes, but not at the same time.

1922. What is the rate of wages they get at other works? Do they do much road making in the south?—I cannot tell what wages they get at the road making, if there is such in the south just now.

1923. Do you find that the same people go back again, year after year, to the same place, or do they have to seek for work each year as it comes?—They go to the same place, generally to the fishing stations, because it is what answers them best. They require to attend to their duties at home till they get the peats cut, and then they are at home again at their harvest operations, in time for looking after their corn crops.

1924. In fact, not many of the people in your district get work in the south except fishing?—Well, I am not aware that they do.

1925. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—You commenced to trade here in 1857?—Yes.

1926. Were you selling on credit or ready money?—I have sold on credit more than I should have done, but I prefer ready money.

1927. But you supply still upon credit?—Very little; I only sell a little. I don't sell much. I sell on credit, but not as a system. I sell on credit sometimes in spite of myself.

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1928. You cannot refuse a poor person?—Once I give it away, it will be on credit then.

1929. Once you give it away, it will be on credit ever?—In cases.

1930. Taking ten years ago, how much in the year would you call the bad debts at that time?—I was taking a piece of land in connection with the little dealing I had, and so I could not exactly form an estimate.

1931. Do you think you make more bad debts now than you did when you first commenced?—Of course I made more bad debts when I gave out my goods; I do not give out so much now as I used to do.

1932. But, in proportion to what you give, do you make more bad debts than you did?—Well, the people are strictly honest, if they were able to meet their debts.

1933. I don't throw any doubt on their honesty; it is only their ability I speak of?—Their ability is declining year after year.

1934. Do you know that because you are making more bad debts?—I will not make more bad debts, because I am not so lavish in giving. I do not give so much as I used to do.

1935. I only want to know in what way you yourself know their ability is diminished?—It is very easy for me to know that.

1936. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Has there been a large increase in the sale of tea and sugar during the last twenty years?—Yes: that was in consequence of the failure of the potatoes to a great degree. What else could the poor people do unless they got a cup of tea, when they had no potatoes?

1937. Have they tea in every crofter's house regularly?—Not regularly. It cannot be regularly; and I consider that those who have plenty of milk do not require tea so much.

1938. There used to be considerable cod and ling fishing?—Yes, but it is quite a failure for this year and last year. There is not a cod this year where they used to be.

1939. But that fishing has not ceased altogether?—It has ceased. There was not a cod to be dried this year.

1940. Is there any fish-curer in the district to take the fish?—It used to be taken by different persons at different times.

1941. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Do they continue to fish with lines or do they now use nets?—Of course, they did not fish any this year.

1942. They did not try it?—They could not get bait. They could not get herring.

1943. They don't fish for cod with trammel nets?—They require to get herring for bait.

1944. They only fish with long lines?—Yes

1945. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You are a native of this place?—Yes.

1946. And you have been here all your days—off and on?—Yes, but I have been some years in the south country.

1947. And you state to us that the circumstances of the people are falling off, and getting worse and worse?—Yes, that I do.

1948. Has the removal of the people, which we have heard of—some of them shifted twice and three times, and shifted to places not so suitable as they allege, from good places and warmer places—a good deal to do with their poverty?—A good deal to do with it. This shaking of the people is next door to evictions; shaking the people, and losing at every move.

1949. Particularly if they have to move to worse places?—They are generally moved to worse places. I never heard of a removal to a better place, nor had I one myself, and I had several removals.

1950. What is the extent of this farm that we hear about connected

with the inn here?—I cannot give a concise account in acres, but I know it has been inhabited by a good many people. He has two farms.

1951. How many persons in your recollection have been upon those two farms at one time?—Well, there were sixteen lots on the farm of the Beinsoraig, and a croft for the mill and a croft for the inn; but, at the time of removing them in 1877, there were only five or six families, and there were not many people in some of them. One went to Glen Henisdale, one to Idrigil, and one is on the ground.

1952. Then the other farm, what is the name of that?—Glen Conan or Glen Uig. Glen Conan is the new name.

1953. How many people were on that farm?—I cannot exactly say, but I believe in connection with the farm there were more than forty-three families removed. The first removal was when Captain Fraser came to the place. Then, when the hill pasture was added, the rest were removed, and brought to another place opposite. Of course, Glen Uig has a southern exposure, and the other is exposed to the blasts of the north wind.

1954. Is there anything of that kind going on at this moment? When was the latest removal of any consequence?—I do not recollect of any since 1877.

1955. It is stopped now?—Well, I think it should.

1956. And, so far as you know, it has ceased?—It has, so far as I know.

1957. You say the people, and you yourself, have worked at railway construction? You have heard there is a project for a new railway from Inverness to Glasgow?—I know that.

1958. If that went on, would a number of people from about this place go to it?—I have no doubt a great many would avail themselves of the opportunity.

1959. And it would be a convenient distance for the people to go?—Yes, it would. They would avail themselves of it.

1960. You stated you had been removed more than once?—Yes.

1961. Tell us about your removals—you held land at one time?—Yes.

1962. Where was your first croft?—On No. 13, Beinsoraig.

1963. How long were you there?—I was there from 1856 to 1869 or 1870.

1964. Where were you moved to?—To No. 89 of the same place.

1965. Not by your own wish?—No.

1966. How long were you on the second lot?—Seven years.

1967. What happened to you after that?—After having put up two or three houses and two stack-yards, corn-yards, and several other improvements, I lost the croft.

1968. What compensation did you get?—When I was removed from No. 89 I was ordered to go to South Cuil, and I believed, as the croft lies, it would have been 4½ and 5 chains; but, as I would have to treat it, it would have been 8 or 9; and, after having taken the lot, after my name was put on the lot, when I got my cattle and sheep sold, I did not go to the lot at all. A house at a distance of 8 or 9 chains, more or less, would not do at all, with the house in one place, and the cattle and the byre in another.

1969. Did you get any compensation for your involuntary removals?—In name of my barn I got £7, and at my first removal I got £2; but the barn, byre, and stable cost me £18.

1970. You got, then, half of what they cost?—Yes.

1971. *Professor Mackinnon.*—You began to trade in 1857, and you had a croft all along to 1877?—Yes.

1972. Have you been trading and crofting during the whole of that time?—Yes.

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1973. You don't trade now so much as you did before?—Well, I lost a good many of my customers at the time of these removals. When the house was pulled down people thought I would never rise again, and my customers scattered, and I am some distance from the road.

1974. And from the knowledge you got by trading, do you believe that the circumstances of the people have been getting worse and worse?—Yes, I believe that.

1975. And you say that the cause of that is what?—Bad seasons, heavy rents, want of public works, and failure of fishings at home and abroad.

1976. And how do you propose that the circumstances of the people might be improved? You cannot change the seasons, and you cannot change the fishings at home or abroad?—No, but when people are down you will have to do more than put them on their feet. You will have to keep them up till they can do something for themselves. If people got Government money, which other parts of the United Kingdom are getting in plenty—if they got a little at 5 per cent. and twenty years to pay it—I have no doubt but that they would pay it honestly, and that it would be laid out at good interest, and as sure as any speculation.

1977. Where is this matter of Government loans going on?—In Ireland.

1978. And how do you propose the people should use the money? What use is the money to be put to?—To put the people into a better position.

1979. In what way?—To enable them to get as much of the land as will keep them, and then give them this money to stock and till it, and build houses for themselves and their belongings.

1980. Is there plenty of land in this parish for them to get?—Plenty, as much as would keep three times the number of its present inhabitants.

1981. On this same estate?—Yes; the land is nearly all taken up in three or four farms—there is that farm which Urquhart has now.

1982. I understand he only came into possession of it last year. Who had it before?—Mr M'Leod.

1983. When the clearing was made the farm fell into the hands of the proprietor?—Yes; it was first in the hands of the proprietor.

1984. Then it changed hands once or twice, and Urquhart took it last year?—Yes.

1985. *The Chairman.*—Have you anything more to state before you retire?—No.

DONALD M'QUEEN, Crofter, Conista, Kilmuir (49)—examined.

Donald M'Queen.

1986. *The Chairman.*—Have you been freely elected to be a delegate?—Yes.

1987. You have a statement to read to the Commission?—Yes. '*Kilmaluag, Isle of Skye, 9th May* 1883. To H.M. Commissioners, 'Uig, Skye. GENTLEMEN,—A Royal Commission having been appointed 'to inquire into the position of the crofters, we, the undersigned, humbly 'beg to state our case to you for the consideration thereof. We beg to 'submit to you that our holdings are too small—some of us having only 'the name of a croft, and quite inadequate to support human life. Our 'holdings also are too dear. We, as a whole, would wish more land at 'reasonable rent. The smallness of the crofts renders it imperative on 'us to till the whole of our ground from year to year, and by so doing

'the land is growing inferior and less productive. Should we have more 'land we could work it by rotation, and, by so doing, have the benefits of 'improved cultivation. We would also desire the hill pasture taken from 'us to be restored. We also would wish compensation for improvements 'on our land, and fixity of tenure; by having such, we would have some 'encouragement to improve, take in, and drain our land, and also to make 'our houses and surroundings more satisfactory than they are. We would '*also desire a right to cut sea-ware as a help to the manuring of our* 'crofts,—not as a favour, as we now have it. We consider the land laws 'unsatisfactory, both to landlord and tenant, and hope that you will 'commiserate our case by calling the attention of Parliament to it. Should 'we get our grievances redressed, we are certain that there would be less 'of real pauperism and poverty amongst us; but in the present position 'of matters we are unable to support ourselves, but are drifting year after 'year deeper into debt, and all sorts of difficulties. We, the undersigned 'beg, in conclusion, to hope that you as H.M. Commissioners will give 'our case your careful consideration, and your efforts on our behalf will 'be gratefully acknowledged by your humble servants,—RODERICK his × 'mark MACDONALD, Balmaquien; Widow her × mark CATHERINE 'MACKAY, Balmaquien; ALEXANDER MACKAY, Balmaquien; CHARLES 'his × mark MACDONALD, Balmaqueen; ARCHIBALD his × mark 'MATHESON, Balmaquien; PETER his × mark MACDONALD, Balmaquien; 'Widow MERION MATHESON, Balmaquien; ARCHIBALD MATHIESON, 'Balmaquien; LAUCHLIN MACKAY, Balmaquien; DONALD M'PHIE, 'Balmaquien; DONALD M'LEOD, Kindram; Widow ROSS, Kindram; 'ANGUS M'DONALD, Kindram; Widow MATHESON, Kindram; JOHN 'MACDONALD, Kindram; Widow her × mark ANNE MACKAY, Kindram; 'ANGUS CAMPBELL, Kindram; ALEXANDER MATHIESON, Kindram; 'MALCOLM ROSS, Kindram; NORMAN MATHESON, Kindram; RONALD 'CAMPBELL, Kindram; Widow CATHERINE MATHIESON, Kindram; JOHN 'GRAHAM, Kindram; Heirs of MURDO MATHIESON, Kindram; JOHN 'LAMONT, Conista; Widow CATHERINE MACQUEEN, Conista; NEIL 'MATHESON, Conista; JOHN CAMPBELL, Conista; ANGUS MACQUEEN, 'Conista; Widow MARY MATHIESON, Conista; MURDO MACQUEEN, 'Conista; HECTOR MUNRO, Conista; MURDO MACDOUGALL.'

1988. Are all these crofters paying rent to the landlord?—Yes, but *some of the crofters have two families on them.*

1989. *The Chairman.*—You mentioned that some hill pasture had been taken away from the crofters in your place? Will you relate the circumstances under which that hill pasture was taken away—We have hill pasture yet, but part of it was taken away from us.

1990. Was it a large part?—Yes, a good piece.

1991. When it was taken away, were your rents reduced in proportion to your loss?—No, but our rents were increased.

1992. How often, and to what extent, have your rents been increased?—Our rents are now double what they were in Lord Macdonald's time. They were raised four times. I cannot tell the first rise that took place in my rent, but in Lord Macdonald's time my rent was £6, 5s., and now I pay £13, including rates.

1993. Has your rents been recently reduced?—Our rents were reduced two years ago.

1994. How much?—Five shillings in the pound.

1995. How much did you pay last year?—About £11, including rates.

1996. Is it a permanent reduction?—That was not promised.

1997. Has the landlord in connection with the rise of rents expended any money in the improvement of the crofts in a useful manner?—No.

SKYE. UIG. Donald M'Queen.

1998. No improvements whatever?—No help for improvements whatever.

1999. *Mr Cameron.*—In what year was the hill pasture taken away?—A number of years now.

2000. About how many?—Twelve years, or more.

2001. What stock did that hill carry?—Two horses, and between thirty and forty sheep each, and we have now only one horse and twenty sheep.

2002. That is for each croft?—For each croft.

2003. How many crofts were there?—Six crofts in my township.

2004. And it carries now twenty sheep and one horse?—Yes.

2005. So about half of the hill was taken away?—I cannot say.

2006. How soon after that was the rent raised upon you?—Immediately on our being deprived of that part of hill pasture the rents were raised.

2007. Did the crofters make no remonstrance or complaint?—We did not complain to the landlord, but we complained to the factor.

2008. What did the factor say?—The factor told us that if we were not willing to give that rent for it to leave it, and that he had one who would be very glad to take it.

2009. What remedy would you suggest now for the state of things which exists?—To give us enough land at a reasonable rent. Many of them would be very glad to get more land if they could get it.

2010. What stock have you got now?—Four cows and a two-year-old is the summing.

2011. How many sheep?—Twenty, and a horse.

2012. When you had the original croft, with the hill grazing that was taken from you, at the original rent, were you then comfortable?—We were pretty comfortable,—much more so than we are now.

2013. What arable ground have you?—About 10 acres, but I am not sure.

2014. Is that not enough to support your family?—It was enough at one time, but not now.

2015. Why not?—Bad seasons, and our crop is not what it used to be.

2016. Do you get any work?—Not in this country.

2017. Are you aware that there many crofts in Skye that are much smaller than yours?—Yes, I know that.

2018. Do you think they are still more in need of redress than you are?—Some of us are seeing ourselves as needful of help as any.

2019. Do you think that your croft is not rather above the average of crofts in Skye in regard to size?—In some places.

2020. Have you sea-ware in the township you are on?—Not in my township.

2021. Are you on the shore?—No.

2022. When a township has the sea-shore does the right of sea-ware go with it?—Yes.

2023. You ask for compensation for improvements and fixity of tenure, in what form would you wish that compensation for improvements?—Payment for our work; if we would get paid for our work upon our crofts. We have no great encourgement for improving our crofts in the position in which we are. We don't know how long or how short we may be left in them.

2024. And if you were assured you would not be turned out, you would not expect compensation?—If we were sure we would not be removed, and got the land at a fair rent, we would consider that sufficient.

2025. You want more land than you have got?—My neighbours want more land, though I might do with what I have.

Donald M'Queen.

2026. That land would have to be got from the tacksmen's land, would it not?—If got at all it would need to be taken out of the tacks.

2027. Would you need to pay the same rent that the tacksmen pay for that land?—I don't think any one is so able as the tacksmen; they take the rent out of the ground.

2028. Then you think the rent the proprietor now gets would not be a reasonable rent for you to pay?—If we could not take the rent out of it, it would be to the loss of the landlord.

2029. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Why was the pasture taken from you? To be added to a tack.

2030. Which tack?—Duntulm.

2031. Did Duntulm complain that he had too little land, do you know?—He was taking the smallest lots he could get. He has a croft still in Solitote—among the smallest crofts in the place.

2032. Does he keep stock upon that separate from the rest of the farm?—There is no stock upon it. It is too small to have stock. It was the skipper of his boat who used to live upon it.

2033. *The Chairman.*—When you say that the crofters require more land, do you mean by that more arable land and more hill pasture?—Doubtless.

2034. But if they cannot get both, would it be more important to them to get the hill pasture than to get the arable land?—I cannot say.

2035. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Do they fish any at Kilmaluag?—Yes, a little.

2036. Is it not a very stormy coast?—Yes, it is a stormy coast.

2037. Is there any long line fishing?—Yes, but they do very little with that. Lobster fishing is what they mostly pursue.

2038. Do they make a good thing of the lobster fishing?—Yes.

2039. Who takes them from them?—Mr Robertson, Portree, buys them from them. He is the principal buyer.

2040. What part of the year do they prosecute the lobster fishing?—In the end of October up to the middle of spring.

2041. What price do they get for them?—I am not sure, but some of the men are here to-day who can tell.

2042. I suppose there is no herring fishing there?—No.

2043. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Where are the cod fish cured?—In our own houses. I never saw buyers coming our way.

2044. You sell them cured?—We don't sell them. We use them for our own families. We were fishing but very little.

2045. Did your boats get destroyed in the storm the year before last?—Yes.

2046. Did you get new ones for them?—Yes, those who had boats got help.

2047. *The Chairman.*—Have you any further remarks to make before you retire?—No, there are two other delegates.

2048. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Are they older than you?—Yes.

DONALD M'DONALD, Crofter, Kendram (34)—examined.

Donald M'Donald.

2049. *The Chairman.*—Have you a croft?—It is my father's name which is in the rental book. He is an old man of eighty.

2050. Did you hear and understand what the previous delegate stated?—I heard and understood the most part of it.

SKYE.

Uig.

Donald M'Donald.

2051. Do you agree with what the previous delegate stated?—Yes, but I would add that it would be more profitable to us to have the hill pasture than the arable land, if we could not get both.

2052. What is the reason of that?—Because we could keep more stock of sheep, and a horse, if we got back the hill. Then, if we had the assurance that our rents would not be raised, or ourselves removed, we would have encouragement to improve our holdings better than we do. I am not for finding fault with the landlord at all, but I find fault with the land laws, because if I should improve my holding the landlord can have my improvements valued to increase the rent, and if I don't pay such a rent, I will be warned, and sent off at the May term. And what causes greatly our poverty is the way in which our land has been tilled for the past many years,—cropping incessantly with the same same kind of crop to feed our stock, to keep our stock in fodder, in order that we may be able to pay the rent. There is much of our land that will not yield fodder for our stock unless we manure it with sea-ware. We have no right to sea-ware, and we can only procure it by favour of those who have such right. We are not on the shore. If we had the land at a reasonable rent, and as much of it as we could cultivate in rotation, we would be much more comfortable, and able the better to pay the landlord. We had no heart to improve our houses, owing to the way in which we were left by the operation of the land laws.

2053. Of what nature are these improvements?—Drains, trenching, digging out the stones; and although we have our croft in name of arable land, there is much of it stony and wet. I am telling the truth.

2054. *Mr Cameron.*—Have you made any improvements?—Yes; and I would do more in that way were it not for the increase of rent.

2055. Has your rent been raised since you made the improvements?—I cannot say that it was, but I know some whose rent was raised after they had improved their lots.

2056. In your own township?—Yes.

2057. Were these improvements of the same nature which you described you made?—Yes,

2058. Was it bringing any new land in?—Yes.

2059. Did you find that profitable?—I was not personally myself taking interest in it, but if the others to whom I refer took in any new land, it would not be profitable to them when the rents were raised upon them in consequence.

2060. Would it have been profitable to them if the rents had not been raised?—Yes.

2061. Were the rents raised immediately after these improvements were made?—Not long after.

2062. Do you believe that the fact of the rent having been raised after the improvements had been the cause of the crofters declining to improve any more land?—Yes, doubtless.

2063. Is there also land in your neighbourhood improvable?—Yes.

2064. Land that would pay to improve?—Yes.

2065. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—On the east coast great improvements have been done under leases. Would it not be advantageous to you to improve under leases also?—Yes, but if we had a promise that we would not be removed, that is the only lease we would be wanting.

2066. With what length of lease would you improve at a profit?—Twelve years.

2067. Would the proprietor not give you nineteen years if you were to ask it, to show you meant to improve?—We would not ask a landlord's

lease if we only got a promise—if we only got assurance we would not be removed or our rents put up on our improvements.

2068. But have you ever asked a landlord for a promise of that sort?—No.

2069. *Mr Cameron.*—Do you know whether your neighbours had their rents raised for improvements?—These parties took no more of the land than I did, and there was greater reason in their case to increase the rents than in mine.

2070. *The Chairman.*—Have you any further statement to make before you retire?—I have nothing further to add.

HECTOR M'KENZIE, Cottar, Solitote (42)—examined.

Hector M'Kenzie.

2071. *The Chairman.*—Were you freely elected by the cottars to represent them?—Yes. '*Kilmaluag, Skye, 9th May* 1883. To H.M. Commissioners, Uig, Skye. GENTLEMEN,—We, the undersigned cottars residing in Kilmaluag, Skye, humbly beg to submit a few things for your consideration. We would humbly desire your efforts to procure on our behalf a piece of land from which we might derive some benefit for the support of ourselves and families. Work is not to be had here, and it is very hard on us to procure the means of sustenance. We would desire land at a fair price sufficient to grow potatoes for us, and to enable us to keep a cow and a few sheep. We have been accustomed to work on the good-will of the tenants amongst us, but they themselves are in so poor circumstances and in want of more land, it is hard on them to supply us. We have also great difficulty after receiving land to put manure on it, having to carry it often a mile and sometimes two. We would also desire a right to cut sea-ware, for at present it is a great favour if we get it. We approach you *hoping you will consider our case, and your efforts in our behalf will be* thankfully acknowledged by your obedient servants,—HECTOR M'KENZIE, family eight; JOHN M'PHERSON, nine; ROBERT MATHIESON, seven; ALEXANDER STEWART, ten; EWAN M'LEOD, five; JOHN M'DONALD, three; DUNCAN LAMONT, four; DONALD M'KAY, two; ALEXANDER GRANT, ten.'

2072. You state you work for the crofters, what wages do you now receive?—We have no work to do in our locality. We have to go to the fishing.

2073. Do you never get employment on the land at all on day's wages?—No; but we pay a little to the crofters for the bits of ground we get from them, and many of them are giving us bits of land for nothing.

2074. How much do you pay for your house and your bit of land?—From 1s. to 2s. I pay for the bit of land; we pay nothing for the stance of the house.

2075. One shilling or two shillings for how much?—As much as will plant half a boll of potatoes.

2076. Then your desire is to obtain land?—Yes.

2077. How do you expect to obtain land,—from a croft or on a tacksman's land?—Where the land is most plentiful.

2078. You desire, in fact, to become a crofter?—Yes, a croft; as much as I can work.

2079. How much would satisfy you?—I would be satisfied with 4 or 5 acres; grazing for a cow or two and a few sheep. We would be satisfied with a cow and a few sheep; but some of us would take up a larger holding.

SKYE.

UIG.

Hector M'Kenzie.

2080. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Are you yourself in a position to take a croft of that size, and stock it?—Yes, I could do that by my own industry and my earnings.

2081. Could you get such a place? have you ever tried to get such a place?—Yes; I applied twice to the factor, and did not get even a reply.

2082. Are there people in the position of cottars, like yourself, who could become crofters if the land were open to them?—Yes; every one whose name is on that paper.

2083. How do you support yourself?—Off the sea. I have no other source. I have no cow or sheep.

2084. Then you are not in debt?—Yes, I am in debt.

2085. *Mr Cameron.*—Have you heard the evidence which has been given before us to-day?—Yes, I heard many of the witnesses.

2086. Have you heard that many of the crofters, who have much larger crofts already than you think would satisfy you, have come to complain of their extreme poverty, and their desire to have larger buildings?—I am aware of that.

2087. Do you consider that their complaints are well founded?—I think that I have a greater cause of complaint, but doubtless they have a heavy cause of complaint. They are weighed down with heavy rents and bad years.

2088. Do you consider that their complaint is true, that the crofts are too small for them? Why is it that you wish to be placed in the same position in which they are and from which they wish to escape?—We would aspire to a little in hopes that we would light upon the great.

2089. But as long as you were in the position of a small crofter, do you not consider you would be in as miserable a state as they described themselves just now?—I cannot say much, for I am much straitened in the circumstances in which I am, not knowing where I can put manure, and I would be very thankful to have less or more land in order that I might be relieved from the pressure of circumstances.

2090. Would you not prefer to have a larger croft at once, than to go through a period of a small croft in discomfort and poverty?—Yes, but it is hard altogether to enter into a big croft and the burden so heavy. It would be better to climb to it bit by bit. It would be better to attain to the big croft bit by bit.

2091. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Where do you fish?—On the east coast.

2092. For how long will you be away in the course of the year on the east coast?—About ten weeks, back and forward.

2093. Have you a boat or a share in a boat?—No, I work as a hired man on wages.

2094. Have you no small boat at home?—No, but I go along with my neighbour in the boat belonging to him.

2095. What size of boat?—24 feet keel and 7 feet beam.

2096. Do you go to the Barra fishing in her?—No, it is generally lobster fishing through the winter and spring.

2097. Then at this time of the year you have nothing to do?—Nothing to do.

2098. Don't you go to the Lewis fishing?—No, we have to plant a small bit of potatoes to supply our families, and we have to cast peats after that and we are waiting again for a month or so till the east coast fishing commences, and then we go there.

2099. And there is no fishing at home?—Well, we get some saith, but there is no herring to get about our coast now.

2100. And no cod in the spring of the year?—Yes, they commence in

January sometimes if the weather be favourable; but our coast is very rough, and sometimes we cast the lines, and it is impossible for us to go for them again for the roughness of the weather, and the tide is so strong as to sweep them away.

2101. You don't use trammel nets here?—No.

2102. What earnings do you make at the east coast fishing?—£7 for the season and 1s. per cran.

2103. What is the most the boat you were in ever got in a season?—Two hundred crans sometimes.

2104. Will you catch more than two hundred? What is the greatest number you ever got?—Two hundred and seventy-two crans.

2105. What is the worst season you ever had?—I got these three last years' seasons very good.

2106. But what is the worst season you ever had? Were you ever down to one hundred, or fifty?—No, I was never so far down as fifty crans. The fewest number I had was one hundred and thirty crans.

2107. What are you getting for the lobsters?—I got at the beginning of the season from 8s. to 9s., and at the latter end of the season 16s. a dozen.

2108. Is that here, or at Portree?—Mr Roderick Macdonald and Mr Robertson here, bought them, and carried them from Kilmaluag shores to Portree.

2109. How many lobsters will you kill in a good season?—Some days we have a dozen or a dozen and a half.

2110. But taking the winter over?—Some days six or seven.

2111. How much will Mr Robertson pay a crew in the season?—I cannot calculate that just now.

2112. *Professor Mackinnon.*—What is the largest sum you make at lobsters in the season?—About £10.

2113. And the smallest?—About £4 or £5.

2114. *The Chairman.*—On the whole, considering the fishing on the east coast, and the lobster fishing in the winter, could you make more now than you used to do ten or twelve or twenty years ago, when you were a young man?—The lobster fishing was not happening in our place at that time, but more than twenty years ago or seventeen years, the first lobster fishing came to our place from London.

2115. But, on the whole, are your earnings superior now to what they were twenty years ago?—Yes. The earnings on the fishings are more than they were twenty years ago, but there are more calls for expenditure by having a family to support.

2116. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Do you think anything could be done to improve your position as a fisherman, and enable you to make more by fishing at home?—We have a want of materials, boats and nets and harbours. At our place it is a very bad harbour; running boats upon the beach, and rough shore.

2117. Are your neighbours who have signed that paper fishermen?—Yes.

2118. All of them?—Yes.

2119. If you had money to buy a large east country boat, and stock it with nets, could you make money with it on this coast here?—Maybe it would happen, and perhaps if we lost the material and boat altogether, we would come to a total loss.

2120. Well, that is like fishermen anywhere else. But what I meant was, whether there was on this coast a good chance of making money if you had the material?—Surely, a good chance; there is nothing like it.

SKYE.
UIG.
Hector M'Kenzie.

2121. As good a chance as on the east coast?—No, I don't think it. The Skye fishing is very far back now.

2122. If you had proper tackle, could you fish for twelve months, going about where the fishing was and getting employment as a fisherman?—I believe I could, especially for three months in the summer time.

2123. *Professor Mackinnon.*—You said there was a month elapsed after the casting of peats was over before the east coast fishing began. Don't you think in that month you could manage to catch the Stornoway fishing?—No, because the fishing is working from the 20th or 30th May till the 27th June, and then we leave home for the east coast fishing on the 1st July.

2124. Can't you go to the Stornoway fishing on the 13th May, and have your potatoes planted by that time?—No, it is impossible, because we have to cut sea-ware and put it on to the ground. I have not a particle of sea-ware for myself at all, and we have, perhaps, to go round and get some elsewhere.

2125. Don't you think it would be more profit to lose the peats, and go to the Stornoway fishing?—I think it would be more profitable to go to the Stornoway fishing.

2126. *The Chairman.*—You mentioned it would be a good thing for you to get improved fishing facilities. Will you describe the kind of harbour which would be useful to you?—Just quays.

2127. Do you mean a pier running out into the sea?—Yes; one that would make a shelter in the bay.

2128. Is there any one of that kind that you know in Skye?—Portree is the nearest one.

2129. But do you know places where they could advantageously be made?—Yes.

2130. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Is Kilmaluag one?—It is very difficult to get one at Kilmaluag.

2131. Would Duntulm do?—Yes, it would be easy to make one at Duntulm; but Uig is the only place for a quay, because it is smooth water always; there is no heavy sea rising there.

2132. Have you to pay for the right to cut the peats?—No.

2133. From whom do you get them?—On Mr Munro's ground, the innkeeper at Kilmaluag.

2134. How do you do for milk for your children?—There is a want of that, unless we buy milk from the neighbours here and there.

2135. I suppose sometimes you cannot get it?—We get it only a very few weeks in the summer.

2136. Then, during most of the year you have no milk for the children?—None. It is very hard on the part of the people to support a family without milk, or sheep, or anything of that kind.

2137. Do you think, if you had a good big boat, like the east coast ones, for yourself and the other six cottars, that you could work here as well as the men who come from Buckie, and other places?—Oh, yes. It would be very useful through the summer time, at the herring fishing; but there is no harbour in the place to keep it here through the winter.

2138. The nearest port to you is Portree?—Yes, that is the nearest place to save a boat in the winter time.

JOHN MACDONALD, Crofter, Solitote (45 or 46)—examined.

SKYE.
UIG.
John Macdonald.

2139. *The Chairman.*—How long have you been a crofter at Solitote?—It is two years since I got my present croft.

2140. Where did you live before?—In the neighbouring township—Balmaquien.

2141. Why did you leave that township?—I married and left.

2142. Does the croft belong to yourself, or are you in the house of your mother-in-law?—I am in my own house and lands.

2143. You have a paper with which you have been entrusted by the people of Solitote?—Yes. '*Solitote, Kilmaluag, Skye, 9th May* 1883.—To H.M. 'Commissioners, Uig, Skye. GENTLEMEN,—We, the crofters resident in 'Solitote, Kilmaluag, beg to lay some grievances which we labour under 'before you for consideration. A piece of land, formerly in the hands of 'one crofter, is now divided among eighteen, fourteen of whom pay rent. 'Our crofts are miserably small, and by being taken in year after year the 'land is of very bad quality. The rent of the land when under one crofter 'was £9, 8s., and we now pay in all £22, 10s., although the third part of the 'croft is in the hands of another tenant. We are not allowed to keep even 'a cow or sheep; have no privilege to cut heather for binding the roofs of 'our houses, or rushes to thatch them with; and we are even debarred from 'cutting sea-ware to manure our ground. We used to have part of the hill 'adjoining our township, but this was taken from us, and we really have 'nothing now. We would desire land sufficient to allow us to keep a cow 'or two, and also to have the privilege of keeping a few sheep—the land 'to be reasonable in price. We would also desire the right to cut sea-ware 'for manuring our crofts. You will confer a great blessing on us by con-'sidering our case, and your efforts on our behalf will be gratefully acknow-'ledged by your humble servants,—JOHN MACDONALD, sen.; JOHN 'MACDONALD, jun.; JAMES MACDONALD; MURDO MACKENZIE; ALEXANDER 'MACKENZIE; ANGUS MACKENZIE; DONALD NICOLSON; ALEXANDER 'MACDONALD; JOHN FERGUSSON; REBECCA ROSS; CATHERINE STEWART; 'ISABELLA STEWART; Widow JAMES MACDONALD; MURDO M'KENZIE.

2144. How do the people whom you represent subsist, since they have no cow, no sheep, and no land?—Off the sea for the most part.

2145. What is their principal object in desiring to have land? Is it to provide their families with milk?—That itself is a great reason.

2146. And potatoes?—Potatoes and fruit of the earth as others have.

2147. But, if you had more land, might you not be tempted to forsake and neglect the fishing?—If we had more land, we would not risk our lives at sea in rough weather as we now have often to do.

2148. You would then prefer to be a crofter to being a fisherman?—Yes; it would be better for us.

2149. Did you hear all that the previous delegate said?—Yes.

2150. Do you agree? Did he speak wisely?—Yes, I agree with what he has said.

2151. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—What was the name of the one tenant who had this large holding?—A man named Malcolm Macpherson. After him, two had it. Then it was in Lauchlan Mackay's hands.

2152. Was it subdivided all at once?—They all came in at once.

2153. Where from?—From Duntulm. They were removed from Duntulm tack.

2154. That was done against their own consent, I presume?—I cannot say. They were merely cottars on Duntulm.

SKYE.

UIG.

John Macdonald.

2155. Did they build their own houses?—Yes, they built their own houses.

2156. This subdivision was at the instance of the landlord?—It was by the landlord's orders—the landlord and factor.

2157. How long ago?—Thirty or thirty-one years ago.

2158. You state that the rent when it was under one was £9, 8s., and now it is £22, 10s., when was that increase put on?—When the subdivision was made. I cannot say what the rent was when the subdivision actually took place, but the rents actually were raised in proportion as the rents of other townships were raised.

2159. What was the last increase?—I cannot tell. It was not I who had the lot at that time.

2160. Why did the people send you when you were there only two years?—The people are not at home. Some are not able to work. The people are away from home fishing; at the fishing at Shetland, Lewis, and elsewhere.

2161. What rent do you pay?—Twenty-three shillings and a few pence; but there are some of them that pay more than that.

2162. What extent of land have you for which you pay that sum?—One and a half acres.

2163. How do you work it, since you are prevented from keeping a sheep or cow?—I take a little potatoes out of it, and a little corn.

2164. Where do you get the manure?—The sea-ware and drift-ware on the shore.

2165. *Mr Cameron.*—Do you get any fishing at Duntulm?—Yes, we fish lobsters in winter.

2166. Was the sea fishing at Duntulm as good as the fishing here?—It is better than this, but it is a wilder coast.

2167. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—They want some hill land apparently. Is there land adjoining their croft which could be got easily, or in whose possession is it at present?—The land is there as we ever have seen it round us.

2168. What farm does it belong to now?—Duntulm tack.

2169. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Is there only one tack on that whole side of the country?—It is all in one man's possession at any rate.

2170. How many miles does it extend?—I cannot say.

2171. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—What is the nature of the restriction that they are not allowed to cut heather for the roofs of the houses or rushes to thatch them with? Whom does it prejudice?—We are not allowed to cut either rushes or heather without leave.

2172. *The Chairman.*—Does the tacksman in reality give you leave to take the grass and heather, or does he absolutely refuse it?—He is not refusing it at all. He would give it to the people who would go and ask him.

2173. Does he make you pay anything?—He is not asking payment.

2174. Then, why do you put in the paper that you cannot get heather or grass?—There are some who cannot get it, though there are others who get the privilege.

2175. Why does the tacksman refuse it to some?—There may be some who do not deserve the privilege; there are others who do.

2176. How can a man not deserve to have the privilege of cutting grass and heather?—There may be some who are not able to give work to the tacksman in exchange.

2177. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Do they all do work for the tacksman?—If you put work before us we would do it.

2178. For pay?—For pay.

2179. But do you give a little work to the tacksman for the privilege of obtaining heather and grass?—He is asking that.

2180. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Then, none of the eighteen you represent have a cow among them?—No, they are not allowed to keep a cow.

2181. What food do they give to the children?—South country meal, and treacle, and tea and sugar.

2182. *The Chairman.*—Are you allowed to keep a cow; or is it because your land is not fit to support a cow?—The land we have is not capable of supporting a cow.

2183. Did they ever ask the tacksman to allow them to have a cow on his farm and pay for it?—I never asked it. It is a new tacksman we have now. This is his first year.

2184. Did you ever get pasture under the old tacksman?—We could not get that privilege from any of the present tacksman's predecessors.

2185. Would you be willing to pay for the liberty of having a cow on the farm for summer pasture?—Yes.

2186. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Are they in debt in your township?—There is no township without being in debt, and we are in debt also.

2187. Is there any family there that is not in debt?—I do not know any who are not in debt.

DONALD BEATON, Crofter, Herbosta (51)—examined.

2188. *The Chairman.*—You have given in a paper. Does that paper contain what you wish to say to the Commissioners?—Yes; it is as follows:—*Statement of Facts.*—Larger holdings; security against evictions and raising of rents; hill pasture for sheep and horses; lands to be valued by the Government; land laws to be changed, to prevent the removal of tenants as long as they pay their rents; right to cut sea-ware.

2189. What is the size of your croft?—About 6 or 7 acres.

2190. What is the summing—the amount of stock it is calculated to keep?—Three cows, and it would not do justice to two.

2191. Any other stock?—That is all.

2192. No sheep?—No sheep; we have no hill pasture.

2193. What is the rent?—£8, 10s. now.

2194. How long have you had it?—It is thirty-one years since I came to it.

2195. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Is £8, 10s. the last rent after the reduction?—£8, 10s. was the rent before the last reduction.

2196. What is the rent at this moment?—The rent is put down at £8, 10s., and the last abatement was £2, 2s. 6d., which leaves £6, 7s. 6d.

2197. How much was the original rent, when you came to the place?—£4, 13s., and the hill pasture included in that.

2198. How often has the rent been raised?—It is in the receipts that I produce.

2199. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Who was Flora M'Queen, named in the receipt?—She was an aunt who was with me on the holding.

2200. And this rent for the year 1857, was it for exactly the same croft you hold now?—Yes, for the same.

2201. The rent at that time is down at £2, 2s. 6d. for the half year. In 1864 it was £5, 15s.; in 1880 it was £8, 10s., and so it remains, with an abatement for the last two years of £2, 2s. 6d.?—Yes.

SKYE.
Uig.
Donald Beaton.

2202. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—How many crofters are there in Herbosta?—Eight.

2203. Were there always the same number?—Yes; there were always eight tenants, but not all the same rent.

2204. When did you lose your hill pasture?—Eighteen years ago.

2205. What did you keep on the hill at that time?—About twenty sheep, three cows, and a horse.

2206. You have got three cows yet?—Yes.

2207. Who got the pasture?—It was divided between the tacks of Monkstadt and Duntulm.

2208. The arable land has not been decreased in size?—No.

2209. Do they complain it is too small?—Yes, for the rent.

2210. They would be satisfied with a smaller rent, then?—Yes, if we would get the hill.

2211. Does your arable land produce as good crops as it used to do?—No, we have no way of doing that.

2212. Have you no fear of being removed by the landlord?—Yes; but not now. Before now, we would get a removal if our rents were not paid.

2213. Then, you mean to say you are not paying your rents, now?—No, we have not paid it altogether this year yet.

2214. You have paid some of it?—Yes.

2215. Are you not able to pay it?—No.

2216. If you were able to pay it, would you?—Yes; we were paying the rent when it was dearer than what it is now.

2217. Then, practically, your complaint is that your rent is too dear, and that you have not got hill pasture?—Yes.

2218. And if your hill pasture were given back, and your rents reduced, you would be satisfied?—I think we would.

2219. Do you think £6, 7s. 6d. too high for 6 or 7 acres, with the right of grazing two cows?—What is the use of that when the grazing is not grazing, and when the land will not give crop?

2220. Is that partly due to their mode of cultivating and re-cropping?—Yes. We ceased to work on the land when the rent was being increased upon us.

2221. Is Herbosta on the sea coast?—No.

2222. You ask for the right to cut sea-ware. On whose ground do you want this right?—It lies on the beach, where it would be easy for us to cart it home.

2223. Don't the people who have the beach claim the right to the sea-ware on it?—The tacksman is not cutting the sea-ware at all.

2224. Do they sell it to you?—We don't ask it of him.

2225. And you are not getting it?—We don't ask it.

2226. Are you taking it?—I never did so myself.

2227. Then why do they ask the right to cut it, if they never took the trouble to ask it?—We think it would do us good to have the right.

2228. If you were to ask for it, would the tacksman refuse it?—I do not know.

2229. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Is the whole sea coast held by Monkstadt?—Not altogether. Some of the crofters have got right to part of it.

2230. How far are they from the sea at Herbosta?—About a mile and a half, or so.

2231. Are the people there much in debt?—Yes.

2232. Is everybody in debt?—So far as I am aware.

2233. But they have generally paid their rent?—No, it is only one man who paid the whole rent last year.

2234. Did any of them refuse to pay?—I do not know.

2235. *The Chairman.*—Have you anything more to state before you retire?—I do not think I have.

2236. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Is it the case that the croft which now is £8, 10s., with the present abatement, less the hill pasture, was formerly rented at £4, 13s.?—Yes, that is just the case. The croft was £4, 13s.; that would keep twenty sheep, and the twenty sheep were taken away, and we were charged £8, 10s.

2237. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Are you charged anything for a doctor in your rent?—Yes, 5s. doctor's money is included in the £8, 10s.

2238. What is the doctor's name?—Mr Brown.

2239. Is the doctor obliged, for that 5s., to give his services whenever they are wanted?—Yes.

2240. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You say that the people are very poor, and the township is poor and almost every one in debt so far as you are aware. Are they going gradually down, and getting worse in their circumstances year by year?—Yes.

2241. How many years back does your recollection of the township go?—Thirty-one years.

2242. At the time when they were paying a small rent, and had twenty sheep, were families fairly comfortable in their circumstances?—Yes.

2243. And they were not complaining?—No.

Donald Mathieson, Crofter, Kilvaxter (about 40)—examined.

2244. *The Chairman.*—What is the acreage of your croft?—The croft is 13 acres, and I think half is arable land, and half grazing.

2245. What is the stock which it is calculated to keep—the summing?—It is only a year since I got possession of this lot, and I was told the summing was two cows. It is four cows for the full lot—no sheep and no horses.

2246. How much of the six and a half acres is arable, and how much grazing?—The third part is laid out for grass.

2247. What is the rent you now pay?—The croft was £16 full rent before I entered it.

2248. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—That is £8 the half croft?—Yes; my original rent was £8.

2249. At that time was there any hill pasture attached to it?—Yes. I cannot say about the hill pasture, as I have only been in possession for about a year.

2250. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Was it £8 when you entered a year ago, or are you talking of a remote period?—Yes.

2251. *The Chairman.*—Do you know what the rent was at the time the land came into the possession of Major Fraser?—I can only speak as to my previous holding—the holding I had before I entered this one.

2252. Where was your previous holding?—In the neighbouring township—Feaull.

2253. What was the size of that croft?—Feaull was divided into nine crofts and was occupied by nine tenant farmers, paying, some £3, some £5, and some £6 a croft. In my furthest memory, the total rental was £45.

2254. But what was the rent of the croft you occupied?—I had more than one croft.

SKYE
Uig.
Donald Mathieson.

2255. What was the rent of the whole you had?—I had five crofts, and I paid £81 and a few shillings.

2256. Was that in the time of Mr Macdonald?—It is two years ago.

2257. Had the rent of that former croft been increased in your memory?—Yes, three times.

2258. What was it at first?—We had the whole township at first, and then there was a son-in-law put in with us, and he got four of the crofts, and he was paying £33.

2259. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—What did the whole nine crofts fetch at that time?—I recollect of the whole crofts being, with the rights of hill, for £45; and then, before I left the place, the rents came, between myself and my brother-in-law, to £118 odds; and the rents were raised thrice in my recollection.

2260. At first the nine crofts were £45, then they were raised to £118?—Yes.

2261. By whom were they raised—under the present proprietor?—Yes.

2262. *The Chairman.*—Did the increase take place at once, or by successive rises?—It was put on at three times. Two rises of rent were put on my father and one on myself, when I got in.

2263. When did the last increase take place?—About five years ago, in my recollection.

2264. Was the area of the croft or was the hill pasture reduced in that period?—The arable land was not increased, but the hill was taken away.

2265. When the hill was taken away, was the rent reduced?—It was reduced a little the first year, and then they raised the rent two years afterwards. There was just 10s. a croft of reduction.

2266. Did the loss of the hill pasture seriously impair the value of the crofts?—A great deal.

2267. Did the proprietor perform any useful work or improvements during that period on the farm?—No.

2268. None at all?—No.

2269. Why were you removed from that croft?—I had to give up that place owing to the increase of rent, and I got the promise of this croft. I occupy the half of it now; and I was two years without land, and then I got that half last year; and once I possessed that croft, the half of it was taken away from me.

2270. When you gave up the old place, on account of the increase of rent, to whom did it go?—It went to another tack—Monkstadt.

2271. Did the tacksman at Monkstadt give as much rent as that which you paid, or could not pay?—I cannot say.

2272. When you left that old place, did you receive any compensation for the buildings or improvements?—The house I occupied cost upwards of £100 to my father, and when I left it it was valued at £13.

2273. How was the valuation made?—By the ground officer and another man.

2274. Was the other man appointed by you?—Yes.

2275. Was it on arbitration?—It was.

2276. How long had the house been built?—About thirty years, to my recollection.

2277. Was it a stone and lime house?—Stone and lime.

2278. Slated?—No, thatched.

2279. In good repair?—Yes, very good.

2280. Did the man appointed by you to value it, value it much more highly then £13?—I cannot say, because it was left to themselves; I got just the account.

2281. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Was anything wrong about the valuation in your mind?—Well, I had to put up with it.

2282. Who was the man you appointed?—One Mr Clow.

2283. Was he a tenant on the estate?—A tenant and a joiner. He was a miller lately.

2284. *The Chairman.*—When you came to the new croft, did you build a new house, or did you go into the old house?—I went into the old house.

2285. Was it a better house than the common, or was it a common house?—It was an old public-house.

2286. A stone and lime house?—Yes, when it was built first; but there was not much of that to be seen when I entered it.

2287. Had you to spend money to repair it, and put it in order?—Yes.

2288. How much?—I got lime from Glasgow, and I had to fetch timber.

2289. How much would it cost you?—About £6 or £7.

2290. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—What grievance have you to state in connection with leaving your farm?—I had a great grievance to go. I was paying high rents with my father, and keeping cattle, and paying a good deal of money; and I was sent to that croft with the promise that I would get the whole of it, and the half of it was taken from me. My mother was here before me, eighty-four years of age, and my forefathers, and paying honestly, and without being in arrear to the factor or proprietor. I am put on six and a half acres with twelve of a family, and the oldest is seventeen and the youngest about two months.

2291. Is the rent of the present croft or half croft reasonable?—Well, I don't consider it reasonable, because nothing was taken off for the licence being taken to another place, only the abatement that the whole of the people got of 5s. in the pound.

2292. You are paying the public-house rent though there is no public-house there?—Yes, only the abatement.

2293. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Did your brother-in-law leave Feaull as well as yourself?—Yes.

2294. You both were removed in order that Feaull might be added to Monkstadt?—Yes.

2295. *Professor Mackinnon.*—I understand you gave up your holding?—I gave it up because the rent was so high, and my brother-in-law gave up.

2296. Who was in Kilvaxter before you went?—One Mr M'Millan.

2297. What became of him?—He was taken to another croft.

2298. Of his own free will?—Likely it was, at least I do not know.

2299. And you were promised the whole of the croft?—My mother was promised the whole of the lot. She is not long with me at Kilvaxter.

2300. Was she at Kilvaxter when you were at Feaull?—No.

2301. But you were promised the whole lot in Kilvaxter belonging to Mr M'Millan?—Yes.

2302. Did he have the whole lot?—Yes.

2303. And another has been put in along with you?—They kept the half of it for M'Millan.

2304. He has got half of it still?—Yes, along with another one.

2305. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Were there any removals from other townships than Feaull in order to give additional land to Monkstadt?—Yes, there were different places that were removed. There were Graulin, Delista, Benore, Feaull, Glachasay.

2306. Were many people removed from these various places?—There were twelve families in Graulin and six in Delista; three at Benore, and nine at Feaull, and three at Glachasay, and three at Scour.

SKYE.
Uig.
Donald Mathieson.

2307. Where have these been removed to?—Most of them are down in Kilmuir, and some abroad.

2308. Was all the land and pasture they had added to the farm of Monkstadt?—Part of it.

2309. What was done with the rest?—It was added to Duntulm.

2310. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Was that all in the present proprietor's time?—Yes.

2311. And within your own recollection?—Within my own recollection.

2312. You saw the thing done?—Yes.

2313. *Professor Mackinnon.*—If I understand your own grievance, it is that the place in which you were was rented so highly that you could not live in it. You removed voluntarily?—Yes.

2314. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—I suppose you thought if you remained there you would be in debt, and could not live?—Yes.

2315. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Had you a lease?—No, I never had a lease.

2316. Had you the whole of that large place upon a yearly tenancy?—Yes.

2317. Would a lease put an end to that unfortunate state of matters you fell into?—To tell the truth, I would not ask a lease, but I would ask security against people being removed as long as they paid their rents, and did not annoy their neighbours.

2318. Do you mean that the security should he provided by the law?—By the law.

2319. *The Chairman.*—How do you think the rent ought to be fixed? Who ought to fix the rent?—Whatever direction it would come from, it would give something reasonable that the poor people would live upon. We would be thankful to see it.

2320. But who ought to value the land, and say what the proper rent should be?—The Government.

2321. *Professor Mackinnon.*—You would not trust the proprietor, and it would not be fair that the tenant should fix the rent?—I would leave it to the Government.

2322. You have been backward and forward through the whole estate over those places that were cleared away?—Yes; I am well acquainted there.

2323. We had people speaking here of their crofts being too small. Is your knowledge of the countryside sufficient to enable you to say what you would consider a reasonable sized croft in this parish—not one like what you had, but one which you would expect the people to hold in order to be fairly comfortable?—That would be according to the family they had.

2324. Well, an average family?—Between £15 and £20 worth.

2325. A croft of £15 or £20?—Yes, including grazing and arable land.

2326. What stock should a croft of that rent carry?—Six milk cows, a horse, and a score of sheep.

2327. And you would give for that croft £15 or £20?—Willingly.

2328. How many acres of arable land would there be?—That is according to the valuation of tbe ground.

2329. But, as ground runs in the parish, taking the good with the bad?—There are more acres under sheep that are worth double the run the poor people have.

2330. Take it good and bad mixed?—About ten or twelve acres, with the grazing besides.

2331. I suppose yon know these large tacks very well?—Yes, very well.

2332. Do you think there is upon the estate a sufficient amonnt of land to divide into crofts of that kind?—Quite sufficient.

2333. And that it would pay as well in such holdings as it would pay in the large holdings?—I cannot say that.

2334. *The Chairman.*—You think that many of these crofts could be carved out of the tacksmen's farms?—Many of them could be created upon the tacksmen's farms. It is quite visible that the crofts are still there with their marches, to be seen going through the country.

2335. Many could be made, but would there be many persons found capable of taking and stocking them?—That is a thing hard to say. People have come to such a poor state that they could not, unless they were supported in some way or other.

2336. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—From your knowledge of the people and their character, if they got assistance—the people who are now reduced to comparative poverty—do you believe, from their character, their honesty, their industry, and otherwise, that they would recover themselves if they got those things?—I do believe it.

2337. You thoroughly believe that?—I thoroughly believe that; and another thing I know, there are a few clever men who would do it, and the most of them are very honest people.

2338. *Professor Mackinnon.*—You can perfectly well remember thirty years ago?—Yes, perfectly well.

2339. And you can remember crofter's houses and places of that time?—Yes.

2340. Would you say quite distinctly that all over your countryside the people were better off then than now?—Yes.

2341. Better fed?—No mistake about that. In my own recollection, they were better fed, because they had sheep, and horses, and cattle. I would not have to go far before I would get scores of cattle where I cannot get a dozen to-day.

2342. But would that make the people better fed?—Decidedly, when they had plenty of stock.

2343. Did they eat sheep at that time?—They did.

2344. Do they eat them now?—Very seldom; very few.

2345. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—If the whole of the land between Flodigarry and the boundary on this side of Monkstadt were distributed among the people in crofts of the size you have mentioned, do you think there would be still laud enough left to make a considerable tack?—I remember well, the place was occupied by a great many more people when these towns were not lifted, and there were large tacks at that time.

2346. And were there gentlemen living on them?—Yes.

2347. *The Chairman.*—Were there always tacks in the country, even in the old times, and large farms?—They were not so large.

2348. But there were some?—There were some.

2349. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Do you know that there were seven tacksmen within less than 100 years ago—gentlemen with families, some of them officers in the army—occupying farms which now constitute three tacks?—I have heard my mother and my father speak about them.

2350. Were there such families at Flodigarry, Sartle, Ardviceolain, Bealach, Duntulm, Monkstadt, and Scudaburgh?—Yes.

2351. And now there are only three tenants?—Yes.

2352. Occupying these seven farms?—Yes.

2353. Duntulm, Monkstadt, and Scudaburgh?—Yes.

2354. *The Chairman.*—Have you any further statement to make?—No.

DONALD M'DONALD, Crofter, Hundlader (74)—examined.

SKYE. Uig. Donald M'Donald.

2355. *The Chairman.*—What is the size of your croft?—Four and a half acres or thereby.

2356. What stock is it calculated to keep?—Two cows.

2357. Any sheep?—No sheep.

2358. Nor horses?—No horses.

2359. How long have you been in the croft?—For forty years.

2360. Have you heard what the previous delegates have stated, and do you generally agree with them?—I desire to say something besides what has been already said. We had the hill pasture along with our arable land in old time always until the captain came, and now we have the rent much increased, double what it was, without the hill at all.

2361. Who was the hill given to?—It was divided between Duntulm and Monkstadt. We are continually getting poorer since we lost the hill. Old people and young people have no means of living. Young, strong men can earn what will provide them with clothing in the south, bnt old people and young people cannot do that; and now, the most profitable land that we had in our townships is under sheep connected with the big tacks, and we understand they were all productive townships. We understand that the land was good land, when we could get ten returns for our corn, and these families could only get two and a half returns in the land to which they were removed. We have not got sufficient land now to enable us to cultivate it in rotation. The township in which I am now, my father and his brother, and another man, had it to themselves, and now there are fourteen in it. You can easily see that if feeding of three individuals was apportioned to fourteen it could not be too scarce. We are undergoing all the exactions that were laid upon us in quietness. The rent was raised upon us, and we had the alternative offered us of leaving the place or to pay the increased rent. We are very needy now that the rights of our fathers and grandfathers should be restored to us—that is the hill pasture—and it was the want of that that brought the great poverty upon the township of Kilmuir. If crofters who are huddled together now in small holdings were spread over the old crofter lands which are fertile, there would be more comfort, and the big tacks would still remain. I am getting old, and cannot do much for myself now, and it is our families who are looking after us when we are getting old, and this is disgusting them from the land—the poor soil they have to deal with. They cannot get so much out of the land as a pair of stockings. When we had the hill, should we only got that itself out of it, it would be so much help. We cannot tell the inconveniences to which we are subjected through the loss of the hill.

DONALD NICOLSON, Solitote (78)—examined

Donald Nicolson.

2362. *The Chairman.*—Are you a crofter?—I had a croft, but it was taken from me. I am only going from house to house.

2363. Where was your former croft?—Totescore.

2364. What have you to state to us?—My rent was doubled, and I would not get it even then unless I would promise to pay an additional £1. My rent was £7, 10s., and it was doubled at once, and another pound added. I did not refuse to pay the double rent, but I declined to pay the extra £1. I then got warning. When the summer came, the officer came and ejected me. He put everything I had out of the house, and I

was only wanting payment for my houses, and I would go. The doors were locked on me. The tacksman of Monkstadt sent word round to the rest of the crofters that any one who would open door for me would be treated the same way as I was next year—and they are here to-day—and not one of them would let me into his house, they were so afraid. I could not cut a peat. My son's wife was in with her two young children, and we were that night in the cart-shed, and our neighbours were afraid to let us in, and crying over us. The peats were locked up. They still had the mark upon us. We had not a fire to prepare a cake. There was plenty of meal outside, but we had not a fire to prepare it. I was then staying in the stable during the summer. I could only make one bed in it. My daughter and my son's wife and the two children were sleeping in that bed, and I myself was sleeping on the stones. The Presbytery of the Established Church, during a vacancy, allowed me to enter the glebe. The factor then shut up my outhouses, and I would not be permitted to enter one of them. I was afterwards staying in the house of a poor woman who was taking care of a sick friend, and the factor challenged Mr Stewart, the tacksman of Duntulm, for permitting me to have shelter in this house, for it was on his ground that this poor woman was; and it is Mr Grant, the minister of the parish, who is supporting me to-day.

2365. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—When did all this happen?—Five years ago. There was due to me £6 for the making of drains on the lot, and my neighbours got this, but none was allowed to me. The factor would not pay me a penny, and it is still due to me.

2366. Did you get anything for the house?—The sum due by me was £35, but I got credit for the value of the house, which was £7; I did not get value for the other houses. They were valued at £17, 10s. and I did not get the value for them.

2367. *The Chairman.*—Who was the factor?—Mr Alexander Macdonald, the present factor. He was law agent as well in the matter.

2368. [*The Interpreter* made the following statement:—He was evicted twice, but when put out he had a shed to enter into, and he entered the shed and entered the stable, and then he was evicted out of these, and an interdict was issued against him forbidding him any more to enter the house or the lands. Under stress of circumstances, he entered a barn, the key of which was given to him for the purpose of securing the crop, but was had up for breach of interdict, and for this breach of interdict he was fined 10s. with the alternative of five days' imprisonment. The expense of the interdict was something like £8. In the £35 there was a whole year's rent due. He was charged, besides, violent profits, being the legal penalty for remaining in possession after the term.

2369. *The Chairman.*—Was all that money really exacted?—Yes.

2370. And it passed into the possession of the factor?—Yes; I settled with the factor for him, and advanced the money out of the bank for him.

2371. Did you recover it?—He paid me when the markets came round, and he was able to realise his stock.]

2372. *The Chairman.*—How do you earn your subsistence now?—*Witness.* Nothing, unless Mr Grant, the minister, helps me.

2373. Have you any son or child?—I have a son. My family was scattered when I lost the place.

2374. Where is your son?—He is with a niece of mine at Kilmuir.

2375. Has he a croft?—No; he is going to be herd at Kingsburgh at Whitsunday. I think I should get the piece of land I had, and I would try to manage it yet, if I got it. If I got land I would help—I would gather the family yet.

[ADJOURNED.]

STENSCHOLL, SKYE, FRIDAY, MAY 11, 1883.

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(See Appendix A, IV., V., VI., XX., XXI., XXII.)

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.

NORMAN STEWART, Crofter and Salmon Fisher, Valtos (50)—examined.

Norman Stewart.

2376. *The Chairman.* What is the size of your croft?—About 7 or 8 acres.

2377. Hill pasture?—Yes, there is a kind of pasture

2378. What is the summing of your croft—the stock it is calculated to keep?—Six cows, one horse, and about twenty sheep. That is the summing for the whole croft. I have a half croft.

2379. You gave us 7 or 8 acres; is that the whole croft, or what you have?—The whole croft.

2380. Then tell us what you really have yourself?—Half a croft.

2381. How many cows?—Two cows.

2382. Do you keep a horse?—Yes.

2383. How many sheep?—About seven or eight.

2384. And no young cattle?—None over a year, and the sheep have gone entirely this year.

2385. What is your rent?—£7, 10s. for my half croft.

2386. Is that your regular rent, or is it with the reduction which was made two years ago?—That is the highest rent.

2387. Subtracting the reduction made two years ago, how much do you now pay? How much did you pay last year?—There was a permanent abatement of £1, 2s. 6d. two years ago, and 5s. in the pound beyond that.

2388. Does the £7, 10s. include the permanent reduction, or is the permanent reduction to be taken off that?—It is to be taken off that.

2389. That reduces it to £6, 7s. 6d.?—Yes.

2390. Then have we to take 5s. in the pound off that again?—Yes, we got 5s. in the pound. We pay rates upon the old rent.

2391. How much was the rent you paid for 1882, including rates?—£5, and 4s. or 5s.

2392. £5, 5s. for two cows, one horse, and seven or eight sheep. Has any hill pasture been taken off the crofters in your memory? Has the hill pasture been reduced?—It has. A piece of the pasture was taken from the one end, and that overcrowds the rest of the township.

2393. Was it more than the half of the whole that was taken away?—No; the best of it went.

2394. When the hill pasture was taken away, was the rent reduced?—No, I never heard of the rent being reduced, but always being raised.

2395. But still you said that £1 2s. 6d. was taken off two years ago?—That was taken off nowhere; the authorities had gone wrong in the summing.

2396. How much was the rent in your earliest recollection?—£3, 13s. for the half croft in which I am now.

2397. What year was that?—Before Captain Fraser became proprietor of the estate.

2398. What do the people whom you represent complain of? What is their complaint?—They have enough to complain of in the high rents that are exacted and the increase of rents. They had quite enough to do as the rents were before that increase.

2399. What do they desire to have?—More land, upon which they can make a living without having to go away from the crofts to other places. They cannot remain at home more than a month in spring and a month in harvest, with poverty.

2400. No other complaints?—About the marches. We do not get justice about the marches. When the sheep are pointed, perhaps they will be two days in a pinfold before we get notice, and still paying money for them. A great many of them die with poverty and "pook" in the winter, as happened this year.

2401. Were you freely chosen as a delegate by the people without any influence?—Yes.

2402. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—You said they could not remain at home on account of poverty. You yourself are a salmon fisher?—Yes, more than twenty years.

2403. You get employment at home?—For a while of the year.

2404. For how long in the year do you get employment at home?—About four months.

2405. Which months may those be?—In the summer, up to the middle of September.

2406. At what time of year do you leave home?—In the beginning of winter.

2407. Where do you go for employment then?—To every place where I can best find employment.

2408. Where did you go last year?—I was not from home last year.

2409. Where were you the year before last?—About Badenoch.

2410. How long would you be away from home when you were in Badenoch?—Until it was time for the spring work.

2411. What money would you bring home with you?—I would not take much money home from any place during the short winter day; but I make a good wage off the fishing.

2412. Have you a family?—Yes.

2413. You go from home to support yourself?—I must go from home, as the land won't support us. I did not make a boll of meal for the last eight years on my land.

2414. It is the money you make on the salmon fishing that keeps the family when you are away?—Yes; and were it not for that, it would have been long since I were in my grave with starvation.

2415. Last year was a worse year than usual, was in not?—Yes; worse than any that has come yet.

2416. Why did not you go from home last year?—Because I had a sick family. I lost in one year almost everthing I had in the world.

2417. You refer to your stock?—Yes.

2418. What extent of land and what amount of stock would you think sufficient to keep you for a year here?—From 15 to 20 acres of arable land.

2419. And what hill stock?—Ten cows, two horses, and fifty sheep.

2420. Is there land in the country that would give as much as that to every man?—Yes, plenty.

2421. What rent do you think would be a reasonable rent for that extent of land?—From £10 to £12.

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2422. You complain of your marches. Is the march line not a natural division between the croft lands and the big farms? What sort of a march is it?—A river in part and a dyke or something.

2423. Is it a march over which sheep would naturally trespass?—Yes, if they were allowed.

2424. Would it be easy to find a march over which sheep would not be inclined to trespass?—Yes, if the river were followed.

2425. Would it be increasing your grounds very much to follow the river?—Yes.

2426. Very much?—It would give us a good bit more.

2427. Has any attempt been made to fence the marches here?—We could not get a fence with poverty. The proprietors never made any endeavour to put up a fence, and we considered that, as it is the estate march, the proprietors should have a fenee there.

2428. Who are the two proprietors there?—On this side Major Fraser, and Lord Macdonald on the other.

2429. Who is the tacksman on the other side?—Mr Stewart, Scorrybreck.

2430. Was it he who was poinding the sheep?—He was doing part of that, and his predecessor was doing the same. We paid in one day about £10 to Mr Stewart's predecessor in the farm.

2431. Who was that?—Mr William M'Leod.

2432. Did Mr M'Leod complain to them frequently before this of the trespass of the sheep?—We heard no complaints, but we had a herd, and he had a herd by the marches.

2433. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You said that a piece of your hill was taken away. To whom was it given?—It was added to Duntulm. It was Mr Stewart who had the farm then.

2434. You also stated that the best of the hill was taken away, and what was left was not worth much?—Yes, and if it was good it would have been taken away.

2435. How many crofters are there in Valtos?—Eleven.

2436. Is that the same number that has been in your recollection, or have they been increased?—They are not the same.

2437. How many were there in your recollection first?—Six families.

2438. Where did the other five come from?—Some of them from other townships.

2439. Mention what townships?—One from Loanfearn, another came from Garos, another from Balmeanach. Others belong to the place.

2440. What became of the crofts when the strangers came there?—The one from Loanfearn was added to the farm of Loanfearn. The one from Garos had no lands there.

2441. What I want to bring out is this, as regards any of the people who came into Valtos from other places, were their crofts added to any of the two large farms?—The Loanfearn one was added.

2442. What is Loanfearn? is it a part of the big farm, or is it a separate farm?—A separate farm.

2443. What rent does it pay?—About £80.

2444. Who had the farm of Loanfearn at the time the crofter's were removed?—The present tenant, Murdo Nicolson.

2445. Are the people in Valtos, speaking generally, very poor?—They are poorer than I can tell. It is hardly credible. When they go for a boll of meal from the dealer, the animal the dealer has to get for it must be marked before they can get the meal.

2446. Is it consistent with your knowledge that the people are becoming

poorer year by year, and their circumstances becoming worse?—Yes. It is a poor place that does not give a return.

2447. Do you attribute their poverty to any extent to their being deprived of the hill pasture which has been referred to as being added to Duntulm?—They were not the better of it. It did contribute.

2448. Has the increase of rent you referred to also contributed to their poverty?—It is the rents that brought us first to poverty. We were in good circumstances until then.

2449. The seasons of late have not been favourable. Is that also an element in their poverty?—Yes, very heavily. There was one year we lost everything. Everything was blown over into the sea. Their crops were delaying the progress of the vessels in the sea.

2450. You are a fisherman. Do you think anything could be done in the locality with which you are immediately connected by putting up quays, where boats could run out in almost all weathers?—Yes, it would.

2451. Has Valtos a considerable frontage to the sea? Is there any place where such a quay could be erected?—I do not think there is any place on our shore; but there is a place down here where it could be done.

2452. Is that at Staffin?—At Staffin.

2453. Would that be a central place for a considerable number of the crofters who are also fishermen? Would that be a convenient place for them to have a quay at?—It would not be very handy to them, but it would be better than wanting anything of the kind. It would do a great deal of good to us, if steamers were calling. There is nothing of that kind with us. We have not even a road, and we pay road money.

2454. What is the nearest place the public road is to your township of Valtos?—The road just reaches the march of Valtos. There was a road a number of years back, but it was allowed to go into disuse.

2455. Do you represent, as a delegate here to-day, any other township than Valtos?—No.

2456. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—How often have the rents of Valtos been raised since you have been there?—Three times.

2457. When was the first rise?—About twenty-six years ago.

2458. Soon after Captain Fraser came?—Yes.

2459. Before that was done, were you all made to sign the rules of the estate?—Yes, but we did not think that that was to come on us.

2460. When you signed the rules you did not expect your rents would be immediately raised?—No, if we had done so, we would not have signed them.

2461. When was the next rise?—About ten years ago.

2462. How much was your own rent raised the first time?—More than £1.

2463. How much was the rise the second time?—Five shillings for the doctor.

2464. When was the third rise?—About six years ago.

2465. How much was then put on?—From £4, 14s. to £7, 10s. altogether.

2466. Were the rents of all the people of Valtos raised in that way?—All in the same way.

2467. After the last rise, did the people complain to the landlord or the factor about this?—They went to Uig, and refused to sign for this increase.

2468. What did the factor say?—The factor asked us to try it for one year.

2469. Then at the end of that year what was done?—We were paying it for two or three years after that until we found the burden too heavy for us.

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2470. Then you refused to pay?—Yes.

2471. What passed between you and the factor on the subject?—He threatened to remove us altogether if we did not pay the increase.

2472. What was the end of the matter?—We got a slight reduction.

2473. How much?—£1, 2s. 6d.

2474. Was that reduction given to all the tenants at Valtos?—Yes.

2475. Are the assessments for roads and other rates taken off you along with the rent?—Yes.

2476. Are the assessments laid upon the old rent, or upon the reduced rent?—On the big rent.

2477. Who gets these assessments?—I do not know; but we give them to the factor.

2478. What has been done in the way of road-making here since Captain Fraser came to the property? He did not make any roads for us. We have to carry everything on our backs. He carried the road so far as it suited him, but no further.

2479. When was the road made which extends from the high road to the boundary of Valtos?—About twelve years ago.

2480. Was the foundation of the road made for 3 miles or so at the time of the destitution?—Yes, and we had it up through our place, though it was not valued.

2481. Was the whole road, as far as Valtos, made at the time of the destitution?—Yes, and further. It reached Loanfearn.

2482. Has it ever been completed to Loanfearn?—It was made to Loanfearn by the destitution committee, but to the march of Valtos it was finished by Captain Fraser.

2483. How many miles was the road that Captain Fraser made fitted for conveyances to go upon?—I cannot tell.

2484. How many miles is it from Stenscholl inn to Loanfearn?—About 4 miles.

2485. How many miles is it from that to the boundary of Captain Fraser's property along the shore?—Hardly 1 mile.

2486. And it never has been finished?—He left more than 3 miles of it unfinished.

2487. Is that the extent of Captain Fraser's improvements on this part of his property, so far as road-making is concerned?—Yes.

2488. And the people pay assessments for the use of that road?—Yes.

2489. Is there any other road in the district of which they get the benefit?—There is no other road whatever.

2490. What other improvements has Captain Fraser made on this part of his property?—I do not know of any.

2491. Has he not built some good houses?—I do not know of any except the inn.

2492. What inn?—The inn down here.

2493. Is that not a shooting lodge?—Yes.

2494. Has he built no other houses?—He did not make any houses for his tenants.

2495. Has the old inn been improved in any way?—No, I do not know of any improvement.

2496. Where do you all get your meal ground?—Here.

2497. Are you obliged to send all your corn to that mill?—Yes.

2498. Is it in good condition?—No.

2499. Does that do the people injury in any way?—Many a loss.

2500. Is that mill the property of Major Fraser?—It is in name of him.

2501. Have you any complaint as to the miller's charges in that mill? Do you consider them too high?—I heard complaints about that.

2502. Can you give any instance?—I do not know of any except that I hear from people who go there. I do not go there.

2503. How often do you get corn ground there yourself?—I did not grind any for the last eight years. I had none.

2504. Then, do you buy all the meal you use in your own family?—Every grain.

2505. Where do you generally buy it?—From a dealer beside myself at times, and from the south at other times.

2506. How much meal do you buy in the year?—I am eleven bolls out since last Martinmas.

2507. How many are in your family?—Seven.

2508. How much more will you want between this and Martinmas?—About as much again.

2509. What has been the price of meal per boll?—22s. and 23s.

2510. *The Chairman.*—You spoke of the great poverty of the people. Will you tell us whether the women and children are in want of clothes?—They are poorer than I can tell. They are in want of clothes and in want of food.

2511. Are any of them actually in want of warm and good clothing?—Yes.

2512. Are the people in want of bed clothes for the night?—Plenty of them are in want; others have them.

2513. Are there any families who have no blankets at all?—Yes.

2514. What do they use for their bed clothes when they have no proper blankets?—Perhaps they have bags over them at night.

2515. Are there many of the children that have no shoes and stockings?—Yes, and cannot go to school for the want of them.

2516. Is the house here used as an inn at present or as a shooting lodge?—I cannot say.

2517. Is it an inn to which travellers go?—No.

2518. Are there many strangers who come about here—travellers?—They will not come our way for the want of a road.

2519. Do the strangers spend any money, or do any good to the people?—No, they make no good to us.

2520. Do you wish to say anything more before you retire?—I have nothing more to say.

DONALD ROSS, Merchant, Culnacnock (52)—examined.

2521. *The Chairman.*—How long have you lived at Culnacnock?—Sixteen years or thereby. Donald Ross.

2522. Have you been freely elected a delegate by the people?—Yes.

2523. What do you deal in?—General goods; meal, all sorts of merchandise required by the people about.

2524. Do you find that the people buy less than they did formerly?—They have been buying less of some sorts of goods and more meal.

2525. What sort of things do they buy less of?—Less cotton and clothing.

2526. Is all their expenditure for meal?—Part goes into other groceries.

2527. Do they buy more meal than they used to do?—Yes.

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2528. Do they buy less groceries than they used to do?—I buy less groceries myself now than formerly.

2529. Do you mean that you buy less groceries for the supply of the people or for your own family?—I buy less for the supply of the people.

2530. Do you find that the people pay less punctually than they did in former times?—They are less punctual now. They cannot be otherwise; they cannot pay punctually.

2531. Are the people more deeply in debt to you than they formerly were?—Yes; more than ever.

2532. Do you think that the people are growing gradually much poorer than they were?—I know that they have got poorer.

2533. Do you know of any families who are in want of clothing and especially of bed clothing?—Yes, I know there are families in want.

2534. Were the people in the habit of making their own blankets here of their own wool or did they purchase them from the shops?—Making the blankets themselves.

2535. Do you think that the reduction of the common pasture in the country, and the diminution in the number of sheep, has deprived the people of the facilities for making blankets and clothes?—There are many of them who, through poverty, have no sheep. [Question repeated].—The end of the district, where I reside, has not been deprived of hill pasture. I am not able to answer for this part. Others can speak to that, but I am given to understand that it is the best part of the hill pasture which was taken from them, in so far as they were deprived of hill pasture.

2536. Did the people use the wool of their own sheep largely for making blankets, or were they in the habit of selling it?—The people made use of the wool themselves; they were selling but very little of it.

2537. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Do you, and the rest of the people here, suffer much from the want of a good road in the district?—Yes.

2538. Is it a serious injury?—Yes.

2539. Is your house near the road?—There is no road into it.

2540. How do you get your goods carried to your houses?—On the backs of the people and horses—in creels and burdens.

2541. How far have they to carry them?—About half a mile.

2542. Do they complain of the postal arrangements in this quarter?—Yes.

2543. What is their complaint?—The post office is about four miles away from the upper part of this district.

2544. And they have to send for their own letters?—Yes, and to send their letters also by messenger to the post office.

2545. Is there no post runner in this district at all?—No, there is not a paid runner.

2546. Is there much business done by bills among the people in this district instead of ready money?—Yes.

2547. When did that commence?—About fifteen or twenty years ago, and it is one of the causes to which the poverty of the people is to be ascribed.

2548. Why do they resort to bills?—The landlord rules them so strictly that payment in full must needs be proffered at the rent day. If only part of it were offered it would not be taken.

2549. Was that the universal practice on this estate, so far as you know?—So far as I know.

2550. In that way there were no arrears?—No, not at that time, until the present years—until the people were not able to pay.

2551. Have they not been able to pay even with bills?—Yes; some

of the parties who used to give their securities on these bills have not been paid.

2552. If there was no money to pay the bill, of course the cattle had to be sold?—Yes; but some securities were so favourable to them that they did not push them so far. There were some people getting money out of banks here who had not a head of stock.

2553. Have you many had debts yourself?—Plenty.

2554. Do you think, from what you know of the people of the district in which you dwell, that they are mostly in debt?—Yes.

2555. Do you think it is because they are very lazy?—I do not think that.

2556. Is there no work given them here?—I am not aware of any but fishing.

2557. Does the proprietor give them any work to do?—Only to a few.

2558. Does he come often to see them?—We never see him.

2559. Does he never come here?—We have seen him occasionally, down the way, but we were not seeing him often.

2560. Has he ever visited the houses of any of the people in this district?—I am not aware that he did.

2561. Does the factor come often?—At the rent collection.

2562. Does he come at any other time?—He comes to school board meetings. He is a member of the school board and parochial board, and comes to attend these meetings.

2563. The last witness told us that a boll of meal could not be got without a particular beast being set aside as security for it. Do they put a mark upon the beast?—The beast will be marked when it is bought.

2564. Do you do that yourself?—Yes; in a few instances.

2565. Is it left for some time with the man who gets the boll of meal?—Yes. I pay the man for the wintering of the beast in addition to the price of it.

2566. *The Chairman.*—Is that particular beast security for that particular debt?—Yes; that is the purpose for which it is bought.

2567. If the man pays for the boll of meal a month or two afterwards will he get his beast back?—It is not for the boll of meal that the beast is security, but for the value of the beast in meal.

2568. Would you rather have the beast, or rather have the money?—I would prefer the money. I would not wish a beast from any man who had got the money.

2569. If you don't get the money, how soon do you take possession of the beast, and sell him?—To the last market of the year—the September market.

2570. If the beast dies, is it your loss or the loss of the crofter?—It is my loss, when I mark it.

2571. If the beast fetches more money than the amount of the debt, who has the balance?—I only want my debt out of it. If the man gets any body to give more than I give for it, I give up the beast.

2572. The man is allowed to sell it, in fact?—It is I who must deliver the beast to its new purchaser, and the money must pass to me, for fear of its being lost to me.

2573. If the beast dies, does the debt remain cancelled?—No; it is to relieve the people, and for the people's convenience that I enter into such transactions, as they will not get relief anywhere else.

2574. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—How many crofters and others do you represent as delegate in the township you come from?—Eleven who pay rent.

2575 You have been present, and heard the preceding witness. Have

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they any grievance of hill pasture having been taken away or their rents raised?—They have complained about the piece of hill pasture that was taken away from them.

2576. Are you a crofter yourself?—I am a crofter myself. I am one of the eleven. It is from this end of the township that the hill pasture was taken, and our sheep are consequently crowded together on the remainder.

2577. When was this hill pasture taken from you?—Sixteen years ago.

2578. Why was it taken off, and to whom was it given?—I am not aware why it was taken from us.

2579. Who got it?—It was added to the Duntulm tack.

2580. Was any reduction of rent given to you at that time?—Our rent was not reduced, unless it was reduced in the case of the parties from whom the hill was taken.

2581. What is the name of the townships at the end where the hill pasture was taken away?—Deig, Glasfin, and Brogaig.

2582. Then these three townships and the township you represent had the whole in common?—Yes.

2583. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—But more townships than these had a share in the hill?—No.

2584. Is there any division between the hill of the different townships all along the east side here?—No, it is common hill pasture.

2585. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Have the rents been increased in your time?—Yes.

2586. What was it in your younger days?—According to the old people with whom I have been speaking, at one time my township was in the possession of one crofter.

2587. What was he paying?—I do not know what he was paying, but afterwards the township was divided between eight crofters, paying £50.

2588. What is it paying now for the whole?—£87, 5s.

2589. Is that after the abatement that was given?—That is the highest without the abatement.

2590. What has been taken off in the way of abatement lately?—5s. in the pound.

2591. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Do you belong to this country?—Yes.

2592. To the particular township in which you are just now?—I am a native of that township.

2593. And you have lived there all your life?—Yes.

2594. And you know the condition of the people thoroughly well for the last forty years?—Yes, I believe there is no one who knows it better.

2595. And your opinion is that they are getting poorer and poorer every year?—Yes, I know that by experience.

2596. And to what do you attribute this?—There are several causes.

2597. What are these?—Buying the meal is very heavy on them; the rent is high; raising money out of banks; the inconvenience of the place for bringing things into it. They cannot get things to buy as cheap as they can get them in other places more accessible.

2598. And their indebtedness to yourself is growing every year?—Yes.

2599. How can you stand it all?—I have stood it yet. Nobody has lost by me yet.

2600. About the pledging of cattle for the meal, do you consider the beast yours when once it is marked?—Yes, I consider the beast mine, and if the beast gets lost it is my loss.

2601. Do you put a price upon it when you mark it?—Yes.

2602. And do you tell the price to the owner?—Yes. We make an agreement about the price first.

2603. And the price of the meal too?—Not the price of the meal, because there is no knowing what the price may be during the year:—the man does not take with him at one time the value of the beast.

2604. So the beast is pledged in reality before he gets the meal?—Yes, in the case of some.

2605. And what security is there that the man will get the meal?—He is not the least afraid that he will not get the meal. In the cases in which I mark beasts as security, the party is already far in my debt.

2606. And does the beast go to cancel that debt?—No, but for present and future relief.

2607. And if the price of the beast at the next market, when sold by yourself, is more than the price you told the man, and the price of its keep meanwhile, does the man get the balance?—I will put it to his credit.

2608. You say the price of goods here is very much greater because of the difficulty of getting goods into the country. What is the price of a pound of tea?—Three shillings for good tea.

2609. What is the price of it at Portree?—I do not know.

2610. Do you sell a quantity of tea?—Yes.

2611. Is the quantity of tea which you sell increasing every year?—Not this year.

2612. But without reference to this year, which is exceptional, has it very much increased since you began to trade sixteen years ago?—Yes.

2613. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—I suppose you don't sell whisky?—No, I never dealt in it.

2614. Is there much whisky consumed in the district?—I do not know what the consumption may be, but there are some here who may tell about that. I have a further complaint to make. I have to complain of the way our marches are open between ourselves and the neighbouring tacksman. We have applied to the landlord to put a fence between us and the neighbouring proprietor. We did not get a reply from him. We had two herds during the past year. We do not expect to be able to have a herd at all this year, because some of the people have become so poor that they are not able to pay their share of the herd. We do not know what to do with our stock. We cannot keep them from trespassing on Scorrybreck without this fence.

2615. *The Chairman.*—If the proprietor would pay for a proportion of the fence, would the crofters assist in paying some proportion of it?—Yes; we would pay a part. We told him we would agree with any terms he would lay upon us.

2616. Would you carry the materials up, and assist in setting up the fence?—Some of us would do that, but those who cannot pay even a herd would find some difficulty in doing anything. We have no road or post-office. Our township, again, is in two halves—half up towards the hill. We keep our cows there. We cannot use the manure from there for the use of our arable ground. We have no road from the shore to our arable ground. We have to carry the sea-weed on our backs and with horses, and we pay road rates without grumbling. We applied for the piece of road to Loanfern to be repaired—the road that was laid out by the destitution committee before—and it was at that time suitable for conveyances.

2617. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—How long is it since the road rates were put on first?—When the last Road Act came out—a few years ago.

2618. Did you pay no road rates before?—It was not paid in name of road rates; it was paid with the rent.

2619. Is it not included in the £87 of rent you mentioned before?—

SKYE.

STENSCHOLL.

Donald Ross.

The rates are besides the sum I have mentioned. The doctor was included in that sum, but not the rates.

2620. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Where does the doctor live?—At Uig. When we send for him in a case of sickness, it might be two or three days before we would see him, and sometimes he does not make his appearance at all.

ARCHIBALD MACDONALD, Crofter, Garafad (37)—examined.

Archibald Macdonald.

2621. *The Chairman.*—Have you been freely elected as a delegate?—*Yes. I come against my will very much, because I have not been long* in my present place.

2622. Do you mean you are reluctant to give evidence?—No; only that if I had been longer in the place I would be able to say more about it than I am able to say.

2623. Will you have the goodness to make a statement of any wrongs or injustices which the people have suffered within your knowledge?—The first inconvenience is the high rent that is exacted from us, and the land not being worth it.

2624. What else?—In the second place, we were deprived of part of the cow's grass, and by that we were cut off from watering for our cattle. There is no water convenient for our cattle. We lost also a path which we used to enter the piece of grazing which we have. We were not making the most off our land owing to the insecurity of our tenure. We did not know but we might be deprived of our holdings as well as the grazing. If they did the one, they might do the other. We were only putting the ground in heart to the extent that we would exhaust in one year, and these are the principal hardships which we were suffering at the hands of the landlord.

2625. Are you aware of any occasion on which there was a suppression of the expression of public opinion here?—There was such.

2626. What was the nature of the suppression of public opinion?—That any one who would be known as a leader of any movement would be warned.

2627. Can you give an example of anybody being warned for such an expression of opinion?—A deceased brother of my own said to me that he was warned for such a cause, and he was deprived of his land, and could not get the land during his life afterwards.

2628. What was the nature of the expression your brother had made use of?—Nothing. No other cause than that he nominated, along with other nominators, a member for the school board.

2629. Do you mean that the person whom they nominated was disagreeable to the landlord or factor?—I think it was at the first election of the school board, because the factor said that the landlord's list of members for the board was complete, and that he preferred to have these; and my brother's nominee was left out. There was no poll.

2630. Is there any other case that you know of oppression by the landlord or his agents?—Another man in Kilmuir—Donald Nicolson—was hardly dealt with.

2631. Do you say your brother, who was engaged in this nomination, actually lost land which he had previously been in possession of?—It was in possession of my father, and after my father's death in that of my mother, and then in my brother's possession until deprived of it as already mentioned.

2632. May there have been some other reason why your brother was

dispossessed, or was that, in your opinion, the only reason?—That is the only cause which my brother told me.

2633. Although the nomination fell through?—Yes; although there was no poll, it was done to him after all. My opinion is that at any election of school board there would not be more than twenty voters present, perhaps not half that number.

2634. There must have been some other persons acting along with your brother. Was any punishment inflicted upon those other persons?—They got warned also, but they were not deprived of their land. Two of them were warned, at any rate.

2635. Is it the general impression of the people here that any manifestation of independent opinion would expose them to danger on the part of the landlord or his representatives?—Yes.

2636. Are persons alleging themselves to be the representatives of the landlord in the habit of threatening the people with eviction from their holdings in case they don't do so and so, and so and so?—I was never so threatened, but I hear that others have been so.

2637. Do you think that the existence of such threats prevents the crofters from executing improvements upon the land which they would otherwise do?—Yes. That is throwing the crofters there far back, and leaving us without work in winter, when we might be employed improving our crofts.

2638. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Are there any persons living in this district who are believed by the people to have a great influence with the laird contrary to the interests of the other inhabitants, and to have exercised that influence prejudicially to the poorer people?—We believe that that is the case, and we are more afraid of such parties than of the landlord. We are not the least afraid that if our landlord knew our circumstances well, he would give us justice.

2639. Are these persons a limited number?—They are a limited number.

2640. Is it believed they have personally benefited to a large extent by that influence which they possess, to the disadvantage of the majority of the people?—There were no residenters in this quarter who ever prospered so well as they, and to the disadvantage of other people and of this township itself.

2641. Is it believed that many of the cases of injustice which are alleged to have been committed have been suggested by these persons?—Yes; that is the opinion of the most of the people.

2642. Can you say that that is not mere suspicion?—It is our belief. We are not absolutely sure, but it is our belief.

2643. Are these persons in the possession of considerable tracts of land?—Yes, tacksmen; not only possessors of a tack, but of tacks.

2644. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You said a little ago that if the crofters were sure of not being disturbed they would improve their crofts more than they have done, particularly when they are home in winter?—Yes; and I myself particularly would do so, and much need of my doing so.

2645. In coming along to-day, between this school-house and the old inn, there appeared to be a great number of stones in the midst of the fields along there. Are these stones not really capable of being removed without much trouble by the people themselves?—Yes, and the stones should be utilised in drains and dykes.

2646. Would you also be disposed further to drain your lots besides removing the stones?—Yes, without having the rigs going one way and another. That is what we want to do.

2647. And you say that most heartily would you do this on your place.

SKYE.

STENSCHOLL.

Archibald Macdonald.

Is it your belief that most of the crofters, were the land suitable, would do the same, and make the land much more productive?—Yes, but they are afraid, because if they improve their crofts their rents will be raised, or they will be removed.

2648. *The Chairman.*—Do you wisb to make any further statement before you retire?—I have to complain of how the grazing was taken from us, and that the summing is greater than the land will support. We are particularly inconvenienced for want of water for our stock, owing to the loss of the piece of grazing of which I have spoken.

2649. *Sir Kenneth Mackenie.*—Does not the river which runs down here belong to you?—The river adjoins our arable land, and when it is under crop we cannot let the cattle get at the river. We had a piece of grazing that was marching with this river, and that was what we were deprived of.

2650. *The Chairman.*—Will you give us any information you possess about the eviction of persons at Borniskittag?—I was born and brought up in Delista, Kilmuir, which is within six and a half miles of Borniskittag. We were removed out of Delista about eighteen years ago, to the township near it called Graulin. We were seven crofters in Delista and twelve in Graulin. We were removed, all of us—cottars and all—none were left.

2651. Where were you removed to?—We were scattered over the estate, some to east side, some to Kilmaluag, some to Kilmuir. These townships were added to Monkstadt. Three of the Graulin cottars—two at all events—were placed in Borniskittag, and another of them was placed in Totescore. Four crofters were removed from Balgown, which is next to Delista. Then the township of Feaull adjoining Graulin was cleared. There were two families in Feaull. One of these left of their own accord, and the other had to give up the place owing to the excessive rent. After that Lachsay was cleared. One tenant had it. The land was added to Duntulm. There was one tenant in it, and two other families. The township of Scorr, adjoining Lachsay, was cleared of two families. The township of Osmigary was next added to Duntulm, but there were no crofters on it. The lots in Borniskittag were as numerous in my early recollection as they are to-day. But I have been told by old persons that it was occupied at first by a small number—from four to seven—and the township lands were more extensive then than now. That is what the old people were saying.

2652. Where were all these evicted people crowded together?—They were placed in other townships on the property. They were placed, for the most part, on land which was run out—which had been exhausted by their predecessors. They were placed in occupancies which had been vacated by crofters who had been compelled to leave through the poverty of the land, and straitened circumstances in consequence; and others of these removed tenants were not able to take crofts at all, and have become cottars. That is my history of them.

2653. How many families altogether?—Twenty-four families in all. So far as I remember, my own father was one of them.

MURDO M'LEAN, Crofter, Lealt (60)—examined.

Murdo M'Lean.

2654. *The Chairman.*—How long have you been a crofter?—It is not long since I got my croft. My father was in it before me, but not in my present croft.

2655. Have you been freely elected a delegate?—Yes.

2656. What are the particular hardships of which the people in your place complain?—The smallness of our holdings, heavy rents, and the insecurity of tenure. We are marching with another property, Lord Macdonald's, and no march between us but a small burn.

2657. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Are you close to Valtos?—Three townships lie between us and Valtos.

2658. *The Chairman.*—Has any common pasture been taken away from your place?—Yes. Two lots of the township were cut off us, and the best part of the grass, and another piece of arable land that the township had in common with others near the shore, and which was of much service to us, because we had ware connected with it.

2659. Have you no sea-ware now?—No, we cannot reach it. We live on the far end of a peat moss—the four lots which have been left to the township.

2660. Is there any other complaint in your place?—We are without a roadway there, through the country or to the sea-shore. At this time of the year, when the weather is good, and the sea fine, we can get our goods conveyed by boats; but in winter we have to travel 14 miles over the hill for the necessaries for our families, and we have to carry everything on our backs over the hill without roads or bridges,—over rivers; and sometimes people are lost in these burns.

2661. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Do you know of any instance?—Several years ago a person was lost in one of these burns.

2662. In speaking of the distance of 14 miles do you refer to Portree?—Yes.

2663. How far are you from Stenscholl?—About 6 miles.

2664. Can you carry anything from here to Lealt except on your backs?—If we had a horse, we could carry our necessaries on horseback; if we had carts, we could take them to the march of Valtos.

2665. How far is it from Valtos?—About $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles.

2666. What school do your children go to?—Valtos.

2667. Do the children attend well?—Those who are strong. We have no road. In winter, when the burns are swollen, they cannot attend.

2668. Does the compulsory officer ever come near you?—Yes.

2669. How often?—Occasionally. He comes pretty often.

2670. Are the people in a poorer condition than they were some years ago?—Yes, getting poorer yearly.

2671. Is there any fishing at your place?—No. I believe fish could be got if the sea were accessible.

2672. Is there no port on your coast?—No port. There is no safe place to haul up the boats between this bay and Portree.

2673. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Could this place be improved very much by a quay for the safety of fishing boats?—Yes, and possibly nearer Portree than this. I have seen quays made in wilder places.

2674. Could a quay be made here in Loch Staffin, for a comparatively moderate sum, that would stand the weather?—I cannot say about that. I have no idea what such work would cost.

2675. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—You say the people are getting poorer year by year. Is there more than one cause for it?—Yes.

2676. How many causes do you attribute it to?—To the smallness of our holdings and the inconvenience and difficulty of access to the place.

2677. But that last has been always in existence?—I believe it is attributable very much to the excess of rent. Before the rent was increased upon us we were in pretty good circumstances. Since that time, unless each year will meet the expenditure of that particular year, we have to encroach upon our stock, little by little, until the stock is exhausted.

SKYE.

STENSCHOLL.

Murdo M'Lean.

2678. Have you anything to say of the badness of the seasons, as regards fishings, or as regards crops?—Last year, I believe, has occasioned considerable loss, for the crop was lost by storm.

2679. That is the only season you think worse than former times?—I don't remember such a bad year as last year.

2680. There are only four tenants at Lealt now. Do you remember the time when there were fewer?—There are seven families located on these four lots.

2681. Where did they come from?—I believe they belong to the place.

2682. They were born in it?—Yes.

2683. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Were you at one time in comfortable circumstances?—Yes, I was in circumstances at one time that no man could crave me for 1s. of debt.

2684. Is that a considerable time since?—Fifteen or twenty years ago.

2685. Were you some years in that position?—Before then I was always comfortable.

RODERICK M'INNES, Cottar, Glasbheinn (43)—examined.

Roderick M'Innes.

2686. *The Chairman.*—Do you occupy any land?—No.

2687. Have you not a little piece of land for potatoes?—No.

2688. You have a house?—Yes.

2689. How long have you been living at your present place?—I was ever without land in my present house.

2690. Have you been living at the present place all your life?—Yes; but my people had land.

2691. How do you live—by working on the land or by fishing?—Principally fishing; very little work otherwise.

2692. What sort of fishing?—Herring, lobster, and all sorts of fishing.

2693. Do you pay any rent for your house?—No.

2694. Is your house built on the crofters' land or on the proprietor's land?—It is on the crofters' land.

2695. You pay no rent at all?—I do not pay for my house; but if I get a bit of land, in which to plant potatoes, I pay for it.

2696. Do you do any service to the crofters in the way of working for your house?—Yes.

2697. What sort of work?—Sometimes helping the crofters in their work.

2698. Did you build the house yourself?—The house was built long before I entered.

2699. Did you spend any money in improving it?—It fell once, and I rebuilt it.

2700. How much money did you spend in rebuilding it?—The last time I believe I spent £12 on it.

2701. Does that £12 include the value of your labour, or did you spend it in purchasing wood and other things?—I spent that in money upon it, besides the work of myself and family.

2702. What kind of house is it?—It is a house of six couples, with windows in the wall; but no wooden floor. It was difficult for me to work it. I had a heavy and weak family.

2703. When you go to sea now, do you receive better wages than you did when you were a younger man?—Yes, sometimes, if the fishing is a

success. Doubtless, we would make a good wage at it if we had convenience for saving ourselves—drawing up our boats.

2704. Where could this convenience be made?—There is a place down here which is as easy of anchorage as any place in Scotland.

2705. What kind of port or quay do you want?—If we had a quay in any convenient place where it could be built. We have no boat that we could use at times when they should be used at sea, for its size must be such that four men can carry it up the beach as soon as it touches.

2706. If you had a quay or pier, would the fishermen be disposed to pay some small sum of money for the use of it, if the Government built it?—Yes, well might they do it indeed.

2707. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Do you refer to the bay of Staffin?—Yes, near the end, where it is coming to a narrow.

2708. *The Chairman.*—If the Government or any other body were to supply you with a proper description of boat and net, would you be greatly benefited?—We would.

2709. Can you suggest anything else that the Government or any other parties could do to improve your fishing trade?—Yes, helping to buy the boats and nets; only, we would need a place for them. They could buy such boats and nets if they got such assistance. These would be of no use to us without a place where we would draw them up.

2710. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Is there fishing not very far from this place?—Yes.

2711. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Is not the best salmon fishing in Skye here?—Yes.

2712. Is it one of the best in the north of Scotland?—Yes; as good as any place in the north of Scotland.

2713. It is leased by Messrs Johnston, Montrose?—Yes.

2714. How long have they had it?—A long time.

2715. How many boats do they employ?—About twenty-four.

2716. And how many men belonging to this district?—Four men to every boat.

2717. Do they all belong to the place?—Not all; there are many from Portree.

2718. What wages do they get?—10s. 6d. a week, and a percentage on the fish caught.

2719. What will that come to when it is a good fishing?—Between £10 and £14.

2720. What times of the year are you employed?—Beginning at this time to the end of August.

2721. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Do you say you make 10s. 6d. a week and £10 or £14 in addition?—No.

2722. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Is the fish taken to Portree in a small steam boat?—Yes.

2723. How often does she go?—Three times a week.

2724. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—You are engaged in the salmon fishing?—Yes.

2725. That employs you for four months, what else do you do?—Lobster fishing the rest of the time.

2726. For the whole eight months?—During the winter.

2727. How many months does the lobster fishing employ you?—Beginning at the new year, or a little before, until the beginning of spring.

2728. About three months?—Yes.

2729. Then what do you do the rest of the year—after the salmon fishing drops till the end of the year?—Long line fishing.

2730. What do you get upon your long lines?—Cod and ling and eels.

SKYE.

STENSCHOLL.

Roderick M'Innes.

2731. Do you get them in the autumn?—Yes, if we went out. We don't fish much beyond what we need for our families, for we cannot get a market for our fish here.

2732. Then for five months you only fish for your families?—Yes, that is all.

2733. What can you make out of the spring lobster fishing?—Some years better than others. Some years from £18 to £20 each of the four of us in the boat, but we have to take our fishing tackle out of that.

2734. How many barrels of potatoes are you able to get from the land in the year for use?—Sometimes none; other years eighteen barrels or so.

2735. How much meal do you buy in the course of the year?—Nearly twenty bolls a year.

2736. What is the size of your family?—Eleven.

2737. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—What do you complain of personally in your circumstances?—Want of land out of which we can make a living, without the necessity of going to sea.

2738. Would you prefer to be a small crofter rather than go to sea?—Yes, but it is not a small croft we would need.

2739. I presume your circumstances have not fallen off of late years, and that your income is usually as good as it was twenty years ago?—Some years my earnings are more than others.

2740. *The Chairman.*—We have heard a great deal of crofters becoming poorer and poorer. Do you think that those who depend chiefly or almost entirely upon the sea are also becoming poorer, or do you think they maintain the same or a better condition?—We believe we are getting poorer, like them. The place in which we are is so straitened. We are crowded into a space of one mile between two tacks, on which there are twenty-three families of us, without land, and the smallest family consists of three, and the largest of eleven. There are thirty-six crofters besides on that strip of a mile, and the place must needs be poor.

2741. I don't wish to ask you about the crofters, but I don't understand why the position of the fishermen, who do not depend upon the land, is becoming poorer and poorer, when wages have become higher and higher, and they have no rent to pay?—I cannot say we are getting poorer in that way, but that we cannot get the land. We cannot be more prosperous at the fishing.

2742. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Suppose you got a croft—and you say you would need a pretty big one—at a moderate rent, would it be better to take to that, than to continue a fisherman, with the benefit of having a pier, and with assistance, which you could pay back in instalments, for the purchase of boats, nets, and tackle?—If we could get a good croft, as I was referring to, we would try and carry on both businesses. I have a family enough at home who would use the boat at the fishing.

NORMAN NICOLSON, Crofter, Brogaig (48)—examined.

Norman Nicolson.

2743. *The Chairman.*—Have you been freely chosen a delegate by the people of your place?—Yes.

2744. Will you state what are the complaints that the people make in your neighbourhood?—The first is that we were deprived of the hill pasture, and in the next place heavy rent was laid on us, and also that the

summing was too heavy for the grazing we had. The place being so poor, it would not sustain the summing, and would not do to winter them. The little grazing we have is spoiled with cutting peats. Twenty-four families cut their peats on our little bit of grazing. Formerly there were only four families in the township. There are now eleven families paying rent, and ten cottars.

2745. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Didn't you say there were twenty-four?—There are eleven paying rent and ten cottars, but there are twenty-four families cutting peats in our grazing. We lost the sheep. We were not allowed to keep a sheep or a horse. I myself had sheep and horses when we had the hill. I had to part with them. I was obliged to part with the sheep at that time at 7s. a head.

2746. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—When was that?—About sixteen years ago.

2747. What kind of sheep were they?—Blackfaced.

2748. Who bought them?—Monkstadt, and I was thankful that he took them. I could not get any person to give me a price for them at the time, and I did it to turn them into cash, though I would like mutton as well as any other person, and I would need clothes also, but I had to part with them.

2749. What was done with the land?—It was added to Duntulm's tack, and again, the little bit of ground that I have marches with the tack. The march dyke is made of turf, and though I should do my own share of repairing it, perhaps the tacksman would not repair his side of it during the whole year. Then again, from after this time, when the seed is in the ground, there are other matters to which some one of my family has to attend,—to watch the crop, to keep them from the cultivated land,—until I can get it into my stackyard at my own cost, otherwise my whole toil will be lost—eaten up by the tacksman's stock. In that way we do not see that we have a means of living. Unless I would be constantly driving off the tacksman's stock, they would trespass on my lands until they would reach the sea. Then the little bits of ground we have will not afford rotation. We must needs cultivate them constantly, and therefore they become exhausted. When we had the horses I had a mare and a year-old foal. They trespassed one Sabbath evening on the tack. They were seized and poinded in Balmeanach. They were sent away at break of day on Monday to Duntulm before I got notice. I had then to go all the way to Duntulm—8 or 9 miles off,—to get them released. Mr Stewart, the tacksman, met me there, and told me that a judgment had come upon me for keeping so many horses, and it would be enough for tinkers to have so many horses. I could not answer him much, but I asked him how much the poindage would be. He told me 8s. 6d., and I paid this into his own hands. He told me I would require to work for him, so that I might get my money back; but I gave him the money, and I did not get it back. I worked for him often, but I never got anything for it. Therefore I cannot keep the little bit of ground that I have, as it is not fenced, even should I have it for nothing. I think that is all I have to say regarding us crofters; but as to the cottars, I think they are as needy of as much land as they could pay for as we are, for unless we give them ground they cannot get it at all.

2750. How many cottars are there?—There are ten cottars.

2751. *The Chairman.*—Do the cottars pay rent for the ground?—I do not think they do.

2752. Do they pay rent in labour?—They are not required to give labour for it; they may do so of their own accord.

2753. But do they give assistance?—They help us a little in the harvest.

SKYE.

STENSCHOLL.

Norman Nicolson.

2754. But they pay for the peats?—2s. a year.

2755. How do the cottars live? how do they gain their subsistence?—As best they can—earning wages out of the country at the fishing and at the railway works.

2756. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—You said you were deprived of grass. Was there pasture in common with townships in the east side here?—Yes.

2757. Do I understand you are forbidden to keep horses or sheep now?—Yes, for the past sixteen years.

2758. Are you forbidden by the proprietor?—I believe so.

2759. Because the other tenants said that in consequence of this land being taken away, the Brogaig and Deig stock crowded theirs up?—I believe that is so.

2760. But if you are forbidden to keep sheep, how does that happen?—Some of them have a few sheep.

2761. Then it is not actually forbidden by the proprietor. It is merely the want of land that forbids it?—The landlord forbad it.

2762. And some of them keep it notwithstanding?—Yes.

2763. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—How do you feed them?—They graze out on the hill pasture belonging to the other townships during the summer.

2764. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Is your township a poor one? Are the people generally poor?—They are become poor enough now.

2765. Are their circumstances getting worse and worse?—Doubtless, they are getting worse and worse.

2766. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Where does this pasture lie that was taken away from them?—Up to Uig and Bealach.

2767. How many sheep could it keep formerly?—I cannot tell that right, but I believe that what was taken from us of the hill would carry as many sheep as the whole of what was left to us.

MURDO M'LEOD, Crofter, Deig (56)—examined.

Murdo M'Leod.

2768. *The Chairman.*—Have you been freely elected a delegate?—Yes.

2769. Will you state what the people in your place, Deig, particularly complain of?—Rent rise,—double what I have seen it,—and hill pasture taken from us. We had the same hill, and when the hill pasture was taken from us, we were ordered not to keep a single sheep. Two others and myself were taken to Uig. One is alive and one is not. We had there to put our names to a paper that we were agreeable to dispense with sheep entirely—not to keep a sheep at all; and when we did so we had the alternative and giving up our holdings. When I came home I began to sell the few sheep I had, and sold them at 6s. to 8s. a head. I had one that I could not get sale for, and I took grazing for it from Mr Stewart, Duntulm, in Flodigary island, and I had the sheep there till Martinmas, till I killed it. My land was then cleared; and my neighbours were so treated. I was then seven years without a sheep or lamb. Then the proprietor allowed us to keep five or six in the upper part of the township. We then began to buy sheep and lambs. We now have two or three, and they are spoiling our township on us.

2770. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—How?—They are eating our crops, as we have no hill pasture.

2771. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Did you say he gave you orders, or merely permission?—It was permission. These sheep were not allowed to be a burden on anybody else. Then we were forbidden

to keep horses. The work of the horses had then to be done by ourselves carrying everything on our backs, especially so in our township. Our ground would be useless unless we took sea-ware from the shore to manure it with; and I think I am for the past twenty years laying 200 creels of sea-weed upon it each year, besides my other work on the ground, and the rest of the township is the same way; and how can people keep up with such work? When I was a young man I could do it, but we have to use hands and feet in ascending from the shore to our township. I may say that all this hard work is killing our young people, for during the last eight years we have lost by death twelve of our finest young men and women. We were attributing their deaths to hard work, but we cannot make sure. There are some in our township yet who have not yet a sheep or lamb. Some of these are so destitute of clothing that they are glad of getting a cast-off oilskin—being without clothes for day or night. If a man gets a good bag with his meal he converts it into underclothing, and glad to do so. They are quite as much in want of night clothes. When we had the hill, we had the wherewith to provide ourselves with good blankets and good clothing, and our women would get employment in making them up.

2772. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—I suppose there is not a spinning wheel now going in the place?—There are spinning wheels yet; we have them yet. I may say that I know a man who was living near me, who died at the age of one hundred and five years, and who never wore cotton clothing—nothing but home-spun,—the manufacture of his own wife and daughter. There is great odds between that time and the present. We are now clothed with south country clothing entirely.

2773. *The Chairman.*—Do none of the people still make stuff in their own cottages?—Some of the people spin yet.

2774. Do they all spin with the wheel?—With the wheel; any one of them who can afford to buy half a stone of wool. It costs us between 10s. and £1.

2775. Do any of the older people still spin with the distaff?—It is very seldom that that is seen now.

2776. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Is there one in Deig?—There are one or two at Deig.

2777. *The Chairman.*—But those who have hill pasture still, and those who have sheep on it, do they not make clothes of their own wool?—Yes. Though I have only two or three sheep myself, I manage in a couple of years to provide myself with a pair of trousers off them, besides stockings.

2778. If a man has enough spun and woven of his own wool to make a suit of stout clothes, how much would the suit cost him when made of his own wool?—Not more than 1s. 6d. a yard. The weaving would cost 6d. a yard, and our own women did the spinning and dyed the worsted.

2779. How much would the same stuff cost if you bought it at the shops?—4s. and 4s. 6d.

2780. When you say the stuff cost 1s. 6d. when made at home, did that include the value of the labour of the women who spun?—It was the work of the women which was making it so cheap, and with bought dyes it would be dearer still. But the women themselves were getting the dye stuffs at home off the rocks.

2781. How many different colours could they make from the dye stuffs of their own country?—Six or seven, or perhaps nine or ten. We can dye with tea, peat soot, lichens, heather tops, and bark of willow; but we do not use tea in making dye—it is too scarce a commodity.

2782. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—You say the weaving of the cloth cost

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6d. What makes up the 1s. 6d.; is it the price of the wool?—It is the manipulation of the wool,—the waulking of the wool.

2783. It is home labour?—Yes.

2784. The 1s. counts for the home labour?—Yes, and the 6d. is the actual weaving.

2785. Do they weave at Portree, or in hand looms?—We have hand looms.

2786. How many weavers are there on the east side here?—Seven or eight.

2787. Have they pretty good employment?—Yes, sometimes more than they can overtake,—sometimes without work,—according to the time of the year. One of us coming from the south country with our earnings, buys perhaps a stone of wool, and brings it home to our women to be worked up.

JOHN MACKENZIE, Crofter, Malagir (68)—examined.

John Mackenzie.

2788. *The Chairman.*—How many years have you been on the croft?—Since I was born. I was born on the croft; my father had it before me.

2789. Have you been elected a delegate freely?—Yes.

2790. You are an old man, and you remember old times. Can you tell us whether you believe the people were much better off when you were young than they are now?—I can say with truth that they were better off in my young days than they are now.

2791. Were they better dressed than they are now, or were they more substantially dressed?—Yes, they were shod and clothed much better than they are to-day.

2792. Did they make their own shoes, or did they buy their shoes in those days?—I used to buy them.

2793. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—But was it common for people to buy them?—Yes, we used to buy boots, and make the shoes at home with thongs of leather.

2794. *The Chairman.*—Were they better fed in those days than they are now?—Yes, doubtless.

2795. In what respect was their food better than it is now?—They can only live now by practising the utmost economy. I remember in my own township none of the families would need to go to borrow from another family. They were not in the necessity of borrowing anything when they were tenants of Lord Macdonald.

2796. Had they to buy meal?—We would be buying but very little at that time. Some families would not need to buy half a boll of meal from end to end of the year, and there might be some families able to sell meal.

2797. Were the potatoes better in those days?—Yes

2798 Was that the time they made kelp?—They were making kelp at one time; those of the crofters who were living near the shore.

2799. Did the Malagir people make kelp?—No, the Malagir people were too far up on the bill. They are not getting the use of the sea in any way. They have no road. Our children cannot go to school in bad weather.

2800. *The Chairman.*—Has your place lost any hill pasture?—Yes, the whole district was entirely deprived of hill pasture, and our stock are crowded in so that they are spoiled.

2801. We have heard of several places losing hill pasture. Was that hill pasture all in one lot, or was it in several different places throughout the country?—It was held in common by the different townships. No township was prohibiting another.

2802. Was it a very large place?—It was a very wide pasture, and was better than three times its own area. After our being deprived of the hill our rent was raised. It was more than doubled on us.

2803. Is it being diminished now?—Yes, it was reduced by 5s. in the pound, but that is only the good-will of the proprietor for the year. We have no assurance of its being continued.

2804. If you had the assurance that it would be continued, would that give you some satisfaction?—Unless we got the rent reduced to a sober rent we cannot hold up to it long. We will soon lose all we have. Our stock has got reduced, and our money has gone. We were hearing of good news from Ireland. We were much inclined to turn rebels ourselves in order to obtain the same benefits.

2805. Have the people, in consequence of discontent, done any injury to the proprietor or the factor or any other person in authority?—No, I am not aware that anything of the sort took place.

2805*a*. Have you been a fisherman?—No, I was living on the hill.

NORMAN MUNRO, Catechist, Clachan (69)—examined.

2806. *The Chairman.*—Have you a croft?—No.

2807. Was your family a crofting family?—Yes, but not in this country.

2808. From what country do you come?—M'Leod's country—Colbost.

2809. How long have you been in your present employment?—Eight years.

2810. Where were you employed before that?—I was employed as a tradesman in the low country.

2811. Since you came here eight years ago, have you observed any change in the condition of the people?—Yes, certain. I remarked that they are a deal poorer since the day when I came here.

2812. In what respect do you see the change chiefly?—In so far as their lands are not yielding maintenance for the people. That is one cause. And that land has been tilled perhaps forty or fifty years, and it cannot be expected it will yield crops to support the people who are living upon it. Another cause, that is evidently the case, which was often spoken of to-day, is the high rents we paid for these lands.

2813. Have you observed a change of feeling and disposition on the part of the people connected with the deterioration of their condition?—Well, I cannot remark anything regarding that, only that they complain of poverty.

2814. What do you think should be done?—If they would get more land, and cheaper, to keep them in employment and work in the country, without running from place to place after the bite they had to get to support their families, they would be better off.

2815. Do you think that the custom of going away for several months in the year to different places, and looking after employment, has a bad effect upon the happiness and character of the majority of the people?—Well, there is no doubt but that might be the case, for since that began in the country there is a difference of feeling in that respect from what it was in my young days.

2816. You think that if the men remained at home with their wives

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and children, and gained their subsistence at home, they would be happier and better?—I am certain of it. If they had lands to cultivate, and keep themselves and their families at work at home, and land that would support them, with cheap rents, such as would keep a family, I believe they would be far better off than running to the low country every now and again.

2817. But the young men, could they not often better their condition by going to other parts of Scotland, or by going to the colonies?—Well, I think they would be as happy at home as in any of the colonies in the world.

2818. But suppose all the young people remained at home and married and had families in the country, would not the land be subdivided again, and the people become poorer and poorer?—Give them the opportunity to work it out, and if the land was overcrowded with more than it could support, send them away to the colonies. I think they should get what lands are lying waste, and the best lands, in the meantime.

2819. But suppose you allow them to multiply to that extent, and subdivide that land, it would be more difficult then to send them away. There would be greater numbers, and by that time the land in the colonies would be filled up, and would they not find it difficult to get a living there?—Well, that is a question that is very ill to answer. I believe there is plenty of land, if it were only subdivided among the people, that would support them in the meantime. If that were done just now, we might just look to what is coming afterwards. I do not see that the meantime has anything to do with what is to come.

2820. But would it not be better to provide some of the people with more land here, and allow others to go away, and so to use every means of improving the people?—Well, if you give them the land, and divide it rightly, I have no objection to that. I think that is very right, when it is done. But had not I a good right to that land for which my forefathers suffered death in wars, protecting the country? Who should have a better right to that land than the heirs living in it, although it is wasted with sheep and game and deer altogether? For instance, my uncle was brought out of his bed to go and defend this country, and at the same time my grandfather was provided with a piece of land that would support his family, and at a very low rent. Now, in a very short period after that he was removed from that, and the land sold, and my people sent abroad if they liked to go. And have not I a good right to claim that land now as the heir of my friend that suffered?

2821. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Where were they removed from?—From Colbost.

2822. *The Chairman.*—How was your uncle taken for the defence of his country?—He was taken by the laird, M'Leod of M'Leod, and when they were done, he got the promise; but not only that, he was removed from a different place for choice of land for the son at the time. I think the offspring had a good claim on these lands to get them. I am well aware that is partly what has done a little disturbance in the island—claiming such claims on the land.

2823. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—In respect of what their fathers did for the country?—Yes, thinking they had a better right to it than strangers had, or even to be put under sheep.

2824. Do you know of any man from this district in the army just now?—I am not so well aware of that, but there are some here who may perhaps know it. I know some in our own country, M'Leod's country, in the army. There are one or two from here, I believe, in the army whom I saw at home once. Another thing that is

very miserable in this place, is the women working the work of horses at the time of sowing and delving their crofts.

2825. *The Chairman.*—Do you think that in former times, when the crofts were larger, there was less work on the part of women in the fields than there is now?—I am certain of it, because they had horses to help them. I never saw any in my young days—women drawing a harrow—till of late, and I think that is horse work for any woman or man, which is very common now in the islands.

2826. *Professor Mackinnon.*—In the countryside where you were brought up, was it the practice for women to draw the harrow?—No.

2827. I suppose the *cas-chrom* was used?—Yes, but only in places where the plough could not go.

2828. Was the plough more common then than it is now?—Certainly; the people had horses to plough, but they have not any to plough now, and they must nse the *cas-chrom*.

2829. *The Chairman.*—Do you think the health of the females and the children suffers from having an inferior description of food, and not having so much milk as they used to have?—That is evident, because in this district I do not believe I saw a pound of butter sold, between Loanfearn and Deig, in eight years, and that is a good proof of the poverty of the country. There might be a little in Loanfearn, but among the crofters I did not hear there was a pound of butter sold in all the district.

2830. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Was the district where you lived famous for butter and cheese?—They used to have a good supply to supply themselves and sell to others.

2831. *The Chairman.*—Do you remember that they used to sell butter in former times?—In my own country, but not here since I came.

2832. Salt butter?—Yes.

2833. Do the people keep any pigs in this country?—No, not in this district.

2834. It has never been a custom in the country?—Well, in my own days I saw the tenants keeping one for their own use; that was all.

2835. But did the crofters?—Yes.

2836. Why have they ceased to keep swine?—Because they cannot feed them. That is my idea.

2837. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—They used to feed them on potatoes?—Yes, and fatten them on corn seed when it came to the time of fattening.

2838. *The Chairman.*—Do you think the general conduct and moral character of the people has deteriorated or does it remain the same—their honesty, good behaviour, and sobriety?—Well, that is a very difficult question to answer. So far as I can see, I cannot say anything in regard to that. I think there are people here as honest as I know of in the whole island, if they had the means; and so far as they go, they are now almost ruined in regard to their honesty.

2839. In reference to sobriety, is there more drinking than there used to be in former times, or less?—I believe there is less, but there is too much still. There should not be any of it at all.

2840. Is the temperance movement making any progress in this part of the country?—Yes, a good deal.

2841. Is there more education generally now than there was? Has the new system of education done good. Has it been effectual?—That will be the case through time. It is young as yet, but it has done a good deal

Murdo Nicolson, Farmer, Loanfearn—examined.

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2842. *The Chairman.*—How long have you had your present farm?—About eighteen years since I got it. My fathers were there for the last 500 years, in the same farm, and the same house.

2843. Under Lord Macdonald's family?—Yes.

2844. Has your farm been enlarged during your time?—Yes, three crofts have been added to it.

2845. Were those crofts added to your farm by your own desire, or by your landlord's desire?—Well, two of them by my own desire, and the other was vacant when I came home. I was abroad.

2846. *Professor Mackinnon.*—You know the whole district perfectly well?—Yes.

2847. How many schools are there?—Two, one here and one at Valtos.

2848. New schools?—Yes.

2849. Built under the new Act?—Yes.

2850. Are there separate school boards for Kilmuir and Stenscholl?—Yes.

2851. Is there a compulsory officer in this district?—No, he lives in Kilmuir.

2852. Does he visit here?—Now and then.

2853. And there are two schoolmasters settled here ever since the schools were built?—Yes; one here and one at Valtos.

2854. Are all the children within easy reach of one or other of the two schools?—Yes; in summer time, but not in winter.

2855. Do you know the population of the place?—I do not know the population of this place; but the population of the upper part, which contains the upper school, is about 450 people.

2856. And how many children attend the school at the present time?—I dare say there will be between twenty and thirty.

2857. Do you consider that a good attendance?—No, far from it.

2858. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Is that here or at Valtos?—At Valtos.

2859. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Is it much the same here?—I think it is the same so far as I can make out.

2860. How do you account for the children not attending the Valtos school better than that?—I do not know what is the cause of it. About this time of the year poor people are so busy, and if there is any child that can herd and help the parents, they will keep them at home when they are sowing, and planting potatoes. After this the children herd the cattle, and the men who are able to work will go south to earn their living and support their families.

2861. And the children herd the cattle?—Yes, there is nobody to look after them except the old people—old men and women.

2862. And these cannot herd cattle?—No.

2863. And then, when the winter comes, the school is too far away?—Yes, and there are bad roads, and burns and the like of that.

2864. But, allowing for all that, do you think the children attend school properly?—No.

2865. And how do you account for that?—That is a thing I cannot make out. If the children were pressed to go to school, they would go.

2866. But they are not?—No. As long as they will do anything about the place, the parents will not send them to school.

2867. Unless they are compelled?—Yes.

2868. Does the school board meet here occasionally?—Not very often.

2869. Do you think the board are perfectly well aware of this irregular attendance?—I think so.

2870. The officer is quite aware of it?—Yes, and every one of the members of the board is aware of it.

2871. Do you know if the Board ever press the children to go in any way?—They spoke to the parents, but there was no use in that.

2872. You know the law gives them power now to punish the parent if he does not send his child to school. They never tried that mode?—No.

2873. Do you think they ought?—That is a thing I cannot say; I do not think the parents will ever send the children to school till they try that.

2874. Then I suppose you think they ought to try it as soon as possible?—In some cases.

2875. The children are clever enough if they were sent to school?—They are as clever as children in any part of the world, if they got a good education.

2876. Even as things are, are they getting a better education than they did ten or twenty years ago?—I do not think it.

2877. There are better schoolmasters?—Better schoolmasters, but I do not think there are better scholars.

2878. There are school rates?—We are paying school rates, and we were not paying them in the old time.

2879. And good schoolmasters?—Yes.

2880. More of them?—Yes, more of them certainly.

2881. And you think there are not better scholars?—No, I do not think it.

2882. How is that?—Well, I cannot make out. I have seen many people from Skye going to the army, and some got to high offices in the army; but you will not see any youngsters now going into the army, and that shows the people are falling back in Skye.

2883. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Do you mean in spirit?—No, not in spirit.

2884. *Professor M'Kinnon.*—In circumstances?—In circumstances.

2885. Do you think, if the people were better educated, that would be one inducement at least for some of the people leaving the country, and so relieve the pressure of population?—I daresay some of the young men would be better to leave the country.

2886. But there are plenty of young men?—Well, there are a great many of them leaving the country; but we have plenty of land in Skye if it was given to us. We have thousands upon thousands of acres in Skye under sheep. I have sheep myself.

2887. You heard the whole evidence that was given here to-day?—Yes.

2888. That the people are getting worse off?—Yes.

2889. You quite believe that?—I am quite sure of it.

2890. You know the district thoroughly well?—From one end to the other.

2891. And the reason they give themselves is, that the crofts were reduced—especially the pasture ground—and subdivided, and the rents raised?—Yes.

2892. Do you also consider that the chief cause?—Yes. Another is that when the people here got poor, Captain Fraser had a rule—and it was a good rule—that every tenant should pay his rent at the term. Well, poor people could not pay, and they had to go to the bank to raise the money, and perhaps they would have to pay interest to the bank, and to the man who helped them to get the money out of the bank. Perhaps

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2s. 6d. or 3s. in the pound would have to be paid to that man. This was ruining the poor people. Perhaps one would borrow £10 this year and £10 next year for twenty years, borrowing it that way.

2893. That, of course, was the consequence of the previous inability to pay?—Yes, lest the people would be moved off the estate. But Captain Fraser did not know anything about that. He was getting his rent from the tenants, but he did not know they were getting it out of the banks or anything of that kind.

2894. And that went on very much?—Yes, very much till lately. Now they cannot get money out of the banks at all.

2895. What would be your remedy for the whole matter?—Well, more lands and lower rental.

2896. Plenty of land?—Plenty of land. There are some patches of land on these crofts which have been turned for the last fifty or sixty years every year.

2897. I suppose neither you nor I are old enough to remember forty years ago. At that time was there a rotation of crop?—Well, I recollect forty or fifty years ago very well.

2898. Was there rotation of crop among the crofters at that time?—Yes, there were plenty of potatoes and plenty of corn.

2899. But were they not cropping the land every year then?—No.

2900. Were they letting it out now and then?—Yes. Most of them had full crofts then, and now there are three families in most cases on each croft.

2901. And were they letting the land out fallow a year now and again, then?—Yes.

2902. You remember that yourself?—Yes.

2903. Now, supposing they did get the land, how could they stock it?—Well, I do not know,—if they would get money from Government. The poor people cannot stock it now, but they will never get on if they do not get more land.

2904. Do you think that would be a reasonable or probable thing to ask Government for money to stock the land?—Well, I think so.

2905. Has that ever been done anywhere?—Not here; they were not in want of it till now. I recollect when I was a little boy every farmer would kill a cow at Martinmas, and also kill a sheep now and again, and use their own eggs and everything, but now they are selling everything to pay the rent.

2906. I suppose, when you were a boy, you remember perfectly well the homes of the people here?—Yes.

2907. Their food and clothing?—Yes.

2908. Bed clothes?—Bed clothes, and everything they wore.

2909. And their food was very much better?—Well, it was strong Higbland food that was used, and it is far better to raise strong-built healthy people, and a nice thing to have.

2910. That is to say they had meal, potatoes, and milk?—Yes, and fish and beef and mutton, and plenty of butter and cheese.

2911. And to-day?—Very little of these. If a man has a wedder or two, he will have to sell them.

2912. And what do they have in its place?—Nothing at all.

2913. *The Chairman.*—Tea?—No, what would they do with tea? There is no beef, no milk, nor anything else; and people going to the south and getting into the habit of drinking tea, when they come to Skye may drink tea in Skye.

2914. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—What is your rental?—£80.

2915. Are you upon Kilmuir estate or Lord Macdonald's?—Upon Major Fraser's estate, marching with Lord Macdonald.

2916. Has your rent been raised since Major Fraser's time?—Yes.

2917. Very much?—Yes, quite enough.

2918. Would you have any objection to state what it was when you got the property?—I left home in 1840, and went to Australia. My father then was paying £25 a year clear rental. There was no road money about that time. Now I am paying £80 a year, but there are three crofts added to Loanfearn.

2919. But since the three crofts were added, has your rent been raised?—Yes.

2920. *Professor Mackinnon.*—What was the rent of the three crofts when your father paid £25?—When I got the two crofts they were £5, 5s. each, and the one croft was £5; that is £15, 5s.

2921. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—That would make £40?—Yes

2922. And it is £80 now?—Yes.

2923. *The Chairman.*—Have you had the same reduction that other people had?—Yes; Major Fraser gave me £20 down for the last two years. In the receipts it is only from year to year.

2924. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Have you a lease of Loanfearn?—No, I never had a lease.

2925. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Nor your forefathers before you?—No.

2926. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Did you ever ask a lease?—No.

2927. Do you wish to have it?—No.

2928. Why not?—I do not know. If I were as young as I am old, I would not stay long in Skye.

2929. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Are you still improving the lands?—Yes.

2930. Are you afraid of your rent being still more raised?—I do not think they can raise it higher than it is.

2931. You have heard some of the previous witnesses state, as a reason for not improving their crofts, their fear of the rents being raised, and of eviction; but you have no such fear?—Not the least afraid.

2932. Because your rent is so high, that nobody else will give it?—It will not pay me, or anybody else.

2933. Might it not be added to Duntulm?—It is too far from Duntulm.

2934. Or Monkstadt?—It is too far from Monkstadt.

2935. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Did you ever hear of a Government advancing money to stock farms?—Not to small tenants.

2936. Or to large tenants?—Yes, I believe Mr Martin, Snizort, got money in that way to fence.

2937. Fencing is a different thing, because the land remains; but what about stock?—The land here wants fencing, draining, and stocking. I never heard of the Government giving money for stocking in Great Britain.

2938. Anywhere else?—Yes, in Australia.

2938*a*. What proof would there be that the stock would remain?—The Government could not mark the beast as a merchant does, and be there always beside it to see that it does not leave the place?—I know that most of the people here to-day, if they do not get help from the Government, will never be able to do any good.

2939. Did you hear about the advances for meal and the marking of the beasts in security?—Yes.

2940. Do you know all about that?—Yes.

2941. What do you think of it?—If the merchant would allow the man to sell the beast again, he would sell the beast, and give the money to the merchant, and he has a right to do so.

2942. And is a fair price paid for the meal?—Yes.

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Murdo Nicolson.

2943. But the price of the meal is not told to the man?—No, but when the merchant buys the beast from the tenant, perhaps the meal is in Glasgow, and perhaps the merchant does not know the price of the meal.

2944. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—It was said recently in defence of a man tried before the High Court of Justiciary that it was a common practice for people here to sign the names of other people without asking their leave; is that so?—No, I don't think it is. I never heard of that being practised in Skye. If it was, it was forgery.

2945. It is not correct to say that it is common?—It is not.

2946. The want of that road is a very great inconvenience and loss to the people of the district?—The want of a road and a postman is a great inconvenience.

2947. Has there been any expenditure upon it for some time?—No. Major Fraser finished it to Loch Mealt, and did not go further than that.

2948. As far as you are concerned, is the road useless?—Useless, to-day.

2949. How many of the members of the school board of Kilmuir live in the parish?—Two members.

2950. How many members of the Stenscholl board live in the parish of Stenscholl?—There are very few.

2951. Are there any?—Yes, there is myself.

2952. Where does the clerk of the school board live?—At Portree.

2953. And where does the compulsory officer live?—About nine miles from this.

2954. How far is he from Lealt?—About thirteen miles.

2955. Don't you think that, on the whole, the compulsory clause of the Act, and the services of the officer in making children attend school, are a dead letter in this district?—I think there should be one over at this side.

2956. *The Chairman.*—You spoke of the Government advancing money for the purpose of purchasing stock. It seems to me very doubtful whether Government could do that, but it does seem possible Government might advance money for the erection of buildings and march fences. Do you think people would be able to take up new land if they were helped with the buildings and with the fences?—Well, some of them, and others not.

2957. Would it be a great advantage to the present race of crofters if their hill pasture were fenced off from the tacksmen?—If would be the making of the poor tenants. Their sheep and cattle are dying. Herds are herding them all day, and they will die with the rot disease. Dogs are after them all day, and if there was any fence the sheep would get a rest.

[ADJOURNED.]

WATERNISH, SKYE, MONDAY, MAY 14, 1883.

(*See Appendix A, VII. and VIII., and Evidence*, p. 611.)

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'KINNON, Crofter, Hallistra (51)—examined.

Donald M'Kinnon

2958. *The Chairman.*—How long have you been upon your croft?—I am twenty years paying rent.

2959. On the same croft?—Not on the same croft.

2960. Have you been freely selected as a delegate of the people of Hallistra?—Yes, it is they who sent me here.

2961. Who is the proprietor?—Captain Macdonald.

2962. Will you be so good as to state what the hardships and grievances are of which the people complain whom you represent?—That we are confined to small crofts, and that we have no place on which to graze our cows other than at tether.

2963. How are they grazed at tether?—It has a peg at the one end. We would like to have a bit of hill pasture for our cows, if we could get it. The crofts which we have have been cultivated incessantly for the past eighty or one hundred years, and are now exhausted. We cannot keep horses. We have no grazing for them, and we have to do the harrowing ourselves. I need to use a double quantity of seed in sowing my land, the land is so bad. I have no further complaint to make.

2964. Is there any complaint about sea-weed?—We get a little sea-weed for payment.

2965. Can you suggest anything that could be done to improve your condition besides what you have said?—I think if we had more land that would enable us to rest what we have been continuously cultivating. We would not require much.*

2966. How about the road? Is there a road about this place or near this place?—The road passes my house.

2967. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—How many people are in the township you represent?—Nine crofters, and the Captain's herd. These nine pay rent.

2968. Are they all in the same position as yourself?—Yes, very much.

2969. You want more land. Is there land convenient which this township could get from the laird?—Yes, above our houses; the land which our forefathers had.

2970. Has that place a name?—Upper Hallistra.

2971. How long ago was this taken from you?—About forty-two or forty-three years ago, when the township was divided into lots.

2972. Was that in the time of the present family?—In the time of Major Macdonald, Captain Macdonald's father.

2973. Have the people asked the present laird at any time to get that hill back?—We asked it once or twice. We have done so this year. We have repeatedly spoken for an addition to our lots and grazing.

* See Appendix A, VII.

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2974. And what was the answer?—He did not give us any encouragement that we would get it.

2975. In whose possession is it at this moment?—In his own possession, under sheep and cattle.

2976. I understand you to say you are not complaining of the rent?—The rent is very high for all that we can keep.

2977. When was it last raised?—To the best of my recollection, it is the same rent still which is laid on the crofts. The present landlord did not raise the rent at any rate.

2978. Is your present township near where we are now sitting?—Within two miles of it.

2979. Are you on the shore?—Yes.

2980. Are they generally fishermen?—The most. We would be fishing when there was nothing else to do.

2981. There is a harbour here which we have seen this morning—a nice little place, which does not seem to be much used; what is the reason of that?—That is a port which the captain built for his own boats, but he does not prevent anybody else from using it. They have full liberty to use it.

2982. Is there any other landing place?—There is a small quay they are working at. The fishermen land at the upper quay.

2983. It is not a protection for boats to lie in, is it?—No.

2984. Is there a good deal of fish got in this bay here?—At one time a good deal of fish was got in the bay, but for some time past it has been going past.

2985. We hear in every place we go to the same story that fish were once got, but now they are scarce. Can you give any explanation of that?—I cannot explain it, but I think it is the hand of Provideuce.

2986. You are not able to assign any cause yourself?—No.

2987. What is the extent of your arable ground?—About 5 or 6 acres of all sorts, but there is part of it under the name of land which is not cultivatable. It would cost from £12 to £8 an acre to trench it to make it good land.

2988. How much are you actually cultivating now?—I think about 4 acres.

2989. Have you ever thought of improving that land, if it is capable of improvement?—Yes, I have thought of that. Money would improve it. Some of the stones would take four or five men, as strong as myself, to lift them. I would need 100 or 200 barrels of gunpowder to clean the lot.*

2990. Then, you think that land practically is not capable of improvement?—It is, by spending money on it.

2991. But, practically, it is not capable of improvement?—It would not pay for a long time to come.

2992. *Mr Cameron.*—Do yon speak of the land of your own croft, or does the same apply to your neighbours?—Most of my neighbonrs' crofts are in the same state. I think my own lot is as bad as another with stones.

2993. So, in fact, there is no land capable of improvement so as to add to the arable acreage of your croft, or your neighbours' crofts?—No.

2994. What stock do you keep?—I am there twenty-six years paying rent, and it is two cows I am able to keep, and the grazing is scant enough for them—mostly on the tether, and starving.

2995. Is that the case with your neighbours in the township?—They are not much better.

2996. But two cows is what they keep?—Some of them are keeping

* See Appendix A, VII.

only one cow. When I have a young beast I am obliged to sell it at the end of the year, having no grass for it.

2997. What is your rent?—£7, 15s. of bare rent; £8, 10s. with rates.

2998. Are you and your neighbours in poor circumstances?—Poor enough. There may be one man who has a cow, and five perhaps may be claiming it.

2999. You mean he has borrowed money upon it?—No, but we are getting meal from the merchants in Glasgow, and shoemakers, and rent, and everything. It may be that five may be claiming an interest in that cow and the value of the cow not able to pay them.

3000. Is that the case generally amongst your neighbours in the township?—Yes, they are mostly in debt. In families in which there may be four young men working, even these may have enough to do to clear their families.

3001. Since when did that state of things begin?—Since the potato failure. People have been poor ever since the land has been lotted, and the pasture taken.

3002. Has it been getting greatly worse within the last few years, or has this state of things been constant?—We were poor enough, but this year has sunk us entirely in debt. We were poor enough before, so poor that we could not get a boll of meal on credit.

3003. And this year has been the worst?—Yes.

3004. Do you account for that in any measure by the loss of the grazing forty years ago?—We were not, certainly, the better of the deprivation of the hill. We need to sell the stirk at a year old, having no place to keep it in.

3005. Is your arable ground sufficient to winter more cattle if you had grazing for them in summer?—I might be able to winter another beast—a two-year-old; but if I had more land I would be able to bring in another bit under cultivation.

3006. Now, will you explain exactly what you mean by the tethering?—The place is so confined, and the corn is so close to where we have to graze them, that we must have them tethered, otherwise they would be in our corn. There is no room to feed them otherwise. When they see the corn and the grass, and they hungry, there would be no keeping them back without the tether.

3007. Could you not drive them to the hill in the morning, and leave them there?—We have no hill at all. The laird has a dyke to the roadside.

3008. Where do you tether your cows?—On our crofts, on that part of our arable land which we leave out for grass. Part of our ground is so bad that it will never grow grass, and we leave that out.

3009. Is there any common grazing at all within the township?—No, nothing; not 3 inches of hill pasture.

3010. To whom do you pay for your sea-ware?—To the ground officer, and the ground officer hands it to the landlord.

3011. Has that always been the practice?—I never saw it otherwise but one year.

3012. What do you pay for it?—1s. 6d. a hundred-weight.

3013. How much is that a cart load?—A cart would not contain a scale.

3014. How much is a scale?—One hundred-weight.

3015. Do you really mean 1s. 6d. per cwt.?—Yes, the drift ware; we cut the sea-weed for ourselves.

3016. You don't really mean to say you pay 1s. 6d. per cwt. for sea-

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ware?—It is not actually weighed, but the ground officer points out the space of the sea-shore on which we are to cut the sea-ware. He is marking out a bit of the sea-shore on which each has a right to cut.

3017. How many cwts. go to one of the country carts?—The scale to which I refer is more than a cart-load; sometimes twelve to fifteen cart-loads for 1s. 6d., and at other times three and four. We measure the sea-ware in creels, and there should be sixty creels in the scale.

3018. How much do you pay in the year for your sea-weed?—Some of us take 2s. worth and others 2s. 6d. worth, and down to 1s. as their families are able to manage.

3019. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—You say you make a large part of your living by fishing?—Yes.

3020. If you had hill pasture, and a larger extent of arable land, would that not rather prevent you pursuing the employment of a fisherman?—It would; but where there are large families, they will do the spring work in three or four weeks with the *cas-chrom*.

3021. Do you think there is more to be made at the sea here than is to be made on the land?—Yes, if there was fishing; but the sea cannot be depended upon. The land is surer.

3022. Do you know if, when the hill pasture was taken away from them, it was done with the view of turning their attention more to fishing?—I do not know.

3023. You never heard of it?—I never heard of that.

3024. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Do they fish for cod and ling here?—Yes, pretty often. When they don't work at the land, they are working at fishing and at lobsters.

3025. What price do you get for cod and ling?—1s. for the ling; I am not sure, however.

3026. Is it cured here?—Some of the fishers do cure, and send to Glasgow themselves.

3027. Have they generally good boats?—The boats are not bad; they are improving. They are much better than they were in our early recollection.

3028. Did they get new ones for those broken in 1881?—Yes.

3029. *Professor Mackinnon.*—You say you have 5 or 6 acres of arable land. Does that include the pasture land?—That includes all my holding.

3030. And for that you pay £7, 15s. of rent?—Yes.

3031. And £8, 10s. including taxes?—Yes.

3032. I think you also said there was no land that could be made arable outside?—There is arable land outside of my holding; what my forefathers had.

3033. And I suppose there is plenty of pasture land?—Yes.

3034. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Does the captain give employment to a good many of the people here?—He used to give some work. There was not so much work these last two or three years.

3035. Does he go about much among them?—Yes.

3036. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh*—Does he live all the year round here?—Yes, unless he goes south on business.

3037. *The Chairman.*—You stated that about forty-two years ago the hill pasture was taken away from you?—Yes.

3038. Was it only hill pasture, or was there arable land taken away at the same time?—The arable land was taken from us at the same time; arable land on which they used to grow potatoes and corn.

3039. You said that this land was now joined to a farm which was in the occupation of the landlord?—Yes.

3040. If the proprietor gave them back that land, would it spoil the farm altogether? Would it take up the whole of the landlord's farm, and spoil it, or would there be enough left to the landlord for a good farm?—It would take a piece out of the landlord's holding, but he has a good deal more besides that.

3041. Do you mean a good deal more on the same spot, connected with it?—Yes, marching with our township.

3042. May that farm in the possession of the landlord be called his home farm—his own particular farm attached to his residence?—No, it is three or four miles from his dwelling-house, and some of it is six miles from his dwelling-house. He keeps sheep and cattle upon it.

3043. Has the proprietor got another farm nearer his residence in his own hands?—Yes, plenty; parks and a big farm.

3044. You said that the farming deteriorated when the land was lotted. Do you mean you would prefer a system of cultivation in common—the 'run rig' system?—Yes, it would be better for us to be as we were before. We might be able to keep a horse, and we might have a herd in common.

3045. Did you ever hear the people express a regret that the old 'run 'rig' system had been abolished?—Yes, they lament it to the present day.

3046. Do you understand what is meant by the 'run rig' system?—Yes, I understand it; and that is the system which they regret at the present day. They had more land then.

3047. Supposing the common hill pasture were given to them, would that satisfy them, or would they still wish to have a system of 'run-rig' re-established in connection with the arable ground?—If we got common hill pasture we would be very well satisfied with that.

3048. At the earliest period you can remember, do you think that the clothes and the food and the houses of the people were better or worse than they are now? Do you think that, in these respects, the people have been improving or not?—We used to get fine home-made blankets at home, that any person could sleep in, and the clothes my wife would make I could appear in anywhere, but now I am reduced to purchase south country made cloth, which will not last a year. The food is pretty much as it was. We are getting meal from Glasgow, and we use milk; but our houses are too bare for want of clothing—night clothes especially.

3049. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—If you got this hill land back, would you be willing to pay a fair rent for it?—Yes.

3050. Now, the present laird is evidently a very good landlord, who lives among you, and has not raised your rent. That being the case, if you get back the hill land, would you really set to work and improve the arable land, which under present circumstances, you have not done, without assistance? Would you take in the whole of what is now uncultivated of your arable land?—Yes, if we would have such encouragement. We are considering our present land dear at its present rent.

3051. But I understand you would feel so encouraged by being able to send your cows to the hill, that you would really then set to work to ameliorate the croft so far as it might be possible for you to do it?—Yes, we would do our best, if we would not be removed out of it.

3052. But you are not at all afraid of eviction?—The landlord was not given to eviction unless a person would do wrong, but we have not such a good bargain. We are not the least afraid of eviction as long as we behave ourselves.

3053. Can you say the same all over this estate of Waternish—that the people feel the same?—I do not say. I speak for the part of the property on which I am myself.

ANGUS M'LEAN, Crofter, Lower Hallistra (63)—examined.

SKYE. WATERNISH. Angus M'Lean.

3054. *The Chairman.*—Have you been freely chosen a delegate by your people?—Yes.

3055. What representations or statement have you to make here on behalf of those who sent you?—We desire to get help to feed ourselves and our stock.

3056. What kind of help? In what form?—Hill pasture.* No crofter can do well without sheep and horses. He is not a farmer without these. I have nothing more to say just now, but if we would get that I think we would be better off than we are.

3057. *Professor Mackinnon.*—How many crofters are there in your particular township?—Seven paying rent. The landlord has his shepherd on another croft. We are together eight crofters.

3058. What is your stock?—Some have two cows, and some one.

3059. How many acres will there be in the croft?—I have never heard the acreage.

3060. Off and on?—Just as Donald M'Kinnon's.

3061. And you have not a bit of arable ground behind the fence?—No; I am in the same township with Donald M'Kinnon. He is one of the seven.

3062. *The Chairman.*—Do you agree generally with what Donald M'Kinnon said?—Yes.

3063. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Is there a demand for crofts? If one of the occupiers wishes to give up his croft, is there any great demand for it in the neighbourhood?—No; one of us, a crofter, has given up his croft already, and I do not see any demand for it.

3064. Has it not been occupied since?—He has given it up at this present term.

3065. And nobody has asked for it?—No, I have not heard.

3066. Where did that crofter go to?—It is 'the post,' and he is in the house yet.

3067. Has he cropped the land this year?—No.

3068. Is the land under crop?—Yes; it is vacant.

3069. *The Chairman.*—If the croft were offered at a lower rent, would there be people inclined for it?—Yes, I am sure that if the rent were less somebody would take it.

3070. Has there been any increase in the number of farmers in Hallistra in your time?—I cannot say.

3071. Are there more than eight families in Hallistra as well as crofts?—Only eight.

3072. *Professor Mackinnon.*—No cottars?—No.

3073. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Were there always eight since you remember?—Yes.

3074. And what becomes of the young people?—When our land was cut into crofts we were put down by the sea-shore. The young people leave the country.

3075. Can they not get houses here?—Yes, they must go away to earn money for us and for themselves.

3076. Are there peats near at hand?—No, our peat moss is two miles away from us, and I have to carry the peats on my back.

3077. The other witness talked of cart-loads of sea-ware. Do you hire horse labour both for the peats and for the sea-ware?—No, a cart cannot travel our way.

3078. Do you require horse labour to cultivate your land?—No, not now. It is just turning it with the *cas chrom* and the spade.

* See Appendix A, VII.

3079. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Your memory can go easily back before the time that the crofts were split up, and I understand the rent has not been changed since. What was the rent before?—I pay now £8, 5s. of rent; and before the lots were cut up I could keep four milk cows for that sum and two horses, and as many sheep as the place would carry. There was no summing.

3080. How many sheep?—There were some with six or seven, some ten or twelve, and up to twenty. Some, perhaps, would have none.

3081. Four cows, two horses, and twenty sheep for £8, and now two cows for £8, 5s.?—I have two cows and a two-year-old, and for the past five years I have been paying 12s. additional for grazing for them.

3082. *The Chairman.*—Has any return or reduction of rent been made within the last two or three years?—No, it is the same rent we are paying for the twenty-five years during which we have been in our present crofts.

3083. Where were you before?—I was down at Trumpan before that.

3084. *Mr Cameron.*—Does the £8, 5s. include rates and taxes?—The rates and taxes are exclusive of the £8, 5s.

3085. *The Chairman.*—Do you pay for a doctor?—I think we pay 2s. in the pound between poor and school rates. We don't pay doctor's money.

3086. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Do you pay road money?—No.

3087. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Is there a road?—Yes.

JOHN M'LEAN, Crofter, Hallen Park (73)—examined.

3088. *The Chairman.*—Are you a fisherman?—I am not now a fisherman; I was a fisherman. John M'Lean

3089. How long have you been on your present croft?—Forty-five or forty-six years.

3090. Have you been freely elected a delegate by the people of your place?—Yes.

3091. What have you to state to us on the part of the people?—I have to say that my land is very high rented, stony ground.

3092. I wish you first to speak on behalf of the whole people who have elected you. What do they complain of?—Their cause of complaint is just the same as mine.

3093. Then go on?—Hard stony ground, and part of my arable land has been cultivated during the whole time of my occupancy. We have no hill pasture. We are in a park surrounded by a dyke.

3094. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Who is outside the dyke?—Tenants who are above us on the hill, and on the other side another park.

3095. Crofters?—Yes.

3096. Where is your place?—About two miles further down.

3097. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—What do you think of the life and living of the people now, compared with what it was when you were young?—They have no living now in comparison to what they had when I was young. They have much trouble and toil working the ground, which they had not then. There is not a man or a woman now but has to be out in spring working at the ground now; and when they are done with the spade, they have to drag the harrows themselves.

3098. Did they not work as hard before?—No, they did not. They had horses that would do the work of ploughing and harrowing.

3099. Had they better food then than they have now?—Yes, they had plenty of meal and flesh, some of them. Before they were spoiled, each one

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would have from ten to twenty sheep, four milk cows, two stirks, and two or three heifers to keep until the time for selling them; but now I must sell my stirk for want of a keeping place, before the proper time for selling.

3100. How often do you eat meat now?—We do not eat flesh at all. We have not the wherewith to buy any, and we have no flesh of our own that we can eat.

3101. What is the principal article of food?—Fish, meal and water, and milk.

3102. Do they take more whisky now-a-days or less?—I am not using much of it, at any rate. There is not more whisky consumed now. I remember whisky being manufactured down here.

3103. Where did they get their whisky from out of Skye?—From the Gairloch people; they were very kind people, but it is a long time since we have seen any of them.

3104. Was there a great deal of whisky privately made in Skye before the Carabost distillery was erected?—Yes, some; but it is a long time since the manufacture stopped. There is not a drop being manufactured now.

3105. In those days, of course, there was no tea?—No, not a drop.

3106. But there is a good deal now?—Plenty of tea now.

3107. I suppose in the poorest houses in the parish they have tea regularly every day?—Yes, in the poorest houses in the parish.

3108. How often every day?—Twice a day, at any rate.

3109. Do they give tea to the children?—Yes, what can poor people do when they have not got anything else? They must take something to keep them alive.

3110. Are there any of them so poor that they have no milk?—Not many; unless it may be some paupers. Some have a cow, some two.

3111. Since what time do you think their condition has begun to deteriorate?—More than fifty years ago.

3112. And who was laird then?—Mr Grant, afterwards Lord Glenelg.

3113. Was he a good landlord?—Yes, he was; but factors were coming our way, who were spoiling the place. These are the people who spoiled the place before the Macdonalds got it. I remember the time of ten shares in the township being at £4 of rent each, and a factor came who doubled the rent. That was before the Macdonalds became proprietors. He doubled that rent, and took the sea-ware from us.

3114. *The Chairman.*—Was the land at that time held in 'run-rig,' or were the crofts already separated?—They held the arable land in common.

3115. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—When was the land first divided among the crofters?—Before the Macdonalds' time.

3116. Were there any people removed during that time, before the Macdonalds?—Yes. Corry was the last factor, and he was before the Macdonalds' time, and he made a dyke by the roadside. He made parks down below the road to the sea-shore. He moved the people who had the arable land, and the grazing above down to that low land; and he placed two and three on each lot, and he put a sheep stock on the hill of which he deprived them. He took from them both sheep and horses; but there were two townships to the north end of that, which he left as they were.

3117. What are they?—Hallistra.

3118. Were there any removals made under Major Macdonald, the father of the present laird?—No, but these people became so poor that they could not pay the land, and much of the land was wasted, and the major had to move these people.

3119. Had the major a factor?—No.

3120. And his son has never had a factor—No.

3121. He manages his own lands?—Yes. Any land which the captain set to tenants since he became landlord, he gave it to them at their own offer.

3122. Has he any tacksmen on his estate, or has he in his own hands all except what the crofters have?—No, he has no tacksmen.

3123. *Mr Cameron.*—You say they used to have horses formerly. Had they more arable land?—Yes, much more, and had less rent than we pay now.

3124. How long ago is that?—About fifty years ago.

3125. Has the poverty of the people been gradually increasing since that date?—Yes, they are not getting richer at all by any means, and these years have spoiled them entirely. I paid £10 between rent and rates at last Martinmas, and six pecks of meal is all that I made at the mill, and I had to buy for my family.

3126. You pay £10, and keep two cows and followers?—Yes, £8, 18s. of rent.

3127. And you have two cows and followers?—Sometimes I keep three; but I have to buy grass.

3128. Where is the arable land you used to cultivate when you had horses?—Other crofters have it now; it is just above us.

3129. Then, there were fewer crofters on the ground than there are now on that part of the estate?—Yes, I think so. There are many crofters now.

3130. There are too many crofters for the land?—Yes.

3131. How do you think it would answer if some of the crofters were to become fishermen, and depend entirely on fishing, and let the other crofters (their neighbours) get the land they occupy?—Well, the fishing has gone against us for the past two years. The Government should give some assistance for the erection of a pier here, for fishermen pass out their lines in very stormy and dangerous weather. They are not in a position to get built boats with sufficient material.

3132. If you had boats found, and if a pier were erected, would it encourage the people to prosecute the fishing more than they do at present?—Yes, it certainly would. They come from the east coast to fish at Barra; and if the fishermen here were as efficiently equipped as these they would be encouraged to do otherwise.

3133. Then, in that case, do you think it would be for the advantage of the people at large, if a proportion of them were to devote themselves to fishing, and the remainder stick to the farming, and take up the crofts of those who prosecuted the fishing?—I do not know that; a fisherman would need to have land also.

3134. Would it not be better for the community at large if a proportion of them stuck to the land and the other proportion took up fishing, and let the land go to the rest so as to increase their holdings?—What would do the crofters good would be for them to keep a horse to help to till the ground. I would rather have a horse just now, even should I only have one cow.

3135. Do you think any of your neighbours that you are acquainted with would be willing to give up their land and stick to the fishing, if they got these advantages in the way of boats and a pier?—I do not know. That is what I cannot say. I was not asking them about that.

3136. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—How many crofters are there in this township? Five; one left us.

3137. What became of that croft? Another one has got it.

3138. Of yourselves?—Another one of ourselves took the croft, and he has now two.

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John M'Lean.

3139. How long have you been in this place? I understand you were not born in this township?—No; I was born not far from the present township, in a place called Reisagan.

3140. You have told us that you are surrounded on two sides by townships of crofters like your own. In these circumstances, how can your townships be extended except at the expense of your neighbours? You have accounted for two sides; what is on the other side of you?—The ground officer is on the other side of me, and other crofters.

3141. How is it possible, then, to increase your holdings in these circumstances?—There is no way in which crofts which are enclosed in a park, as we are, can be increased, unless by removing some of those that surround us.

3142. Can you suggest what ought to be done to benefit you?—If w. would get hill pasture; but the rent is heavy enough on us.

3143. Is there any hill pasture which would be convenient for you?—Yes, there is such hill pasture above us, and in the hands of the landlord.

3144. What is the name of the place?—Hallistra.

3145. That is the same place the previous witness spoke of?—Yes.

3146. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—You mentioned that when crofts were vacant, the captain gave them to tenants at their own offer. Were the offers higher or lower than the previous ones?—I cannot say.

3147. Were the six crofts in your township all at the same rent?—No.

3148. Do you know if the tenant who got the two crofts paid the old rent for the extra croft that he took?—I cannot say. I am informed that he has taken it as at this term of Whitsunday, and I am not sure if he has got it yet.

3149. *The Chairman.*—You stated that the people were better off when you were young—that they had better clothes and better food. When you were young were the people more cheerful and happy in their minds than they are now?—I cannot say much about that, but their circumstances then were better than they are now.

3150. Had they more amusements and diversions than they have now?—Yes, much more.

3151. What sort of diversions?—Balls and dances at some times of the year—at Christmas. They don't have such now.

3152. Had they more music?—Yes.

3153. What sort of music?—Pipe We don't hear the pipe at all in the place now.

3154. Did they sing more?—Yes, plenty of songs

3155. Men and women?—Yes.

3156. What has made them less cheerful? Have the clergy discountenanced those amusements, or is it the deterioration of their condition?—The ministers of course were discountenancing it. The ministers won't be for the like of that at all.

3157. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Are they against the pipe?—I did not ask the gentlemen; I cannot be sure.

3158. Have they expressed themselves against the singing of any songs except psalms and hymns?—Yes, many a time.

3159. And the people pay great respect to the ministers?—There are indeed some trifling songs that people would not be much the better of hearing sung.

3160. *The Chairman.*—Is it in any degree on account of their depressed circumstances that they have become less cheerful and fond of diversion?—You may be sure of that; that their poverty is making them less cheerful. You may be sure that when a man is depressed with poverty he cannot be cheerful.

3161. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—In your early recollection were there young men going into the army from here?—Yes.

3162. Did they go willingly or unwillingly?—They were going willingly.

3163. Are there many now?—Not so many now.

3164. Have you any idea of the number that are now in the army from Waternish?—No.

3165. Do you know how many pensioners there are in Waternish?—No, but I believe the commanders who have come from Skye were the best that ever crossed the seas.

3166. Are there any pensioners in Waternish?—I do not think there are. There was a time when there were some.

3167. What do you think is the reason why the young men do not care to go into the army now?—I do not know very well. I cannot understand it very well. Some enter the army yet; perhaps hardships at home may compel them to list.

3168. Have there been any young men from Waternish that have risen in the army?—Yes.

3169. Do you know any living now?—Yes, Major M'Leod, now living in Edinburgh.

3170. He is the son of a crofter from Geary?—Yes.

3171. Has that not given any encouragement to other lads to enlist?—I would expect it to encourage them, but that lad was considerably steady, and he carved out a position for himself.

3172. Is it an exception among the young men here to be steady and well-behaved?—I do not know any unsteadiness about them.

3173. Do many of them go to work in the south?—If they don't, they will not get work here. They must go to the south, or die where they are.

3174. Do many of the young women go also?—Yes, it is in the south that the women earn most of what supports them.

3175. Do they learn any bad habits there?—I don't know. I was not asking, neither am I seeing any bad habits.

3176. Have they had any visit during the last year or so, from any Irish gentlemen lecturing upon land rights?—I am not aware; I did not notice anything of the sort.

3177. Have their ideas been influenced to any extent by what they have heard about Ireland and out of Ireland, that is, about the land and their own condition?—I do not know anything about that; I was not hearing.

3178. Do you know what has been done in Ireland for the improvement of the people?—I do not know. I have not heard. I am not hearing so much about that now as I was hearing before. I think they are getting better now. We hope we will all be better of the Commissioners' arrival here. If we are the worse of it, it will be a bad business.

3179. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You have stated, or the previous witness stated, that there were no tacksmen upon this property?—Yes.

3180. Who live in the slated houses down near the shore?—Most of them are merchants, and people who live in rented apartments.

3181. Are some of these people in fairly good circumstances? Are they reputed to be in fairly good circumstances?—I do not know.

3182. Are any of the people living there in a position to help their poorer neighbours?—No, unless the merchants. The only other people are fishermen of the place who rent rooms. One thing is, we would need to have a quay at any rate.

SKYE. CHARLES M'KINNON, Crofter and Fisherman, Lusta (47)—examined.

WATERNISH.

Charles M'Kinnon.

3183. *The Chairman.*—Have you been freely elected a delegate by your people?—Yes.

3184. What statement have you to make on behalf of those whom you represent?—That the land is too dear, and too little of it.* I was paying £3, 5s. for a bit of ground. I could only keep one cow, and I had a heavy family. I was six years continuously that I had to kill the six calves to see if I could get a cup of milk for the children, for I could not keep them alive, for I had no grazing on which to feed the cow; I had no horse.

3185. Is that the general condition of your neighbours?—The condition of both my neighbours and myself at that time.

3186. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Have you given your place up?—No, Mr Gordon Macleod was the landlord then, but Captain Macdonald is now the landlord. We got a little more land since. I got 8 or 9 yards breadth added to my croft, for which I paid 25s. of bare rent. I now keep two cows.

3187. *The Chairman.*—What was the length of his strips of ground 8 or 9 yards wide?—There will be a good bit; some scores of yards.

3188. 100 yards?—Yes, or more.

3189. 200?—Near 200.

3190. *Professor Mackinnon.*—How much do you pay?—£5.

3191. How many cows do you keep now?—Two cows, but I have not got as much grass as would keep one sufficiently.

3192. There is no grazing on what is inside the fence?—We have hill.

3193. How many are there of you?—About forty in the township.

3194. And each keeps two cows?—There are some who have only one cow. There are full shares and half shares in the township. I have half a croft.

3195. And those that have the full share can keep four cows?—Yes.

3196. About those that have only one cow, does that arise because they are not allowed to keep more than one, or because they are not able to keep more?—They are not allowed.

3197. They will have only a fourth of a share then?—Yes.

3198. Have you any sheep?—About twelve or fourteen for my half share, but the hill pasture is so bad.

3199. The £5 of rent includes the rates?—No.

3200. There is £5 and the rates as well?—Yes.

3201. What do you think would improve your condition?—Oh, to get the land cheaper and more of it, to enable us to keep more stock.

3202. Is there more of it to be had?—Plenty in the Isle of Skye.

3203. But upon this estate?—I do not know, but there is a good deal.

3204. Is it more hill pasture, or more arable ground that you want?—We want more hill pasture and more arable ground.

3205. You have not a horse?—No, I have not; but there are those in the township who have horses.

3206. Those who have a full lot pay £10?—Yes.

3207. And their stock is one horse, four cows, and about twenty-four sheep?—Yes.

3208. Are any of them to be here to-day?—Yes.

3209. Do you consider their lot big enough?—I do not know that it is; they are complaining that the crop will not sow the ground.

3210. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Would you be satisfied with the full

* See Appendix A, VII.

croft?—I would not be satisfied with the full croft as it is to-day, for it is too dear.

3211. *Professor Mackinnon.*—You think the rent of £10 is too high?—Yes, I do.

3212. And you think the summing for it is too great?—Yes.

3213. What would you consider a fair rent for it?—About half, or a little more.

3214. What would you consider a fair summing for it to give proper summer pasture?—It would give me enough to do to keep one horse and one cow, and about twenty-five or thirty sheep.

3215. And the rent of that would be what?—Half of the present rent.

3216. That is only £5?—Yes.

3217. So you think really the croft is double its proper rent?—Yes, I do.

3218. Well, if each croft were doubled in that way, how would you dispose of the people who are in the place?—I cannot tell that, as there is not room for them.

3219. Is there not a place you could send them to on this estate?—I do not know but there is, if it were well divided among them all.

3220. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Would any of the people here be anxious to emigrate if they got assistance?—I do not know; I believe they would not be very willing. They are too much attached to the old places.

3221. Have they any friends in America?—I do not know.

3222. Or anywhere abroad,—in Australia?—Some of them have, but I don't know.

3223. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Have you not been born and brought up in the place?—No.

3224. Where were you?—Duirinish.

3225. How long have you been in your present croft?—Twenty-three or twenty-four years paying rent, and altogether I have been about thirty-six years in this parish.

3226. Have there not been some people that went abroad from this district during that time?—Yes.

3227. Are they doing well?—I am not hearing.

3228. Don't they write home to their people?—Very seldom. It is a long time since I heard of their writing at all.

3229. Then what do you propose to do with these people that would have to be put out of your place before the place could be made comfortable for the crofters?—Spread them.

3230. In Skye?—Spread them over Skye. The one who preferred staying could do so, and the one who did not could go away.

3231. When they were talking over that question among themselves, I suppose they did not take up the question of some of them going away altogether out of the island?—No, we had no idea of anything of the kind.

3232. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Suppose it were possible to give them larger holdings, does it consist with your knowledge that the people here have money enough to stock these larger holdings?—No, they have not money enough to stock larger holdings. They cannot have money to stock larger holdings. The most of them would not get a bag of meal on credit.

3233. Then, what would be the use of dividing the land in Skye among them?—No use, unless they would get help. They will only die as it is. Should I get the land I have for nothing it would not keep me alive.

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RONALD M'FIE, Crofter and Fisherman, Lusta (46)—examined.

WATERNISH.

Ronald M'Fie.

3234. *The Chairman.*—Do you come as a delegate from Loch Bay, or do you come to state a special grievance?—Both.

3235. Will you state your special grievance?—That I am, for the past twenty-two years paying rent on this estate, and that I have not seen the mill yet, and I do not know where it is, and that I have to buy all the seed that my ground requires every year. And I think there is no remedy for that, but to give the land at its value. £7 is my rent, including rates. £6, 2s. 6d. is my rent. I can keep two cows, but I have to buy from £2 to £3 worth of food for them, and I myself spent between £25 or £30 for food for my family. I think the only remedy is to give us land at a fair rent, sufficient to keep us comfortable. I cannot get return from my land of more value than £5. I have a stirk, and if I feed it well I may get £3 for it, and if it is not well fed I cannot get the half of that. I have about fourteen sheep, off which I make from 30s. to £2 per annum, and the most of the crofters in my township are in the same condition. The fishing has been bad for the past few years, so that there is no way for people to live unless they get help or land cheap, and if the following year would be as bad as the present the strongest would be uppermost—the weak ones would go to the wall. I have nothing further to say.

3236. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You don't look very well? Are you in good health?—I have not much reason to complain.

3237. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—You spoke about the mill. Do you mean there is no mill on the property?—There is a mill on the property.

3238. You mean you do not go to it?—I had nothing to take to the mill.

3239. Did you give the grain to the cattle?—No, I do not give it to them every year.

3240. What became of the grain?—It is not growing—the place is so bad. The rain has denuded the soil, and exhausted it so, that it does not yield crop.

3241. If that is the case, why do you sow corn?—We get a little return which is of use in feeding the cattle.

3242. Would it not be better to sow grass seed instead of corn?—The grass itself would not grow. That would not feed our cows in the winter, though it might be of service in summer and autumn.

3243. Do you get anything but straw from your corn crop?—No.

3244. Then why could not you try the grass? Would you not have a large amount of grass?—I do not think I could. It is only peat soil. It is but 1 inch or 2 inches in depth of peat over gravel.

3245. *Mr Cameron.*—Do you work it with the *cas-chrom*?—Yes, I was trying it first with the plough.

3246. Do you ever try the spade?—Yes.

3247. Surely you get below 2 inches of moss with the spade?—Yes, but it is getting shallower every year.

3248. *The Chairman.*—Do you ever use a pick here to break up the ground?—No, it is not so hard as that.

DUNCAN STEWART, Schoolmaster, Stein—examined.

Duncan Stewart.

3249. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—How long have you been here?—Upwards of a year.

3250. Is there another school in this district besides yours?—Yes.

3251. Where?—At Knockbreac, north of Hallen.

3252. Do they attend school well here?—No.

3253. What is the general attendance?—It is below the average.

3254. What is the number?—Seventy is the number on the roll; and the attendance is below the average of sixty, which ought to be the average.

3255. What is the average?—Forty-three.

3256. What is the chief cause of the bad attendance?—Well, there are many obstacles. I think that on account of the frequent changes of teachers the parents have been dissatisfied until I came, and since I came the average attendance has been higher than ever it was before.

3257. Have any of them complained that they are too far from the school?—Not one.

3258. How far are the farthest of your pupils from the school?—Two miles.

3259. Are any prevented from attending by want of clothes?—Not to my knowledge.

3260. Who is the chairman of the school board?—Dr Martin of Husabost.

3261. How many members are there in the board?—Seven, I think.

3262. How many of them are resident in this district?—Only one.

3263. Who is that?—Mr Shaw, steward to Captain Macdonald.

3264. Is there a compulsory officer?—Yes.

3265. Where does he reside?—Just above.

3266. Does he visit frequently?—I think so.

3267. Have there been any cases reported to the board of non-attendance?—Many cases.

3268. And what has the board done?—The board has done nothing, to my knowledge.

3269. Then the people find they can either send their children to school or not?—It appears so.

3270. Do they complain of the fees?—They do, and the fees are very small.

3271. What are the fees?—1s. a quarter is the lowest.

3272. For what?—For everything that the youngest child can take in. Standard I., 1s. 3d.; II., 1s. 6d.; III., 1s. 9d.; IV., and above, 2s.

3273. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Does that include specific subjects?—No; the Board cannot make any arrangements for these.

3274. Who does?—I do.

3275. What are they?—I just make them according to the branches taught.

3276. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—What is the average fee for Latin, Greek, or mathematics?—The average fee for the higher branches is 5s., but for extra branches and for everything, 7s. 6d. per quarter, which is not too high for the country.

3277. What proportion have you attending these higher branches?—Six out of the number; that is one-tenth.

3278. Do you consider that a fair proportion?—No.

3279. To what class of life do these pupils, who take the higher branches, belong? Are they the children of crofters?—Partly.

3280. How many?—Two or three.

3281. What branches do you teach these?—Latin, French, Euclid, algebra, drawing, and other common subjects.

3282. *Professor Mackinnon.*—All for 7s. 6d. a quarter?—Yes.

3283. *The Chairman.*—Are the fees for the higher branches regulated by authority, or are they left entirely to you?—They are left to the

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teacher, because the board has no power to fix the fees above the standards.

3284. When the board fixes the fees, I suppose the fees are paid to the teacher?—Yes; but the board are responsible; they are bound to pay me the entire amount of fees.

3285. Are there any arrears of fees?—There are a few.

3286. *Sheriff Nicolson,*—Is Gaelic used in the school in teaching?—No.

3287. You do not speak it?—No, I do not speak it, and therefore cannot teach Gaelic.

3288. Do you find that any hindrance?—It is no barrier.

3289. Do all the children speak English?—More or less, the whole of them understand it.

3290. *The Chairman.*—Is music taught?—It is.

3291. Have you any instrument?—I have no instrument except my voice.

3292. Are you well supplied with apparatus and maps and everything necessary for teaching?—Yes, fully supplied.

3293. Have you held a school in the Lowlands?—I have.

3294. Do you find the children here equally apt for learning?—No, I don't.

3295. To what do you attribute that?—Native habits.

3296. May it not be that they are not equally well acquainted with the English language?—Partly so.

3297. Would it be agreeable to the people for their children to be also taught in Gaelic?—I believe it would. I think some of them expressed a wish for a Gaelic teacher here.

3298. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—I suppose you mean a teacher who understands Gaelic?—Exactly.

3299. *Mr Cameron.*—Do you find any difficulty in explaining to the children in English when they themselves talk Gaelic?—They don't talk Gaelic to me.

3300. Do you find any difficulty in making them understand what you say?—No, I find no difficulty.

3301. Do the children assist their parents at all in the work of their crofts?—Decidedly, and they stay away from school on purpose to do that.

3302. That keeps them away from school?—Yes, for a month or six weeks.

3303. At what time do they stay away?—Just a little before this time—six weeks before this time.

3304. What are they doing?—Working on the ground assisting in tillage.

3305. Planting potatoes?—Probably that was part of it.

3306. And keeping cows?—Yes, and a few of the younger members of the family keeping the houses.

3307. *Mr Cameron.*—We have heard that some of the crofters are in the habit of tethering their cows. Have you found that, instead of doing that, they use children to herd them?—Well, I cannot enter into that, because I was not there to see; but it is possible that it would be done.

3308. And what other work do they do on the croft besides the spring work?—Well, I cannot say what work they do specifically. But I know they are absent from school, and that many of them are absent when they ought to be present.

3309. What time of the year are they chiefly absent besides spring?—Well, they are very irregular. The habits of the people here are not regular at all, and the attendance of the children has been very irregular

in consequence, I am sorry to say; but I think the people are kindly disposed to the teacher, and that they wish him well. If he is very strict or rigorous they think he is inimical or unfriendly to them, and they are quite mistaken if they do, because he is only acting up to what the Government demands, and what the law enacts. I can assure you, that it is a very difficult thing to please the Government inspector, who is very strict of course, and the people, on the other hand, are certainly not strict; and the teacher, between the two fires, what can he do?

3310. *The Chairman.*—But in cases of irregularity, do you not sometimes speak to the parents yourself?—I have gone and visited them, and remonstrated with them, but still they just lapse into their old habits, and they forget what is due to duty, and the demands of duty.

3311. *Mr Cameron.*—Have they ever expressed to you the necessity of their children helping them in their crofts as an excuse for not sending them to school?—They don't seem to see a necessity of that kind, but just on the spur of the moment they take the child away.

3312. Do they give you no reason?—No reason, and no warning.

3313. And when you ask them do they give a reason?—They say the child has been taken away for this or that, but that does not include a reason; it is simply a statement. There is no reason about it.

3314. *Professor Mackinnon.*—You stated the children are not so apt to learn as the children in the south. Do you mean they are not so clever naturally?—I certainly mean that they are not so capable.

3315. That they are deficient in intellectual ability, for example?—Well, certainly they must be.

3316. I think you also stated you had no difficulty in explaining to them a lesson in English. Did you find they had any difficulty in understanding your explanation?—Not much difficulty.

3317. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—How many have you in the 5th and 6th standards?—Five.

3318. Are there any girls among them?—Not one.

3319. If there were girls in the 5th and 6th standards, should you teach them domestic economy?—Certainly.

3320. And would they then pay fees as for specific subjects?—No.

3321. Then there are some specific subjects which they get without paying extra fee?—Certainly.

3322. What does that include besides domestic economy?—Do you mean the girls?

3323. Are there any special subjects besides domestic economy taught free?—No, the boys pay for the extra subjects.

3324. But the girls do not pay for domestic economy?—Certainly not.

3325. Do you find the children here are well supplied with class books?—Yes.

3326. Do they learn their lessons at home?—No.

3327. Is that one of the causes why they don't progress so well as children in the south?—It is.

3328. And that is an evil habit of the country?—It is.

3329. Of course agricultural half-timers are recognised. Do you think that these children when absent are usually usefully employed at home?—Well, I think some of them are uselessly at home—not usefully employed. They are kept at home without a proper reason.

3330. You think, that on the whole, the children are fairly clothed?—They are.

3331. Sufficiently clothed for attending in the bad weather of winter?—They are.

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3332. You don't see great signs of poverty in the clothing of the children?—I do not.

3333. Are they well shod?—Well, they come bare-footed.

3334. In summer?—In winter.

3335. And they don't object to go to school in winter because they are bare-footed?—No, because those who have boots go without them in winter.

3336. And you don't object?—I cannot object. I have no reason to meddle with these things.

3337. *The Chairman.*—Do the children usually bring something to eat with them?—Well, I cannot say, for I do not see them eating.

3338. But your natural curiosity might lead you to investigate; you might know to some extent?—I have often told them if they were hungry to go into my house, and only some went.

3339. But the question is whether their parents are able to supply them with some food to bring to the school?—Yes, quite.

3340. Do they, then, habitually bring a piece?—I suppose they do, because they don't go home to dinner, and therefore they must have their dinner in their pockets.

3341. Do you know what they usually bring?—Oat cake, and a bit of cheese, when they can get it.

3342. Do they bring any milk?—They don't bring any flasks or bottles that I have seen. They drink water.

3343. Do you think they are worse provided than the peasantry of the Lowlands in that way?—According to the climate, and according to their habits, I think not. They can endure a great deal more than I could have endured when I was like them, because I was not brought up in the same way. They are indurated to the island of Skye, which I never was.

3344. Do you think that the general habits of the people are much hardier and poorer with reference to diet than those of the peasantry of the Lowlands?—Well, I don't think, comparatively speaking, that they are poorer. I have been in Sutherlandshire, and I know Sutherlandshire very well, and I have found many poorer people there whose children were attending school regularly, and whose fees were paid, and they were not so well attended to nor so well kept up as the children here, as even tho very poorest of them are. Comparatively speaking, the children of Skye, so far as I have seen, are not below the average, but I would say rather above.

3345. Physically?—Well, I would say in point of cleanliness, for the children here, that come into school when you like you will find them very clean.

3346. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You were asked to compare the children of Skye with those of the Lowlands, and you answered for Sutherlandshire, but his Lordship meant southern counties?—I said rather above the average.

3347. Why do you jump into Sutherlandshire?—I was comparing Highlands with Highlands. I cannot compare Highlands with Lowlands. I said they were rather above the average in contrast with Sutherland.

3348. Can you contrast the Highlands with the Lowlands?—Yes, because the one is high and the other low.

3349. *The Chairman.*—May I take the liberty to ask you where does your experience lie in the Lowlands?—In Stirlingshire. I was born at Bridge of Allan.

3350. Then do you consider that the physical condition of the children here is equal to that of the children of the labourers and peasantry there?—I do.

3351. Both with reference to dress and diet?—Everything except in

attendance at school. They are certainly not equal there. As I stated, there is a lapse of attendance at this place.

3352. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—But what of their mental faculty?—I cannot account for mental faculty.

3353. Do you consider their mental faculty or talent to be inferior to that of children in any other place?—I do not know in regard to any other place, but the calibre is certainly below that of the Lowlands.

3354. The mental calibre?—Yes.

3355. Apart altogether from want of books or anything of that sort?—Well, if you go into particulars, I say the general calibre is certainly below the average, but you must take everything into consideration. I am taking everything into consideration.

3356. *The Chairman.*—You mentioned that the children do not receive as much instruction at home as they do in the Lowlands. Is that owing to carelessness and indifference on the part of the parents, or is it owing to their not being able to give instruction from their own ignorance?—That is a question I do not like to answer, because I do not know, with regard to the parents, what their state is.

3357. You might have had some casual knowledge of the state of education in the last generation among labouring people. Do you think there are more of the adult population unable to read and write, and therefore to teach, than in the Lowlands?—I cannot answer that question.

3358. When was your last inspection by the Government inspector?—In August last.

3359. Have you got a copy of the report?—I have. It is as follows:—'*Summary of H.M Inspector's Report, October* 9, 1882. The same old 'story has to be again repeated for this school. A new teacher appointed 'since the last inspection. The present master has been in charge since the 'month of April last only. The order is good, but the school is as a whole 'in a very moderate condition. The wall plaster requires to be repaired, 'and the room should be at once whitewashed. After the warning given 'last year, the grant was reduced under article 32 B for faults of instruction. 'The frequent change of teachers is to be regretted. My Lords trust that 'the defects mentioned by H.M. Inspector will be remedied without delay.'

3360. What was the percentage of passes, was it above 80?—It was below 80.

3361. Was it 70?—Say 70.

NEIL M'DIARMID, Crofter, Geary (70)—examined

3362. *The Chairman.*—How long have you been on your croft?—Since I was born.

3363. Have you been freely elected a delegate?—Yes.

3364. What statement have you to make on the part of those whom you represent?—I think that those who have preceded me have left little for me to say, but those who delegated me desired me to say in your presence that there are thirty-three crofts in Geary, and when our fathers had it there were twelve crofts. And they are complaining that they are without horses or sheep now. It cannot be that they could have sheep or horses when there are thirty-three tenants in Geary. Who will extend their holdings unless the landlord does it? If the landlord will not give them more room, so long as there are so many sheep tacks in Skye, the poor man will

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never get justice. Sheep do not improve the soil, but the people will. The land will run into heather and rushes under sheep. Instead of that the land should be in the hands of the people who improve it. If the people do not get enlarged holdings, they will become poorer every day.*

3365. I have to say, further, that in Geary some of the people have left for the south country, leaving the spring work unfinished, owing to their inability to procure food for their families, as their credit was gone. In regard to debts, I have to say that the landlord is very favourable to the people. He never yet put a man out of his possession for rent. Geary crofters can keep two cows and a two-year-old, but the holdings would not support these, but for the landlord allowing the crofters a month or two grazing in spring on his own grounds. The first year that Captain Macdonald became our landlord he gave them a strip of hill pasture in addition to what they had, and did not charge them one shilling extra. This year, again, he gave them another strip. They would have to enclose it with a dyke, and they considered it too small for that. It is not the present proprietor who has done them any harm, but those who preceded him. As to the hill pasture, I need not say anything about it, as it was taken from us at the same time that those who before were deprived of it.

3366. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Is there any restriction upon them as to the sale of their cattle?—I am not aware of anything of the sort. I did not experience anything of the sort.

3367. Do you know of any such thing in Geary?—I am not aware of that, and I have not seen him take vengeance on any one.

3368. Are they free to sell them to anybody?—Yes, the ground officer gives the people an offer for the stock. If the people don't accept this offer, they are at liberty to sell to anybody else. If the landlord does not give what another gives, the crofters are at liberty to sell them elsewhere.

3369. Does the ground officer offer for all the stock that is sold?—It is for the stirks that he offers oftenest.

3370. Then he has the first offer always?—Yes. That might be about the Whitsunday time.

3371. Are they much in arrears at Geary?—Yes, I know that some are.

3372. How far are any of them in arrear?—I know that some are in arrears to the extent of a full year's rent. The landlord said nothing to them about it.

3373. Is there any business done among the people here by bills, to raise money?—No, not for him whatever.

3374. As to other matters, are they in debt generally to merchants for food and other things?—Surely, they are.

3375. Have you any notion of the amount of debt there is in Geary just now?—Can it be without debt? Hundreds of bolls have been brought to it not within the last year, but other years.

3376. Are there many of them in debt for the meal?—Yes.

3377. Where do they get it generally?—From Greenock. There is a man named M'Lean, a native of this island, in Greenock. The Geary people are often working in Greenock. The man knows some of them. When one is not acquainted with him, it is natural he will not be trusted. I am sure that that man has scores of pounds against Geary, for the produce of Geary won't feed the people half a year. And I believe there is not in the island of Skye any people who have made more work in trenching their ground than the Geary people have done.

3378. Have they done that at their own expense?—Yes.

3379. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—You mentioned there were only twelve

* See Appendix A, VII.

tenants formerly in Geary. How long ago is that?—I think about sixty years ago.

3380. Where did the other twenty-one tenants come from?—From about Waternish.

3381. Are they Geary people—born in the place?—Some have come from this side of Waternish.

3382. Were the crofts or lots of land divided by the proprietor without their consent?—It was done with the people's consent. I am of opinion that if the arable land were cultivated on the 'run rig' system, Geary would not be so well off as it is, because it would not be tilled.

3383. What I want to know is how these twenty-one additional people got into Geary? Was it by the wish of the tenants of Geary themselves at the time?—When the west side of Waternish was cleared some of them, I believe, went to Geary.

3384. But who invited them there?—I believe it was the proprietor.

3385. And the lands he gave them were held in occupation at the time by these crofters?—Yes, and the hill also.

3386. Did these thirteen crofters voluntarily resign half of their lands for the sake of the people on the west side?—I will not say they did.

3387. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Are the people of Geary in poor circumstances?—They are, as I have said. The land will no more than feed them for six months; and were it otherwise, there would not be so much meal coming to them from the south.

3388. Are they getting worse in their circumstances?—Yes. The climate accounts largely for that. That is not the landlord's fault. It is the work of Providence.

3389. Are they falling back year by year. You know there are many years since the potato failure began?—That put a number of them back. They are very close at work earning their support.

3390. You said that tacksmen in Skye were not advantageous to the place, and that sheep allowed the pasture to deteriorate, and that men ought to be allowed to cultivate it?—I am sure of that?

3391. But it appears there are no tacksmen upon Waternish?—No.

3392. Then how was it that the people of Waternish are so poor; where is the land that would support them?—If it is not in Waternish, it is through the country.

3393. How much land has the proprietor in his own possession, apart from the farm surrounding his house?—I cannot tell within a mile, but I can mention the townships.

3394. Those the proprietor occupies himself?—Yes.

3395. Mention them?—Lower Hallistra, Trumpan, Unish, Ballabourach, Scorr. I do not remember any other township lands he has.

3396. Will you give us a rough estimate as near as you can of the number of arable acres, or of what once was arable, in all those townships you have enumerated?—I will not try that.

3397. Is it big or little?—It is big enough.

3398. Are the hill grounds attached to those different townships of considerable extent?—If you were on board the steamer, you would see its extent from sea to sea.

3399. Can you give us any estimate of the number of heads of families (crofters) that at one period occupied those different townships you have enumerated as being in the natural possession of the proprietor?—I do not know, but I think there were over eighteen families in Unish. I think Trumpan was in the occupancy of a tacksman at one time. I think there were four in Ballabourach. I don't know but there were eighteen latterly in Scorr, and I think there were ten in Lower Hallistra.*

* See Appendix A, VII.

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3400. Were all the clearances of those places made at one time?—I think they were.

3401. Who was the proprietor then?—I think it was the major, the present proprietor's father.

3402. One of the witnesses said that the removals went back to the time of the Grants?—There were clearances by Corry, but I don't think they cleared these two townships.

3403. One of the witnesses said the factors came, and did certain mischief; who were they factors for?—I think, for Grant.

3404. Were there more factors than M'Kinnon of Corry whom you could name as accessory to these removals?—I do not remember.

3405. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—We have had a crofter from Lower Hallistra, who spoke of Lower Hallistra being occupied. Is there a mistake about the name, or are there still crofters living about Lower Hallistra?—There are people below the road yet, in Lower Hallistra.

3406. *Professor Mackinnon.*—But, above the road?—Above the road is cleared.

3407. *Mr Cameron.*—What rent do you pay?—Over £3.

3408. What stock have you got?—My summing is two cows and a two-year-old.

3409. And there is no hill pasture?—No.

3410. You say you have done some trenching—some improvement in your township? Have the people derived any profit from that improvement?—Yes, they got benefit from that.

3411. Have most of your neighbours improved the land?—I understand that the most of my neighbours improved their holdings the same way, and I am now taking out of the ground twice what I used to do.

3412. Is there any more land remaining to be improved beyond what they have already done?—No.

3413. They have improved it to the utmost extent?—Yes.

3414. And what they want now is more hill pasture?—Yes.

3415. Would they be satisfied if they got more hill pasture?—They are complaining of the arable land also.

3416. You mean there is not enough of it?—There is not enough of it.

3417. Is there any place where you can get more hill pasture in the neighbourhood?—Just above us, and I don't know but the landlord may give us that.

3418. Have you ever asked him?—Yes.

3419. What was the answer?—We got a little strip this year, but it is not enough.

3420. Did you trench the ground with the common spade, or in what way?—With the pick and spade.

3421. Do you get any work, either here or in the south, beyond what you have to do in your crofts?—A few might get a little more work here than they got to do in their crofts.

3422. There is work going on here to a certain extent?—Such work as the landlord may give them.

3423. None besides?—No.

3424. And in the south?—Yes, every person that can goes to the south to work. They must do that, or they would starve at home.

3425. How long do they stay in the south?—Till Christmas; plenty of those who left here a short time since.

3426. From when?—From this week.

3427. What money do they bring home with them on an average?—This year many came back from the east coast who did not get paid at all.

3428. What were they doing on the east coast?—Fishing.

3429. But I was talking about other work. Do they get any other work besides fishing?—Yes. They get other work besides fishing out of the island.

3430. And what do the people bring back?—It cannot be much, between board and lodging—perhaps £7 or £8. It will give them enough to do by steady working to bring home £9 or £10.

3431. But, averaging the years, do you think they make more by fishing, or by working in the south?—They do much better at the fishing when it succeeds with them.

3432. And which do they prefer?—They prefer the fishing, because their chance is better.

3433. Do you think it would have answered the people better to have worked less land and been more in the way of getting wages in the south either by fishing or otherwise?—I can say that they would not put an oar between rowlocks, and would not man a boat, and would not hoist a sail, if they were dependent upon all the fishing they got here through the year. As for the Geary people, unless they catch herring, no other fishing will be of any use to them, for the ling fishing is very scanty. The year in which the herring take is most plentiful, it will not last them much past winter. They may then take their long lines ashore.

3434. If you got better boats and tackle, do you think you could do more in the way of fishing?—I cannot say. I think they have boats that will serve the purpose out here, for on this side they catch ling. A few ling can be caught here through the year. There are no piers and no place of refuge. What would they do with the boat when they could not draw it up?

3435. But if they had better boats and a pier?—I cannot say much about that.

3436. Are the people about here disposed to fishing, or do they generally dislike it, and would they rather stick to the land?—Yes, they do like it; and in evidence of that, they are very often at Barra and the east coast.

3437. And if they saw an opportunity of prosecuting it more successfully they might make more money by it?—Yes, they would. The fishing is very good if successful. The fishing would need to be very good before it would pay for sufficient fishing tackle and fishing material in this place.

3438. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Have you a pier at Geary?—Not a pier.

3439. Is there something like a pier at Scorhoren?—Yes, there was, but it has long since fallen into decay.

3440. Would it encourage them to fish if they had a good pier there?—Yes.

3441. *Mr Cameron.*—Has the poverty of the people dated from the period when there were thirty-three crofts, or is it a more recent production?—The poverty of the crofters commenced with the thirty-one families in Geary, for every crofter had four or five cows and a horse and twenty sheep or so.

3442. But that was a long time ago?—Yes.

3443. Has the poverty been severe ever since then?—Poverty was increasing ever since the potatoes began to fail at first.

3444. Has it not increased in a greater proportion of late years?—Yes.

3445. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Were you born at Geary?—Yes.

3446. Were your people one of the twelve families that had it?—Yes.

3447. How old were you before these other people came in?—I was very young at the time.

3448. Do you remember the time?—Yes.

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3449. And do you remember that the twelve who were there before you were pretty well off?—Yes.

3450. I think you said they had a hill which they lost?—That is true enough.

3451. So that the twelve had a hill more than what the thirty-three have now? They lost the hill they had, and other people were thrown in upon them as well?—That is true; they had more than that. They had the island—the island of Geary—at that time.

3452. Among the twelve?—Yes.

3453. What rent did the twelve pay at that time?—I am not sure.

3454. About what was it?—It is doubled to-day.

3455. Do you think, if the twelve had it over again, they would be fairly comfortable?—I think they would; I know they would.

3456. It would support twelve fairly well?—Fairly well.

3457. Are there twelve that could take it?—I cannot say, without assistance.

3458. You could take a twelfth part of it yourself? Of course, if the twelve got it, they would be willing to pay a fair rent for it?—They would.

3459. And do you think there is plenty of land that could be given to the others?—Through the country?

3460. Through the country?—I think there is.

3461. And do you think the people would be willing to take up a croft if they got it?—Would not that be better than buying twelve bolls of meal and more from the south?

3462. But would they be able to take it up?—I do not know if the whole would.

3463. But some of them would?—I know that.

3464 Then of those who would not be able to take up the croft, do you think there are any among them that would be willing to go elsewhere, *out of* Skye, *if they got assistance*?—*I do not know.* What could they do after they landed over; I have a son in Australia, and a sister, and I know both sides.

3465. And are they fairly well off there?—My son is a schoolmaster there.

3466. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Does he help you?—He does.

3467. *Professor Mackinnon.*—But you think this township could perfectly well support the number of people who were there when you were a boy yourself?—I know that, because I know the people who are alive in it now are better at working the ground than their fathers were. They were not up to it.

3468. You said there were many improvements made in Geary. Do you think that the people are more skilled workers, all over the place, than they were fifty or sixty years ago?—I do not remember in my first days of any people using a pick at all.

3469. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Are there any places worse off than Geary?—I think there are.

MALCOLM M'KINNON, Crofter, Geary (60)—examined.

Malcolm M'Kinnon.

3470. *The Chairman.*—Have you been freely chosen a delegate?—Yes.

3471. You came from the same township as M'Diarmid, who was last examined?—Yes. I have nothing to say. He has told everything him-

self. One thing is that the people are so poor that unless they get assistance from Government they could not rise more than they are.

3472. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Assistance in the way of land?—Yes. But if they would get help, they would pay it back again.

MALCOLM M'LEOD, Crofter, Gillen (77)—examined.

(*See Appendix A, VII.*)

Malcolm M'Leod.

3473. *The Chairman.*—Have you been freely chosen a delegate?—Yes.

3474. What statement have you to make on the part of the people of Gillen?—They are wishing to get enlarged holdings. I do not know how large they would desire, but that they should get some enlargement at any rate. They are very close. Their holdings can only support one cow with justice, but they keep one and a two-year-old.

3475. Have they any common pasture?—No, but a very small bit at the end of the lots within the fence.

3476. In former times, had they common pasture?—I was once that I had the whole pasture myself. I was four years in Unish, and I had the hill pasture there.

3477. But at Gillen?—We have not had hill pasture since I came to Gillen six years ago.

3478. Before that, was there common pasture in old times?—There were no tenants in Gillen before these. They were previously in Scor for twelve years.

3479. And who was in Gillen before that? Was it a tacksman?—It was in the hands of the proprietor a long time before.

3480. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—How long is it since you were tenants at Unish?—It is about thirty-two years since we were cleared from Unish. We were fourteen or fifteen years in the occupancy of Unish, and I myself was four years in Unish to that time.

3481. In whose time were you removed?—Major M'Donald moved us from Unish, and sent us to Scor.

3482. Who took possession of Unish?—The proprietor kept it in his own occupancy.

3483. And there are no crofters in Scor now?—No.

3484. Who removed them?—The captain, the present proprietor.

3485. *The Chairman.*—Then you, in your lifetime, have been moved twice?—Yes, three times in all. I am now forty-three years paying rent. I was three years in Trumpan, where I was born. Then I went to Unish, where I remained four years; then twelve years in Scor.

3486. *Mr Cameron.*—Which was the best land in all those places?—Unish. I was very well off in Unish.

3487. Was there a tacksman at Unish?—Yes, at that time.

3488. And crofters?—Yes; there was a Mr M'Rae.

3489. Was there a tacksman at Gillen too, a good while ago?—Yes, at one time.

3490. Before your time?—I do not well remember him, but I remember cottars he had in it.

3491. In what way did the land at Unish show its superiority to the other land?—There was large hill pasture connected with it. We could keep cows and sheep and horses.

3492. You have no pasture where you are now?—No, we have neither sheep nor horses; and buying has spoilt us entirely. The land has

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Malcolm M'Leod.

become so weak, and will not yield crops, and we cannot manure it. The shore is too steep for us to bring the sea-ware from it.

3493. Is any of it capable of improvement?—It cannot be much improved by working, but if we had a horse we could manure it; we could improve it.

3494. There is no land that would bear trenching?—No, not that we could trench.

3495. What do you want?—There is land enough through the country.

3496. But what do you and your neighbours in the township particularly want?—The one thing they are wanting there is to have their holdings increased, to have hill pasture where they could keep sheep, and that they would be able to keep a horse. If Parliament would advance us money to enable us to stock the land, we would pay it by degrees; but should we have our present holdings for nothing, we would not come on well with them.

3497. Did you ever ask the proprietor if he saw his way to give hill grazing?—Our landlord was offering us a piece of hill ground when we came to Gillen. We have no fault to find with him.

3498. Why didn't you take it?—It was dear. Some of us were not for taking it, though others were, and we didn't take it at the time, and could not get it afterwards.

3499. But you could not have been very anxious about it?—It is not the landlord that left us so poor as we are,—at least the present landlord.

3500. How long ago did the landlord offer you this piece of hill ground?—He was offering us the hill shortly after we came to Gillen.

3501. What rent did he offer the hill at?—I think it was £25.

3502. What stock was it calculated to keep?—Not many cattle.

3503. About how many?—I think it would keep a horse a piece for the eleven tenants.

3504. How many cows?—I don't think it would support more than a horse a piece to us. It would be bare enough with that itself all the year. It is only a small spot. But the landlord was very favourable to us. Though we should be backward with the rent, he was not hard upon us.

3505. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—The previous witness stated that when you were selling your beasts the ground officer was in the habit of coming once a year and getting the first offer. Is there such a custom?—Yes.

3506. Supposing then they did not agree as to the price?—The landlord expects to have the first offer.

3507. What happens if they do not agree?—If they would not agree about the price, the landlord was letting us sell the beast wherever we could. He was not finding fault with us.

3508. Supposing they did not agree, what happened?—That we would be at liberty to sell the beast anywhere else. He never said anything worse than Yes and No to us about that.

3509. Is it a fact, or is it not, that you generally did give the beast to the ground officer?—Yes, and he would be getting them.

3510. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Does he give as good a price as other people?—He is giving a good price this past year too.

3511. Has that been always the custom?—Yes; for some time past at any rate.

3512. *Professor Mackinnon.*—And you almost always agreed?—Sometimes we might be complaining of the price we got from them, but we would agree for all that.

3513. *The Chairman.*—Do the people dislike the ground officer coming

round to make this offer? Would they rather that the ground officer did not do it?—They would prefer the ground officer to have the beast than anybody else, if he gave a price as good as others, and if he would go pretty near the price they could have got from another, he would get it all the same.

3514. Is it, on the whole, a convenience to the people that the ground officer should give them the opportunity of selling their beasts to him?—No, not much. He is buying them these days like anybody else, and he gets them in preference to any other, when he does that.

3515. *Mr Cameron.*—Do the drovers come round here?—A few. Some of them were here this year already.

3516. Are they very stiff to deal with?—Yes, they certainly are.

3517. Are they more so than the ground officer?—They are as hard to deal with as the ground officer. Any one that comes the way will drive as hard a hargain as possible.

PETER M'NAB, Crofter, Gillen (45)—examined.

(*See Appendix A, VII.*)

Peter M'Nab.

3518. *The Chairman.*—Are you a fisherman?—I was once a fisherman. The former witness was a neighbour of mine.

3519. Did you hear and understand what the former witness stated?—Yes.

3520. Do you agree with what the other witness said?—Yes.

3521. Have you anything to add to it?—Only that we are much in need of enlargement, which we have not got in the place in which we are. We have poor land, and it does not yield crop, and we are spoiled with having to buy everything. I have had to buy nine and a half bolls of meal already, and one and a half bolls of seed already, since the new ye r.

3522. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—What is the number of your family?—They are not all at home. I have ten of a family; four are away.

3523. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—How many share in this meal?—Eight.

3524. *The Chairman.*—Are your family an assistance to you?—Some of them. If their earnings would succeed they would help me.

3525. Have you anything further to say on the subject of the township grievances?—We are very poor in our township. We can do nothing unless we can get our condition improved, unless we can get our rent reduced, or help—more land in which we can keep sheep. We have neither sheep nor horses.

3526. When the sons and daughters of the people go out to work elsewhere, are they generally thoughtful of their parents, and do they help them in their poverty and distress?—Yes, if their earnings succeed. It is the children who are helping greatly the most part of the crofters. The land is not yielding much to help them.

3527. And these wages are always earned in the south?—Yes.

3528. To what places do they generally go?—Glasgow and Greenock, and the young men go to the east coast fishing and Ireland. I have a son in Ireland just now at the fishing.

3529. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Have you been twenty-one years at Gillen?—Yes.

3530. Where were you before you went there?—In Scor.

3531. Are you personally poorer to-day than you were when you came to Gillen?—Yes.

3532. What is the cause of that?—Having to buy so largely. Purchasing has ruined me.

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Peter M'Nab.

3533. Then when you were in Scor you hadn't to purchase so much meal?—No. It is very little I was buying in Scor, and the family was not so heavy either.

3534. How long is it since the family came to be of age to assist you?—The oldest four years ago, another three years ago, and another two years ago.

ALEXANDER MORRISON, Crofter and Fisherman, Forsavriev (40)—examined.

Alexander Morrison.

3535. *The Chairman.*—Are you a freely elected delegate?—Yes.

3536. When?—To-day.

3537. Why did they not elect their delegate sooner?—We were long of hearing. We came over here, and we could not get any person to write for us. We could not write ourselves.

3538. Did any one try to prevent you corresponding with the Commission?—No.

3539. What statement are you authorised to make to the Commission?—That we are in a bad place. Our arable land is peat to the depth of about 3 or 4 feet, and it is not yielding crop. We took it in ourselves. We were getting 1s. a rood from the laird for taking it in. We cannot get sea-weed to manure our land, unless with fine weather and a south wind. Each of us could sow three or four bags of seed oats. There are some of us who bought two bolls of seed oats to sow, and some of us who, even with the two bolls of seed oats which they bought, along with the seed which the land yielded, had not sufficient to sow their land. All the potatoes which we can cultivate will not support us more than two or three months, at any rate, this year. Our stock is, some two cows, and others three cows each, and maybe a stirk or a two-year-old. I cannot tell how many sheep we have. The sheep don't belong to ourselves; they belong to the landlord. We keep a horse each, and the land is so soft and boggy, that I can only get three hours' work out of the horse, and others cannot work with the horses at all.

3540. How much is the rent?—£9 and a few shillings each. I have to pay wintering for the cows. It would be enough for me to winter one of the cows and a horse with my crop.

3541. Has the rent been raised?—No.

3542. How long has it been the same rent?—Since I went to Forsavriev, nineteen years ago, it has not been raised. It was not for the habitation of man that that place was created at all.* During the past twenty days or month we took out of the bogs on our land up to twenty ewes and some hoggs, which were drowned in the bogs.

3543. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Were they your own?—It was of our own sheep stock, but the sheep stock we did not consider to belong to ourselves at all.

3544. *The Chairman.*—Why?—The day we leave we cannot take any of them with us.

3545. Is that on account of arrears of rent?—The sheep belong to the landlord.

3546. Why do you let the common pasture to the landlord?—When the people got the township, the landlord sold them the sheep stock, which they were to pay for, and since then they have not been able to pay for the stock.

* See Appendix A, VII.

3547. Have they paid any of it?—I do not know, but they may have paid a little at first.

3548. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Do they pay interest?—Yes, they pay interest.

3549. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—What was the amount of the stock?—160 ewes. I was not among the first tenants at all.

3550. What price were they sold at?—£1 and 22s. each. Some of the crofters tell me so.

3551. How long ago was that?—Twenty-two years ago.

3552. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—I understand this was a new settlement?—There were no tenants in it until we settled in it twenty-two years ago.

3553. When they came twenty-two years ago, was there any arable land at all?—There was a little when we went there first, but we were shifted down to the lower place since.

3554. But the arable land you have now is all newly improved land?—Yes. They got 1s. a rood for trenching and improving this.

3555. Did they pay interest on that money?—No.

3556. But was the rent fixed before the land was taken in?—Yes.

3557. Then this £9 odd, does that include interest upon the stock?—No.

3558. This is the rent simply of the share of the hill land you got before it was improved?—Yes.

3559. Did you go there of your own free will?—Yes.

3560. Have you not spent money since in improving the land?—Yes.

3561. How much?—I cannot say.

3562. How many acres have you improved at 1s. a rood?—Between fourteen and fifteen.

3563. *The Chairman.*—So the 1s. a rood amounted to a good day's wages?—Yes, I would make three roods a day.

3564. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—It seems you got a very bad bargain of the farm?—Yes, there are rocks, and our sheep are going over these rocks to the sea-shore, and are carried away by the sea, the sea being directly under these rocks. Others of our sheep stick in the cliffs, and we have to lower a man down with ropes to get them extricated.

3665. Does the proprietor refuse to relieve you of your bargain?—We were within the last year asking another place of him, and he was promising it.

3566. What do you think the Commission should do for you?—The land which is wasted both in Minginish and Bracadale, where my forefathers were born, should be restored to the people. There is pleuty of land for all the inhabitants of Skye, if they could get it.

3567. Did you come from Bracadale nineteen years ago?—No, but my father came from Bracadale to Minginish.

3568. Where did the others come from?—From Ascrib island, some of them.

3569. How many tenants were at Ascrib island?—Five.

3570. Do your horses and cows go upon the common pasture occasionally where the proprietor's sheep are?—Yes.

3571. *The Chairman.*—Then the common pasture is useful to you, although the sheep belong to the landlord?—Yes, it is ourselves who get the produce of the sheep, but the day we leave we have no sheep; and if we would be another year in the place, we would not have a cow or sheep or other creature that we could take with us over the dyke, if next year will be as the present year. The parties who are the means of this Royal Commission are suffering in prison, and we are quiet here, and if we don't get justice we will go to prison ourselves, or else we will sell our lives as dear as possible.

MURDO M'LEAN, Crofter, Forsavriev (64)—examined.

SKYE.

(*See Appendix A, VII.*)

WATERNISH.

Murdo M'Lean.

3572. *The Chairman.*—Are you also a fisherman?—I was a fisherman at one time.

3573. Have you been elected a delegate by the people of Forsavriev, or have you come on your own account?—The former witness and myself were put forward to speak for the rest.

3574. Did you hear what the former witness said, and did you understand it?—Yes.

3575. Have you anything to add to what the former witness said?—There is plenty to say in addition if it would be of any use. We are not wanting much wealth, if we only could get a place where we could grow crops. But we are placed on land where we cannot grow crop,—soft, peaty land. It is two years since we sent anything to the mill to grind. Before then we may have been sending a little while there was strength in the ground. We think that if we could get a place in which we could grow a crop, we would be quite willing to pay a reasonable rent for it—if we could get a place where we could work for ourselves, and improve ourselves.

3576. Is there any land near there which the proprietor could give you if he pleased, and where you could grow crop?—Yes, there is land. Our sheep are trespassing upon it, and being poinded, and we ourselves are quite willing to take it, and to pay for it. I mean land which is near us, which we never had before, which would grow crop, and which would answer our purpose. I do not say we are paying for it, but that we are willing to pay for it if we got it.

3577. Have you asked the landlord for this land?—Yes.

3578. What did he say?—He said at first that we would get it, and then that we would not.

3579. Has your present landlord ever raised your rent?—No, it is just as it was when we got the place.

3580. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Where did you come from?—Ascrib island.

3581. Were you more comfortable there than you are now?—Yes, we were; we were producing food, which we cannot produce where we are.

3582. How did the children get taught there?—They were without schooling, and that is the reason why we could not write to Edinburgh to the Commissioners, as others have done.

3583. Was there ever a school at Ascrib?—No.

3584. How many children would be there of an age for school?—Up to fifteen.

3585. Why did you not get a lad to teach them?—We spoke about that, but we were not thought of sufficient importance.

3586. To whom did you apply for a teacher?—The late Rev. Roderick M'Leod of Snizort. He told us he would try to get us a lad to teach our children.

3587. But none was got?—No.

3588. If you had got a good place, would you not rather be on the mainland of Skye than on the island of Ascrib?—I was very sorry when I was put out of the island, though it had its drawbacks.

[ADJOURNED.]

DUNVEGAN, SKYE, TUESDAY, MAY 15, 1883.

(*See Appendix A, IX., X., XI., XII.*)

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.

MURDO M'LEAN, Crofter, Edinbane (60)—examined.

Murdo M'Lean.

3589. *The Chairman.*—Have you been freely elected a delegate by your people?—Yes.

3590. How long have you been on your croft?—Twenty-nine years.

3591. On the same croft?—Yes. I would like, before I say anything further, that I would have the assurance that no vengeance will be taken on me for anything I say here to-day, for one of the delegates who are here to-day was told by Mr Robertson, the factor, that he must take care what he was to say here to-day.

3592. Who is the factor on the estate to whom you belong?—Mr Robertson, Grishornish.

3593. Is he here to-day?—He is not present.

3594. Is there any one present who represents the estate?—I do not think there is any one here to represent the estate.

3595. The Commissioners are not able to give any guarantee to you for the conduct of the proprietor, and they cannot engage to interfere between you and the proprietor or between you and the law; but we hope and confidently believe that no proprietor will offer any ill-treatment to anybody on account of what is said here to-day. We hope and think that all the proprietors will follow the example which has been given by Mr M'Donald, and which is to be given by M'Leod to-day, who have stated, or will state, that there is perfect freedom of statement on the part of the witnesses. Now, if you feel you are able to tell the whole truth, you may remain and give evidence; but if you do not feel you are able to tell the whole truth, you may retire?—I will tell the truth, for the truth will assert itself at any rate.

3596. Now, what statement are you charged to make on the part of those who have elected you a delegate?—'*Statements prepared by the 'Tenants of Edinbane.* Our lots are from 6 to 8 acres of arable land. 'There are about 20 half lots from subdivision. A large piece of the hill 'has been taken from us called Ben Dhu, and no compensation given. 'Several of our lots have been taken down by 1 acre, and no reduction 'of rents. The proprietor has never done anything for the land. The 'houses are built and maintained by ourselves. On removal we get 'compensation for the roof only. We think our rents too high, when so 'much land has been taken from us, and the rent in many cases raised. 'They were last raised to give the factor Mr Robertson votes. We are 'not in arrears. Seven days' work is claimed by Mr Robertson from each 'lot, and 2s. is taken from us for every day we miss. He likes us to 'give him the first offer of stock, but he does not fix the prices. A lot 'is allowed four cows and twenty-four sheep. Four cows are too many 'for the pasture. The profits from sheep go direct to Mr Robertson for

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'rent. We never touch a penny of the money. The money from our 'sheep for the rent, instead of being put in the bank for us until Martin-'mas, when it is due, is kept by Mr Robertson for his own use, and we 'get no interest from him for it. We cannot utilise fishing for the want 'of proper boats, &c. Fishing should be distinct from crofting. There 'were plenty of evictions in Grishornish and Coshletter before the 'time of the late Mr M'Leod. Many of us have seen the law officers 'come and strip the roofs in Edinbane, and pour water down on the fires. 'The people evicted mostly emigrated. They got no compensation. The 'land is now largely in the hands of Mr Robertson, the factor. We would 'migrate, not emigrate. No Gaelic is taught at our school. We would 'like our children taught to read the Gaelic Bible. The school rates are 'a shilling. Fees for standard III. 1s. 6d. There are eight paupers on the 'estate; most of these on Ben-Dhu have come from other places. Several 'cottars have been removed by the late Mr M'Leod and by Mr Robertson 'from Grishornish and Coshletter and put upon us. The poor-rates are 8d. 'Mr Robertson, the factor, has the lands once belonging to us of Kerrol 'and Ben-Dhu in his own hands. We received no reduction when these 'lands were taken from us. Mr Robertson keeps a meal-store, and we 'nearly all deal with him. We are this year already very deep in his 'books for meal. When Mr Robertson put the money on to our rents, 'for votes for himself as he said, he promised to make it good to us, but 'he has never done so, although we protest every year. We can give 'many other instances of oppression. One man took in a lodger against 'Mr Robertson's wish. He was fined a £1, and had to pay the £1 for 'five or six years, and was only pardoned last Martinmas. Another man 'for selling a stack of corn off the farm, although he had offered it to Mr 'Robertson several times, and was in sore need of ready money, was 'punished by having his rent raised from £3, 8s. 5d. to £4, which he 'still pays. The year before last two men quarreled about the march of 'their crofts. Mr Robertson ended the quarrel by fining the man with 'the largest croft 10s. a year on to his rent, and no corresponding reduc-'tion to the man with the small croft. In November last the factor put '7s. on to a half lot, with the reason stated, "I want to make a gentleman 'of you, and give you a vote." Mr Robertson has two shares of sheep in 'the hill, and although we complained, he will not pay for the grazing, 'and he refuses to let our sheep go over the lands of Kerrol, which is our 'right in winter, and makes us twice a year build up the dyke that keeps 'our own sheep out of our own grazings. We have to submit to such 'things as these, for fear of being evicted. Reforms wanted. More land 'and fixity of tenure. We cannot improve our lands at present as they 'will not support our families while we are improving them; but if we 'had enough of land to keep us on it the whole year round, and if we 'were made secure against fines and evictions from petty spite of the 'factor or other causes, we would improve it, and there would be no more 'heard of destitution in hard years like this. When the credit which 'this bad year drove us into is settled for, there will not be much of our 'stock left to us we think. Our delegates will be able to give evidence 'to all the above. The delegates appointed are MURDO M'LEAN, NEIL 'GILLES, KENNETH M'FIE, EWEN M'LEAN.'

[*Mr Robertson*, Grishornish.—I wish to state to the tenants of Edinbane that whatever they state here, no notice of it will be taken by me whatever. They are quite at liberty to say whatever they choose.]

3597. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—How many crofters are there in Edinbane?—Twenty-five whole crofts.

3598. How many of these are subdivided?—Ten.

3599. That makes thirty-five families in possession of land?—Yes.

3600. Are you speaking for any other townships besides Edinbane?—Only for Edinbane.

3601. There was another township named Coshletter, are you not speaking for Coshletter?—There are no tenants there; the landlord has it.

3602. For how long has there been that number of tenants in Edinbane?—It was at first apportioned out into twenty-five lots. That was long ago.

3603. You have been twenty-nine years a crofter; were they apportioned out when you first remember, twenty-nine years ago?—They were divided at that time as they are now.

3604. And were they divided long before that time?—Yes, I cannot tell how long it is since the division was made.

3605. Since how long have ten of those crofts been subdivided?—A long time before we came to Edinbane.

3606. Then there have been thirty-five families in possession so long as you remember?—Yes.

3607. Are there any cottars upon these lands of Edinbane in addition to the thirty-five families holding land?—Yes.

3608. What number will there be?—There are ten, I think.

3609. Have those ten families always been there?—No.

3610. When did they come? Were they born there, or were they brought in there?—They were brought in. Most of them were brought in.

3611. Where were they brought in from?—Most of them from Coshletter and Grishornish.

3612. How many?—Six were brought in from outside Edinbane. They came from Grishornish and Coshletter, one being from Grishornish.

3613. And four were born in Edinbane?—Yes. There are four of these six paupers.

3614. How long is it since they were brought in?—It was in the late proprietor's time; he brought in four of them, and Mr Robertson two.

3615. Will that be twenty years ago?—It is more than twenty years since Mr M'Leod brought in the four.

3616. Do these cottars get part of their support from the thirty-five families who have land?—It is the land of the crofters which they have, but it is to Mr Robertson that they pay for all that.

3617. Are the cottars paying rent?—They are paying 5s. a year.

3618. Do the crofters find it a burden upon them to have those cottars situated among them?—The crofters will be helping them more than the cottars are a help to them.

3619. But except for these cottars, they are not more confined in their arable land than they were so long ago as your memory recollects?—No.

3620. Then your principal complaint is that you have not enough of land. Is that so?—We are complaining of the arable land. One crofter would need to have as much as any three of us have.

3621. Where would you expect to get this additional arable land?—Is there not plenty of land waste in the Isle of Skye? Is not the property of M'Leod waste altogether? There are no more than three crofter townships on the M'Leod estate, and the rest all waste land,—sheep and deer.

3622. On the property of Grishornish is there arable land to be given to them outside of the home farm?—Yes.

3623. On Grishornish itself?—Yes.

3624. Is that land from which crofters have been removed?—Yes. It is from Coshletter we were brought, and there are many others in our township who were brought from Coshletter also, because of the sheep.

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This was when Mr Cameron bought the estate, and made Coshletter into a sheep tack and removed us from it.

3625. Have you any idea how long ago that was?—Twenty-nine years ago.

3626. But twenty-nine years ago there seem to have been the same number of crofting holders that are there now. What became of the families in Edinbane before the Coshletter people got possession of the Edinbane crofts?—Some of them went away to America and others to Australia. You have heard how the law officers were extinguishing their fires and knocking down their houses.

3627. And the Coshletter people went into these knocked-down houses?—Yes, when they were removed from Coshletter themselves.

3628. You mentioned that when the houses are built by themselves, and when they are removed, they get compensation only for the roof. Have there been many removed of late years who had compensation given for the roofs of their houses?—None of late.

3629. How long is it since there have been any such removed?—Some of them got removings, but were not evicted. One got a removing this year, but was not evicted.

3630. Therefore there is no instance in your recollection of this compensation for the roof?—I do remember an instance of such compensation. When we ourselves came to Edinbane, we had to pay for the roofs of the houses which we got.

3631. Did you get compensation for the roofs which you left?—I got a little, but others did not, for the shepherd went to live in the house in which I had been.

3632. Those only whose houses were made use of received compensation for the roof which they left?—Yes, that is so. Only those whose houses were made use of got compensation. I myself took the roof of my byre and stable with me to Edinbane, for I would not get anything for it.

3633. We are talking of twenty-nine years ago, and you do not remember any similar instance since?—No.

3634. You mentionad that they paid, in addition to their rent, seven days' labour, or, failing their giving the labour, 2s. a day. On what is the labour employed?—Reaping or cutting hay or grass.

3635. It is not upon your roads?—No, it was upon the home farm.

3636. With such a croft of six or eight acres, you have a stock of four cows and twenty-four sheep and no horses?—Some have horses.

3637. What rent do they pay for that?—Some of them up to £8. But we have to pay 10s. additional for the wintering of the horse, and we have to take grazing for the horse elsewhere during the summer and autumn.

3638. Then the horse is not included in the rent?—No.

3639. Setting apart last year, which was exceptional, has the produce of the arable land been diminishing?—Yes, the land is getting poorer and the crop scantier each year.

3640. What is the cause of that?—Incessant cultivation for the past seventy years and more.

3641. Have you ever tried leaving out part of it, and seeing whether the remainder would not give a better crop?—We tried that; the land is very much exhausted. I tried grass in a part of it during the past three years, and I had to give it up.

3642. And you are of opinion that the land is not worth the rent it was originally worth?—You know the holding is so small, and as part of it cannot be left out of cultivation to enable it to recover, that is rendering it worthless.

3643. But you did not try leaving part of it out?—Yes.

3644. And that did not succeed with you?—No; not in grass. Those of course who had only half lots could not leave any part of it out.

3645. You mentioned that Mr Robertson kept a meal store, and that you dealt with it. Are you bound to deal with Mr Robertson for meal?—No, but his store is the most convenient.

3646. It is made a matter of complaint in this statement that they had to deal with Mr Robertson, as I understand?—Mr Robertson will not be pleased if we go elsewhere to buy.

3647. What are they paying to Mr Robertson for meal?—Last year 23s. a boll.

3648. At this moment?—I do not know what the price is this year.

3649. Don't you know the price of the meal when you take it out of the store?—No.

3650. The price is not fixed when you get it?—No.

3651. You said that Mr Robertson asks the first offer of the cattle. Is the price fixed when you give the cattle?—He offers a price for them, and of course if the party gets a higher offer Mr Robertson does not insist on the beast being sold to him.

3652. Then is it a matter of complaint that Mr Robertson expects the first offer?—It is the case with the cattle very much as has been stated about the fodder and about the meal.

3653. Do you sell corn to Mr Robertson?—Yes, sometimes; some of them.

3654. Will the price be fixed when they sell it?—Yes.

3655. At the time?—Yes.

3656. Then do they sell their cattle to anybody else than Mr Robertson?—Yes.

3657. And Mr Robertson does not take vengeance on them for that?—No.

3658. When do they know what the price of the meal is which they get from the store?—At the time of payment.

3659. When will that be?—At Sligachan, about September or Martinmas.

3660. When they sell their cattle?—No; that is the time of payment independently of the times when they realise their stock.

3661. Is the price they have to pay dearer than that at which other meal-dealers in the country are selling it?—For some time now no other meal-dealers come our way. There used to be vessels with meal coming our way, but not since Mr Robertson has been keeping the store himself.

3662. But you know the price at which meal sells at Portree generally?—Yes.

3663. Is the price that is paid at Grishornish for meal dearer than the Portree prices?—Yes.

3664. What will the difference be between the Portree and Grishornish prices?—Those who buy in Portree would have to pay carriage for the meal from Portree,—those who would not themselves be able to carry it. The meal in Portree was about £1 or 21s. a boll last year.

3665. And you were paying 23s. at Grishornish?—Yes.

3666. Is that difference in price reasonable for the transport of the meal for that distance?—The difference is more than the carriage would be accounting for.

3667. Will the 1s. a boll pay for the carriage of the meal from Portree?—That is the dearest it will be. Some of it is less than that.

3668. It is mentioned in the paper that there was a fine exacted for selling a stack of corn off the farm?—The delegate is present from

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whom the fine was exacted, and he will speak. His name is Kenneth M'Fie.

3669. In regard to the stock, how long has the stock on the hill been on its present footing as to management?—I cannot say how long it is since the sheep stock was made a joint stock.

3670. Is it long?—Yes.

3671. Was it before Mr Robertson became factor?—It was in the former proprietor's time, when Mr Macdonald of Orde had the management.

3672. Before then each man managed his own sheep for himself?—Yes.

3673. Some of them had fewer sheep and some more. How did they get equal shares in the stock to begin with?—Those who had none or those who had less than their share did their best to buy from outsiders who had more than their summing of sheep.

3674. Now it is likely the people from outside had very little money to buy stock. Who advanced them the money to buy stock?—They got the money themselves. Those who had not sheep at all Mr Robertson supplied, for which they paid him money. My share was less than eighteen sheep, and I paid £18 for them to Mr Rohertson.

3675. Am I to understand you had only six sheep of your own, and that you bought eighteen?—My family had two lots, and we had only six sheep on one of them. We had a whole share on the other one.

3676. Then the stock does actually belong to the tenant, and is not pledged in any way?—No, it is not pledged to the landlord or to any other.

3677. How is the stock managed?—Do the people appoint any person there among themselves to manage the stock?—Yes.

3678. How many of them are there?—Two.

3679. Does the proprietor interfere with the management?—We are at liberty to sell anything to the value of £10, but beyond £10 we are not at liberty to sell without the consent of Mr Rohertson.

3680. There are six hundred sheep in the hill, I understand?—Yes.

3681. Twenty-five shares of twenty-four sheep each?—There are twenty-nine shares.

3682. Twenty-nine whole shares?—Yes; there are twenty-eight shares, and the shepherd has one share as his wages.

3683. Then two of these shares Mr Robertson has himself?—Yes.

3684. That makes twenty-five shares, and one for the shepherd and two for Mr Robertson, which makes twenty-eight. These are the whole shares?—Yes, and the hotel-keeper has half a share, and another man who lives in Kerrol has another half share, making twenty-nine shares altogether.

3685. And there are twenty-four sheep on each share?—Yes.

3686. Are they selling lambs or wedders?—We sell lambs.

3687. How many lambs will you sell in the season?—Between 100 and 120 tops.

3688. Who has the selling of those lambs?—We ourselves try to sell them, and Mr Robertson does the same.

3689. And to whom is the money paid?—If we get the money we hand it to Mr Rohertson, and if Mr Robertson gets it he keeps it.

3690. Have you no bank account?—No.

3691. At what time of the year do you receive payment for your lambs from the purchaser?—The purchaser pays on delivery.

3692. What is the time of delivery?—About Lammas is the usual time, or past Lammas.

3693. And Mr Robertson keeps the money till Martinmas?—Yes.

3694. And what they complain of is that they miss the interest of

the purchase price of the cast for that time?—Yes, that is what we complain of. *

3695. Do you have a settlement at Martinmas?—Yes.

3696. Is there ever a profit upon the stock after paying rent and expenses?—It will not pay the rent and expenses altogether, but it is helping us to pay the rent very much.

3697. Do you hold more than one croft?—Yes; two crofts.

3698. And you are paying £16 of rent?—I am paying £13.

3699. How much of that rent was paid last Martinmas by your profit off your two shares on the hill?—£10, 10s. and some pence.

3700. So you had only £2, 10s. to pay besides for the croft?—Yes.

3701. *Mr Cameron.*—Is the wool of the old ewes you sell off the farm disposed of in the same way as the lambs?—Yes.

3702. That is to say, the money is paid over to Mr Robertson?—Yes.

3703. Did you sell your wool last year?—It is the wool-brokers in Glasgow who are buying the wool. They advance the money if it is not sold at Martinmas.

3704. And the old ewes are sold at the same time as the young lambs?—Yes.

3705. And they are delivered, I suppose, at the usual time—at the end of harvest?—Yes, except last year.

3706. You say that several of the lots in your township were reduced by one acre?—Yes.

3707. Do you know anything of that yourself?—I know it was taken off them.

3708. Was it not taken off you?—No.

3709. And it is also stated that no reduction of rent was given in consequence. Was that so?—Yes no reduction.

3710. What became of that one acre that was taken off?—It was added to the innkeeper's farm.

3711. How many acres did the innkeeper get in that way?—I cannot say.

3712. Off how many crofts was the one acre taken?—I do not know, but I think it was taken from three crofts.

3713. I suppose then the three crofts were all contiguous?—They were all beside one another.

3714. And beside the innkeeper?—Yes.

3715. So it came very handy for the innkeeper to get this land?—Yes, it was just below the main road.

3716. Now, did these crofters ever ask for any reduction of rent?—They got the first year from Kenneth M'Leod a farm in Kerrol for it; more than what was taken from them.

3717. How far is Kerrol away from this place?—It is just beside us—part of our town.

3718. How long did they retain that land?—Only one or two years, till Mr Robertson came in, and he took that land away from them, and gave them no reduction.

3719. Are their holdings as they are now, without that acre which was taken off, as good, or better, or worse than the neighbouring holdings?—Well, they cannot be so well without this taken off them, and nothing got for it, when the rent is the same.

3720. But if the holding was originally much better, and he took off an acre, that might reduce the value of the holding to be equal with the others. Was that so, or did they all start equal?—These three crofts were equal with the other holdings.

* See Appendix A, XVII.

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3721. So, in consequence of the reduction of land, they are worse than the other holdings?—Yes.

3722. It is stated in your paper that the fishing should be distinct from the crofting. Will you explain what is meant exactly by that?—If a man had as much land as would support his family all the year round, if he himself will not be about the croft working it, he cannot improve it, and bring it to its utmost cultivation. If a man had as much land as would support his family, the working of the land would keep him agoing without having to go to fish.

3723. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Then do you mean a fisherman should be a fisherman purely?—Yes, unless they would go to fish a little for their families.

3724. *Mr Cameron.*—Then, as I understand, you think crofters should be crofters and fishermen should be fishermen, and that they should not intermix these occupations?—Yes, but to get as much land as would enable him to support his family comfortably through the year; and if we would get that, I do not believe we would be troubling landlords or other people for help.

3725. But what do you mean by those who are to occupy themselves with fishing? Do you mean the fishermen are to have no land?—I do not think that. I think every fisherman ought to have a little land along with his house.

3726. Then do you think the fishermen should not have as much land as the crofter? How much land?—I think the fisherman would not be able to manage so much as the crofter, as he would not be able to devote his time to fishing.

3727. Then you think there should be two classes—one of crofters with large crofts, and one of fishermen with small crofts?—Yes. The fishermen with us have not very large boats, and they are only fishing as much as will keep their families going, and therefore, I think, so far as we are concerned, we should have the land, as much as would keep our families in comfort.

3728. Are you not aware that one of the great grievances through the whole of Skye, as generally understood, is that the very system which you speak of as a good system, has been carried out, namely, that the crofters have been moved from crofts where they have been comfortable, and put down on small crofts near the sea, where they have been expected to make up their livelihood by fishing?—And is it not that which has spoiled them, and made them poor people? They were taken from other parts and packed by the sea-shore, and the best part of the land under sheep.

3729. Does that not agree with what you said just now, that crofters should be crofters, and that fishermen should have smaller holdings, and occupy themselves with fishing?—I do not mean that such a fisherman ought to be among us at all. I do not mean that among us there should be people placed on small crofts, in order that they might devote themselves to fishing.

3730. Will you give in your own words your ideas how fishing should be prosecuted?—I myself have got two nets at home, and last year I did not fish more than a barrel of herring with them, and in that way, how could I depend upon fishing? I am only losing my time with it.

3731. Then, will you say distinctly that fishing is altogether a mistake for the people in this district, and that it should be discontinued?—I know that a fisherman without land would not do in our place.

3732. It is mentioned in that statement that one of the crofters took in a lodger, and was fined for it. What was the lodger?—He was a hawker—a rag collector

3733. What are the farms and deer forests you alluded to as being Macleod's property which were waste?—Minginish entirely, the parish of Bracadale altogether, except a little that was given to the cottars in Struan.

3734. Would all those large farms be suitable for crofters, or did you only mean a proportion of them?—Yes, it is there that the crofters would get justice. The best land in Skye is there.

3735. Do you think those two farms of Glenbrittle and Talisker would make suitable crofting farms?—Was it not crofters that were on them before? It is there that crofters would thrive—good strong land, if it were taken under cultivation now.

3736. And what would they do with the higher part of the land?—They would stock it with sheep and cattle.

3737. Have they got capital in order to do that?—If they got good land it would be easier for them to get money. If they were located on the land in such a way as that neither landlord nor anybody else would interfere with them, they might get assistance from Government to buy the land.

3738. Have you any idea of the value of the sheep stock upon these two farms I have mentioned, at the present time?—No.

3739. What is the deer forest you allude to as being wasted?—The Cuchullins.

3740. Do you know yourself where the deer forest is?—In the Cuchullins and Minginish.

3741. Would the land where the deer are be suitable for crofters to cultivate?—Not in the upper parts of the mountains.

3742. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Was the paper you have handed in composed by the people themselves on the spot?—Yes, it was made up in Edinbane.

3743. Is there enough of land for the crofters upon the estate of Grishornish according to their views, apart from the landlord's own farm, that could be given back to them?—Yes, but M'Leod of M'Leod has much better land, if we could only get it.

3744. Will you explain now about the votes; do you mean Parliamentary votes, or what votes?—School board votes.

3745. One of the complaints is that Gaelic is not taught in the school. Why is that? Does the school board prevent it?—I don't know, but the schoolmaster is a south country man, who has no Gaelic.

3746. Who is the chairman of the board?—I don't know.

3747. Is Mr Robertson one of the members of the board?—Yes.

3748. Can he speak Gaelic?—He does not speak it, at any rate.

3749. Is he a Skye man?—No.

3750. Why does Mr Robertson wish to get from the people the first offer of their cattle, and wish them to go to his store?—Does he do so from philanthropic motives, or for the purpose of making a profit himself?—To make profit to himself, no doubt.

3751. Do you wish to abolish those two things? Would the people rather be free of this first offer, and free of the store? Would you prefer that the store was not there?—We were, at the beginning of this spring, very much in straits for meal, and we thought that he should have had a constant supply of meal in his store, and were it not for the supply of meal that Dr Fraser got, there would some of us have perished.

3752. Then, there was not meal in the store all the year round?—There was no meal at that time.

3753. You state that sometimes Mr Robertson sells the sheep for them, and sometimes they sell them themselves, and when they sell they give

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the money to Mr Robertson. When he sells for them about Lammas, does he tell them, when he sells, what he gets, or do they know nothing about it till Martinmas?—He tells us the price at the time.

3754. And the only complaint they have about that is the loss of the interest?—Yes.

3755. Is the present proprietor of age?—Not yet.

3756. How long is it since the late Grishornish died?—I cannot exactly say.

3757. Is it ten years?—It is more than that.

3758. Has Mr Robertson been the factor all the time?—Yes.

3759. Was the late Mr M'Leod of Grishornish a good landlord?—We were putting up with him as he was.

3760. Then who was his predecessor? Was it a man commonly called Corriechoilie?—Yes.

3761. How long was he proprietor?—A few years.

3762. Who had it before him?—Mrs Murray, the widow of Mr Murray of Grishornish, and it was left with her in liferent.

3763. Do you recollect when it belonged to the family of M'Leod?—I remember when M'Leod of M'Leod bought Grishornish.

3764. But when it originally parted from the family?—M'Leod sold it shortly before he became bankrupt.

3765. Have you any idea how long ago the first parting from the family took place?—No, that was before my time. When Sheriff Macdonald was, I think, in Grishornish; it was he who was selling the land in Grishornish, and other portions of the estate.

3766. What object had Mr Robertson in making voters for the school board? Is the election not conducted by ballot?—His reason was that he was expecting to get some votes himself in consequence. I cannot be sure, but that is what I think.

3767. Has there been any contest in the parish for the school board?—Did you ever give a vote yourself?—Yes, there was a contest.

3768. Did Mr Robertson, or anybody in his behalf, ask the people for their votes?—I cannot say that Mr Robertson did ask us out and out.

3769. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Had you a brother in the army?—Yes.

3770. Was your father a crofter?—Yes.

3771. What rank did your brother rise to?—Lieutenant-Colonel.

3772. *The Chairman.*—You stated that in your opinion there ought to be large crofters, and that there ought to be fishermen separately, with small portions of land. Can you tell me whether you ever heard of a crofter being anywhere removed from his croft for the purpose of improving the crofts of those who remained behind, or whether when a person is removed from his croft the land is always given to a tacksman or farmer?—I am not aware that crofters have been removed from townships for the purpose of bettering the condition of those who are left behind, or that crofters have been removed from holdings for the purpose of having better holdings given to them.

NEIL GILLIES, Crofter and Fisherman, Edinbane (45)—examined.

Neil Gillies

3773. How long have you been on your croft?—About thirty years.

3774. Have you been freely elected a delegate?—Yes.

3775. Have you heard and understood the statement made by the previous witness?—Yes.

3776. Do you agree in the main with what has been stated?—Yes, in the main.

3777. Have you any additional statement to make?—I am ready to answer any questions.

3778. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Is Loch Grishornish a good loch for fishing?—Last year it was very bad. The year before that was little better.

3779. Have all the people boats?—No, there only four boats in the place that I call boats, but there are some old ones that are not fit for sea, and the new ones are too wee to go to the open sea with; and there are no fish coming into the lochs just now, and we cannot go to the open sea for want of boats.

3880. Where would you go to fish outside?—In the Minch.

3781. There is abundance of cod and ling there?—Yes, if we had the boats and material to go.

3782. Do you think, if good big boats were got for the Edinbane people, the men would work them?—I am certain they would go to some other district and fish there,—to the east coast, and Lewis and Harris. They are able enough to go, if they had boats and materials to go.

3783. Is there any reason why they should not be as good fishers as men on the east coast?—They are as good, after they are taught and learned by them.

3784. Is there any difficulty in getting bait at Edinbane?—Not that I know of. The only bait is herring, and sometimes it is very scarce, for long lines.

3785. Is there any prohibition about the shell-fish there?—Yes, about the oysters.

3586. No prohibition on mussels?—I do not know. I heard people say that, but I was lifting them, and was never prohibited from lifting them.

KENNETH M'PHEE, Crofter, Edinbane (about 55)—examined.

3787. *The Chairman.*—Have you been freely elected a delegate?—Yes.

3788. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—You saw this paper before it was handed in to us?—I heard it read.

3789. And you agreed in all that was stated in it?—Yes.

3790. It states that a man for selling a stack of corn off a farm, though he had offered it to Mr Robertson several times, and was in sore need of ready money, was punished by having his rent raised from £3, 8s. 5d. to £4, which he still pays. Are you the man that sold the stack of corn?—I am the man.

3791. Was it against the regulation of the estate to sell the straw off the farm?—Yes, it was against the regulations to sell corn off the estate without giving the proprietor the offer.

3792. Are you bound to consume the straw and apply the manure to the land?—That is a rule which was made by the late Mr Kenneth M'Leod. I never saw it written, nor did I hear of any one who saw it written.

3763. Are the tenants all aware that that is the rule of the property?—Yes.

3794. Do they complain of that rule?—I don't know that they are complaining.

3795. Do you think it is necessary to good cultivation that the manure

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of the straw should be returned to the land where the straw was grown?—Yes, but no man would put the straw off the estate if he had cattle to consume it. I had more fodder than I could use for my cows.

3796. How many had you?—Two cows is the summing, but I had not two at that time.

3797. You had one?—Yes.

3798. You are now paying £4 for the half lot?—Yes.

3799. Is the only reason that the rent was raised the fact that you sold this straw without offering it to Mr Robertson?—Mr Robertson said so to me. He gave that as the reason to me.

3800. The rent was raised as a fine for contravening this rule on the estate?—Yes.

3801. Is that fine ever to come to an end?—I do not know, but that fine is on me yet.

3802. For how long has that fine been running?—I don't know, but I have paid it seven times—six certainly.

3803. And you have no expectation of its being remitted?—I expect it to be remitted to me sometime, but it has not been remitted yet.

3804. Have you asked to be relieved of it at any time?—Yes.

3805. More than once?—More than once.

3806. What was the answer?—That I would have a vote.

3807. And it is now kept at £4 in order that you may have a vote?—Yes. Mr Robertson did not mention vote, but when I saw that he was qualifying those who had not a right qualification for voting, I understood that that was his motive in making my rent £4.

3808. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Whether would you rather have the vote or your old rent?—I did not want the vote at all.

3809. *The Chairman.*—You have stated that it was the rule of the estate that the straw was to be consumed on the land, and that is for the improvement of the land. But, when the straw is threshed, is there any obligation to offer the corn for sale to the factor?—I don't know. I never saw it in my own case, or in the case of others, in the township that they had more corn than they required.

3810. *Mr Cameron.*—Are you a fisherman?—I am not doing much fishing. I used to go to the east coast fishing, but it is four or five years since I gave that up.

ALEXANDER DUNCAN FRASER, M.B. (Edin.)—examined.

Alexander Duncan Fraser.

3811. *The Chairman.*—How long have you been settled in Skye?—Six years.

3812. Are you a native of Skye?—No.

3813. Are you a native of the Western Highlands?—I am a native of Argyleshire.

3814. During the six years you have been resident here you have had good opportunities of noticing the physical condition of the people?—I have.

3815. Would you kindly state to the Commission what you think of the physical condition of the people, especially with reference to the alleged deterioration during the past few years. Do you think the people, when you first came into the country, were in a better physical condition—better fed, and better dressed, than they are now, or not?—I know

that a number of them were better fed and better dressed than they are now.

3816. What is the cause of this deterioration which you have noticed?—I think that the bad seasons have had to do with it.

3817. Have you had any reason to believe that the soil is itself exhausted, or less capable of yielding grain crops than it formerly was?—I am quite sure, from the system of cropping adopted, that the soil is less capable of giving crops to-day than it was some years ago.

3818. Is it within your knowledge that tracts of common grazing, sheep grazing, have been withdrawn from the crofters of late years?—It is not.

3819. You have no knowledge of it?—I have no knowledge of it.

3820. Have you heard of it in the country generally?—I cannot say I have.

3821. Have you reason to think that the deterioration in the clothing of the people has any connection with the alleged fact that they have less wool of their own for domestic manufacture than they had?—I have heard that stated. I believe they are not able to buy the wool they were once able to buy, for want of ready money. They are too fond of dealing in bills.

3822. Do you think that the quality of the lodging of the people, or of their food, is prejudicial to their health?—If they did not live so much in the open air I am sure that many of the houses would certainly be prejudicial to the health of the people, and the quality of the food too.

3823. Are you aware of any cases of disease in the country which can be distinctly traced to the character of the habitations or the food?—I believe I am. I have seen a good deal of scrofulous disease, and also a good deal of lung disease, and a large proportion of eye disease, all due to the houses and food and want of clothing.

3824. Has it come within your notice that the children are frequently in want of milk, or have they a sufficient command of milk?—They have nothing like a command of milk. Even at the present hour they have not sufficient milk. There is no grass at present for the cows to make milk with, and they cannot feed them with either meal or potatoes or anything else; and the cows that have calved this year are giving little or no milk at the present time. The calves require all the milk, and, in addition, meal and other foods. I know that in general cases myself, and it is a difficulty with me in treating people when I recommend them to have milk that they say they cannot get it.

3825. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Did you, from your personal experience this season find some cases of extreme poverty in Edinbane?—I did.

3826. Poverty reaching to what may correctly be called destitution?—I did.

3827. Did you find some cases of families being actually in want of food?—I did.

3828. To what do you attribute their condition?—Well, to the failure of the potatoes last year, and the destruction of the corn with the gales.

3829. Did you find many instances of that?—Well, I found three instances in one day.

3830. Of families that were actually in want of food?—Without a bite of food in the house, and actually borrowing from neighbours not much better off than themselves, and who had lent their last handful of meal, and must have starved but for the assistance they got.

3831. That was the reason why you made a public appeal for assistance?—I made no public appeal, properly speaking, for assistance. I wrote to my

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own friends for assistance, and got it; but, before getting it, I had to send a telegram for food for the people.

3832. The accuracy of your statements on the subject has been questioned by some writers in one newspaper, at least, and the charitable efforts you have made were even sneered at in one letter I read myself. Was there any ground for the assertions made in that letter?—I know of no grounds.

3833. You made a reply to that letter in the *Inverness Courier*?—I did. I sent a reply to the *Scotsman*, but they refused to put it in, on the ground of length, which was perhaps the only ground.

3834. Are you willing to give in that letter as a statement of some of the facts connected with the destitution in Edinbane?—Certainly. *

3835. You are surgeon to the Gesto Hospital?—Yes.

3836. I suppose that institution is of great value to the country?—It is.

3837. It was founded by the late Kenneth M'Leod?—It was.

3838. What is the average attendance there?—The average daily attendance there for the last year was ten. There are only twelve beds, so it only left two vacancies.

3839. Are there ever more applications than you can supply?—Yes, often.

3840. What class of diseases are most common?—This year, eye diseases from want of food—I mean, the usual cause is want of food,—ulceration of the cornea, and so on; scrofulous complaints, and abscesses connected with diseased bone.

3841. You spoke of consumption. You, as a recent comer to Skye, don't know much about the past history of Skye, but have you heard or made any inquiries as to the health of the people in former times in that respect, and whether consumption was more common in former times than it is now?—I have heard it was not common in former times.

3842. I think the late Sir Robert Christison wrote something to that effect?—I cannot say.

3843. What are the chief causes of consumption now?—Most of those cases I have seen, in grown-up people especially, have been cases of people who have gone to the south.

3844. People catching colds, and neglecting them?—I suppose that is the cause of it.

3845. Has the badness of clothing anything to do with the catching of cold?—There is no doubt of that; badness of clothes and want of food.

3846. We have heard, in one other place at least, the suggestion that the excessive labour to which they are subjected weakens the constitution of the people. Do you think there is anything in that?—I don't think there is anything in that. If they had the food to take they could stand the labour, and a great deal more.

3847. Are the children generally not very well clothed?—They are very badly clothed.

3848. They generally go barefooted?—Barefooted, a number of them, summer and winter and bareheaded too.

3849. But I suppose you don't consider it very bad for them?—I consider it bad for them, in winter, to be barefooted and bareheaded.

3850. When they go to school, whether do you think it is better for them to go barefooted, or to go and sit in the school with wet shoes on?—Bare feet are certainly better.

3851. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Are you sure of the bareheadedness

* See Appendix A, XVII.

being against them? Do you know that the Blue Coat School boys are not allowed to wear anything on their heads?—I am aware.

3852. Don't you think it gives them a better head of hair?—If the insides of the children here were as well lined as the Blue Coat boys they might stand to have their heads bare; otherwise I do not see how they could.

3853. Have you anything more to suggest to the Commission?—I have nothing.

3854. *Mr Cameron.*—Have you, in your experience, often found two families residing in one house amongst the crofters?—Not often.

3855. But occasionally?—Occasionally.

3856. I suppose you consider that very prejudicial to the health of the families?—I certainly do.

3857. And it has other disadvantages besides?—Yes.

3858. Have you ever taken advantage of your position as a medical man, and remonstrated with them for it?—I cannot say I have. I did not know what remedies to suggest. There was no use pulling down till one was prepared to build up.

3859. Do the people eat much fish here?—They do, when the fishing is at all good. This year they have not done much fishing.

3860. Do they get as a rule an abundant supply of fish in good years?—They generally get sufficient herring to salt for winter use.

3861. I suppose you consider fish a very nutritious and a very valuable article of food?—I do.

3862. Do you find that eating too much of one kind of food has the effect of producing dyspepsia and kindred diseases?—It does. There is scarcely a patient who comes to me who has not dyspepsia. It is the commonest disease of any.

3863. Do you attribute that to anything except eating large quantities of oatmeal?—Quantities of oatmeal and no other food.

3864. That is the principal cause?—The principal cause.

3865. Can you suggest any improvement in their food that is within the reach of the people?—If they would not sell their eggs for tea.

3866. They exchange their eggs for tea?—I always tell them to use their eggs.

3867. Is there a good market for eggs here?—They sell them to the local merchants.

3868. What price do they get for them?—They were getting as high as 8d. this winter. They look upon that as a very good price.

3869. Do they sell them to the steamers in summer?—Not in my district; there are no steamers coming in.

3870. *The Chairman.*—You stated that in some cases you have seen two families occupying the same house. In those cases were the families nearly related to each other, such as the family of the father and the family of the son, or were there sometimes two families strangers to each other living in the same house?—The cases I have seen were those of father and son, I believe.

3871. Will you state whether, in the course of your practice among the poor, destitute, and sick, you have received any spontaneous assistance from the proprietors and factors or their families,—I mean in supplying diet or in distributing alms, or in assisting the poor in sickness?—I have received assistance from the proprietor's family in Grishornish, and also from the shooting tenants in the lodge at Edinbane, who were always willing to do anything for the sick people when I mention the fact that they wanted anything.

3872. *Professor Mackinnon.*—This last year was exceptional, but I

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understood you to say that the condition of the people is so poor as to be to some extent prejudicial to their health?—Yes; I think the diet is much too limited even in a good year,—potatoes, fish, and meal.

3873. Have you turned your mind in any way to a remedy of a more or less permanent kind to bring about a different state of matters?—I do not see a remedy. There are too many people on the land, but I do not see how you are to get rid of them, unless by the natural causes operating over a number of years. As crofts become vacant, let them lie vacant, or join them to the neighbouring ones.

3874. You are quite of the opinion which the crofters express, that the crofts are too small?—I am quite satisfied of that. They will trust to their small crofts, and the least disease in the potatoes or destruction of their crops immediately brings them to the verge of want.

3875. In their statement, the people themselves say that fishing should be distinct from crofting, but when the witness was examined upon it, I understood him to mean that that was a general statement, and that it had no particular reference to the district of Edinbane, where they all evidently wish to be crofters. I suppose, as a general statement, you would agree with the expression?—I would, as a general statement.

3876. You find that consumption is chiefly among the young who have been south?—That has been my experience up to last year.

3877. That is also my experience. Can you, as a medical man, give me any explanation of it?—I have always believed that those people, when they go south, being used to living here on their small means, take lodgings in a poor part of the town, and, having to pay for everything they eat and drink, they starve themselves, and go about with too few clothes on, and they want the fresh air and everything they have here. In that way I believe they get consumption; I don't know any other reason for it.

3878. The hard work and the bad air is not sufficiently counteracted by the amount of good healthy food they take?—No, and they have not the rests from labour which they have here; for even if they have little food, if they are not being worked, they still keep free from all disease except dyspepsia.

3879. That is to say at home?—Yes. In the south they must work, and live on very little.

3880. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Do you think the want of food is the cause of the people remaining comparatively idle during the winter months. The people of this country do not display great energy in cultivating their crofts during the winter months?—No, they don't work much during winter.

3881. Do you think the want of food is very much the cause of that habit?—I am sure they feel very much less inclined to work when they are not well fed, judging by what I feel myself.

3882. But you think, if, their food was better, they would display more energy?—I am sure they would; there are no better workers as navvies than Skyemen, but then they are having their beef three times a day.

3883. One witness in another place told us the weather was so bad in the winter months, from new year to the sowing time, that it was impossible to work outside. Was that your experience?—During the last two or three winters I could not get my own work done for the length of bad weather. It sometimes rains for weeks and weeks.

3884. And that is prejudicial to the pursuit of agriculture in this district?—It is. I do not think corn crops pay in this country at all. It is much better to lay the land down in grass.

3885. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You ride about continually?—I do.

3886. Have you been over the most of Skye?—I have, except the south part.

3887. In the course of your observations, don't you constantly see here and there the ruins and remains of scores, I may say hundreds of houses, that had been once occupied by people?—On every hill side.

3888. Does not the appearance presented by the grass about those places denote that there must be considerable depth of good soil about those places? Don't they look exceedingly pretty and green?—Yes, most of them look exceedingly pretty and green.

3889. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Yesterday we had a schoolmaster, a stranger in the country—only one year in the country—suggesting that the children in this district were scarcely so clever as the children of the south. Would you consider the people of the district equal upon the average, in mental as well as physical capacity, to the people of the rest of the country?—Yes, I do. I believe that is so.

3890. Mentally as well as physically?—Mentally as well as physically.

3891. And physically fully equal to the average, if they were well fed?—Certainly. One thing I have noticed. I have noticed that children who seemed starved and meagre up to a certain age,—twelve to fifteen,—all of a sudden shoot up to be great stout men. They go away to the south, and come back great strong men in one year. It struck me over and over again.

3892. How do you account for that?—I cannot account for that.

3893. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Will it not be accounted for in this way: that they were in regular service and got regular food, which they did not buy themselves?—That might partly account for it.

3894. *Professor Mackinnon.*—But even the people that do not go south manage to get big and strong?—Yes, some of them; many of them do.

MALCOLM M'CASKILL, Crofter, Kilmuir (36)—examined.

[*Mr Alexander M'Donald.*—I have been specially requested by M'Leod of M'Leod to mention, that his tenants have perfect freedom to say whatever they think fit and proper, so far as he is concerned, without fear of consequences.]

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3895. *The Chairman.*—Have you always been resident in Skye?—I was away for some time, but I was back every year. I was away ten years.

3896. When you say away, where did you go, and for what purpose?—I was at Glasgow.

3897. For the purpose of labour?—Yes, working.

3898. Have you been freely elected a delegate?—Yes.

3899. Did you prepare the document which you now present?—Yes.

3900. Yourself?—Partly.

3901. Is it a statement by the people of the district?—Yes. It is as follows:—'I am thirty-six years of age, and was born in Kilmuir, parish 'of Duirinish. My father was born at Ramasaig, and is about seventy-five 'years of age. He was evicted from there to Idrigill, from Idrigill to 'Forse, and from Forse back to Idrigill, where he was only one year. 'Then he was removed or evicted to Kilmuir where he was only for a few 'years, when he was removed to his present croft, which he has occupied

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'for about forty-eight years. He was removed from the first four places 'for no other reason than to make room for sheep. He was not in arrears 'of rent. He has seen all the following townships laid waste or depopu- 'lated:—Lowergill, Ramasaig, Ollasdale, Dibidale, Idrigill, Forse, Varkasaig. 'He has seen the first two depopulated twice. When he came to Kilmuir 'first there was only twenty crofters, paying about £100. The reason for 'removing him to his present croft was that the grieve or manager M'Leod 'had at Dunvegan at that time thought they had too much land, and 'would have no time for work for M'Leod at Dunvegan, consequently he 'divided Kilmuir into forty crofts (or about), and my father was removed 'to his present croft. Shortly afterwards it was subdivided, and four 'other parties have a piece of it to-day. His croft is about 3 or 4 acres, 'but it would not make 1 acre, and give the ground a depth of 12 inches. 'The summing is two cows for each croft, but not able to keep anything 'like two cows; no sheep. My father is paying rent for the long period 'of sixty years, and he never owned a sheep during that time. There is 'grazing in Kilmuir for seventy-five cows. We do not sell more than 'twenty stirks every year, which I value at £3, 10s. We sow about 480 'bushels; give two returns, which I value at 4s. the bushel. I allow them '400 barrels, or 10 barrels each, which I value at 3s., which give a total 'of £226; deduct rent, £100, which leaves only £126 divided among 200 'souls, which only gives on an average about 12s. 7d. each. I daresay 'every one in Kilmuir will say that I have gone too high, but after all it 'is a poor profit. I have not taken the labour into consideration; any one 'who knows anything about small crofts knows it is considerable. Also the 'milk is not a great thing in a place like Kilmuir. Our hill pasture is the 'worst in Skye. Some turn their crofts yearly; do not even leave out 'where you would dry a pocket handkerchief. These must kill their 'calves. I was exactly £4 in feeding meal last year. Could not get corn 'to buy; my neighbours can say the same, some more and less. It is a 'miracle how the poor crofter lives. We are actually starving; how can 'it be otherwise in the face of the foregoing statement? Paupers are far 'better off in many respects. If not for the money earned in the south and 'the fishing we would have been paupers in the poor-houses long ago. The 'population of Duirinish is about 4500, and there has not been a doctor 'for the last eight years. The nearest to here is 9 miles, and about 21 from 'Glendale, or from 12 miles to 21 from three-fourths of the population. 'The paupers can have their doctor and medicine, but no word of the poor 'crofter, who bears all the burden. I am intimately acquainted with the 'most of the crofters in the parish, and all are willing to pay any reason- 'able amount in order to have a doctor at once. It is disgraceful for a 'civilised country like ours to be without a doctor for eight years. I am 'not aware of anything being done for to get one. Only Miss M'Leod 'of M'Leod has done her best with the authorities, but to no effect. The 'proprietors hate to see the face of man, as their clearances of the land 'show. They have far more respect for sheep and cattle. We pay for 'sea-weed at the rate of 30s. per ton of kelp, or 1s. 6d. the cwt. or scale 'we call it. There are three fishing boats in Kilmuir, and have their full 'implement of nets. The loch is sometimes very good for herrings, but we 'are *too far from the fishing grounds. We don't want any piers, as the loch* 'is well sheltered. Our boats are small, and can be drawn up at any time. 'Trawling is prohibited; shell-fish or mussels are not prohibited. Some- 'time ago we built a house, and managed to slate it. I am now assessed at '£10, which I consider double its value. I believe the assessor never saw 'it; at anyrate he was not inside. I have written him several times, and to 'no effect. I paid of rates last year £2, 6s. 11d., excluding my croft, which

'I consider too high. There are several others in the same position as 'myself, and at the same rate. Now, what inducement has a poor crofter 'to make a good house, when he is taxed higher than his rent? It keeps a 'good many back from building houses; they rather stop in the wretched 'houses that they have than better them. Even felt houses are taxed in 'other parts of the islands of Inverness. There are a few of them now in 'this parish, and expecting the taxman daily. The assessor told me he 'would give the rent value for my house. I may say he is quite 'welcome, if I had money to build a house that I could thatch with 'straw. It is a great hardship on the overburdened crofter. Over forty 'years ago there were only twenty crofters in Kilmuir; there are over sixty-'four families to-day. Overcrowding is a great grievance with us; they do 'a great damage on our hill pasture, cutting peats. I can give no reason 'for overcrowding, but the following:—When any one is looking out for a 'place, some crofter gives him permission to build on his croft, or gets 'about ¼ of an acre of land; immediately the proprietor rents him 30s., or 'the crofter only gets 5s. of a reduction, so that the proprietor is the gainer 'by 25s, and the poor crofters never gets anything for the damage done 'by the parties cutting peats. Another cause for overcrowding is when 'a crofter leaves the place or dies, his next neighbour will not get the croft, 'but it is given to a stranger. When a crofter dies or leaves the country, 'and if he happens to be in arrears, the incoming crofter must pay them. 'It is not right that the incoming crofter should pay anybody's debt; 'proprietors should run the risk of losses like other merchants. It is a 'trifle that the proprietors have out in arrears, in comparison to the 'merchants. I fully believe, and am not far wrong when I say, that all the 'stock and the effects of all the crofters in Duirinish would not pay their 'debts at the present time. All the crofters that I know in this parish 'paying rent from £10 to £15 are pretty well off, and shows that we 'should get more land at a reasonable rent. What I consider a fair croft is '15 acres arable, four cows, one horse, and hill pasture for about fifty sheep; 'a fair rent for the above £10. There is plenty land to be had about 'here, and on the MacLeod estate, and very suitable for crofts of any 'size, and plenty to take them, that is if stocked for them. There were 'seven crofters removed about fourteen years ago to a part of Kilmuir called 'the Moss, in order to add their grounds to those of the new hotel. They 'got no compensation whatever when they were removed, had to build 'new houses where they went to, and their crofts very inferior to those 'they left. The school board consists of seven members,—one F. C. 'minister, one merchant, one ground officer, one factor, one doctor, and two 'proprietors. I am actually ashamed to tell what I have to say. There 'was a general election thirteen months ago. The returning officer was 'sitting in the first room, his clerk in another room immediately off it. The 'first on the ground was one of the proprietors with his men; he sat in 'the room along with the returning officer, saw his men go into the room 'one by one, left the door open, and saw how they voted. He was that 'honest he did not go into the room. Next comes the factor with his 'men; he went into the room along with them, saw how and who they 'voted for. Next comes the ground officer, who is next the factor, and is 'ten times worse; he takes them by the shoulder and walks in with them; 'they all plumped for him, consequently he is returned at the top of the 'poll. I have seen latterly as many as four or five candidates in the room 'at one time. One man would not vote till they were actually turned out of 'the room. I believe all the rest of the work is carried on in the same way. 'During the last eleven years, I never heard of a meeting being called so 'as to give an account of their work. The meetings are held in the hotels,

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'where they pay from 7s. 6d. to 15s. for every meeting held, suppose a 'church is within a few yards and a nice comfortable schoolhouse within 'a quarter of a mile to the said hotel. They have their lunch at the 'rate-payers' expense. If they won't do the work free, let them all resign. 'The amount paid for school board and parochial work is considerable. I 'will give you a few instances of how business is conducted at said board. 'There has been thirteen teachers in three schools, or sixteen in four within 'the last four years, and I believe all the teachers under the board at present 'are looking out for another place. The attendance is as bad. We have four 'compulsory officers, and things are worse than they were when there was 'only one officer. I am told one of the officers has not visited his school 'since August. Our rates are increasing yearly; 9d. last year, and no explanation given. Unless a thorough reform is made in our schools, the rate-payers are determined not to pay any more rates. Give the teachers a 'salary so as to keep them, and not have such changes. I would earnestly 'request this Commission to ask Government to give the islands a larger 'Government grant, as the children cannot very well attend school in 'winter, as they cannot be clothed or fed as they ought, as you find out as 'you go along. Our very high rates must be reduced, or the sooner the 'Education Act is repealed the better, in the islands at anyrate. The scholars 'are not so good as they were twenty years ago; the most of them leaving 'school are scarcely able to write a letter. The roads are not one bit 'better. I will only mention a case or two. A few years ago, when the 'people were removed from Lowergill to Ramasaig, the factor got a new 'road 4 or 5 miles long, made to his smearing house at once, so wherever 'you go there is always more respect for sheep than man. The road to 'Glendale leading from the public road at Kilmuir, and used for the 'benefit of 2700, not one penny was spent upon it for a great number of 'years. If it was to a gentleman's house or tacksman, it would be made at 'once. The party who comes after me will give you more information 'regarding the schools and roads. I was informed by the miller at Glendale 'that he used to grind upwards of 1400 bolls, but now down to 300, and 'no other reason but the land not yielding its former crops, owing to its 'being turned yearly, and the eviction from Lowergill and Ramasaig. We 'are now hurdened by policemen, which is the cause of a great deal of ill-'feeling among the people. We are taxed 1s. 2d. in the pound; I expect it 'to be 10d. or 1s. next year. We have three policemen stationed at 'Kilmuir, and not more than 300 souls. One policemen is as good as 500. 'I strongly recommend your Commission to nrge upon Government to have 'them removed at once. I do not know of a single case they had for the 'last twelve months. Great dissatisfaction has been caused in the parish, 'owing to the parties who got the management of the relief fund, such as 'factors, ground officers, merchants, and parties who did not know anything 'about the destitution of the people and the parties in actual need.'

3902. I observe that this statement is all couched in your own name. It runs always in the first person—'I think so,' or 'I recommend.' Is it all your own composition?—No.

3903. Has it all been read to the persons whom you represent?—Not all, but to some of them.

3904. It has not been read to all?—Not all.

3905. Then the whole of this statement does not express the views and opinions of the people whom you represent?—It does, every word.

3906. How do you know?—I have been speaking to them.

3907. But why was the paper not read in public meeting, and signed by all the people, or many of them, as well as yourself?—I was appointed to come here to-day and state my views, and that is my statement.

3908. You believe, in fact, that that statement substantially represents the sentiments of the people who have sent you here?—Yes.

3909. There is a statement in this paper to the effect that when a crofter is removed from his croft, or relinquishes his croft in arrear of rent to the landlord, and is succeeded by another crofter, the incoming crofter pays the arrears of rent to the landlord?—Yes.

3910. Is that done in the township which you represent?—They are very seldom in arrears, but if they are they pay them.

3911. Have you yourself personal knowledge of individual cases in which arrears have been paid?—I have.

3912. Can you state how many years such arrears have accumulated?—I cannot say.

3913. Can you state any amount that you know to have been paid by the incoming tenant?—£10; and I heard of a tenant paying £20.

3914. In the case of £20 having been paid, was the croft a large one or a small one?—A small one.

3915. How many years' rental do you think the £20 probably represented?—I believe four years' rent.

3916. Are you aware of any one being present here at this meeting, or any one coming here, who has paid arrears of rent for entry in that way?—Yes, there are four here.

3917. Have these payments taken place in the case of a son or relative succeeding a father, or have they taken place when the crofter has been removed, and been succeeded by some one quite unconnected with him?—Quite unconnected. It did not matter who it was.

3918. And when such payments are made to the proprietor, are they made at once, or is the payment spread over a succession of years in the form of an increase of rent?—It is paid at once, before they enter possession.

3919. Is it usual to find persons so anxious to obtain a croft even at the high rents you mention, that they will come in and pay all the arrears of their predecessor?—Quite common. It is quite easy to get them.

3920. Then there is a great demand for crofts?—Yes.

3921. Notwithstanding the high rent and small return?—They never look to the rent if they get a croft in some cases—a good many of them. If I were leaving my croft to-day, I could get forty that would take it.

3922. Would they take it at an increase of rent?—I believe they would, if it were asked for.

3923. But a great increase?—At a great increase.

3924. Then, in that case, the crofts are not rack-rented or at the highest rate?—No.

3925. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Do you pay taxes for the police along with your rent?—On my house rent.

3926. Do you hold your house on a long lease or a feu?—No feu or lease—just the house I have on my father's croft.

3927. You hold your croft from year to year?—Not a day. I can be removed at any time. I just built the house to save thatch. I put slates on it, and I was taxed.

3928. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Do you pay these taxes to the Government officer or along with your rent?—It is the inspector of poor who collects it.

3929. Not the police tax?—The police tax goes to Inverness.

3930. *Mr Cameron.*—Do you pay as tenant or as owner?—My father is entered as proprietor, and I am his tenant.

3931. Can your father be removed at any moment?—At any moment.

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3932. And without compensation?—Without compensation. The house was only built on the croft.

3933. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Do the crofters pay taxes?—No, but my house is superior to others.

3934. Then this complaint in your petition about the tax for the police applies only to you who have built a better house?—There are seven or eight in the district who have done so, and are taxed the same as my house.

3935. Are you perfectly satisfied you will never be turned out of that house?—I can be turned out to-morrow.

3936. But you do not expect that, or you would not have built it?—No, I cannot say. I just built it on chance, because I thought it would be cheaper in the end to slate than to thatch it—than to be thatching it every year. It is entered in the valuation roll at £10.

3937. You are prohibited from trawling. Is that because the people of the country generally object to trawling?—It is the proprietor, I believe.

3938. Would it hurt the proprietor that you should trawl?—Not unless we would catch trout.

3939. Would your neighbours like you to trawl?—They would have no objection, unless there were some nasty contentious people that would not like to see their neighbours getting on and catching fish.

3940. Is it not the case that there was trawling in Loch Grishornish, and that the people objected to it?—I never heard of it. The fishermen themselves would not object to it.

3941. Doesn't it interfere with the small lines?—No; where we trawl we do not interfere with the herring nets.

3942. Perhaps not with herring nets, but with long lines?—We never fish with hand lines where we trawl—nor long lines either.

3943. Who is the returning officer of the school board here?—Mr Mackenzie, of the post office.

3944. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Give me the names of the four people now in the army?—I only know one of them—Alexander M'Innes.

3945. *The Chairman.*—You stated that the school board was all composed of persons elected in the interest of the proprietor, and under the influence of the proprietor, factor, and ground officer?—I mention them all in my paper.

3946. Are you convinced that if the people had really perfect freedom in the election of this school board they would choose a board of a very different character from that which they have chosen?—I believe they would.

3947. Do they earnestly desire to have a representative on the board of their own class, to represent their own views?—Certainly.

3948. And they have not been able to obtain that?—No.

3949. And you think that is owing to fear of the factor, and the ground officer?—I have stated in my paper the reasons.

3950. You have stated in the paper that when the school board meet they meet at the inn, that they pay rent for the room, that they have a meal there, and that they pay for the meal out of the rates. What ground have you for making that statement? Has it fallen within your personal knowledge that the charge for the room and for the food is at the expense of the rates?—I know it from the board when there are two meetings—parochial board and school board—there is 15s. paid for the room, and when there is one meeting there is 7s. 6d. paid.

3951. How do you know that the payment is made?—From the clerk.

3952. And you know from the same source that the payment is made from the rates?—Certainly, it comes out the expenditure of the board.

3953. And with reference to the food, are you well aware the food is paid out of the rates?—Certainly, they get food at the inn by the payment of the 15s.

3954. Is that generally the case in Skye?—Well, I cannot say about any other places.

3955. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Will you mention the four people who paid arrears of rent?—I only know M'Innes.

3956. How much was due on the croft?—£8.

3957. Who was the proprietor you refer to in the paper as having come forward in the voting for the school board?—Mr Robertson and Dr Martin.

3958. Who was the factor you refer to?—Mr MacDonald, Portree.

3959. Who was the ground officer?—John Shaw, Waternish.

3960. *Mr Cameron.*—It is mentioned in this statement that one place was twice depopulated?—It was depopulated, and again depopulated a second time.

3961. Were the same people sent back again, or a fresh lot?—They might be the same people, in some cases, but probably not.

3962. When was it the first depopulation took place?—About sixty years ago, and the second five or six years ago,—Lowergill and Ramasaig.

3963. How was it filled after the first depopulation?—I cannot say.

3964. Where did they come from?—From different townships.

3965. How was the place refilled? Was it done at once, or after an interval of years?—Not all at once.

3966. You don't know much about it, in fact?—I know it was done twice.

3967. But you cannot give information where they came from?—No, I cannot.

3968. You seem to think the giving of vacant crofts a good system?—No.

3969. But you state in this paper that it is desirable to do so?—It is done; it is given to strangers.

3970. But it is approved of in your statement?—No, I do not mean that. I mean that when my neighbour leaves I do not get his croft, supposing I asked for it; it is a stranger that gets it.

3971. You consider that a good system?—No.

3972. I thought you said you would like to get it?—I don't want overcrowding; I want to get it myself.

3973. You think that, when there is a vacant croft, it should not be given to a stranger, but to the next neighbour?—To the next neighbour.

3974. Who drew up this statement?—I wrote it myself in my own handwriting, but I got the headings, and put it down in pencil in my pass-book.

3975. How many people did you consult about it?—Most of the people in the place.

3976. They all saw it?—Not that paper; but they saw my heads, and knew what I was to write. It was this morning I wrote the paper.

3977. But they all saw it before—all the heads of families?—Yes.

3978. And they approved of it?—Certainly.

3979. And you wrote it out yourself?—Yes.

3980. And that paper contains all your headings?—Yes.

3981. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—You say there are forty heads of families?—There are thirty-three whole lots, and 9 half lots—that is forty-two.

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3982. Have they all been consulted about it?—Not the forty-two.

3983. Are there any who have held back?—I never consulted the forty-two.

3984. How many of the forty-two do you think have been consulted?—About the half of them.

3985. And the other half have not been consulted?—No; I never called on them.

3986. *Mr Cameron.*—Have you ever heard that trawling is very much objected to by fishermen in other places than this?—In some cases it is objected to,—not in all cases.

3987. You have seen it stated in the papers?—Yes.

3988. Would you be surprised to hear that the fishermen in this country formerly sent a petition to their member of Parliament against trawling?—Not here. It must have been long ago.

3989. *Professor Mackinnon.*—In case the returning officer at this election may not be examined, I wish to ask whether you attribute any blame to him in allowing people to be present?—I never heard him object to any coming in.

3990. Do you blame him for allowing them to come in?—I think it was his duty to tell them it was wrong.

3991. Do you know it to be the case that he must actually allow them to come in?—It may be lawful, but I know it is wrong.

3992. Not only so, but he cannot put them out?—No, he cannot while the voting is going on. But the electors objected to it.

3993. Every candidate is entitled to be present at the voting?—I am aware of that, but it is wrong, and it should be done away with here at elections. I don't blame the returning officer.

3994. The paper looks as though the returning officer was blamed?—No, I do not attribute blame to him. I blame the candidates.

3995. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Do you think the candidates knew how the votes were going?—Certainly, because they were standing and looking over the voting, and they walked in with the electors to the place where the clerk was sitting, and saw how they voted.

3996. And saw them mark the paper? Are you satisfied in your own mind that that actually happened?—Certainly, there were hundreds who saw it.

3997. *The Chairman.*—Were you present yourself?—Yes.

3998. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Did you vote?—I did.

3999. Did any one see your mark?—No, I put them out of the room; and there was one man present in the room who would not give his vote till they were turned out of the room, clerk and all. I was in the room at the time, and I was turned out, and two or three of the candidates as well.

4000. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Was there no person in the room at the time?—None but himself when he voted.

4001. *The Chairman.*—Do you think, if the crofters freely elected the persons whom they pleased, that they would find among the crofting community persons fully capable of performing the duties of the school board?—I should think so.

4002. Would they probably elect a fair proportion representing the proprietors and their interests?—Oh, yes.

ALEXANDER M'INNES, Crofter, Kilmuir—examined. SKYE.

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Alexander M'Innes.

4003. *The Chairman.*—Who is your proprietor?—M'Leod of M'Leod.

4004. Who is your factor?—Alexander M'Donald, Portree.

4005. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—We have been informed that when you entered your croft you paid something?—Yes.

4006. Who was your predecessor?—Peter M'Lean.

4007. Was he any friend of yours?—No.

4008. What did you pay to the landlord?—I did not pay anything to the landlord, so far as I know.

4009. To whom did you pay it?—To Mr M'Lean.

4010. You gave him a certain sum?—Yes, because he paid the same sum before me.

4011. For what did you pay that £8?—It was after I took it that I understood the matter; but so far as I understand, from what I heard, the money did not go to the proprietor. I think the original beginning of it was about a house that was on the farm. It was the value of the old house.

4012. But you gave it to your predecessor?—Yes.

4013. *Mr Cameron.*—And he gave it to his predecessor, you believe?—Most likely.

4014. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Are you entitled to get that £8 when you leave again?—Well, it depends on circumstances. I cannot guarantee that, but (to show the scarcity of land) I was almost forced to do it. It was no necessity, but my own free will.

4015. Why did Peter M'Lean, your predecessor, leave?—I understood he got a better place.

4016. He left it of his own free will?—Yes, and I counted it as an obligement that I got it.

4017. Did you agree with the factor for the place before you agreed with Peter M'Lean?—So far as I understood the rules, he could not give it to me without the consent of the factor.

4018. But he got it?—Yes.

4019. Did the factor know you paid him £8?—I cannot say, because M'Lean had to do with the factor, and I had to do with M'Lean.

4020. Do you think the factor, up to this moment, ever knew about the £8?—I think he knows it.

4021. Did you ever mention it to him?—No, because I never had the opportunity. We live a distance apart from one another.

4022. But you pay rent to him sometimes?—Not yet.

4023. Does the house still stand for which this £8 was originally given?—No, the house has fallen; I cannot tell how long since.

4024. And you don't know how many generations the £8 has gone on for?—No.

4025. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Are there any such cases as your own in the same town?—I don't think it; so far as I know, I understand it was not as arrears, but for the price of the house, and M'Lean had to pay the same as I had.

4026. But it was for a house that you did not get the benefit of?—That is the sum and substance of the whole.

4027. *The Chairman.*—Had M'Lean any arrears of rent at the moment he left?—M'Lean had it only a year. I do not think he was in arrear.

4028. *Mr Cameron.*—He is a substantial man?—Yes

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JOHN M'SWAN, Crofter, Skiniden—examined.

John M'Swan.

4029. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—What place were you in formerly?—I was nineteen years paying rent in Ramasaig.

4030. When you went into Ramasaig, what happened?—My brother and I were on the one lot. My brother became sickly, and fell into arrears. Then he died, and another brother of mine entered the place from Edinbane. He remained four or five years in it, and the arrears were increasing on him; and when he saw this he left entirely, and returned to Edinbane, and the arrears were then left about my head. They then began to warn me out of the place for these arrears, and then I began to ask for another place, owing to the way in which I was disgusted with the warnings I was getting. Tormore was the factor then, and he sent me word I would get a lot in Skiniden, if I would give him the stock and sheep which I had in Skiniden. He himself had made a club stock of the stock of Skiniden. I told him I would give him the sheep, as I was sinking in arrears, paying for warning every year. I then came to Skiniden, and when I did so, here were five on the lot on which I entered. Four others and myself had the lot on which I entered.

4031. Did you at any time in your life pay to the landlord the arrears of a stranger on condition of getting a place?—The factor made me pay the arrears which had accumulated on my brother.*

4032. Were your brother and yourself jointly in the farm?—Yes, and we had a house each, and we were getting separate receipts for our rents, and I gave up to the factor my receipts, and he kept them several years in his possession at Tormore. I was thinking I would not get them back at all, but I sent for them to him, and when the receipts came back the factor told me he could not deny but I had paid him my own share of the rent,—that he could not help it, but his predecessor in the factorship was responsible for it,—that it was so in the books.

4033. Were the two names of yourself and your brother in the rental book?—Yes. No man could have land without having his name in the books.

4034. *The Chairman.*—Suppose your brother had died, would you have been tenant in the lot occupied by your brother?—No, I had nothing to do with my brother's possession, nor he with mine.

4035. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Then it was not a joint possession?—There were separate receipts and separate payments.

4036. You stated that a stranger entered your brother's half, and was there for some years. Was it after the outgoing of that stranger that you were made to pay the arrears of your brother?—The arrears which had accumulated on my two brothers were exacted from me. They kept my share of sheep, value £20, for these shares.

4037. Does it come to this, that you had to pay for something that you never got any benefit from?—Yes, I never got the value of a snuff.

4038. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Were the two tenants in one lot, or were they two tenants on two separate lots?—Yes, it was divided between my brother and myself,—the lot.

4039. Did you and your brother divide it, or did the factor divide it?—It was myself and other people of the township who were seeing to its being divided properly.

4040. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—After this division between yourself and your brother, were you in the habit of getting a receipt for only your part?—We were getting separate receipts after this division.

* See Appendix A, XXIV.

4041. And the factor recognised the division?—Yes, the factor never objected to it.

4042. *Professor Mackinnon.*—He knew of it and expected it?—Yes, he must have known, for after my brother left I asked him for the whole croft.

4043. *The Chairman.*—Suppose you had declined to pay the arrears due by your brother or brothers, what would have happened to you?—It would not be exacted from me as long as I would remain in Ramasaig, but when I left they kept the sheep from me; and he told me that if I would give him the sheep and £5 in money, I would get a lot in Skiniden. I had not the money, and he said he would take the sheep for the £5, and I got such security.

4044. Then, what was it you paid altogether?—He did not make a price for the sheep, but as he chose himself; but those who came after me got £20, being £1 per head over all. On the lot on which I now am there are arrears on the person who occupies it with me, and they can lay his arrears upon me as they did before. I cannot contend with them at law. If I could I would have taken it off them, having my receipts there to produce. I gave up all expectation.

4045. Is it a common thing in the country for incoming tenants to pay the arrears of their predecessors as a condition of getting their holdings?—Sometimes that is done, but rarely.

MALCOLM M'CASKILL—re-examined.

4046. *The Chairman.*—You desire to correct a statement which you made in your evidence?—I wish to explain that it was the polling-booth I meant that the candidates went into.

4047. You wish to substitute the word 'polling-booth' for what other word?—For 'room.'

4048. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You know John M'Swan who was examined here?—Yes.

4049. The property he is on is the property of Glendale?—Yes.

4050. It has nothing to do with the M'Leod property?—No.

JOHN M'DONALD, Cottar, Lonmore (64)—examined.

4051. *The Chairman.*—Have you been freely elected a delegate by the people of Lonmore?—Yes.

4052. How long have you been resident there?—Four years.

4053. Where did you come from?—Waternish.

4054. Are you a fisherman as well as a cottar?—I was a fisherman also when I was in Waternish.

4055. What statement have you to make on the part of the people of Lonmore?—Another man and I are the only persons living in Lonmore. I was put away from Waternish because of a dispute that was between the M'Fie's and the proprietor, and I was cited as a witness for the M'Fie's. I was on the property then possessed by Mr Gordon M'Leod, and when Captain MacDonald became proprietor, he put me out of my holding, because I told the truth at the Court at Portree.

4056. How did you come to settle at Lonmore?—I came to be a shepherd to Mr Mackenzie, who was then in Struan in Bracadale, and

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when he left Struan I had to leave my house. When Mr Mackenzie came to Lonmore I had to leave my house there, and I could not get a place from a landlord. I even reached Raasay, until I came to Mr M'Callum, parish minister in Duirinish, and he gave me a place by the river side. I have not much more to say.

4057. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Are you complaining at Lonmore?—No; but the reason why I could not get a place about here was that the township was already crowded, and that the captain put my brother and myself away.

4058. *The Chairman.*—If I understood you rightly, there are only two cottars at Lonmore. By whom were you elected a delegate?—The people of Kilmuir.

4059. Then what have you got to say on the part of the people of Kilmuir?—Only that they are very poorly off.

4060. Were there ever any crofters at Lonmore?—No; it is only a small place. It is only a small bit of peat land that I have taken in myself, and it is because I could not get a place anywhere else that I took it.

4061. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—But have you anything to say about the people of Kilmuir?—That they have not a place in which they can keep sheep. A poor man cannot be well off without having sheep.

4062. *The Chairman.*—Had they any common pasture at a previous time?—Yes, I believe so.

4063. Do you know for certain that they had?—I am not sure, because it is only eight years since I came.

4064. Is there any other delegate from Kilmuir?—Yes, William M'Leod and Roderick Steel.

4065. Has William M'Leod been long resident at Kilmuir?—Yes.

WILLIAM M'LEOD, Crofter, Kinloch, Dunvegan (50)—examined.

William M'Leod.

4066. *The Chairman.*—Are you in part of Kilmuir?—No, I have nothing to do with Kilmuir. Though they appointed me delegate, I cannot say anything about them. Their grievances I do not know.

4067. Where is Kinloch?—It marches with Kilmuir.

4068. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Is it part of the glebe?—This side of the glebe.

4069. *The Chairman.*—Have you been freely elected by the people of Kilmuir?—Yes.

4070. But you don't wish to give evidence about Kilmuir?—I cannot give evidence about Kilmuir, because I was not there. I do not know what took place.

4071. Then will you kindly make a statement about Kinloch?—I have no grievance; I do not complain of my own position.

4072. Do you complain on the part of those who have elected you?—No, I cannot state their grievances, though I was elected.

4073. You have no grievance?—No.

4074. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Did all the people gather together to elect you?—Yes, they were all together in the schoolhouse, and they elected me first, and I withdrew my name, and they elected me again.

4075. There was a Malcolm M'Caskill, who brought a paper which he stated he had read to about half the crofters of Kilmuir. Did you know

anything about that paper?—No, I don't think I saw it, because I do not belong to that township.

4076. And you cannot say that it represents the feelings of the people of Kilmuir?—No.

JOHN M'DONALD, Crofter, Roshkill (55)—examined.

4077. *The Chairman.*—You have a croft?—I have a croft, but I do not live by the croft.

4078. Are you a fisherman?—I am a sort of a tradesman.

4079. What is your trade?—A tailor.

4080. How long have you been resident in Roshkill?—Twenty-seven years.

4081. Do you gain your subsistence more by your croft or more by your trade as a tailor?—It is the tailoring that is keeping me alive—the sort of a living that I have.

4082. Have you any statement to make on the part of the people of Roshkill?—I have nothing to say about them, but that they are tradesmen like myself. They number only a merchant and a shoemaker. There is another man who has got a bit of ground.

4083. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Are you a Kilmuir delegate?—I have nothing to do with Kilmuir. We have a little village to ourselves, which belongs of right to Harlosh.

4084. As a dealer or tradesman, you will be able to tell us something about the way in which the people are dressed?—I am able to tell about that.

4085. In former times were the people more substantially and better dressed than they now are?—Yes, and clothed much warmer. They are now clothed in south country rags.

4086. Did they use more cloth made of their own wool in former times than is now the case?—I have seen about thirty-five years ago, when I was a boy, the webs of cloth—twenty yards to twenty-seven—which had been manufactured by the women of the household.

4087. What is the reason there is less home-made cloth now than there was when you were young?—The want of wool; and the want of the mother of the wool—the sheep—to us poor people.

4088. Is it because the people have less pasture for their sheep than they formerly had?—Yes, what else?

4089. Do you find that the people are less able to pay you now for making their clothes than they formerly were?—In the beginning of my days it was very much easier for them to pay than it is now.

4090. Do they bring fewer clothes to you to make now than they formerly did?—It is very little that I am seeing now-a-days of Highland cloth at all.

4091. Have you more bad debts now than you formerly had?—They are doing their utmost to pay me.

4902. But still, is it more difficult for them to pay than it formerly was?—Very much more difficult.

4093. Has the fashion in favour of south country rags, as you call them, something to do with the diminished business of the country?—Many of the people would have nothing to do with the south country rags if they could do otherwise.

4094. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Do they buy their south country

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clothing ready made up, or do they bring the webs to you to make?—They buy the cloth mostly, for they don't consider the south country clothes so well or so strongly made as in our country.

4095. *Mr Cameron.*—Do the crofters who have got sheep sell the wool, as a rule, or do they manufacture it into cloth?—The people on my side of the country have no wool themselves. The people who have sheep stock, as we have heard to-day, may possibly get a share of the wool.

4096. But is their share of wool, whatever it is, sold to brokers in the south, or is it manufactured into cloth, as appears to have been the custom in old times?—Some of them send wool to the south—perhaps one in a hundred—to be made up into cloth.

4097. And the rest?—They have not it.

4098. But the rest of those who have it?—I do not know anything beyond the M'Leod country.

4099. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Do you mean to say that when people have their sheep in common, and the wool is sold in one lump, they have not any wool for themselves?—No, unless they buy as strangers would buy.

4100. *Mr Cameron.*—But you say you know nothing about any country outside of the M'Leod country?—I know about outsiders from hearsay.

4101. Well, will you answer about the wool from hearsay; whether it is still the custom for those who have sheep to make their wool into cloth, for to send it to the south?—Their wool would do little for them with us.

4102. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Do you think the people about here are generally poorer now than they were in your younger days?—I am sure of that.

4103. Are your circumstances better or worse?—Worse; I have a large family.

4104. *Professor Mackinnon.*—How many are there in Roshkill paying rent?—Four.

4105. What rent do they pay?—William Campbell pays the highest rent; I think it is about £3.

4106. And the others?—Another is near that, and I myself pay 39s. of bare rent, and the dues come to 3s.

4107. What stock are you allowed to keep?—One cow.

4108. *Anything else?*—And a stirk, by buying some feeding.

4109. No sheep?—No sheep.

4110. Are there no sheep in the township at all?—No, but the Harlosh people claim our place.

4111. And they have sheep?—They have a few. One may have one or two, and others have none at all.

4112. Can you buy wool in the country from the other tenants who have sheep?—Yes, we buy wool for clothes and stockings.

4113. And why don't those people who have sheep make country clothes as they did long ago?—Where I was born, which was in Bracadale, there were comfortable crofters there. They were in comfortable circumstances. They had cattle and sheep and horses. They had a great stretch of hill pasture.

4114. But, even as things are, would it not be more profitable for the people of the place to buy wool in the place, and make clothes of it than to buy south country clothes?—Not now, because the wool is so dear.

4115. Is that the reason why they don't buy it?—Those who are able to buy are buying now for the manufacture of bed clothing.

4116. Don't you think it would also be profitable for them to buy it

for day clothing?—The way the prices of sheep go, it would come very dear to them.

4117. *Mr Cameron.*—Who told you the wool is dear?—My own experience.

4118. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Do you buy it for your own day clothes?—No.

4119. Would it not be better to buy it, and get it done in that way?—A man has enough to do to attend to his family.

4120. *Mr Cameron.*—Do you ever remember wool cheaper than it is now?—Yes.

4121. In what year?—Forty years and more ago.

4122. Within the limit of forty years, have you ever known wool cheaper than it is now?—No, not much since then; but I could get, at that time, a good fleece of which I could make two or three pairs of stockings for 2s.

4123. *The Chairman.*—Do you go round from house to house, and work in the different houses, or do the people bring the cloth to you always?—I used, at first, to go from house to house, but I ceased doing it. I ceased that about seventeen years ago. I have, since then, gone very little among the houses.

4124. How do you think the little boys are clothed, compared with what they were when you were young?—In my young days the children would have beautiful shirts on them of white blanketing, and a little kilt and a jacket, and went barefooted.

4125. You don't make clothes for the girls, but you may be able to state whether the young girls are as well dressed as they used to be?—At that time the young girls were clothed equally well with the boys, but now they wear cotton rags.

4126. Do you think that all the manufactures which are brought here from the Lowlands are rags, or of a bad quality?—Some of them are good enough.

4127. What are the clothes which you yourself are wearing? Are they low country manufacture?—The clothes I have on me now came from the south of England.

DONALD M'PHEE, Crofter and Mason, Roag (74)—examined.

4128. *The Chairman.*—How long have you been a crofter?—I have been paying rent during the last fifty-two years.

4129. Have you been freely chosen a delegate by the people of Roag?—Yes.

4130. Have you a statement which you wish to make on the part of the people of Roag?—At one time the place on which I now am was in possession of my father and my uncle, and to-day there are thirteen families upon it. We had sheep and cattle and horses at that time, and we had a wide hill pasture, and when we lost the pasture we could not keep horses or sheep, and the bit of hill pasture that we got we could only keep one cow upon it, and two cows on our lots. When we lost the sheep we had no wool wherewith to make clothing for our families; and when we had no horses to do the work, our women had to do it—dragging the harrows with a rope about their shoulders, helping the men with forks and spades in digging the ground. Now, if we would have given us a place on which we could keep a horse and a few sheep, which would supply

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clothing to our families, and sufficient to keep our men at home to work at, the proprietor as well as the people would be benefited. The ground would be made more valuable, and we would be better in consequence. As I was hearing about the clothing of the women, the women used to be making good, tidy clothing for themselves and for their husbands at home out of their wool, and there was no occasion for them to buy south country clothing. If they had the wool, there would be no occasion for each woman to imitate the fashions,—the godless fashions of France; and if we would get the land—as much of it as would keep us in comfort—we do not want too much of it at all. We want a proportionate supply of the good things of this life. We would be satisfied with that, and until the poor people get as much of the land as will keep them in such comfort, and till they have as much sheep stock as will keep their families in clothing, they will not be put right.

4131. When the hill pasture was taken away from Roag, what was done with it?—It was added to the tack of Claggan. The march of Claggan was a river, and there was a burn on this side of it, and when the tacksman got Claggan the march of it was extended to the burn.

4132. You said there were thirteen families now at Roag, where did those families come from? Did any of them come from outside, or did they multiply on the ground?—It was the natural increase of the place, as they had no place to go to. Besides these, there are four cottars in the place who have no land at all, and these are a burden upon the crofters; and if our holdings were extended, we would all be comfortable. It is the want of land that is causing our poverty.

4133. *Professor Mackinnon.*—You say the people all grew in the place, but I understood you to say that formerly it was held by your own father and uncle. Surely the whole thirteen families did not grow naturally in the place?—When my father and uncle had it, these others were crowded in upon them. In the time of my father and uncle, these others were so young that they could not make any use of land.

4134. Were they in Roag?—Yes; they were in families then.

4135. How many of these thirteen families are your own relatives?—They are not relatives.

4136. Where did they come from?—Just in Roag. They were young then. Every one of them belongs to Roag. These people were young at that time, but when they grew up, and married, and had families, they had no other place to go to, and they had to be added to Roag, and some of those are without land still.

4137. Are the thirteen crofts in Roag all divided into equal lots?—They are the same size, but they are not equally good.

4138. What is the rent?—The worst of the lots are not so dear.

4139. What do you pay yourself?—I pay £5, 12s., and two others beside me.

4140. And the others a little less?—There are others who pay considerably less than that.

4141. What stock does your croft carry?—Two cows, two calves, and the cow to which I referred, which was kept upon the bit of pasture, but we have no sheep. I have neither sheep nor a horse. We have no place in which to keep them.

4142. Your chief complaint is that the croft is too small?—Yes; that is what is the matter with us.

4143. And, of course, if you got a bigger croft, you would be quite able to pay a reasonable rent for it?—Yes, if we would get hill pasture on which we could keep a few beasts and a horse.

4144. What croft do you think, in that place of your own, would be

required in order to make a living on it?—I think if we had 12 acres of arable land, and as much hill pasture as would enable us to keep twenty-four sheep and a horse, we would be satisfied with that.

4145. How many cows?—Four cows, and we would be agreeable again to have our lots valued by valuators.

4146. Suppose you were a valuator yourself upon such a croft, what rent would you think was a reasonable rent for it?—I am not a valuator. I would be quite satisfied with the valuation of any competent person.

4147. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—What value is an acre of arable land round here to the crofter?—I do not think it is worth more than 3s. or 4s. to him, the land here is so much run out. During all my experience I have not seen any part of our holdings left uncultivated; for, if we left any part of them uncultivated, we would not have wherewith to feed our stock.

4148. What value do you put upon a sheep's grass and a cow's grass and horse's grass?—I will tell you the value that is put upon it just now as it is. The grazing of a cow is valued at 5s. on our hill pasture, the grazing being so bad, and 10s. for grazing on our crofts; and we are complaining that that itself is too high.

4149. And for the sheep?—Six sheep are considered equal to one cow in grazing.

4150. And the horse?—A horse is equal to two cows.

4151. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Are you old enough to remember the time when your father and uncle had that place themselves?—Yes.

4152. Were they in the habit, when they were cultivating the ground, of leaving out pieces of it then?—Yes, the fourth part, and that fourth part when cultivated would be better than double its size of what had been cultivated.

4153. I understand there is a greater number of people in Roag than thirteen or fourteen. How many?—The place beside me contains five families, and the place on the south of me other five families, and the other end six families.

4154. Are they all much in the same condition in which you are yourself?—Yes, not one better than I have said.

4155. If they were to get reasonably sized crofts, is there land in the district that you could get for them?—No, but there is a tack beside us, the lease of which is nearly out, and that tack would put right in their circumstances the whole of M'Leod's crofters.

4156. Are there many of the people about yourself who would be able to take such a croft?—Yes.

4157 Could they put the stock upon it?—No, they could not stock such a croft without help.

4158. But there are some who could stock it?—There are some.

4159. Then they would be prepared to pay a reasonable rent for such a croft?—Yes, that is what they want.

4160. Do you think they would pay the present rent that is paid for it?—It is likely they would.

4161. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Have you been away from the country as a mason?—Yes.

4162. Where have you been working?—Galloway, Caithness, and Sutherland, and in the south country at mason work.

4163. We have been told that in some other places the people spend a good deal of money on tea. Is that the case in your township of Roag?—I believe they take tea indeed now, but in my young days they did not know anything about tea and they did not need it. They had milk and cheese and flesh, and the tea was not of much account with them.

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4164. Can you state from your own knowledge that the children suffer from scarcity of milk?—Yes, I know that fully; and I heard Dr M'Leod say that he noticed that when the children ceased to be getting the milk and eggs and other good food, and were taking tea, they were deteriorating.

4165. Who was Dr M'Leod?—Dr M'Leod, Portree formerly factor for Lord Macdonald.

4166. Is he long dead?—It is not much more than twenty years since he died. I was working in Ramsaig when he died.

4167. Have you been present all day?—Yes.

4168. Have you any complaint such as we have heard in other places of the people being obliged to offer their cattle to the landlord first, or being obliged to go to a store, or anything of that kind?—No.

4169. As I understand, your complaint is altogether want of pasture and the scrimpiness of your crofts?—Yes; and M'Leod of M'Leod was always so kind to people who had been driven from other places, that he would give them a place on his own property. When Minginish and Talisker were in the possession of one man, the tacksman expelled the one family that was left upon the tack.

4170. Which tack?—Talisker.

4171. What was done with the family?—They got a place from M'Leod of M'Leod in Roag.

4172. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Do you think the children are worse off than they were at the time Dr M'Leod spoke to you?—I think that they are not at all so strong or so healthy as they were then.

4173. I mean, are they worse off for milk?—Yes, very much worse than in Dr M'Leod's time.

4174. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Suppose they got the crofts you were talking of, do you think they would give up the tea, and revert to the milk again?—I do not think they would.

4175. I suppose you would do everything yourself to bring that state of matters about?—Yes.

4176. Are there a large number without land at all in Roag?—Yes.

4177. I am told about fifteen or sixteen?—There are four on my own lot without land.

4178. Are these without even a cow?—They are without a cow, but they have a hen or two.

4179. *Mr Cameron.*—How long ago was the hill grazing taken from Roag and given to Claggan?—It is a long while since then; about forty years ago.

4180. Have you any rule on the estate as to subdivision of crofts?—The rule was that, however much the croft would be subdivided, only one house was to be upon it.

4181. How was it that rule was broken in the case of Roag?—That rule is not broken yet.

4182. But if originally there were only your father and your uncle, and now there are thirteen families, it must have been broken?—The rule was made when it came to be thirteen families.

4183. What are the French fashions you object to?—The fashions the women have, and they used to look nice and tidy before this fashion of carrying bags at their backs.

JOHN M'PHEE, Crofter, Harlosh (74)—examined.

4184. *The Chairman.*—How long have you been a crofter?—Forty years in the one house; and my father was an old soldier. He was at the battle of Waterloo. He was ninety-eight, and he was in the house before me; I succeeded him.

4185. Were you ever in the army yourself?—No.

4186. Have you been freely elected a delegate by the people of Harlosh?—Yes.

4187. Have you any statement to make on behalf of those who elected you?—The first factor we had in Harlosh was Mr Gibbons. He was an Englishman, and he was not a good one. That was M'Leod's property. When he came to Harlosh the people were working at kelp, and kelp was at a good price at that time. The land was dear when there was such a good price for the kelp, and when the kelp work ceased, the people fell into arrears and could not pay the rent. M'Leod then got Harlosh valued by a gentleman at what it was worth, and it was valued by Captain M'Leod of Orbost's father, and Mr M'Leod of Gesto. They valued Harlosh at £60, and the townships of Crochinish and Balmore were included in that. When Mr Gibbons came he saw it was a bargain, and he coveted it in his heart.

4188. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—When was this valuation made?—I believe in 1840, to the best of my recollection.

4189. How long were you under that valuation before this visit of Gibbons?—Mr Gibbons arrived at the time this valuation was made. He went to M'Leod and asked him for the township of Feorlick, and the factor gave him a tack of it, and the people along with it. He got the people from M'Leod with the tack, and he himself was to have paid the rent. When he (Gibbons) got Harlosh to himself he saw that it was a good bargain, and that there was room in it, and he removed the people that were in the middle of Feorlick and placed them in Harlosh. I have the names of those who have been so removed, and they are in M'Leod's books.

4190. What was the number?—Four in Breckinish, six in Crochinish, and eight were also removed from Talisker farm.

4191. How many altogether were removed by Mr Gibbons?—Seventeen. He placed these families as close together as the sea would allow him; and we have but very little land, and it will not support us; and some of those he took from Minginish were placed upon peat soil, which had never previously been cultivated. When he packed the people in that way Ebost tack was then free, and he thought that was a better bargain, and gave up Feorlick. Then Major M'Kinnon succeeded him. He was not very severe on the people. They were paying rent in work, but he removed some of the people,—Malcolm Stewart and Murdo Macdonald; these had not a place on earth on which they could put a foot. I myself saw them living under a sail spread on three poles under high-water mark. He warned off Donald Campbell for giving shelter to a poor man who had not a place to live in. I saw the officer coming to his house and breaking into it; and he went in with a pail of water and extinguished the fire, and a great steam arose in the house; and what with the noise of the fire extinguishing and the denseness of the steam, his wife went out of her senses. We were then advised that if we would tow her after a boat in the sea, she would get better; and we took her out, and she would not sink deeper than up to her breast. I myself was two years in an asylum in Glasgow. I was a keeper there, and I never saw one that was so mad

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as her. Now Major M'Kinnon went to Edinburgh, and it was said he was brained there. He was succeeded by Mr John Scobie, who came to Harlosh, where I live. He told us freely that M'Leod of Dunvegan had given us over to him, that he might do what he liked with us, and he said it was God who sent him there. He came and took a view of Harlosh, as the spies did who went to spy out the land of Canaan. There is a place there called Ardmore Point—a peninsula in Harlosh. He thought that would make a splendid park for tups, and he thought that whatever became of the people, he would have such a park there, and he removed four of them, and said he would make them as comfortable up at Balmore as they were before. He said that he had told M'Leod about it, and that he had promised M'Leod he would make them as comfortable as they were before. The four people went up to see where they were to be located. There was a piece of mossy ground there, which had never been cultivated, and was in its primeval state, and when the people saw the place they would not go into it. John Campbell was one of them, John Macdonald was another, and they said they would trust to the providence of God; and if God should support them, they would go to Australia.

4192. *The Chairman.*—What we desire is that you should make, if possible, your account a little shorter, without any sacrifice of truth, because there are other persons to be examined?—If I do that I cannot tell the truth.

4193. Then you must tell the chief things?—The Commissioners must need hear my story, for I have a great deal to say, or another day must be taken to it.

4194. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Then you must go on, and do your best.—They said they would go to Australia, and they preferred to do so, and they asked Mr Scobie if he would take over their crop and their houses. He would not buy the houses, but the manager and himself said they would buy the crop. His manager and himself laid their heads together, and the manager said 'the corn is braird, and we cannot value it.' The man's crop was worth a great deal, but he only got a trifle for it. Two of them went to Australia, and they died on the passage, and were thrown overboard. The third man who remained chose, as he had no other place to go to, this piece of peat ground; and when he went to it, there was no place in which he could build a house, and it is on my lot that his house is built. What land he got was too small. Scobie then on a certain morning came over to my lot on the sly, and viewed it. My lot was marching with a bit of peat moss which the other man had, and he took an acre of my ground and added it to the other man's ground, and he valued what he took from me at 4s., and he threw me in upon other people who were living upon three acres of ground or grass, and I have only now the sixth part of two acres to keep my cow alive. After that Mr Scobie removed Donald Campbell and also Ronald M'Caskill. These left the country. One of them went to North Berwick, and the other to Inverness. When Campbell was put out of the house, not a tenant in Harlosh was allowed to give him shelter. His wife had nine children, and they were naked. They were on the hill sides during a wet night, and to all appearance she was a good woman, and she was heard praying on the hillside, for help, to God. I have another cause of complaint. Scobie again took our hill pasture, which we had had for fifty or sixty years before, and he settled crofters upon it. Neither the proprietor nor himself took a lawful way of depriving us of it; but there are people still paying for that hill pasture, and we are paying for it, for it was ours—that is Roshkill. I have another grievance. For the past sixty years we have been paying road money—4s. of road money, or four days' work as an equivalent. There is no

road to send our children to school, and it is peat moss; and in winter, if it should happen that one in our township should die, there is no way for us to dispose of his remains unless we bury them in the sea, or in the peat moss near home. There was another way which we could use, but Mr Scobie closed it up, and we could not enter upon it unless we broke the gate which he had placed upon it, and locked with a padlock.

4195. What do you now desire to have to make you happier and better off?—We would desire to have the land at its value, and plenty of it; that we should get fixity of tenure; and that we should get the land here from Government, and compensation for working it, and that we should remain to work it. I must needs stay at home. I am for the past twenty-five years going to the south country, and earning rent, for which I have nothing.

4196. Where do you work in the south country?—In England, at Barnsley, Yorkshire.

4197. What sort of work do you do?—Working sometimes above ground, and sometimes under it. I forgot a little. We were not allowed to get a tuft of heather to make rope for thatching our houses.

4198. You stated you had once been employed in a lunatic asylum?—Two years.

4199. Why did you leave that situation?—When my father died I came home to occupy his holding.

ANGUS M'FARLANE, Crofter, Harlosh (52)—examined.

4200. *The Chairman.*—How long have you been in your croft?—I have been twenty years in the township, and ten years on my present croft.

4201. Were you elected by the people of Harlosh to be their delegate?—Yes.

4202. How many of the people joined in electing you?—I cannot be sure how many were present on the night on which we were gathered. That was Saturday last, in the schoolhouse at Kilmuir.

4203. Were all the crofters there, or most of them?—There was a good number of them.

4204. And they elected you?—Yes; and the minister was present.

4205. How many do you mean by a good number?—There were up to twenty.

4206. What statement have you to make on behalf of those people?—That we are gathered together on the worst spot of Mr Scobie's tack, near the shore, and that we are surrounded by a dyke, which dyke is surmounted by wire fencing to keep us into the shore. We ourselves were made to pay half of the expense of that dyke to keep us in that pinfold. I myself in one year paid to account of expense of that dyke 24s. 4d., to the best of my recollection.

4207. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Are you paying every year for it?—No, we are not paying it every year. The delegate who preceded me was making complaint that we were without roadway. Our road lies through a peat moss, and in winter we cannot use it for taking home our peats. Where there are two women taking home a creel of peats each, the one woman often has to drag the other out of the mud, the road is so bad. Now, as a remedy for the hardships of the people, I think they should get the ground and the hill pasture along with the arable—from ten to twelve

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acres of arable ground along with as much hill pasture as would graze from forty to sixty sheep, with four cows and their followers, and a horse to work the ground. They cannot make use of the ground without a horse, even should they get that ground; and even should they have such land given them it would be without profit to them, unless they would get assurance from Government that no landlord would have the power to evict them, after they had cleared that ground and improved it for themselves.

4208. The ground you would have to get would have to be taken from tacks?—Yes; the tacksmen have the ground.

4209. Would you, at the outset, be willing to pay what the tacksmen pay for it?—Yes, indeed we would.

4210. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Does Mr Scobie reside in Feorlick?—No, not in the island.

4211. Has he ever resided there?—I am not aware that he was ever residing there.

4212. Who has charge in his absence?—A man of the name of John Clark.

4213. Ground officer?—As manager; he is overlooking everything.

4214. How long is it since any tacksman resided at Feorlick?—I cannot enter upon that, for there are only twenty years since I came to Feorlick, and Scobie was there before me.

4215. He has Balmore too?—Yes.

4216. There used to be a tacksman living there?—Yes.

4217. Is there a tacksman at Vatten now?—Yes; they are included in one tack.

4218. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—If the Harlosh people got Feorlick could they stock it?—I believe they could not very well do so on their getting it; but I do not doubt they would be able to stock it through time.

4219. They could not pay rent for it till it was stocked?—Yes, they could do it. They are paying rent already every year. I am only paying £2, 13s. and a few pence. I am at the least spending £8 in purchasing meal. Would not that pay a good bit of land for me?

4220. How many people are there in Harlosh?—I think it is twenty-nine lots.

4221. Families?—I cannot tell the number of inhabitants. There are thirty families in Harlosh.

4222. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Do you get the sea-ware free?—No, we do not get it free. We have free as much sea-ware as our fore-shore yields, but we pay Scobie for what we get from the rest of the shore.

[ADJOURNED.]

BROADFORD, SKYE, WEDNESDAY, MAY 16, 1883.

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(*See Appendix A, XIII.*)

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'KINNON, Crofter and Fisherman, Elgoll (45)—examined.

Donald M'Kinnon.

4223. *Chairman.*—Have you been freely chosen a delegate by the people of Elgoll?—Yes.

4224. How long have you been upon your croft?—About twenty-five years.

4225. Have you any statement to make, written or verbal, on the part of those who have selected you?—I have a verbal statement to make. We had hill pasture, and it was taken from us about thirty-eight years ago. Then part of our arrears were taken off our account, and three years afterwards were added to our account. We have forty-five families in Elgoll in a township about a mile square, and besides these there are seventeen cottar families in our midst. There are forty-five paying rent. We are only in a poor condition for want of a place that will support us, and we are much in need of land if we could get it; and between the crofters and the cottars on our place, we would occupy very much more land than we have if we could get it. There are eight townships about us which had been cleared, and we were placed on that point.* There is beside us a township, Keppoch, from which forty-four families were removed, and sixteen of them were sent away to Australia. Five of these families were placed among us in Elgoll. This was in 1852. From some of the crofters of Elgoll land was taken to accommodate those families who were placed among us, and these are cottars to-day, their forefathers having been crofters paying rent. We are three miles from the highway, and we can only bring supplies for our families either on our backs by land or by boat when we have the opportunity. We bring our supplies from Broadford, which is sixteen miles away from us.

4226. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—How far does the highroad go?—There are about eleven miles only of roadway from Broadford towards us. Three miles of the distance between us and the roadway is through rocky land, without even a footway. Our shore is exposed; it is very rough,—the only place where we can haul up our boats. The schoolhouse was erected on the place where we would be hauling up our boats and drying our nets, and there is now no place where we can perform either of these operations. We are in a very stormy place, our houses being now and again unroofed with the wind. We cannot get thatch. No thatch grows on our own place. We only get thatch by stealing it from the neighbouring tacksman—Mr Bower. We are confined on a square mile of land—close upon 400 souls—and the tacksman with whom we are marching has six miles of extent of country for himself. The whole estate is in the hands of two tacksmen, except the square mile which we have.

4227. *The Chairman.*—What do you mean by the whole estate?—

*See Appendix A, XIII.

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Strath-Aird, belonging to Mr Alexander Macallister. The only thing we require is extended holdings out of which we can make our living. We don't make our living off the land at all. It has become exhausted. It has been constantly cultivated since the time of our forefathers, close upon the last 100 years. I myself sowed three bolls of oats, and the return which I got would not exceed one boll. I have not seen a pound of meal of my own manufacture during the last twenty-five years during which I was in possession of my holding; and for the sort of stock which I have, I have to bring feeding from Glasgow and Greenock. Besides that my own family are out £30 in food. If I could now get the land it would be better for me to have to pay £20 of rent for what I could make a living out of.

4228. *Mr Cameron.*—What rent do you pay for your croft?—£2, 14s.

4229. What stock have you on the croft?—Two cows and a two-year old is the summing, but the land will not support these at all at all.

4230. How many acres have you of arable land to winter these animals?—About three acres, but we don't turn that. We don't cultivate all that. It has become exhausted.

4231. How much of that do you cultivate?—About two acres, and some of that is not more than an inch of soil, overlying rocks, and during rains the sea for a quarter of a mile from our shore is turned red with the soil washed off our land.

4232. What hill grazing have you in common?—A corner of the hill which is very rocky.

4233. Do you mean that you have not enough arable ground to winter the two cows, or that you have not enough summering ground to graze them?—We have not enough ground either to summer or winter them.

4234. Do you consider the rent you pay too high?—Yes, I think so, for all the good we are taking out of the ground.

4235. What do you consider would be a fair rent for that land?—I cannot say much, because we are not taking our living out of it. We depend upon fishing and work.

4236. May what you have stated in regard to yourself be applied to the other crofters, your neighbours?—Yes, and some of them are worse off. In some instances there are three in one lot.

4237. Are they in very poor circumstances?—They are as poor as people can be.

4238. How long has this poverty existed?—About thirty years; since the potatoes failed first.

4239. Were they as bad twenty, or say thirty years ago, as they are now?—When the land is going back we are going back also.

4240. Would you compare the condition of the people ten years ago with what it is at present?—They are very much worse off to-day.

4241. In fact, you mean they have been gradually growing worse year by year?—Yes.

4242. How do you account for that circumstance?—The want of land; and there is plenty of land beside us if we could only get it.

4243. But they had the same quantity of land ten or twenty years ago, and how do you account for their being worse off now than they were at that time?—The ground is getting weak. We are turning it every year. Some turn it twice a year—much of it; and there is no land but what is lying on the top of rocks.

4244. I can quite understand your croft is getting worse, but is it possible for any man to depend upon croft land of so small a size as that which you describe?—I don't think it possible.

4245. Even if it were good land?—Even if it were good land; there is not enough of it.

4246. Then, that being so, and it being impossible for a man to live by a small croft, even on good land, how is it that the people are so much worse off than they were ten or twenty years ago? Is it that they take less work?—That the land is not yielding its crop, it is being turned so often,—the bits that we have. We cannot leave out a bit of it.

4247. But you say that if the croft were good land, still you would not be able to earn a living from it, it is so small?—Yes, I could not take a living out of American land of the same size.

4248. But you had the same quantity ten or twenty years ago, and were much better off: how do you account for that circumstance?—That the land was yielding more crop. I was not under the necessity of buying so much food either for myself or my family.

4249. What work do you get?—Fishing.

4250. No other work?—We get no work from our landlord. We have to work in other countries—the east coast and Ireland. It is from there we make our living.

4251. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—You have described your place as a very bad place. You cannot draw your boats on the shore; you cannot spread your nets on land; it is so stormy that the roofs are blown off the houses; the land is so poor that the soil has only 2 inches of depth. Would it be desirable to continue in that place even if the land were extended?—The rest of the estate is better than that if we could get it. If we could only be allowed to encroach upon the tacks for three miles, we would take a living out of it where our forefathers were.

4252. Would you prefer to shift your houses to a place where you could draw the boats and shift the nets?—Yes, if we could get the land along with it.

4253. You would prefer that to staying where you are without increase of rent?—Yes, to be near a roadway for the place is so difficult of access.

4254. Thirty-eight years ago, when your hill pasture was taken away, you said there were arrears of rent upon you. Were your arrears very heavy at that time?—No, there was not much.

4255. Do you know what amount of arrears were taken off and put on again?—A neighbour of mine informed me that 37s. was taken off each croft, and that that was laid upon him again at the end of two years.

4256. Do you mean that every crofter was in arrears at that time?—I don't think that every crofter was in arrears.

4257. Was it a reduction of rent you mean, or a taking off of arrears?—It was a reduction of rent.

4258. Not an abatement of arrears?—No.

4259. Are you heavily in arrears to the proprietor?—No, not one shilling.

4260. Does your answer apply to the whole community as well as yourself?—I believe that all of us are in the same condition.

4261. Are the people much in debt for meal?—I am sure they are; we paid for our meal last winter, and we now get on credit what we require up to the next time of payment.

4262. Were you clear after last winter?—Some are not clear.

4263. And those that are not clear, are they getting meal from the merchants still?—Some of them are, and some are not.

4264. How are those living who don't get credit?—The neighbour who is in good credit assists the one who has not.

4265. Are there many who require such assistance at the present time?—About six or seven families in our township.

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Donald Mackinnon.

4266. Do you remember a time when there were no people who ever required that sort of assistance through the winter and spring?—Yes, I remember that.

4267. In your early years was it a very unusual thing that there should be any people who required help from their neighbours?—Yes.

4268. A very unusual thing?—Yes, very uncommon.

4269. Then you think the condition of the people is now very much worse than it was when you were young?—Yes, I know that it is.

4270. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Who is your proprietor?—Mr Alexander Macallister.

4271. Does he stay upon the property?—No.

4272. How long is it since any proprietor has stayed upon it? Do you recollect any resident proprietor?—Not in my recollection.

4273. Have you ever seen your proprietor?—Yes.

4274. When?—About forty years ago.

4275. You have stated that, besides Elgoll, there are two farms upon the estate. Will you name these two farms, and the names of the tenants?—Kirkibost and Kilmorie. They form one tack under Mr Bower, and Camnsunary is the other tack in the possession of Mr Laidlaw.

4276. And these two tacks, and your own place of Elgoll, occupied by the crofters, constitute the estate?—Yes.

4277. Is Strathaird a big estate?—It will be about six miles in length. [About 14,000 Scotch acres.]

4278. How much of these 14,000 Scots acres do the people of Elgoll occupy either as hill or as arable land?—About a square mile.

4279. Have some of the people now in Elgoll who have now no crofts—who are cottars—have they at some former period had crofts, or are they the descendants of people who had crofts in other places?—Some of them are the descendants of those who were paying rent.

4280. And the others?—The others never had any land at all.

4281. I understand that on Elgoll there are four hundred people altogether?—Yes.

4282. Have you any idea what the population is upon the other parts of the estate occupied by the two farms?—About seven families.

4283. On the whole of the rest of the estate?—Yes.

4284. Is a good deal of the land, or some of the land, at any rate, upon those two tacks good land, suitable for cultivation?—Yes. Was not that land which our forefathers had, cultivating it?

4285. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Is it fine land?—Yes, fine good land, which our forefathers had.

4286. Beautiful green braes?—It was once beautiful and green, but it is now getting under moss.

4287. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You were born in Skye?—Yes; I am a Skyeman to my backbone.

4288. Was Strathaird part of the old heritage of the Mackinnons?—Yes.

4289. Are you aware that the Mackinnons were a distinct clan, and could raise a number of men in old times who could take the field?—Yes, and I am of that myself. I am a Mackinnon myself; and if my services should be needed, I am ready to stand for my country at any time.

4290. You stated that you are not in arrears of rent. Was that rent got out of the croft, or was it really got from labour abroad or from fishing?—The rent was not taken out of the croft. It was earned at fishing.

4291. You mentioned something about a school being placed in a locality where they used to draw their nets. By whose authority was that school placed there?—The school board.

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Donald Mackinnon.

4292. Is there no place in the neighbourhood that would be suitable for a school?—Yes, plenty of it.

[*Rev. Donald Mackinnon,* minister of Strath.—I should like to make an explanation, if I am not out of order. It happened that I was the party who laid out the site of this school. All the tenants in the place were naturally anxious. There was no place outside the boundaries of the farm that seemed more suitable for a school in this particular locality unless we interfered with the crofts. That we were very anxious to avoid; and to make things as pleasant and smooth as possible, I called a meeting of the people,—and the people of the village were there, I think the most of them,—and they all agreed to this place, which had been the site of a school fifty years ago, and was the garden of the schoolmaster who was then supported there by the Gaelic School Society. It was simply, at the time we took possession of it, a tithing-fold for cattle. The people then had docks for their boats, beyond which they never drew them inland —places made for the boats in the bank, where they secured the boats for the winter. We took the ground so as not to interfere with that. We left that untouched, and went considerably above it, so that we did not in any way interfere with that ground. In consequence, unfortunately, of the great tide we had two years ago, the tide encroached upon their docks and upon the school grounds, but there is no reason to say that we in any way took possession of the ground they were accustomed to use for their boats. I don't suppose there was ever such a thing known as the necessity for bringing a boat in upon the ground we occupied, and at the very time, or shortly before that, the remains of the old schoolhouse were standing upon that very ground.]*

4293 *Mr Fraser Mackintosh.*—Is Elgoll a good place for fishing?—*Witness.* Yes.

4294. Could anything be done at a moderate expense in the way of a quay for running out and in in time of stormy weather, and for bauling up their boats alongside?—It is not a very suitable place for a quay or place of that sort, but it could be made very much better than it is.

4295. You complain of the roads—do you pay road assessment?—Yes. We are paying road money to the county of Inverness, and we have not a road at all ourselves.

4296. *The Chairman.*—You stated there was a great deal of good land upon the tacksmen's farms—fine green knowes or hillocks which formerly were arable. Do you consider that, having been so long out of cultivation, it has deteriorated, or do you consider it has improved by the rest it has had?—It is getting worse the longer it is left out of cultivation, and it would be improved if it were brought under cultivation for pasture.

4297. But is it getting better for cultivation if it were now broken up?—Yes.

4298. Upon the crofts, in your place, has there been any attempt made to improve the arable ground by deep trenching with the pick?—No, the ground was so hard. It is dry enough, but we would be afraid to improve, in case we would be turned out by the landlord or factor.

4299. Have you ever seen the pick used at all?—No, not on our land.

4300. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Is there any man from Elgoll in the army just now?—Yes.

4301. More than one?—Only one at present.

4302. Are there any pensioners?—There are no pensioners.

4303. How do the cottars live there?—One of them is here present.

4304. Where do they get work?—They don't get work at all. They live by fishing and by cultivating bits of ground they get from the crofters. They are a burden upon the crofters.

* See Appendix A, XIII.

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Neil Mackinnon.

NEIL MACKINNON, Elgoll—examined.

4305. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—How far are you from church at Elgoll?—Three miles.

4306. Have you a minister there?—Yes, once in the three weeks the minister comes to see us.

4307. Is that the Free Church minister?—Yes.

4308. How far are you from a doctor?—Twelve miles.

4309. That is the doctor here?—Yes.

4310. Do the children attend school well?—Yes; as best they can.

4311. Are many of them kept from going to school by the want of good clothes?—The place is out of the way, and not a public place, and they would be ashamed to go to the school with the clothes they have. If they had to go to a public school they could not appear.

NORMAN ROBERTSON, Crofter, Elgoll (71)—examined.

Norman Robertson.

4312. *The Chairman.*—Are you a fisherman as well as a crofter?—No.

4313. Have you been freely elected a delegate by the people of Elgoll?—Yes.

4314. Was no influence exercised by any one in the election of the delegates there?—No, they were not influenced by any one outside of themselves.

4315. Where did they meet, and how did they meet, and how many of them met?—All the inhabitants of my township.

4316. Did you hear the examination of the other delegates from Elgoll, and did you understand it?—I heard them, and understood it.

4317. Do you agree with what they stated?—Yes, indeed.

4318. Have you any additional statement to make on your own part? Not much. In our townships we have no peat moss.

4319. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Where do you get your peats?—From Mr Bower, tacksman.

4320. Do you pay for them?—No.

4321. Is the peat moss far from you?—Yes, but many of the people have not that privilege.

4322. How far is the peat moss from where you get your peats?—It is a mile from the man who is farthest away from it.

4323. Have you horses?—Yes.

4324. Has every crofter a horse?—Yes; there is a horse allowed to every full croft.

4325. Do you use the horses for ploughing, or do you use the *caschrom*?—Those who have land suitable for ploughing use the horses, and there are others who have not been able to use a horse at all in cultivating their land.

4326. Do you fish for cod and ling?—Some years; seldom.

4327. Do you fish for herring regularly when they are to be got?—Yes, a few families who have nets. There are many of them who have no nets.

4328. Were any of your boats destroyed in the great storm the year before last?—Yes.

4329. Did you get new ones?—Yes, every one of them.

4330. Much better than they had before?—Yes.

4331. Has there been any positive destitution in Elgoll this season?—

I have not seen such destitution for the past forty years—such want of food.

4332. Do you refer to the great potato failure in 1846?—Yes.

4333. Have you got any relief from the committee?—Yes, many of us got that.

4334. Were they satisfied with the way in which it was distributed?—There were not many who went to ask relief, and who needed it, but got it; but there are many who are still needy, and who have not got it, but these did not, I think, ask for it.

4335. *Mr Cameron.*—Do you go to the Loch Hourn fishing?—Yes; those who have nets go, but there are not many in our townships who have nets. They are not able to buy them.

4336. Do they make much profit out on the fishing at Loch Hourn?—Yes.

4337. Would the people go more to the fishing in Loch Hourn if they had more nets?—Yes.

4338. Have you any complaint to make in regard to the mode in which the fishing is conducted in Loch Hourn?—The south country people are spoiling it—fishing it in daylight and trawling, and so spoiling it on the poor people—trawling even on the Sabbath day.

4339. Have there been any cases of steamers from other places carrying away the fishermen's nets?—I have not noticed anything of that. The steamers are very careful.

4340. You did not hear any cases of that kind last year?—No, I did not hear; but another might have heard of it.

4341. What was the price of herring per cran last year?—From 2s. 6d. to 18s.

4342. It varied according to the supply?—Yes, according to the means of getting it to market.

4343. Could you suggest any means which might be adopted so as to equalise the prices, and avoid getting such a small price as 2s. 6d.?—Yes, if the poor people had an opportunity of salting them, they would get a better price for them, and steamers would have less to take with them in great hauls, and the poor people would then get a better price.

4344. What do you mean by having better opportunities of salting?—If they had money wherewith to buy barrels and salt, they themselves could sell the herring when they had cured them.

4345. You don't cure the fish yourselves?—No, we have no means of doing it.

4346. They are taken away by the steamers to cure?—Yes; and if the steamers would not take them, perhaps a poor man would lose twelve crans and more, and then their nets along with them.

4347. Do they lose anything in consequence of the want of telegraphic communication?—Yes, people would be the better of the telegraph.

4348. How would they use the telegraph? For what purpose?—We could know all about the state of the market, and when the fishing was in he loch.

4349. So as not to lose a good opportunity of salting your fish or selling them?—Yes.

4350. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—The previous witnesses stated that they wanted more land, which had been possessed by their forefathers. If you got that land which you want would you pay a fair rent for it?—Yes, and thankful to do that.

4351. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—What do you understand by a fair rent?—If I would know how much land I was to get—what summing I could keep on it.

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4352. Do you think that the present tacksman pays a fair rent for his tack?—We do not know what his rent is.

4353. And you cannot say whether the crofters of Elgoll would be willing to pay the same rent as the tacksman does, if that land were given to them?—No, as we don't know what the tacksman is paying. We would pay a fair rent if we would get the land.

4354. A former witness stated they turned over part of the ground twice in the year?—If he lifts his potatoes early, he may be able to plant cabbage.

4355. He also stated that for three bolls of oats sown sometimes he only reaped one boll. Is that also your experience?—Yes, that is my experience also.

4356. Would it be better rather not to cultivate that piece at all, and give it rest for a year?—If it could be left out of cultivation two years, we could get a double crop out of it.

4357. How do the seventeen cottars live that are in Elgoll? Do they pay rent to the crofters?—No.

4358. How do they live at all?—Going away to their earnings and getting help at home here and there,—getting a few bits of land from such of the crofters as can afford to give them it.

4359. And the crofters don't charge them any rent?—No.

4360. Do they give them any assistance in work?—No, not to speak of, as the crofters have no work to be done for them.

4361. I should like to hear what your idea of a fair comfortable croft would be? What would be the summing of a reasonably-sized croft?—Four or five cows, forty or fifty sheep, and a horse or two.

4362. And of arable land which would winter these black cattle and horses?—Ten or eleven acres.

4363. Now, on the estate on which you are, what would you think a fair rent for that croft?—I would say £8.

4364. Of course, you are not able to say whether it pays more just now?—No, as I do not know what the rent is.

4365. You would not think it would be worth more than that to a crofter?—I do not know, but it might be worth more, according to the demand and the quality of the land.

4366. But you would be willing to give a reasonable rent for it—such as any other man could afford to give?—Yes, according to what valuation could be made for it.

4367. Are there any sheep in Elgoll just now?—I don't believe there are more than two for each lot.

4368. You say the people are very poor. Do you think there are many among them who could take such a croft if they got it?—Yes, plenty. They are spending in meal in the half-year as much as would pay for such a croft.

4369. How long have you been paying rent in Elgoll yourself?—I am forty-seven years paying rent.

4370. How many people were in Elgoll paying rent in that old time when your father began to pay rent?—I cannot remember exactly, but I will guess about sixteen or seventeen.

4371. And there are now forty-five?—Yes.

4372. And the increase has taken place, partly at least, by other people being thrown in upon them?—Yes, they were taken from Keppoch. Those of the Keppoch people who would not go to Australia were settled down among us.

4373. How many sheep did your father keep on his croft?—He had fifty sheep, at least.

4374. Do you remember his rent at that time?—That was before they lost the hill. He was paying £3, 10s.

4375. Of course, your memory can go back long before the potato disease?—Yes.

4376. Were the people very much better fed at that time than they are now?—Yes, they had plenty of food then.

4377. What kind of food had they?—They were making food from what they grew themselves—making meal of their own oats, and using their potatoes.

4378. I suppose you have quite a distinct recollection of the years from 1846 to 1851—the year of the potato disease, and the two or three years following?—Yes, I was working in the south in the year of the potato failure.

4379. But you were at home the two or three years following?—Yes.

4380. And do you say distinctly that the people are worse off this year and poorer than they were in those years?—I don't remember the people being so poor as they are this year, the most of them.

4381. Of course, there are a large number of the families in Elgoll that could not take crofts, even if they got them, from their poverty?—Those who could not take such large crofts as that could take smaller.

4382. I suppose they could not stock them without assistance—the whole of them?—No.

4383. But you think there is plenty of land in the country for the whole of them, if they got it?—Yes. The land that my grandfather had is in green rigs, marching with us, on the other side of our fence.

4384. When the people of the place were talking over this matter among themselves, had they any other remedy to improve their condition besides getting larger holdings in their own place?—There is no other remedy that they talk of.

4385. And you think that remedy quite sufficient?—Yes, we think so; and then we will not require any outside assistance. If we could only get land we could work.

CHARLES M'KENZIE, Crofter, Torrin (71)—examined.

4386. *The Chairman.*—Are you a fisherman as well as a crofter?—I am not a fisherman at all.

4387. Were you freely elected a delegate by the people of Torrin?—Yes, I was constrained even to go.

4388. By how many people?—The whole people of the township.

4389. Without any influence?—Without any.

4390. What statement have you got to make on the part of the people of Torrin?—They are for having their holdings increased—those who can take such increased holdings. Another thing of which they complain, is that the land which they have is refusing to yield crop. Though we sow seed we do not reap, and besides that, the deer are eating our corn. Years before, the deer would not come upon us until the corn was filling; but now they come to eat the braird, and the tops of the potatoes. Yesterday, for the first time, my neighbour had a piece of clover sown, and when he rose in the morning the deer were browsing on it. We have need to be protected from the deer, but we are promised such protection. We never got any compensation for loss caused to us

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by the deer. We had to stand it ourselves, and besides that, even though our land was refusing to yield its crop, Tormore, the factor, raised our rents; and the mill in which we had been grinding our corn for the past forty years is now idle, and has been so for twenty years back. Besides that, the one year's seed will not sow our crofts the next year. We have to buy seed oats in Greenock. If I did not get credit from a merciful man who is there, my lot, for the most part of it, would be uncultivated. I have nothing further to say, but that the land will not pay itself. Our arable land will not yield as much as will feed the stock we have. We have to feed them with oatmeal and with Indian meal at the end of the year, and that expense is eating up the value of the beasts; and we must needs pay Lord Macdonald's rent to the uttermost penny at the end of the year, at any rate. Now, what is to happen to us if our earnings fail us? How can we afford to pay the meal merchant? When I was a young man, I was at work earning wages, and I was not troubling any man; but now I am become old, I cannot follow the occupation in which I was making a living before. My savings in these times have supported me hitherto, but are now exhausted. I have nothing now but the little stock which is on my ground, and when that will be exhausted I do not know what to do unless I get some enlargement of my holding while the stock is left to me, to keep me up during the few years I have yet to live, and that will not be very many. I have not been such a long time in the place in which I now am, but as to the other things that happened, there is one here who is older than me, and he knows better than me, and can tell better about these things—the things that have happened.

4391. *The Chairman.*—Who is that?—Neil Nicolson.

4392. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—How near is the deer forest to you?—It marches with our hill pasture. The deer come and trespass over our hill pasture.

4393. How large is your hill pasture?—About three miles. There are two miles at any rate in our march with the deer forest.

4394. Was any of your hill land taken away for the forest?—We were never deprived of hill pasture.

4395. Do I understand you correctly to have said that it was agreed to fence your lands from the deer?—Yes, the factor promised that, with our own assistance, he would protect us from the deer.

4396. When do you expect that fencing to be put up?—We were promised that it would be up by the end of summer.

4397. What sort of fencing?—A wire fence on the top of our own dykes.

4398. *Mr Cameron.*—How many miles of fence would be required to keep the deer out?—I don't know exactly.

4399. Has the factor taken no steps towards getting the fence up?—Yes.

4400. What steps has he taken?—He has provided stobs for us, and he is to provide wire.

4401. Are the stobs cut?—Yes.

4402. Where are they?—I believe near Broadford here.

4403. So, in point of fact, the fence is all ready to put up?—We have to drive them home ourselves, and sink the stobs in the ground.

4404. When are you going to drive them home?—Of course, I cannot say. Those who have horses can tell better, for I have no conveyance of the kind.

4405. But, in point of fact, the fence is all ready to be put up?—Well the stobs are all right, I believe, but I really don't know whether the wires have come forward or not.

4406. But the stobs would not be got unless there was an intention of putting up the fence?—They would be got for no other intention.

4407. And you believe it will be put up?—I believe, in the main, that he will stand to his promise. I have no occasion to doubt it.

4408. Do you say no one had been paid for any damage done to crops?—No damages whatever; but, I may state, a widow woman in the neighbourhood has got £2, 2s. of late for all she sustained.

4409. What size is her croft?—She has a half croft.

4410. How many acres?—I believe there are seven or eight acres; but I am not very sure.

4411. When was she paid this £2, 2s.?—I have overheard it of late.

4412. You believe it to be true?—I believe it to be true, from the source it came.

4413. *The Chairman.*—Whose deer are they?—Lord Macdonald's.

4414. They belong to Lord Macdonald's deer forest?—Yes.

4415. How long have they been there?—Longer than I myself, but they are getting more numerous.

4416. Have they been doing damage to the crops for many years past?—Yes, for as long as I have been in the neighbourhood.

4417. Were complaints made about it in former times?—Yes, complaints were made, but no recompense was given.

4418. Have complaints been very often made?—Yes, but Mr Mackinnon of Corrie, the factor, was giving us about £2 a year to help us to pay a watchman over them at night. That is done away with.

4419. How long is it since it was done away with?—I don't recollect, for I was not all the time in the country. I had to go to employment to make my living.

4420. How long is it since the fence was promised?—It was promised last summer and last harvest time.

4421. What is the nature of the fence which is going to be put up?—Stobs with wire on the top of our own dyke.

4422. How many wires?—Three wires, I believe, was the intention, so that he believed the deer would not jump over.

4423. How high will it be altogether?—Eight feet nine inches—seven feet or eight feet anyway.

4424. Will this fence go round all the common pasture? No, only four lots of the arable land on the top next the hill.

4425. It will go round the arable land next the hill?—Yes.

4426. Will it not go round the common pasture?—No.

4427. Do the deer come on the common pasture?—Yes, on Saturday I saw them feeding on my neighbour's clover.

4428. Is the clover on the pasture or the arable land?—It is on the croft he is labouring for his crops.

4429. He has arable land?—Yes.

4430. Do the deer do any harm to the common pasture? Do they disturb the sheep or do any harm to the common pasture?—We don't look to that; but one thing is, we are prevented from being seen upon the hill the time of the shooting, by the huntsmen—the lease-holders of the deer.

4431. They don't like you to go upon your own common pasture?—No, if they go round the time of the hunting.

4432. Suppose there were a fence put all round the common pasture as well as the arable ground, would that be advantageous to you?—I believe it would, but if it were round the arable ground we would require no more.

4433. When the deer come upon the arable land and eat up the crop, what do you do?—Watch them at night the time of the crop filling.

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That is the time they used to come on of late years, even last year, and thus they are eating the braird of the corn as it comes up.

4434. Did anybody ever kill a deer that came on the arable ground?—We dare not.

4435. What would happen to you if you killed a deer?—I would be evicted out of the place, for the first thing. They could not hang me, I believe.

4436. Is it against the law to kill the deer upon your ground?—I believe it is against the law of the landlord, whether it is against the law of the land I cannot tell.

4437. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—What rent do you pay?—I pay £3, 5s. for a quarter of the lot at this time. It did not used to be so high till Tormore raised it, and then, when the rent was raised the other assessments were rising along with it, and that makes the burden heavy.

4438. What stock do you keep?—Just one cow and a half, I may say. A cow and a two-year-old are allowed me.

4439. And a horse?—I am not allowed to keep a horse.

4440. And sheep?—Well, there are sheep, I believe. About fifty on the lot, and the quarter of fifty will be about twelve.

4441. How many have you got yourself?—That is what is allowed me. It is a club stock. I have to stand the consequences of the loss besides.

4442. Does the club shepherd not go upon the hill at the shooting time?—Yes, but he must do it early in the morning, and have not a foot on their grounds after they come out.

4443. But are they not so hard upon you the rest of the year?—No, the rest of the year they are not so hard upon us. They were that hard upon us. We need ropes to keep the thatch on our houses, and we spin that rope out of heather. There was a neighbour of mine on the hill for this purpose, and a huntsman came up to him and threatened to shoot him if he would be seen there again, even on their own heather that they were paying rent for,—for fear of molesting the muirfowl. We had to stand all this. We were afraid we would be prosecuted if we should speak out, because it was a great boon to the landlord, of course. We have stood many a thing, but we were feared to speak out, and whatever may be done we must stand it, or else prepare ourselves for the worst.

NEIL NICOLSON, Crofter, Torrin (76)—examined.

(See Appendix A, XIII.)

Neil Nicolson.

4444. *The Chairman.*—How long have you lived in Torrin?—Sixty years.

4445. Were you freely elected a delegate by the people of Torrin?—Yes, or I should not have come. I was reluctant to come.

4446. Have you heard what Charles Mackenzie said?—Yes, and I agree with him in every word, and it was truth he was saying.

4447. Have you anything to add to the statement?—I will tell you how I got on all that time in the place in which I was. I was born in Sleat, and I was five years of age when the land was laid out into lots first, and the crofters in the township in which I was for more than ten years after it was made into lots were removed in order to give place to Major Macdonald, Waternish. That is what brought me to Torrin. These people had no place to go to. They were crowded into other townships. My father then had no place at all. There was no vacant place in Sleat for him.

4448. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—What was the name of this place in

Sleat?—Linigarry and Kilbeg. My father could get no place in Sleat till the factor came to Strath to collect the rents. He then evicted a man from Torrin, and placed my father in his holding. His croft was then £11 of rent. The surveyor came to value the land, and he made the valuation £12, 10s. Then there were ten of the crofters in the township complained that their lots were not good enough, and at the end of the year the factor came to enlarge their holdings at the expense of the township's grazing—the best grazing we had—and we got nothing for that. We got no reduction in our rents. Then poor rates came to be assessed upon us, which raised the rents again. We then got money for drains. I got £6, and I was paying 8s. 6d. of interest upon it, and we were promised that we would be relieved of it at the end of twenty years. That is two years since, and we are paying it still. Then Macdonald, Tormore, came and he gave us the worst blow of all. He raised the rents, and he laid rent upon cottars in each township, who had not an inch of ground beyond what their houses were built upon.

4449. *The Chairman.*—How much did Tormore raise it to?—8s. 6d. was added for the drains, making £12, 18s. 6d., and it is now £13, 10s., besides all the other assessments that follow. It comes to £15. The assessment was 13s. for poor rates, and 14s. for school rates, and 3s. for road money. That is all except 4s. of doctor's money.

4450. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—What are the rates?—The poor rate is about 1s. 1½d. in the £1, and the school rate 1s. 0½d. in the £1,—tenant's share.

4451. *The Chairman.*—Then, in your recollection, your aggregate payments have been raised from £11 to £15?—Yes.

4452. When the rent was £11, what was the price of cattle? What was the price of a cow when the rent was £11?—Between £5 and £6.

4453. If you sell a cow, what is the price of the cow now?—I believe £7 or £8 to-day.

4454. What was the price of a stirk, such as you now sell, thirty years ago?—I would not get £1 for it thirty years ago.

4455. What would you get for it now?—If it be a good stirk they may get £4 or £5.

4456. About sheep,—you have still sheep?—Yes.

4457. What was the price of a wedder when you sold a wedder long ago?—About forty years ago we would get 10s. or 12s. for a wedder.

4458. And what might you get at the present moment?—We would get £1 for it to-day.

4459. When a cottar went out to labour, what were his wages thirty or forty years ago?—About 12s. a week.

4460. And now, how much would it be?—Between 15s. and £1.

4461. You have heard it generally stated that the condition of the people has deteriorated—that they are less flourishing now than they were before. Do you think that is in any degree owing to the imposition of the new rates—school rate and road money, and so on? Is that one of the reasons why their condition has fallen off?—Yes, it is making the burden heavier on the tenant.

4462. Would you rather pay the school rate and the road rate, and have the schools and the roads; or would you rather pay no rate, and have no schools and no roads?—I have no scholars at all. To those who have scholars I believe the burden is very heavy upon them—paying so much in the £1 for them besides school fees, and their children going naked and barefooted to school because they cannot clothe them.

4463. Do you think, on the whole, that the teaching, under the present system, is good for them or not?—I do not think that the schooling they

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are getting now-a-days is better in any way than the schooling they were getting in my early recollection; and we were in days gone by getting that schooling gratis. All the schooling I got was under a parish schoolmaster; and our school, I believe, did not cost more than £20.

4464. You state you got the schooling gratis—who paid for it?—The landlord. I was not paying at all. The schoolmaster was paid off the parish.

4465. Were there no fees at all?—The scholars who came on well with arithmetic and grammar and Latin, and such branches, were paying a little. At that time, in winter and spring, I believe our school would average sixty scholars.

4466. In regard to the road, would you rather pay the road money, and have the road, or rather pay no road money, and have no road?—I would rather pay for the road, for it is passing my door, and it is very convenient to me.

4467. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You are an old man, and have lived all your days in the parish. How many tenants were put out of the place when Major Macdonald came?—There were eight in the township in which I was.

4468. Any more?—There were six at any rate in Kilbeg. Two of those who were put out of Kilbeg found a place on the mainland.

4469. In whose possession are the two places you refer to now?—Tormore, I think, and more besides.

4470. Do you know a place called Suishnish?—Yes.

4471. Do you know a place called Boreraig?—Yes, they are beside each other.

4472. They are not far from Torrin?—No.

4473. Will you give us any particulars about people that once occupied Suishnish? How many people were put out of Suishnish?—I am not sure, but it was twelve lots.

4474. What became of these people generally?—Some were sent to Sculamus, some to Breakish, some to Sleat.

4475. How many were removed from Boreraig?—I don't remember, but it is ten lots that were in it.

4476. Who occupies those two places at present?—Our minister had these places last.

4477. Do you know a place called Kilbride?—I am not sure whether it was six or eight lots, but there were more than that of families.

4478. There are no crofters there now?—Only a shepherd, and a servant with the minister.

4479. Do you know a place called Duisdale in Sleat?—Yes.

4480. Were there small tenants there at one time?—Yes, it was occupied by crofters.

4481. How many?—Eight, I think. It was eight lots. I believe there were more than that of families in it.

4482. How long is it since it was cleared?—About fifteen years ago.

4483. Can you recollect when Kilbride was cleared?—Yes, two years after I came to Strath—fifty-eight years ago.

4484. How long is it since the clearance took place at Suishnish and Boreraig?—I think it would be in 1852 or thereabout.

4485. Do you know Ferrindonald in Sleat?—Yes.

4486. Were people cleared out of that?—Yes.

4487. How many?—Seven or eight, at any rate.

4488. At what time?—About twenty years ago.

4489. Do you know a place called Ostaig?—Yes; it marches with the township in which I was.

4490. How many people were cleared out of Ostaig?—There was no family at all in it. Mr Macdonald's mother was living there. Ostaig was surrounded by Linigary and Kilbeg, which were cleared as I stated before.

4491. Do you know a place called Carradale?—Yes.

4492. How many were cleared out of Carradale?—Four or five, at any rate.

4493. Are all these places—Ferrindonald, Ostaig, Linigary, and Carradale,—in the possession of Macdonald, Tormore?—He has not Ferrindonald. He has Kilbeg, Ostaig, Linigary, Dalveil, Glencruig, and Gillen. He has Sleat from sea to sea.

4494. What number of people, have you any idea, were upon the farms occupied by Macdonald, Tormore, that you describe as going from sea to sea?—It is long since I was that way, and I cannot say.

4495. Is there anybody but the shepherds, to the best of your belief, now on those farms?—I am not aware that there is any one paying rent unless to himself.

4496. At whose instance were all those clearances; were they upon Lord Macdonald's estate?—Yes.

4497. Who was the factor at the earliest period?—Macpherson was the earliest one I can recollect.

4498. I suppose he was the person who was in charge when Suishnish was cleared?—No. The present is the ninth factor under whom I have been, and the landlord is the fifth.

4499. I have mentioned some names. Do you know any other townships where you are aware that clearances have taken place in Sleat?—Yes; there were three in Morsaig, and Morsaig was added to Ord.

4500. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Why were the people evicted from Boreraig and Suishnish?—I suspect there were some of them who were in arrears of rent. Some went to Australia, and some to other lots that were vacant, and then the remainder were cleared off.

4501. Were they all sent away?—Yes.

4502. Were there not some well-doing crofters there?—Yes, as well-doing as any in the parish.

4503. Very respectable people?—Yes, as well-doing as in the parish.

4504. Were these in arrears?—I cannot say.

4505. Who was factor when that was done?—Mr Ballingall.

4506. Was Lord Macdonald under trust at that time?—Yes, it was the trustees who sent Ballingall there.

4507. Who got the place after the people were sent away?—Norman M'Leod, who was in Scalpa.

4508. Then there were more tenants than that before Mr M'Kinnon got it?—Mr Scott, Drynoch, had it, and then the minister got it.

4509. Do you remember it being said that one of the reasons given for removing the people was that it was for their own good, because they were too far from the church?—I remember hearing that said.

4510. How far is it from Broadford?—Six miles.

4511. Do you know whether any people anywhere have got the offer of Suishnish and Boreraig to be given to six tenants this year?—I am not aware of that.

4512. Who was factor when the people were evicted from the various places that Mr Fraser-Mackintosh asked about?—Macpherson was the factor under whom the first evictions took place. Maxwell was the next. He did not remove any.

4513. Were any evicted in Tormore's time?—Only those that were cleared off by him from Carradale when he added the township to his own tack.

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4514. How long is it since the people were removed from Kilbride?—Fifty-eight years ago.

4515. *Mr Cameron.*—What is your own rent?—£15 between rent and taxes.

4516. But the rent without taxes?—£13, 10s.

4517. What stock have you?—I have six cows and two horses and between forty and fifty sheep; that is the summing.

4518. I understood you to say you were satisfied with the schooling you got in your time, and that it was equal to what is now obtained. What are your own acquirements besides reading and writing?—Arithmetic; I can read English and Gaelic.

4519. You think the schooling is no better than it was, but no worse. Is that it?—It is worse.

4520. So you pay more money for a worse article?—In the school in which I was they would get English grammar and Latin taught, and there is no word of that in the present schools; and they could get Greek too. The present schoolhouse cost £1000—for a little pimple of a woman.

4521. Do the people in this district approve generally of female teachers?—Our female teacher is the only female teacher in our parish.

4522. Whether do you prefer a female teacher or a male teacher?—I hear those who have children in the school say they would prefer a male teacher.

4523. Are you satisfied with your own rent?—It is dear upon me. The feeding of my stock and my family, and providing with seed, costs me up to £30 per annum, beside the crop.

4524. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—One or two of the former witnesses spoke of sowing three bolls of corn and getting only one boll. It seems natural to ask why they go on throwing away their corn. Have you any explanation of that?—I do not know how other people's crops come on, but I can tell about my own.

4525. Is it because you value the fodder for your cattle more than the grain you can raise?—Yes.

4526. Have you a right to sea-ware on the shore where you are?—Yes, on our own shore.

4527. Have you plenty there?—Some of them are not satisfied. They are taking sea-ware from others. They are taking sea-ware from the minister and Mr Bower.

4528. Has that been put a stop to?—I am not aware that it is stopped yet

4529. Have they been threatened with interdict if they go on taking away Mr Bower's?—Yes, many a time. I never was obliged to take sea-ware from anybody else, or any other place. I had a full share myself.

4530. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—You mentioned, though it was not translated, that you bought straw. Who are the people here who have straw to spare?—At Breakish principally.

4531. Are they a crofter population at Breakish?—Yes, their lots are larger than is required for the amount of stock they have.

4532. That is to say, their hill pasture is smaller in proportion to their lots than it is in Torrin?—Yes, very much more so.

4533. Do you pay for the sea-ware to the minister?—I am not aware I ever paid a penny to the minister for sea-ware.

4534. Did he ever ask it from you?—I never heard that the minister asked payment. When Mr Bower came first the people of our township offered to pay for the sea-ware, and he would not accept it, and the people then took the sea-ware.

4535. What does Mr Bower do with the sea-ware? Has he any use

himself for the sea-ware?—He uses it a little, but he does not need much.

4536. In regard to the hill stock, is it in common?—Yes.

4537. Who manages it?—We have two shepherds.

4538. Who buys and sells the stock?—Ourselves.

4539. Does every man do it?—Two or three of our own number are elected each year as managers.

4540. At what time of the year do they make up their accounts?—About Martinmas time. Every thing we have to sell is sold by that time.

4541. Do you know what the average profit of a share of the hill is—your own share?—£10 per share. I have also to say the deer are troubling us very much. They are spoiling our crofts, and we must get protection against them, or else we cannot stand it. I was paying 5s. of dog tax to enable me to keep them off. The shooting tenant's gamekeeper came to the back of my house, and shot that dog about 50 yards off. The dog was lying beside my wife and daughter, who were lifting potatoes at the time.

4542. *The Chairman.*—Who was the shooting tenant?—The Armstrongs, who had the shootings at Strolamus. They had the shooting over our hill too.

4543. Who was the gamekeeper who shot it?—Robert Macgregor.

4544. Is he in the country now?—No, I complained to the Fiscal about it, and the Fiscal could not recover payment of the value of the dog from the sportsman, because Tormore said I had no right to keep a dog.

4545. Did you ask the Fiscal to prosecute the gamekeeper?—Yes, I put the case in the hands of the Fiscal, and the answer I got from the Fiscal was that the factor was saying I had no right to keep a dog, so nothing was done.

4546. Did the factor make you any allowance for a watcher to keep off the deer?—Mr Mackinnon, the former factor, paid us during two years.

4547. How many years is it since you received any allowance to keep a watcher?—Fourteen or fifteen years before Tormore came.

4548. Have you made many complaints for many years about the deer?—Yes, and Tormore would answer me when I complained to him—'If 'you are not satisfied with what you have, throw it up.'

4549. Do you know that a fence is going to be put up now?—The factor is promising that, at any rate.

4550. What kind of fence would you prefer to have? Would you prefer to have a solid stone dyke or an open wire fence?—The stone dyke would last longer.

4551. Which is best for the arable land generally—a stone dyke or a wire fence?—Neither of them would make much difference to the arable land.

4552. Do you think there ought to be a fence also round the hill pasture against the deer, or would you be satisfied with one round the arable?—It would be very useful, but it would be a very long fence. There are mountains in it.

4553. How many miles long?—Six miles, I think. It would indeed be useful to have it. Another thing that is causing us very much inconvenience, is the fact that two burns run through our grazing, and we have to cross these continually, and they are not bridged; and the beginning of this spring one of my neighbours was found drowned in one of them. I could only say that it is those who have the smallest holdings who complain most. A good deal of money came to this parish for the use of poor people, and because I had a whole croft I did not get a penny of it.

SKYE.

BROADFORD.

Hector Macpherson.

HECTOR MACPHERSON, Crofter, Harrapool (55)—examined.

4554. *The Chairman.*—Have you been freely elected a delegate?—Yes.

4555. Have you got a statement to make on the part of those whom you represent?—Well, I had some delicacy in accepting to be a delegate, because I was afraid I would be hunted afterwards for giving evidence; but I see there is a guarantee from Lord Macdonald and the factor, and I just took courage to come forward. We have general grievances in the township that I belong to. I think it is a great grievance, the small holdings. That is the main grievance, and want of security of tenure, and want of compensation in case of removals. The rents are high, but are considered *high owing to the smallness of the holdings.* These are the main points, I think.

4556. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Have you anything else to state in addition?—There are grievances connected with cottars being rented who are on the crofts of other parties, and no reduction of rent.

4557. Does that occur in your own township?—It does. It is not on my croft, but it is in the township.

4558. Does the proprietor get that rent?—Well, it is likely. It was Tormore who imposed the rents on the cottars here on the lands of the crofters.

4559. And you got no allowance?—No, there was no allowance.

4560. Did you use to charge any rents to these cottars?—Not that I know of.

4561. Is there any other grievance?—The money we got for improving was added to the rents at the expiry of the time that we were allowed to pay the interest for it.

4562. You mean drainage money?—Yes.

4563. Is it still going on?—It is still going on, added to the rents, and we are assessed for it in connection with the rent. It stands as rent now.

4564. How many years is it since you got the money?—I think thirty-two years or so. There were twenty years allowed to pay it.

4565. Anything else?—We are paying for sea-ware.

4566. To whom?—To the proprietor, or to the adjoining tenant who can sell some.

4567. Have you none of your own?—Well, we have a little, but it is not sufficient.

4568. What are you charged for what you require to buy?—Those who have a little of their own will do with 5s. worth yearly.

4869. Is that about the highest?—No, it is not about the highest. Those who require it require the value of about 10s. or 12s.

4570. Is there not enough sea-ware on the shores of Skye for all without any payment?—I think there is no scarcity here, but only they have to pay for it.

4571. Have you any other grievance?—There are game and rabbits in our grazing.

4572. We have heard to-day of rabbits for the first time. Are the rabbits very troublesome?—They are.

4573. Are they growing; are they increasing?—They are always increasing, except when the sportsmen are after them.

4574. Are you not aware you can protect yourself now to some extent?—No, because we are tenants at will. We cannot protect ourselves. There is no fixity of tenure.

4575. Don't you even try to trap them?—No, we don't even dare to

trap them. If we did we might be put in jail—if there was room for us.

4576. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—You said there was no security of tenure. Has anybody been removed from Harrapool or the neighbouring townships of late years?—I don't know of any of late, but that is the good-will of the proprietor and the factor.

4577. How long is it since you heard of a removal?—Well, removal was carried on in my time on a very extensive scale. Perhaps it is too far back to speak of, but in this parish there were a few cases of those who were thrown out and evicted. I think there is a woman outside at the door who can give evidence of that. She was a widow woman with two children, and she was thrown out of her holding without any rent or arrears.

4578. What was the reason she was thrown out?—She was at Breakish.

4579. For what reason?—There was no reason.

4580. Is she a very poor woman now?—Yes, she is supported by her son now. She has two sons, and one is in the army, and the other has to support his mother.

4581. How long is it since she was turned out?—Upwards of ten years ago.

4582. Was it for doing something against the will of the proprietor or factor that she was removed?—I do not think it.

4583. You say the rent of the crofts is thought high because they are small?—Yes; supposing I had the croft I had myself gratis from the proprietor, I would prefer to have three times as much and pay for it, because I could bring a living out of it.

4584. Is there ground near you held by tacksmen that could be used for enlarging your holding?—Well, there is plenty of ground in the parish, only it is occupied by the tacksmen.

4585. Supposing the crofters got it, would they be able to pay as good a rent as the tacksman is able to pay?—It could not be expected that crofters would pay for tacks that were in the market for some time back, and parties declaring they were ruined by these tacks. They would pay a reasonable rent imposed by a valuator.

4586. They would not pay as high a rent as the tacksman would be able to pay?—It seems the tacksmen are not able to pay when they are willing to get clear of their tacks.

4587. Suppose it is let again, and the proprietors have to take a reduced rent from tacksmen, will you be able to compete with the tacksmen?—Of course, not without capital. The tacksmen are men of capital.

4588. How can you expect to take any large holding without capital?—It would be easier to have large holdings than to be paying it to the merchants here and there.

4589. But you want to stock it?—Well, I would strive to stock it too.

4590. Would you get money to stock it?—I think the factor would advance the money on good security.

4591. *The Chairman.*—You said there was a woman who had been turned out of her holding, and that she is here at the present moment. Did she ask you to mention her case to us?—Yes.

4592. Does she wish to be examined?—Yes, she came to my house this morning.

SKYE.

BROADFORD.

John Macdonald.

JOHN MACDONALD, Crofter and Fisherman, Harrapool (65)—examined.

(*See Appendix A, XIII.*)

4593. *The Chairman.*—Have you been freely elected a delegate from Harrapool?—Yes.

4594. Will you make any statement you have to make on the part of those who elected you?—The name of our township is Harrapool, the meaning of which is 'the tail end of a quagmire,' and it is there our lots are laid out.

4595. Did you hear the statement of the last witness?—Yes.

4596. Do you agree with that statement in general?—Yes, quite.

4597. Then will you add anything which the previous delegate did not say?—I am paying rent in Harrapool thirty-eight or forty years, and in my early recollection my father was taking out of the ground that I have now the wherewith to enable him to rear eight or nine of a family without the necessity of buying. There was good reason for that. The township was taking into cultivation a part of the pasture when it was getting foggy, which enabled them to get food sufficient for themselves and their family, as the ground was strong. The ground officer was living in our township, and he reported to the factor that we were, by this way of cultivation spoiling the grass—both Sculamus and ourselves. The ground officer then came to the Sculamus people, and told them that they could not take in any part of the grazing, as they were spoiling the cows. The people told him that what they had for grazing, over and above what they cultivated, would do for their stock all summer. The ground officer then went to the factor and told him this, and the factor replied that if the people had as much pasture land over and above what they required for the grazing of their cattle he would find use for it. He then placed four families who had been cleared from Suishnish upon the Sculamus grazing. The grazing of the two townships is now spoiled with deer and rabbits. The factor was Mr Ballingall.

4598. Is it the same forest that the previous witness has spoken about?—Yes, the deer from the same forest. The deer are through the whole district.

4599. Have you any promise of a fence there?—No, but any one who will complain the answer is, 'I myself will take your holding.' The rabbits are causing us great loss. Several hundreds of them were killed this winter upon the grazing of our township and the neighbouring township.

4600. Who kills them?—They are killed by the shooting tenant.

4601. Does he make any allowance? Does he pay any proportion of the price of the rabbits to them?—Not a penny.

4602. What does the shooting tenant do with the rabbits he kills?—Sends them away in boxes.

4603. Does he ever give any of them to the crofters to eat?—No, not one—not even a foot.

4604. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—How long have the rabbits been there?—It is only three or four years since they commenced to be a burden upon us.

4605. They have been there for ten years, I think?—They were not so numerous, but they are now destructive.

4606. Where did they come from?—They came from Sleat.

4607. *The Chairman.*—Are you aware you have a right to kill the rabbits yourselves?—No, we are not aware. The gamekeepers tell us that we dare not kill them. We don't try to kill them.

4608. If you have a right to kill them, have you any means of killing

them?—Do you know how to kill them?—We know that quite well, how to kill them with snares and traps.

4609. About the deer; have you ever asked the factor for a fence to keep the deer off?—No; they are eating the corn of our two townships.

4610. But as the fence is being put up for the other township, would the factor not put one up for you too?—We did not ask him.

4611. How long would the fence be to enclose your arable ground against the deer?—It would take a mile, or three quarters of a mile.

4612. And how long would the fence be to go round the whole of the hill pasture?—That would take three miles.

4613 What other grievance have you?—I made a great deal of work on my lot in the way of improving. One year I opened 360 yards of drains, and closed them up with stones. A few years after that my rent was raised, and my rent was raised before then, on account of the drainage money I got. This last money rise was 15d. or 18d. in the £.

4614. Do you mean your rent was raised on account of drainage money, and then raised on account of the drains you made yourself?—My rent was raised 16s. about twenty years after I had opened these drains. It was Tormore who raised it.

4615. It was raised on account of the drainage money expended, and then it was raised again. Do you mean it was twice raised?—I was not counting the drainage money that was laid upon me as an increase of rent, as I was to be relieved of it at the end of twenty years; but instead of my rent being reduced at the end of twenty years, I had the 16s. added to it, and the drainage money kept up, and paying poor rates, and other rates upon the sum total. Any one can understand that peaty ground must be getting exhausted, as the ground was formerly peat mosses, and a place that was never created for the habitation of man. We are for having increased holdings on which we could live. Though we have a few cows left us, we cannot take as much cut of the ground as would keep them alive. Besides, we spend three rents in supporting our families and cattle. Not only that, but we have to buy almost all the seed oats that we have to sow. Another thing I have to say. I had a brother in the township of Sculamus. He was at work in Glenelg, and died there. He left nine of a family. A few years after his death they were wanting to evict his widow and her children. I went security for her year's rent, in order to keep her in possession. The next year she was evicted. She was obliged to leave without getting compensation. It was I who paid the rent for her, and I got £2 back. She was a number of years occupying a half-ruined house with her nine children, the youngest of them being a year old and the oldest seventeen. Her son bought a stirk. She dared not build a place near her house where she could keep it. At last she got a bit of Breakish, and she is there still, but her children have left her. Some of them went to Australia.*

4616. Have the children succeeded in life?—They made a living of it wherever they went, but she is very poor indeed. It is one son that is supporting her with his earnings.

4617. Did she bring up all her children without receiving any parochial relief?—She got very little assistance.

4618. Did she get some assistance?—It was the parish that built the house for her.

4619. Did she get no weekly allowance?—If she did I do not remember it. It was myself who helped her most.

4620. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Was it because she could not pay the rent that she was turned out of the house?—No, for I got £2 back of the rent which I paid for her.

* See Appendix A, XIII.

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John Macdonald.

4621. But that was for the roof of the house?—No. I gave £5 to the factor, and it was only £3 she was due.

4622. Why was she removed?—She had very little stock. She had not a summing.

4623. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Who got her place at the time?—A farmer who came from Suishnish. It is now occupied by two.

4624. Was it to accommodate them that she was removed?—She was not owing any rent or arrears, and it was one of the Suishnish farmers who was placed in her stead. [Question repeated.]—Yes.

DUNCAN FINLAYSON, Crofter, Upper Breakish (60)—examined.

(*See Appendix A, XIII.*)

Duncan Finlayson.

4625. *The Chairman.* Were you freely elected a delegate by the people of Upper Breakish?—Yes, by all who were present. There were some of them absent, however.

4626. About how many were present?—Most part of the inhabitants. A good many of them were at work.

4627. Will you make any statement you have to make on the part of those who have elected you?—What I have to tell is that we have been located upon a poor piece of ground—a piece that was taken from another township—and it was never cultivated until the set came to it which included my father. They had it for £1 a piece, and there was no work ever made upon it except such work as we ourselves did. I am at this day paying, including rates and rent, up to £5. There is £3, 19s. of rent, and my rates come up to 15s. The ground is such that I have had to expend £25 in seed for it over and above the seed I got out of it. I don't remember seeing the ground left uncultivated. It is turned every year, and it is not worth cultivating it for the support of man. Its only value is to feed our stock. The stock is only one cow and a horse, and these eat up all the grass upon our lots. We have to tether our cows on the cultivated land. The only outrun we have for them is a bit of bad hill pasture full of rocks. The most of it is bare rock. I did not cook a meal for my family out of all that grew on my holding since the new year. Whenever the family come of age that they can work, they must leave to earn money to support their parents. We are getting supplies from merchants on credit until the money is earned, and if we had sufficient ground that would supply us with what we need in the way of food, we should consider ourselves well off. All that we earn from end to end of the year we spend in food, and our holdings are so small that even if we had them for nothing we could not make a living out of them. I have not altogether two acres of arable land. I don't know what else to say.

4628. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Was your first rent raised all at once from £1 to £3, 19s.?—Not all at once. There was some improvement made on our township at the time of the destitution. We were getting meal for the work.

4629. What was put on then?—18s.

4630. What was the next?—Tormore, the first year he became factor, laid 15s. upon each croft without coming to see the ground.

4631. Was there any cause assigned for that increase?—We just got a letter from the factor. There was no cause assigned, only he said the ground had been valued by a valuator, but we never saw him.

4632. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Did you hear his name mentioned?—No. Five years ago we got clippings of a bad hill pasture for sheep, and that is 27s. to each of us, which makes up the hill rent now.

4633. How many sheep do you keep on that pasture?—Six hundred was the summing that was assigned to it, but we have not got four hundred upon it yet.

4634. Was it from want of capital to buy them, or from want of food for the sheep?—We are not able to buy the stock.

4635. *Professor Mackinnon.*—How many families are there of you paying rent?—Thirty.

4636. And sharing in this hill?—Yes.

4637. That would give you twenty sheep each?—Yes; but many of them have only one or two, and others have none at all, and some have a full share.

4638. Do you consider 27s. too dear for twenty sheep?—No. It is the best bargain we have. The ground will not return to us the oat seed we put into it.

4639. Are you earning any money for the hire of your horse?—There is no hiring.

4640. What do you do with the horse?—Only that when my spring work is over I send him to the hill until the winter comes. As the manure we use is sea-weed, we will not manage without a horse.

4641. Do you breed foals?—Yes, some of us do. Should I be for selling the grazing I have for my cow, I could not get a person that would give 8s. a year. There is no such place at all in the parish.

4642. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—What would you wish?—To get a place out of which I could support my family.

4643. Another place altogether?—Yes, if I could take it.

4644. How long have you been in this place?—I was born in the place.

4645. How long has the family been there?—It is seventy years since my father came to it.

4546. Has it always been in this poor condition?—My father used, before the ground became so poor, when it was in good heart, to make 2 or 3 or 4 bolls of meal out of it, and plenty potatoes.

4647. Is there any land about you that you could improve?—No, except the tacksman's land.

4648. I mean land adjoining your croft lands?—We are marching with a tack.

4649. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—What tack?—Mr M'Kinnon, Kyle, and Kinloch on the other side.

4650. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Was M'Kinnon there seventy years ago?—M'Kinnon, Kyle, had Kinloch also at that time.

4651. Was there any pasture they had formerly of which they have been deprived?—No, but the township next to ours—Lower Breakish—was deprived of pasture. We were settled in the part of the pasture which was taken from Lower Breakish.

4652. Was your father a crofter?—Yes.

4653. *Mr Cameron.*—You mentioned that you get supplies from the merchants until the money is earned. Are many of the people in debt to the merchants?—Yes, and I for one.

4654. What do you suppose the debt is on your township altogether—I don't know.

4655. Are they very considerably in debt?—Yes, I believe so.

4656. Is that one of the greatest hardships they have?—Yes; we would have no hardships so long as we are in health, if it were not for our debts.

4657. Do you see your way at all to get out of debt?—I am in hopes, as my family are getting stronger.

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4658. How do you work?—I do dry-stone mason work.

4659. Do you get good wages at that?—The poor people cannot give me wages. If I make 2s. a day I will be contented.

4660. Do you get pretty regular employment?—Sometimes I get more than I can overtake, and at other times I get none at all.

4661. Would you like to have such a sized croft as to make you independent of work altogether?—I would take a croft at £9 to £12 rent.

4662. Would that be sufficient to enable you to live and support a family without taking any work?—I don't know that it would, but it would be very good along with our own help.

4663. Is it a general wish among your neighbours that they should become crofters alone, and live independent of work?—There were some in our township that could not take big crofts—widows and others—and we did not speak on that subject before we left home.

4664. So long as your crofts are as small as they are, I suppose you must depend, to a considerable extent, either on work or on fishing?—Yes. My son is only eighteen years of age, and the last letter I had from him was from Germany, and he is helping me there.

4665. What is he doing there?—On a steamer sailing from Glasgow to Hamburgh.

4666. Would the people like to emigrate from Glasgow to Australia or America if they got help?—I would not like to do that in my old age.

4667. But speaking for your neighbours?—I cannot understand their minds on that.

Widow MARION MATHIESON, Waterloo (60)—examined.

Marion Mathieson.

4668. *The Chairman.*—What is your condition in life?—Have you got a croft?—I have 8s. worth of land.

4669. And a cottage?—Yes, I have got a house erected recently; I was without a house till then.

4670. Will you have the goodness to state your complaint to us?—That my land was taken from me. That land is now very dear, but when I had it the rent was £3, 4s.

4671. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Where was this?—In Lower Breakish.

4672. *The Chairman.*—Why was it taken away from you?—My two brothers' wives quarrelled. The land was taken from me to make matters smooth for them. They were on the one lot, and my brother wanted to get my lot to give it to his brother, to have the whole lot left to himself.

4673. What was your husband?—A crofter.

4674. Was the land taken away in your husband's lifetime?—No, while my husband was in life the holding was not taken from me.

4675. Then was your holding taken from you in order that it might be given to one of your brothers?—Yes.

4676. Did you beg the factor that it might not be taken away? Did you make any representation?—Yes.

4677. Were you in arrears?—The ground officer turned me back, and I had the £3 in my hand, and he told me that even should I pay it, the land was to be taken from me.

4678. What were your brothers' names?—Donald Anderson and Roderick Anderson.

4679. Have they still got possession of your former holding?—Yes. It is a day of liberty this.

4680. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—How long is it since this happened?—Sixteen or seventeen years ago. Since then I have been working on day's work.

4681. *The Chairman.*—Do your brothers do anything to support you and help you in life?—Not much.

[*Rev. Mr M'Kinnon.*—It is right it should be known that one of her brothers, who lives in a different township, offered to build a house on his own croft and be kind to her, provided she removed to another township, and she declined, hoping she could get back to her old croft again.]

Rev. DONALD MACKINNON, Minister of the Parish of Strath (67)—examined.

4682. *The Chairman.*—How long have you been a resident in this parish?—I was born in the parish. Then I was away for fifteen years, and all the rest of my life has been spent here.

4683. And you belong to an ancient family long settled in this country?—Yes.

4684. So that both by tradition and personal experience you are well acquainted with the circumstances of the people?—I am.

4685. Looking back to what you have heard, and what you yourself remember in your youth, will you state to us what you think of the condition of the people now compared with what it was?—I cannot say I agree with the evidence I have heard given here to-day, that the people were more comfortable fifty years ago than now. My experience is that, though there is undoubtedly in the country a great deal of poverty, I certainly think the people are in very much better circumstances than in my early recollection. There was a great deal of starvation in my early days, and I remember very well that plenty of families lived chiefly upon shell-fish from the shore. Happily, nothing of that sort is seen now. In my early recollection, we saw plenty of men as we have heard now, going bare-headed and bare-footed, and out at the elbows and out at the knees. Nothing of that sort is to be seen now. They had very hard times indeed. Their only food then was potatoes, and I remember about the first time meal was imported into the country, they had no meal except what they made from their old crofts, and the people are now better fed. In all the shops around us we see all sorts of things for sale, and selling quickly and well. We see butter and cheese and ham, and all these sorts of comforts that are in common use among the people, with tea and other *et ceteras*, which were unknown in my early days. Still I do not mean to say there is not a great deal of poverty; and I think the cause of that poverty is the subdivision of the crofts, and that the holdings of the people are far too small. That, unfortunately, is very much their own doing, and I think it was a very foolish step on their own part, the subdivision of their crofts, so that crofts which were originally supposed to be no more than sufficient for one family, are now, in some cases, called upon to be the mainstay of four families. I think a great deal of that might be removed if the young people would see their way to emigrate. I am not advising them to do anything but what I do myself, and I advise them to emigrate. I have seven sons, and they are now going abroad into the world to all quarters to earn a living for themselves. If

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I do that, I do not see why the people should consider it unkind to advise them to do the same. There are many reasons which make it advisable for them. By going away they could not only help themselves, but they could help those they leave behind; and we know in point of fact that when a man has emigrated and succeeded, as many of our countrymen do succeed, they are very, very mindful of those who are at home, as indeed those who are at home are also. There is, I may say, a state of things existing in this end of the island particularly, and more or less through the whole island, viz., that all the earnings of the strong and able-bodied young men who go away to the south, are sent back for the support of the young and old at home. That is a state of things which, I think, hardly exists anywhere else. I think in many localities out of the Highlands when people find they can earn money for themselves, they set up for themselves, and leave parents and younger members of the family to shift for themselves as they best can. That is a thing I would like to see encouraged, but I would not like to see the crofting system extended with the miserable bits of land they have now. If I saw every man with a good croft, there is no reason why, with the earnings the people get from other sources, they might not be fairly comfortable; but it is impossible, with the subdivision of the land such as they have now, that they should look for anything but recurring periods of starvation.

4686. Have you a glebe yourself?—Yes.

4687. Have you been in the habit of farming it?—Yes.

4688. So you are acquainted with rural affairs?—Perfectly.

4689. You have heard a great deal said of the eviction of people in former times—about their land being taken from them, especially their hill pasture, and given to tacksmen, and they themselves frequently crowded in and settled upon other, and perhaps, as is alleged, inferior lands. Do you think that the system of creating large farms—adding to them—and crowding the people on small holdings, was in past times carried too far for the welfare of the people?—Most undoubtedly, because I think these immense sheep farms have done a great evil to the country. I have no hesitation in saying so, while I think that a moderate sprinkling of comfortable tacksmen among the crofters is very much for the advantage of both.

4690. Do you think that the creation of these great sheep farms has been for the permanent benefit of the proprietors?—Decidedly.

4691. Do you not think there may be some danger that the proprietors will now not be able to re-let them, or will be compelled to re-let them at reduced prices?—Well, I think that it is a certainty now. My idea is that the value of the land in this country is coming to be fixed by the value of the land of America, because this country and America are like two sides of a large river; the means of communication are so rapid, and I think the farms are bound to go down.

4692. If you think there has been a mistake to a certain extent in the policy of past times, do you think it would be possible now to go back upon it, and to withdraw from the large farms a proportion of arable and common pasture land, and to let it to the crofters?—I see no difficulty in doing so, except the difficulty of money. If any wise and judicious measure be devised by which they could get the loan of money at a moderate rate of interest, and give them time, I can see no difficulty in falling back from the bad system.

4693. Do you think that might be done in some degree, and yet leave the tacksmen farms of sufficient proportions,—large enough,—or do you think that would spoil them?—In this immediate locality there are no excessive farms; they are medium farms about here. But in Skye there

are a good many farms excessively large,—far too large for the good of the country.

4694. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Are some of the farmers non-resident?—Non-resident, and I should like to see the time when a tax was imposed upon every non-resident farmer and every non-resident proprietor. It is one of the greatest disadvantages of our country that we have so few resident landlords among us.

4695. Have you seen, generally, on the part of the proprietors, or on the part of the factors, any intelligent or much intelligent solicitude for the welfare of the class of crofters, or do you think that the crofters have been inconsiderately and perhaps selfishly used for the purpose of increasing rents?—There is no doubt, in some places, they have. There can be no doubt about that; but I must say for the part of the country I know best, —that is Lord Macdonald's property,—I think, as a rule, the management has been very kind and gentle. There may have been mistakes, as there always are in everything human; but I think as a rule the Macdonald family, so far as we know their history, have been very kind and generous proprietors to the people. There are, at this moment, men in this room whose families have been upwards of one hundred years on the same place, and they may think their rents high; but I cannot say the rents are excessively high, because I think these men, though paying a few pounds for a good many cattle and sheep, might be paying for a cellar in the town more than they would pay for all the comforts they enjoy in the country.

4696. You don't think the rents are at all exorbitant?—I don't think it is the question of the rents so much that affects the people, because if a man is paying £5 or £6—if you hand over the £6 bodily to him, he will not be very materially benefited and it will not go very far to support his family. I think the subdivision of the land is a far more serious affair than the rent, because they are obliged to keep it constantly in cultivation, so that the land has become latterly sterile.

4697. Do you affirm the statement we have heard, that the land has really become much less productive than it was?—There is no doubt about it. Everything is taken ont of it. I was talking to a man the other day who complained of the sterility of his land, and I said—'Now, tell me the 'truth, are you not growing oats on the very same land where your great-'grandfather grew oats, without any change?' and he confessed it was so. Everything is taken out of the land, and nothing put into it.

4698. Do you think the arable land might be rendered more productive again by deep trenching and turning up the subsoil?—No doubt in many places it could be trenched.

4699. Have you ever seen any attempt of that kind?—Yes, I have seen it, and had a little of it myself, but it does not pay very well. I attempted that in my own glebe, and also in some little bit of a farm that I had, but I found it did not pay, and after paying for the expense of draining it, it is laid in pasture again.

4700. Do you think a greater proportion of the adult middle population go away to seek their living elsewhere than they did when you recollect at a remote period?—Yes, I remember when there would not be a dozen men leaving the parish all the year round.

4701. Do you think that increasing habit of the people leaving their families and going away produces hardship and discontent, and has it not a bad effect upon the morality of the people and their domestic relations? —I do not think so. Of course, it is a very painful thing for a man to be obliged to separate himself from his family, but in the circumstances it is necessary at times to do so, and I cannot see the necessity of its having

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any bad effect. It seems to me to develop their feelings of kindness more and more, because the earnings of all the young and able-bodied men who go away are sent home to support their parents, brothers, and sisters.

4702. But still, do they not feel it a hardship?—No doubt they must feel it a hardship to separate from their families.

4703. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Do you think that the perpetual use of sea-ware has an effect in reducing the value of the land?—It has decidedly. It destroys entirely, by continual use, the tenacity of the land, till it becomes a sort of impalpable powder, that is washed away with every shower of rain.

4704. Has not this use of sea-ware as manure come into fashion since it ceased to be profitable to make kelp?—No, it was always used. There was always a certain proportion reserved to manure the land, even in the time of kelp.

4705. But much less than at present?—Yes, of course it would be less, but it would not have required as much when the kelp trade began, because potatoes were at that time very scarce, and had been only at a comparatively recent date introduced into the country.

4706. But the Highlands have been cultivated for hundreds of years, and it seems only within the last thirty or forty years, I think, that they have ceased to be cultivated to profit?—Well, they had a very good system applicable to the country when there were fewer people in it,—namely, what the delegates mentioned to-day, that they used to break up their pasture. They used to turn their cows at night into these folds to enrich the land, and after having the land well manured by their cows being put in at night they got splendid crops of oats. They would take perhaps a couple of crops or three crops of oats out of that land, and then they let it lie, and went to a fresh place.

4707. What prevents them doing so now?—Well, one thing prevents them doing so now, that the people are more numerous, and that they have more cattle, and cannot spare it from their grazing. They do it to a certain extent in some places, and where it is done it is often a cause of complaint and misunderstanding among themselves. In the case of a farm, for instance, where there are a great many subdivisions,—subdivided lots,—and where the number of subdivided lots exceeds the number of entire lots, then the men with the subdivided lots will break up the pasture. Those who have the whole lots complain that they are outvoted, in fact, and complain that these poor men keep them down by injuring their stock.

4708. Do you think, if a system of emigration for families were devised, many families in this parish would be likely to go to Australia and America?—I have not the least doubt that a good many people might be got to go, if they see there is no chance of getting any thing to do at home, and I think it would be a very wise thing for them to do. One of my sons is in Canada, and he gives me a most flourishing account of it; and I had a letter from a countryman the other day, sending a small subscription for the destitution in Skye, and asking 'Why cannot the starv-'ing people come out here? They can earn eight shillings a day, and live 'for one shilling and sixpence.' Why, a man going out to labour in that way would soon be in a position to take a holding for himself.

4709. Do you think they would be more ready to go in families or as young men simply?—There is no doubt they would be more inclined to go, if there was any scheme at all; but I am not prepared to say much about what the feeling of the people would be, because I never spoke to them much about it, except to one here and there—so few that I cannot say what the general state of feeling is.

4710. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You are against the present subdivision of crofts, and wish to see them enlarged?—Yes.

4711. You have also stated that the constant use of sea-ware is rather running out the ground. Now, would it not be the effect, if the crofts were increased, that something would happen like what the crofters state, that the manure produced by the cattle on the enlarged croft would operate very materially to manure properly the land in a proper rotation of cropping, and thereby increase the productive power?—Distinctly, because they would have food enough to use for the cattle in the winter, and make manure for the land.

4712. In fact, it is the smallness of the croft that is the reason, really and truly, why they have so little manure of their own production, and therefore they must go to the sea-weed?—Well, I think, considering the circumstances of the people, that if each man who had a croft would do it for himself they might be tolerably well off; and if all those who are in subdivisions were moved to some equally good spot elsewhere, it would be a great advantage. There is another point, namely, the development of the fisheries. I think it is a very important element in improving the condition of the people. The people are too poor to have either the boats or the quantities of nets required to go into the deep sea; and the east coast men, who have large boats and plenty of fishing gear, come and take the wealth away from us. If our own people were put in the way of getting boats and nets and lines, with some harbour accommodation here and there, that would tend very materially indeed to improve their condition. In the neighbourhood where the Commissioners are now sitting there is a very large population, to a great extent relying upon the fishing, at Broadford. There are from 500 to 800 people round this bay, who would derive more or less benefit annually from the fishings here, if they could prosecute them properly.

4713. Why don't they do so, because they appear to have a fairly good harbour?—The reason is that those who go out here in a gale of north wind cannot come in for want of a pier. If they come with a take of herrings, the steamer cannot get near the pier, and so on, and they have no facilities for turning their fishing to account, such as there would be if there was a pier here. There are at least 150 or 160 boats, with about four men each, and their families, all fishing more or less here, but they would fish a great deal more if they had a pier.

4714. You consider Broadford Bay a proper position for a good harbour?—Distinctly; it is very well situated. I am going to open a correspondence with the Board of Fisheries. I was asked to communicate with them some weeks ago, and I intend to do so in a day or two; for I think that a good pier here would be a very material improvement to the condition of the people.

4715. Of some 400 fishermen?—A great many more than 400. If there was a pier here, where a steamer could come, there are 600 or 700 fishermen who would come here and put their fish into the steamer, instead of getting half value for them at the curing stations.

4716. Have you any idea what the cost of such a pier would be in Broadford Bay?—I think a gentleman who had a pretty fair idea of it estimated it would cost about £3000 to make a good pier at Broadford.

4717. And I presume it would be well worth while for those fishermen to pay a good rent for the use of that pier,—that there would be enough of money for a return?—I don't know as to the rent.

4718. They said they were willing to pay a fair rent?—I have no doubt if the fishings were improved, they would be in a position to pay rent. It would not come to very much in all. I think the fishing would be so

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much improved that they would all very cheerfully pay a trifle for the use of the pier.

4719. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Would you consider what you call the present croft, without being subdivided, sufficiently big as it is?—If the thing could be managed, I would like to see the crofts a great deal bigger. The best of them are, to my mind, too small to make a comfortable living. I would like to see the biggest even much larger.

4720. I suppose there was nothing like the same subdivision long ago—forty years ago?—The subdivision has been going on for a very long time; and I remember very well, when the father of the late Lord Macdonald saw the evil of it, he gave orders to the factor of the day to take means to stop it, and it created such an amount of discontent among the people, because they could not do what they would with their own, that he gave it up after trying for some years, and let them take their own way.

4721. I suppose there is no doubt the people are more expensively dressed and fed now than they were forty years ago; but was a substantial crofter of that day not in his own way more comfortably fed than he is to-day?—No, I do not think so. They had more food grown by themselves than they have now, but I think that the crofters now live better than they did then. I don't mean to say they are not in many places on the verge of starvation.

4722. They told us they killed their own sheep in those days?—I can look back perfectly well sixty years, and all the sheep I know of being killed was that there was always a sheep on Christmas day as a *gaudeamus*.

4723. But even with the enlarged crofts, and supposing they were spread over some of the tacks of the country to the utmost reasonable extent, emigration would still have to form part of the solution of the problem for the improvement of the people?—I think, if an opening could be found for them in the different places of the country, the question of emigration might be deferred to a future generation.

4724. It would come?—Well, we would not see the necessity for it if they could get those holdings at home.

4725. Of course, if they got money for boats and nets, that would be a matter of importance?—That would be an immense matter.

4726. They would have to pay back interest upon it, of course, and they would be quite ready to insure those boats?—Yes, of course.

4727. And to pay back interest?—Yes.

4728. *The Chairman.*—Referring for a moment to the question of emigration, we are aware, from the records of the past, that there have been various emigrations, at different periods, from Skye, and we have no reason to doubt that the people who have emigrated have, in many cases, done well. We also know that people have been prompted to emigrate from other parts of Scotland, and that they have succeeded in the colonies, and sent home encouraging reports to their relations here. Now, we have been struck by the great reluctance of those whom we have examined to avow any inclination to leave the country. They always speak of emigration with repugnance, and always speak with favour of enlarged holdings at home. Do you think that the sentiment is quite spontaneous and natural to the people, or do you think it has been inspired by the suggestions of others elsewhere—from Ireland and other quarters?—Well, it is a phase of public opinion that is new to me. It is of recent origin, and it is not easy for me to say.

4729. But is it a feeling of recent origin?—Yes, so far as I am aware, it is; and I should say, with reference to emigration and men doing well

that there are three or four men who left this country within my own recollection, and who died lately leaving half a million of money among them.

4730. I have been asked by Sir Kenneth Mackenzie to call your attention to the question of the deer forests. We have heard from two townships complaints of the depredations of the deer?—I am sorry, nobody in the parish suffers so much as I do from the deer.

4731. Do you think the people do suffer to some sensible extent?—Most decidedly they have suffered severely—heavily.

4732. They have long complained of it?—As long as I can remember. There is one farm particularly—Torrin—where the deer have been giving them a great deal of annoyance.

4733. Have the factors and proprietors shown any promptitude to redress that grievance?—Well, I think there has been a great deal of quiet suffering among the people, because they did not trouble their landlord or factor much about it; but since they have begun to speak about it, as Lord Macdonald has always been disposed to help them, I think, on the matter being properly pushed, he would do so. To show that Lord Macdonald was ready to do so, I myself am next to the Torrin people, and I had a small farm from Lord Macdonald for which I paid £100. I told him the deer had destroyed my corn very much, and he at once gave me a year's rent—£100—to enclose my corn.

4734. Has he ever done so to the crofters?—No, he has never given anything to the crofters; but I believe, as you heard stated here to-day, they are at various times paid for watching the corn, but I think that every proprietor of a deer forest ought to be obliged to fence it at his own cost.

4735. You don't think the crofters ought to be called upon to take a share in that?—Certainly not. I think if a man receives a rent, and receives two rents for the same land, he is morally bound to protect the tenant who suffers.

4736. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Do you know anything about rabbits?—I know too much about them.

4737. They are really becoming troublesome?—They are, in one or two places. I think the only place where they are really troublesome at all upon the crofting farms is a farm at Harrapool, and I know that though the shooting tenants may be a little slack in the matter, they are taken bound by their leases to keep rabbits down.

4738. Do you know whether the rabbits are excluded in the lease of the shooting tenant?—No; I think that the rabbits were not mentioned either by the landlord or by the tenant, so far as I know. I took a lease myself once of a little holding from Lord Macdonald's agent in Edinburgh, and he wanted to reserve the rabbits, but I said I would not submit—that I would not take the place at all—if I was not allowed to deal with the rabbits; and that is the only lease, so far as I know, in which there is any mention made of them at all.

4739. Then, do you protect yourself from rabbits?—Yes.

4740. Do you confirm what one or two delegates stated to-day, that as they have been tenants from year to year, they did not protect themselves, and are afraid to do so?—I believe it is true. But I really don't think, though they are afraid, and though they hold it to be *in terrorem* over them, that any steps would be taken against any man who protected himself. I think it is more from the gamekeepers than from the tenant or the proprietor.

4741. *Professor Mackinnon.*—But still the feeling of fear is a genuine feeling in the mind of the people all the same?—I think it is.

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4742. *Sheriff Nicolson.* — With regard to education, Neil Nicolson expressed an opinion about its being as good in the olden time as it is now. What do you think of that?—I quite agree with him. The possibility of education then was far superior to what it is now. I don't mean to say there are not plenty of teachers now as able as there were then, but the education code is such that it actually puts a prohibition upon the teacher from carrying on anything beyond the three r's. And I think that the Education Act was a great evil to us in this country where we have so many poor rate-payers, because we had schools before in every place where we have schools now. These schools were supported by people able and willing to bear the burden, and bear it cheerfully, and there were no rates or fees for poor people, and they could get quite as good an education as we can get now. Indeed, I am prepared to say that the Education Act was, for this country, a mistake. In this same country we have had to spend £8000 upon schoolhouses, where £800 might have answered the purpose of the country quite as well.

4743. *The Chairman.*—But though there may not be a better education given, may not more people be receiving education?—I do not think it because the compulsory clause is practically of no benefit here. We have tried it, and found it so unmanageable and so expensive that we have virtually ceased to put it in force. There was a sort of method proposed by referring the matter to justice, but what are you to do in places where there is no justice at all; so if we have a case we must go to Portree, and have the expense of taking witnesses there, and being three or four days away.

4744. Are there any parish libraries?—We had a library at one time in the village. We have in fact a library now, in the village of Kyleakin.

4745. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—I suppose they read newspapers a great deal now compared with what they did twenty or thirty years ago?—Yes, they do.

4746. Have you any idea of the proportion of them that can and do read newspapers compared with what there was thirty years ago?—I don't suppose, in my recollection, there were then four newspapers coming to the parish. There are a score in the parish now.

4747 What kind of newspapers do they most read—do you know?—Well, I think the sort of newspapers many of them prefer reading are not the newspapers that are calculated to lead them right, and give them wise counsel; and I am afraid a good many of the newspapers they read are calculated to make a breach between them and their best friends.

4748. What newspapers do you refer to?—I would rather not say. The man whom the cap fits can wear it.

4749. Is the *Scotsman* popular here?—I don't think so. I think, if the *Scotsman* was a little more read, it might teach more rational views. I don't approve of the *Scotsman's* politics in all cases; but I think it has been giving very sound advice to our friends here, if they would only take it.

4750. *Mr Cameron.*—Will you tell me whether emigration has been adopted at all here lately?—Well, there are two or three families who went to New Zealand. An agent came here to bid for emigrants, and he got three or four families.

4751. Did he take the families bodily?—He did, and they have been very prosperous indeed.

4752. I suppose they have written back to their friends?—Yes, in regular communication.

4753. Has it not had the effect of encouraging others?—No.

4754. Is there any mode by which these large tacks might be cut up into smaller farms suitable for the better class of crofters?—There can be no difference in that respect, if the landlords consent to do it.

4755. And if they had the money?—Of course, that is essential, but I saw a method that was suggested by Mr M'Andrew at Inverness a few months ago, which appeared to be a very feasible scheme, and I think if that idea could be followed up, a great deal of help might be given to the crofters; that is the idea of forming a society to lend the money to stock their crofts. I think it was a capital idea. Sir Alexander Mathieson tried to snuff it out, but I think Mr M'Andrew went upon the right lines.

4756. Would these large farms be suitable for crofters, supposing they took them up to the hill tops, that is not only the low ground but the high ground too?—There is no place here where you can move crofters more properly off the sea-shore. The hill pasture I consider of much greater importance to the crofters than arable land, because it pays them better. The crops from arable land in such a climate as this is always uncertain, and with a good amount of grazing land they can have cattle and sheep.

4757. I gather from what you state that if a crofter paid £5 of rent, and had the £5 returned to him, it would make very little difference to him. I suppose you consider one of these small crofts more in the light of a home for the man who earns his livelihood elsewhere?—Certainly, in the case of small crofts. I think there might be very judiciously two classes of crofts; one for such as would prefer fishing, and who could not as proper fishers afford the time to attend to a large croft. If such a man had a small croft where he could be comfortable, and grow potatoes for his family, I think a great many crofts of that kind could be judiciously located in various localities, and many would be glad to get them.

4758. But I am afraid from what we have heard, that there is a disinclination among these smaller crofters to look upon these crofts as homes; that they always want an increase of the size of their crofts, and are less inclined to work abroad?—Yes; that is because they have not the means of engaging in fishing or anything else in which they could expect to make up a good supplement.

4759. Is there any way you can suggest now of inducing the people to look at these small crofts in the light of homes, and not to try to extend them?—Well, I should like to devise some means of restoring the broken crofts to their original size; that is what I should like to see.

4760. Would you like to see large crofts sufficient to enable a family to live comfortably upon them, and another class simply as homes, the occupants of which should devote themselves to fishing and other work?—Quite so; that is absolutely necessary, while some men would be able to take large crofts and keep them. Well, there are other men who, if you gave them a large croft, would not succeed in it; but I would give large crofts to all who would be able to take them, and other smaller crofts to men of minor wealth, and give them facilities for fishing.

DONALD M'GILLVRAY, Crofter and Fisherman, Lower Breakish (55)—examined.

4761. *The Chairman.*—Have you been freely elected a delegate by your people?—Yes.

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4762. You have produced a paper. Is that the statement which you wish to put into our hands?—Yes.

4763. Has this been seen by all the persons who sent you here?—Yes. It is as follows:—'*Lower Breakish, May* 14, 1883. The township of 'Lower Breakish was originally let to tenants in the year 1800, and 'formed into forty lots, with equal shares of pastures from the shore to the 'watershed as wind and rain might divide it. We possessed these lots 'for a number of years, until Mr Macpherson, then factor, deprived us of 'one of our pastures without any summons or reduction of rent, and let it 'to tenants which still hold it. We had still a right to keep sheep or 'cattle on the hill pastures until Tormore, the late factor, deprived us of 'all the hill, and ordered our sheep to be gathered to Kinloch sheepfold, 'where we had either to kill them at once, or sell them for half price. He 'left us a patch of the hill for a shift for our cattle twice a year. This 'place is four miles distant from the nearest of us; and our wives or 'daughters have to travel that distance twice a day, viz., 16 miles, for 'very little milk, and four men have to watch the cattle night and day 'during the whole time. In the second year of his factorship he (Tormore) 'added to our rent from 3s. to 16s. per lot. Moreover, he charged the 'township £20 extra for the patch of hill pasture. Seventeen of the lots 'are divided into two halves, in all sixty-three families, with a population 'of 311. We will be in poverty and want, and a burden to the com-'munity until the other township, Upper Breakish, is lifted, and the place 'restored to us as before.'

4764. Do you desire to add anything to that statement on your own part?—Yes. I desire to tell that when our forefathers got the land some of them went to the army, and others had sons and brothers in the army, when the last Macdonald regiment was raised, and that was the reason why these crofters got this township cut out. The township was previously in possession of eight crofters.

4765. Do you mean that the township of Upper Breakish was cut out of the township of Breakish or Lower Breakish?—Yes. Upper Breakish was cut out of the pasture belonging to Lower Breakish.

4766. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—When did you get Lower Breakish?—In 1803. There were eight tenants there previously, and the descendants of these eight are with us yet.

4767. *The Chairman.*—I understand that before the year 1800 there were in Lower Breakish eight tenants?—Yes.

4768. And that subsequent to that date tenants were brought in and located on the same land?—On their pasture.

4769. As a reward to them because their relatives took service in Lord Macdonald's regiment?—Yes.

4770. How many families were there then settled upon it?—Forty.

4771. Forty new ones, or forty including the eight?—Forty in addition to the original eight.

4772. What next?—The second grazing which they got has since been taken from them. The whole pasture which we had for our sheep has been taken from us.

4773. How much hill pasture have you now got remaining?—A strip about two miles in length, and I cannot say it is half a mile in breadth.

4774. Do they keep any sheep?—No, neither sheep nor horse. If a man keeps a horse, he must buy grazing for it from somebody else outside our township.

4775. How far is this, the strip of grazing, from the holdings on the township?—Four miles from those of us who are nearest to it.

4776. Is it true that the people really go, at a certain season, four miles back and forward, twice a day, to this place?—Yes, doubtless.

4777. How many do that? How many is it necessary to employ?—Every one who has a cow has to do that.

4778. Have they brought this hardship under the notice of the factor and the landlord?—Yes, doubtless. It was Tormore who did this upon us, and we applied three times to our present factor to have this hardship removed, and he has not done so. He is trying to do so.

4779. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—How long is it since Upper Breakish was cut off Lower Breakish?—About seventy years ago.

4780. How long is it since the next piece of pasture was taken from them by Tormore?—About five years ago.

4781. Who got it?—The people of Upper Breakish.

4782. When Upper Breakish got that pasture, was no pasture left in Lower Breakish?—Yes, a piece is left them yet.

4783. This other piece that was given them four miles away is charged £20 of rent?—Yes, and even it is part of the old grazing that we had.

4784. It is not mentioned in this paper as part of the old grazing?—That does not matter.

4785. Then they had to pay £20 extra for a piece of their own hill ground?—Yes.

4786. Why did Tormore raise the rent? Was it because he had the place valued?—I am not aware, unless he valued it himself. He never came to see where we were living, or what sort of land we had, and yet he raised our rents twice.

4787. Are their rents dearer than those of their neighbours, comparing their land and stock—I mean the rents in Lower Breakish compared with those along the coast here?—They may be equally dear in other townships.

4788. Were they cheap rented before the £20 was put on?—It was not. We were not counting it cheap at all. Our opinion is, there is not a township in Skye so dear as ours.

4789. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—When this bit of land five years ago was given to the Upper Breakish people, did the Upper Breakish people pay any rent for that?—Yes, a little over £40.

4790. What reduction did you get for its being taken away from you?—Not a halfpenny, but £20 additional was laid upon us.

4791. Do I understand that five years ago, when this piece of land was taken from Lower Breakish and given to Upper Breakish, £40 of rent was paid by the people of Upper Breakish; whereas you yourselves received no reduction of rent for this bit being taken away?—No, we did not get a halfpenny, but our rents were raised £20 for the piece which was left with us.

4792. But as I understand, you had not that piece for which you are now paying £20 at the time the detached piece of Upper Breakish was taken away?—Yes, we had it, except a small corner.

4793. Then we come to this, that except that small corner, there was at your expense a rise of £40 of rent got for a piece of land, and you yourselves paid £20 also. It came to a matter of £60?—Yes.

4794. Was there any reason given for that operation?—No reason given.

4795. Did I understand you rightly to say that the factor never went to these places to see what was proposed to be done at this time?—The factor went to see the hill pasture, but he never came to see us or our houses.

4796. What period of notice did you get that this was to be done?—We did get notice beforehand.

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4797. How long?—I cannot remember, but the time was not long.

4798. Were you warned out of it?—No.

4799. Did you protest and object at the time?—Yes, we were objecting to the pasture being taken from us altogether, but we were not objecting to the half being given to our neighbours.

4800. Did the Upper Breakish people get anything else except this bit of hill pasture for the £40?—They got a little piece of the Kyle tack, but we claimed what they got as ours by right.

4801. You say in your petition that you will be in poverty and want and a burden to the community until the other township of Upper Breakish is lifted. Where do you propose to put the people of Upper Breakish?—Is there not plenty of land through the country? The gentlemen can easily understand that we cannot but be in poverty in a place where there are sixty-three families and three hundred and eleven souls altogether, and when we have only about 160 acres of arable land, and part of it rocky and mossy,—covering the rocks with earth which I had to carry on my back in creels, carrying stones in the same way with creels to the drains. We have neither horse nor cart. I have only one sheep, and she had three lambs last year, and I have no place to keep them on.

4802. *The Chairman.*—Are we to understand that the women of your township have to walk sixteen miles a day for the purpose of milking their cows twice a day?—Yes, doubtless. If there are two women in a family, the one takes it at the one end of the day, and the other at the other. If they don't do that, the calves will perish in our folds.

4803. You stated that the factor held out the hope to you that your grievance would be redressed. Do you have ground for thinking that your grievance will soon be remedied?—We are in that hope.

4804. How does the factor intend to remedy the grievance?—He was promising that we would get a part of the hill pasture back.

4805. From Upper Breakish?—Yes.

4806. How would he indemnify the people of Upper Breakish for the loss of their pasture?—I do not know.

4807. Do you know of any steps taken by the factor to remove the grievance?—I know that he came twice or thrice to us, but we could not agree among ourselves about it.

4808. What sort of land is it that intervenes between the crofts and the sheepfold of Kinloch?—Black heathery hill pasture.

4809. Whose occupation is it in?—Part of it we have ourselves, and the people of Upper Breakish have the rest. The part which is next to their lots belongs to them, and we have to walk over that before we reach our own.

4810. I suppose that from your experience you are of the opinion that it is very important for hill pasture, which is attached to crofts, to be in the immediate vicinity of the arable ground?—Yes.

4811. And that an arrangement for giving hill pasture to crofters who do not possess it would not be beneficial to them unless such hill pasture were situated close to the arable ground?—Yes.

DONALD LOGAN, Schoolmaster, Broadford (43)—examined.

Donald Logan.

4812. *The Chairman.*—How long have you been a schoolmaster?—Twenty years. I have been twelve and a half years at Broadford.

4813. Were you teacher here before the new system was introduced?—I was. I was a parochial teacher. I declined at first to become a

delegate, but at the urgent request of several of the other people at a public meeting, I came forward. I am not unwilling, however, to give evidence from any knowledge I have, and I have jotted down the different things gathered from what others say and from what I know myself. As to their holdings, the average size is from 4 to 5 acres, with outrun. The rents for these crofts are from £5 to £6. On such holdings the people become poorer and poorer, and would require at least 12 acres, and pasture for forty sheep. The soil becomes deteriorated in consequence of being turned every year for a number of years, and the rainfall of the country is so great that even the manure in summer is washed away. I have observed the rainfall for eight or nine years, and in some years it has been as high as 98 inches. Rain fell on 200 days in the year 1877. The holdings are only held at the will of the landlord, or rather his factor, because the people don't see and don't know the landlord. The dwellings were built at the crofter's expense, and until lately no compensation was allowed when leaving or being removed. The late factor (Tormore) told me he introduced a rule upon the estate that compensation would be allowed for crofter's houses, but the rule I was told was observed more in the breach than in the fulfilment. The rents are considered high, owing to the small extent of croft, but the crofters would be quite willing and more able to pay three times as much for a croft three times as large. My neighbour Donald Mackinnon, Harrapool, had his rent raised three times on one or two occasions after improvements. The sheep runs are mostly all the result of evictions, but not quite recently. The farmers consider the crofters a nuisance, and prevent them from taking away sea-weed from the shores on the farm, although by their leases they have only a claim on the sea-weed required for their own use. I was an emigration agent for New Zealand, and got six families and one or two single people to go. Ministers or factors did not encourage emigration. Those who left were in better circumstances than the average. They got free passages, and their fares paid to the port of embarkation. If they had, or could get good crofts, they would not leave; others wished to go, but were so sunk in debt that their effects would not pay their debts and outfit. As to population, nearly 1200 live within 4 square miles, or nearly 300 to the square mile, between Broadford bridge and Lussay bridge, huddled on small crofts, and driven away from their former holdings. They are mostly engaged in fishing. I have been clerk and treasurer of the school board since the passing of the Education Act until last June. No encouragement is given to clever boys. I can give information on this head if necessary. As a great many of the crofters are on the verge of pauperism, they do not now consider it so great a shame as formerly to go over to that denomination. The pauper children are the best educated in the parish, as the parish pays for them. Rates are pressing. In the last abstract issued by the Parochial Board in 1874, the parish was assessed for nearly £700, and the registered paupers only got £173. I produce the abstract. The proprietor charges for the sea-ware; and when the ship freighted with potatoes for the destitute was in the bay, the neighbouring sheep farmer kept from the crofters the ware with which they intended to plant the potatoes. The people wish to get larger holdings and permanent tenure, fixed rents by land court or otherwise; but are not in favour of leases, as they fear the Greeks even bringing gifts.

4814. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Are you aware of your own knowledge what you have stated about the farmers not giving the sea-ware?—I have it from those present here who told me.

4815. And you have no doubt it is correct?—I have no doubt it is the truth.

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4816. What are the names of the persons who were so refused?—John M'Lean, Harrapool; John M'Leod, Harrapool; William Fraser,—these were people checked for taking it away.

4817. But who were the people who would not give the ware?—The tacksman of Corrie—Mr Murchison.

4818. Anybody else than he?—Nobody that I am aware of.

4819. You are now referring to the seed potatoes that benevolent people in the south sent here?—Quite so.

4820. *Mr Cameron.*—How do you come to be clerk and treasurer of the school board?—I was parochial schoolmaster.

4821. Is it usual for a schoolmaster to be clerk and treasurer?—There is no other body whom the board could get to do it. I was returning officer, and then I became clerk and treasurer.

4822. It is not usual in this country?—It is not uncommon.

4823. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—To what extent are they learning the higher branches as compared with the time before the passing of the Education Act?—I may say that there is about 5 per cent., and I should say there was then 10 per cent., but then we had not the accommodation we have now. We were huddling seventy scholars into a room 16 by 24 feet. I had often to tear out the windows to allow the scholars to get a breath of fresh air, and to stand at the door to get a breath of it myself. Scholars had to travel 6 miles, and to bring in stones, as they could not get seats to sit upon in the school.

4824. Do they attend well?—There is no pressure put upon the children. I think if the school board did their duty the children would attend. They are very poor, and in the winter season, when they get their clothes wet, it is not easy for them to come back again.

4825. Have any of the parents been reported and fined?—Only in one township, and it was rather a quarrel between two townships as to where the school should be located.

4826. *The Chairman.*—What is your native place?—Sutherlandshire.

4827. A schoolmaster who belonged to the south told us he did not find the children here so apt for education as in the south?—I think he was quite wrong. I have had children from the south and children from the north, and the children from the north, when they came to be advanced and got a classical education, were not in any way behind the others.

4828. You speak Gaelic?—Plenty, and read it and write it too, and use it occasionally in the school, but not as a class subject.

4829. But in conveying to your pupils an understanding of English you use it?—When they are beginning, and I show them the similarity of certain words. I find it very useful, especially when infants come into the school in their first two years before they understand English. I find it very useful in the discipline, because there is a sort of bond of union between the scholars and myself.

4830. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Many of the children, I suppose, come to you without a word of English?—Two-thirds.

4831. Are there many of your people still who speak no English in this district?—Not very many.

4832. Then, as to reading newspapers. We are told of one paper which is not popular here. Do you know of any paper or more than one paper that is particularly read here?—The *Chronicle* is the paper which is generally read.

4833. No Glasgow or Dundee paper?—We sometimes get a sight of Glasgow and Dundee papers.

4834. Is the *People's Journal* much read here?—I suppose about a dozen or two.

4835. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Are there about 5 per cent of the scholars in the higher standards now?—Yes.

4836. And there used to be about 10 per cent.?—Yes.

4837. And the accommodation was very much worse. What is the reason of this falling off?—One chief reason is that we have a system of cram now, and we have not the same scope for teachers that we had formerly. We have to make up to a certain age, and 'it is the cow that 'milks' which is looked to, and I must prepare for the day of inspection. Specific subjects do not pay.

4838. Then you mean to say you don't encourage the children to take up the higher subjects?—I would, if I had the time to devote to them.

4839. But owing to the pressure put upon you, you are not able to do so?—I am not able to devote the time, otherwise I would be very glad to do so.

4840. There was a statement that the assessments in the parish came to £700 a year?—In that particular year, 1874.

4841. There was £173 of that spent upon paupers. How much was spent on education?—We first had a rate of 9d. to secure the grant. Then we had a rate of 5d., but since then it has reached 1s. 8d., till last year when it reached 2s. 0½d.

4842. What is the parochial rate?—I cannot say. I do not pay it on my house. I believe it is 1s. 1½d. on tenants.

4843. If £173 went to the paupers, what became of the rest?—There was £77 for management and £65 to the doctor, and £50 for some arrears by the auditor.

4844. There seems to be a large payment for doctors and for paupers out of the parish and for paupers in the asylum, and poorhouse besides?—Likely.

4845. You have no reason to suppose the parochial board is not properly managed?—I cannot say; I have nothing to do with the parochial board.

4846. But you have brought this up as a representation from the people who delegated you?—Yes, showing how heavy the rates are. I am not reflecting on the parochial board.

4847. *Professor Mackinnon.*—The inference was of course that the rates might be smaller with equal efficiency?—I must be silent on that point, when I do not know.

4848. Then you attribute the want of higher education entirely to the present educational arrangements of the country?—I do, for the want of a sufficient staff; but it would not pay to keep a staff.

4849. There is no doubt that the general education is improved in all the schools of the country?—Certainly.

4850. In efficiency and comfort. There are more children getting education?—More children get it, but I cannot say that the efficiency is greater. I cannot say we turn out more good scholars.

4851. You come from Sutherlandshire?—I come from Bonar Bridge.

4852. With reference to children there and here, which do you consider better clothed?—They are far better clothed on the east coast. Three acres in this county are not to be compared with an acre there. The rainfall in Sutherlandshire is 29 inches; the rainfall here is 98 inches.

4853. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Are you of opinion that Gaelic could be much more utilised in education than it is at present?—I think so. It is a great drawback to us in teaching; perhaps one of our chief drawbacks, that we have to teach English in the earliest stages. If Gaelic were made a specific subject when a child came to Standard IV., V., or

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VI, we could then draw larger grants, and have something for the time we spent in teaching English in the earlier stages.

4854. Is it not quite erroneous to state that the utilising of Gaelic, or making it a specific subject, would in any way prevent children being properly educated in English, or otherwise?—That is my expectation, that it would be a mistake.

4855. It is quite erroneous to view it in that light?—If we had the time it would be quite erroneous, provided the school board could give us the time for specific subjects.

4856. Are there many teachers in Skye who can speak Gaelic?—A good few; but a good many are Lowlanders, who have come of late.

4857. Why do they come?—Because our teachers go south. My head pupil teacher has gone to a Glasgow school. The Highlanders are going south, and the Lowlanders are coming north.

4858. Are those who come from the south of a very high class?—My opinion is that there were more schools under Government inspection in the south before the passing of the Education Act than in the north. In the north schools were mostly kept up by the Ladies' Association and the Church. A great many pupil teachers who did not hold certificates came north, and of course they are inferior to the teachers who hold certificates. I hold a certificate myself.

4859. *Professor Mackinnon.*—I suppose, other things being equal, you consider it a very great advantage that a teacher, in this part of the country, should know the language of the children?—Most certainly.

4860. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—And the inspector too?—Yes.

4861. *Professor Mackinnon.*—The inspector, as a matter of fact, does?—As a matter of fact, he does. I wish to say that there were six or seven cottars who came forward and said they were upon the tacksman's ground, that they had very little ground, and they thought their case should be brought forward, and I promised to state it before you. In regard to the case of the cottars, they were for a very long time on Mackinnon of Kyleakin's farm; the whole of them I represent. They have about one acre or one and a half acre of ground, and sometimes six of them get a cow's grazing; and I am told by some of them that they work thirty or forty days in the year for that. Each family has a cow. There is no money taken. Some years they do more, and some years they do less.

4862. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Do they pay anything for the stance of the house?—Not merely for the stance; they have bits of ground attached.

4863. For everything, they have to work thirty or forty days on the average?—Some years they don't work at all, and some years they work thirty or forty days.

4864. Then, what is their grievance; I don't see it?—I don't see it either. They are wishing to get more land, and if the crofts be extended, that it should not be upon their place.

4865. What is the value of a man's labour down at the Kyle?—From 2s. 6d. to 3s. for the best labouring men.

4866. Can that be got hereabout?—The work cannot be got here at all; but at any work that is given them they get from 12s. to 15s. or 15s. to 18s. a week.

4867. I saw a man working near here at drains?—He is a particularly good labourer, and he gets 2s. 6d. per day.

4868. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—What do the lime quarriers get?—12s. to 15s.; I think 15s.; it is very hard work.

4869. *The Chairman.*—You stated that under the old system your

accommodation was very faulty. Are you satisfied with the present accommodation?—I am perfectly so.

4870. Do you think that the present accommodation is rather more spacious and extensive than is necessary, considering the resources and habits of the people?—I don't think so.

4871. You don't think it is a bit too good?—No.

4872. And under the old system you state there were twice as many taking higher subjects in proportion to the number?—Yes.

4873. Were the scholars less numerous under the old system than now? What was the average attendance under the old system?—The parochial school was shifted at the passing of the Act, and two districts were combined, and consequently the attendance is greater now.

FINLAY M'INNES, Crofter and Fisherman, Waterloo (54)—examined.

Finlay M'Innes.

4874. *The Chairman.*—Have you been freely elected a delegate?—Yes.

4875. Will you be so good as to make a statement on the part of those who have elected you?—The first thing I have to tell is that our holdings are too small, and that they are bad. One of them is peat moss of unknown depth. I speak of our arable land. Again, we can only cultivate half of our lots. At the time of the year when it happens to be wet and rainy, our beasts cannot go to the upper part of our lots, the land is so deep and boggy. We have sometimes had to take our cattle out of the bog with ropes. Then our grazing is soft ground also. Not an eighth part of it can yield grass, the soil being black and peaty. Much of it cannot be trodden on by our cattle at times. Again, there are fifty-three years since it was laid out in lots, and it was then made into twelve lots. Some of the original occupiers of these twelve lots left the country and went abroad. There are three of our lots again divided into two halves, and one is divided into seven portions, and in these lots that are so divided the subdivisions of them are occupied by families who pay rent. Then there are six other families in the township who pay no rent at all. There are 149 souls in our township altogether. When it was first made into lots each lot was £3 of rent, and now the rent is £3 10s. for the past ten years.* Besides that, we pay for sea-ware 5s. a year, and I have here a letter, which I got from the factor when he was raising the rent.—'Mr Finlay MacInnes, 16 Waterloo, Tormore, by Broadford. 'Skye, 31*st October* 1872. Sir, I have to intimate that your land and 'grazings have been valued at £1, 15s., and you are to be charged at that 'rate from Whitsunday last. If you consider yourself aggrieved, you will 'intimate the same to me, by writing, within ten days from this date, 'when I will relieve you of your lands and let to another.—Your obedient 'servant, D. MACDONALD. *N.B.*—I have strict orders to allow no 'arrears after Whitsunday 1873.' Here is another letter which I got from the landlord's agent when I failed to pay one year's dues for the sea-ware:—'*Portree, 29th July* 1872. Sir, I have to acknowledge receipt 'of 5s. for sea-ware from Pabbay year 1869.—I am, Sir, your obedient 'servant, HEW MACDONALD. Mr Finlay MacInnes, Lower Scullamus, 'Broadford.' Our summing is two cows, no sheep, no stirks. We get the sea-weed from the island opposite us—Pabbay,—and we have great trouble taking the sea-ware from there. I was there a week yesterday, and I was nearly drowned, and those on shore when they were seeing us approaching were very much in fear that we were lost. I went another day, and I

* See Appendix A, XIII.

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was not able to take sea-ware at all, it was so stormy. The people of our township are accustomed to herring fishing. We have no ports or sheltering places, and should the wind rise, and when we are approaching the shore in bad weather, we are in danger of losing our boats. Another thing is troubling us very much, and is touching our township very much, namely, that the steamer which passes up and down has often taken away our nets, and we got nothing like compensation for them. The steamer is not coming at a set time, neither is she taking the same course when she does come. Our land is now becoming much exhausted through continual cultivation. Some of it we are turning four times a year. We are planting potatoes in the same ground year after year—two years after each other at any rate. We also have to carry earth on our backs to hide the rocks, or we could not be able to sow oats. Then the part of our arable land which is furthest from our houses is very much destroyed by hares. Rabbits and deer don't trouble us much, but the hares do.

4876. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—In one of the letters you have handed in, it appears to be dated at Tormore on the 31st October 1872, and you are there told, in October 1872, that you are to be charged £1, 15s. of rent as from Whitsunday last. Is that correct, that five or six months after the term you are told for the first time your rent is to be raised, and to go backwards? Was that your first notice?—Yes, that was the first notice, and the whole of the township the same way.

4877. Suppose you were not disposed to pay that increase of rent, that letter informs you you will be turned out in the very middle of a year?—I had no other expectation. I could not say I would not pay it, or that would be the result, and to every one else in the township.

4878. Have all the other people in the township received similar printed letters?—Yes, every one of them, so far as I know.

4879. Do I understand you to say that all the tenants in Waterloo pay for sea-ware direct to the landlord?—Yes, they do so in a sense. The landlord has got Pabbay in his own possession.

4880. About the subdivision of crofts, you stated that one croft was now subdivided into seven,—under what circumstances was that done? Was it from the natural increase of the people themselves, or were there outsiders placed among them?—It was families from another part of the estate.

4881. It was outsiders?—Yes. Besides that there was a pauper's house built upon that lot.

4882. Does the same answer apply to the subdivision of the others? There were twelve crofts in all originally, three subdivided, one of them into seven. Does the same observation apply, that it was due to outsiders—the subdivision of the other two?—On one of these lots there are two families who were brought from Suishnish, and the subdivision of the other lots is due to the natural increase of the family. I would like to know if there was any possibility of getting a harbour of refuge for us in Broadford, and our township is also wanting to get more land, and that they should have fixity of tenure, so that the landlord could not evict unless there would be a very good reason for it.

WILLIAM FRASER, Crofter and Mason, Blackpark (62)—examined.

William Fraser.

4883. *The Chairman.*—Were you freely elected a delegate?—Yes.

4884. Have you any statement to make on the part of those who chose

you?—There are twelve lots in the Blackpark. These lots were portioned out six years ago, but we were kept back for a whole year, after I myself had expended 30s. on the drainage of my lot, and when the time came when I should sow my seed I was prevented from so doing, as the tacksman's lease of it had not run out. We have no grazing nor right to seaweed, he counting us as thieves when we are upon the shore. I am the third individual mentioned by Mr Logan who was denied sea-weed. The tacksman, when we went to the sea-shore for weed, came with his ground officer to prevent us. There were three of us—John M'Lean, John M'Leod, and myself. I am for the past five years working very hard, and with the assistance even of my family in the sort of place which I have, I could not yet manage to sow a boll of oats in it, even without potatoes at all. Every time I have cultivated it I am going to a depth of eighteen inches with the pick and spade. I built a house upon it, and spent a good deal upon it, and I asked that the factor should give me some assurance that I would be left in the lot—of some hold of my own house—and I did not get that. We are without grazing for a cow or a goat, but we could graze a pet sheep on the grass or on the lot,—not outside the lots, —we cannot keep a pet there. I have not much more to say. My hardships have been told, and that is all my neighbours have to say likewise.

4885. Did you say these portions have been made six years ago?—Yes.

4886. Where did the people come from?—We were throughout the place here. My father was twenty-three years in Keppoch, in that township that was cleared, but the rest of my people are down about here.

4887. From whom was the land taken in order to form your lots?—Off the tack of Corrie. It was a practically useless piece which nothing green was growing upon—just a bit of moss called Blackpark, and very properly so. We pay £6 for this park among us.

KENNETH CAMPBELL, Shepherd on the Farm of Corrie (between 36 and 40)—examined.

4888. *The Chairman.*—What is your occupation?—I am managing shepherd on the farm of Corrie, which is in the occupation of my uncle, and when my uncle is not at home I manage his place.

4889. What is your uncle's name?—Murdoch Murchison.

4890. Are you married?—Not married.

4891. You wish to make a statement with reference to certain evidence?—To the evidence of Mr Logan and of the last witness. At the time they would require sea-ware here my uncle left for Oban, and he gave me permission to give the sea-ware to every one that would seek for it, but he preserved a wee patch that was near our own park for our own use and the use of cottars that we have on the place; and so I did give it to every one that came that way, and a fixed price on it, and that because the proprietor was doing the same. Well, I did not get one penny for the sea-weed as yet, and whether I will or not—I am not very particular—but we preserved a piece near our own park for our own use and the use of the cottars, as I have said. Mr Logan said that Mr Murchison objected to it; but I may state that they never asked it of Mr Murchison, nor said a word about it at all. This place was built for telling the truth, and not lies—I cannot give them another name. Well, there were three boats just landed at the piece we preserved for our own use, and I and the ground officer went down and asked them who gave them

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permission, and one of the men came up and said the two of us were too weak to have such language, and then I and the ground officer returned and left them there, and they did not say what brought them there or who gave them permission to cut sea-ware. That was all I said.

4892. Am I then to understand that the crofters are allowed to cut sea-ware upon the coast of Corrie except one portion reserved for his own use?—Of course, certainly.

4893. But in return for payment?—That was formerly going on in the place and the law is not changed yet.

4894. In return for a payment which is not punctually made?—No, not to us as yet.

4895. How much would the payment be for one boat-load?—Two shillings for a boat-load.

4896. How much would it weigh?—Would it weigh as much as one ton?—About three tons; and there are not many of us who can carry half a ton. They are doing it at the pier of Broadford.

4897. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Have you any right by your lease to sea-ware except what you require for yourself?—It is included in our lease.

4898. The whole sea-ware?—Yes, unless we use it we must buy artificial manure.

MALCOLM M'INNES, Crofter and Fisherman, Heaste (35)—examined.

Malcolm M'Innes.

4899. *The Chairman.*—Have you been freely elected to be a delegate?—Yes.

4900. Have you any statement to make on the part of those who have elected you?—Yes; the lots which we have are too small, and we have spoiled them owing to the frequency of our cultivation of them. I myself remember getting crops very much better than we can get to-day out of them, and the reason for that is that our holdings are so small* that we have to cultivate them entirely every year, and if we don't do that the crop will not feed our summing of stock, and even after all the crop is not sufficient for that purpose. We are out of pocket £6 or £7 for feeding for our stock in addition to what the lot grows. Besides that, none of us can get as much seed from our corn as will sow our land. We had no potatoes at all last year. We had to buy them all. We had to buy seed oats last year also. Other years we might not be as ill off as that. Again, we are at the back of the country, and we have no roadway. We are four miles from this place, and this is the nearest place from which we can get our supplies. This is the nearest place at which steamers call. Drainage money was laid upon us—I don't remember how far back. Those drains then burst, and I had then to lift them and relay them, or the ground would be worthless. But I got no compensation for that, and I myself am paying the drainage interest which was originally laid upon me.

4901. *The Chairman.*—How many years is it since the drainage was effected?—Before my time. I believe it was thirty-five years ago.

4902. Was the ground benefited by the trenches?—Yes, at first; but then they burst, and they were useless until I re-opened them.

4903. You did re-open them. Is the ground still the better for the trenching executed at that time?—Yes, it is the better for it to the present day, as long as the outflow is kept clear.

4904. What do you desire in order to improve your condition?—Though

* See Appendix A, XIII.

the land is dear, we have to complain we have not got enough of it. We have to keep a pair of horses, and we have not got enough work for our horses to do on these lots, and we have to keep them all the same. We cannot work a cart or any other wheeled conveyance until we get a roadway.

4905. Have you any hill pasture?—Yes.

4906. How many crofters are there?—Thirteen crofts.

4907. What is the summing?—Five cows, twenty-four sheep, and a pair of horses.

4908. How much is the rent?—£10, 16s. besides rates.

4909. Do you consider that too high a rent?—Yes, because of the badness of the soil, owing to the frequency of its cultivation. I have no doubt the land at first would yield sufficient to feed the stock. We have to buy all the meal that our families require.*

4910. Do you make no meal for your family off your croft at all?—No, we cannot even get as much seed oats as will sow our land.

4911. What is the extent of the arable ground?—I believe six acres.

4912. *Professor Mackinnon.*—I suppose you heard the evidence that was given by the smaller crofters here during the whole of the day?—Yes.

4913. Their idea was that a croft of this size would be about a reasonable-sized croft. Don't you think you could manage to let a part of your six acres rest every year, and cultivate the rest, and that that would be a better way, leaving out, say, two acres every year?—We would have nothing then to feed our stock with.

4914. Could you not keep more sheep then, and one horse?—The cows are better for the ground than sheep.

4915. What would you consider a reasonable-sized croft?—We would require double as much as we have to keep our pair of horses in work.

4916. That would be twelve acres?—Yes.

4917. Ten cows?—Yes.

4918. Forty-eight sheep?—Yes.

4919. Do you think that croft would be worth twice the rent you pay just now?—I would prefer to give double the rent for such a croft than to be dealing with such a croft as I have, for I could then leave out a part of it. We have to complain also of the deer.

DONALD NICOLSON, Crofter and Fisherman, Luib (48)—examined.

4920. *The Chairman.*—Were you elected by the people of Luib freely?—Yes; it was only done to-day. That is the reason of the names not being sent in.

4921. What statement have you to make?—We have to complain of the smallness of our holdings. We are planting potatoes during the last fifty-six years; and if we sow oats in any part of the ground, we have no means of planting potatoes, and even should we sow oats the deer will destroy them.

4922. Have you any hill pasture?—Yes.

4923. What is the summing of the crofts?—Only three cows, no horse; and we are forbidden by the factor to keep sheep, but we are keeping a few all the same.

4924. How many sheep could you keep if you were allowed?—We could keep about two hundred or three hundred on the township.

4925. How many for each croft?—Up to twenty each. There are eight crofts.

* See Appendix A, XIII.

SKYE.
BROADFORD.
Donald Nicolson.

4926. If you are forbidden to keep sheep, what do you do with the land?—No good in the world from it. We might be as well without it.

4927. What is the rent?—£4 a lot.

4928. Have you got keep for the cows in winter?—No, we could not get as much off our lots as would feed one cow, and some of these lots have two or three families settled on them.

4929. Describe what harm the deer do to you?—They eat the crop at night.

4930. Have you represented that to the factor for many years past?—No; we did not; but even should we do so, we would not be the better of it.

4931. Does the factor make any allowance to you in order to keep a watcher at night?—No.

4932. Does the factor help you in any form to protect yourselves against the deer?—No.

4933. Did you hear they were going to get a fence against the deer in another township?—Yes.

4934. Will your people apply to the factor for a fence at your place too?—We would be glad to do that.

4935. How long would it be?—About four miles.

4936. Round the whole hill pasture?—Yes.

4937. And how long would the fence be round the arable land?—Not above three quarters of a mile.

4938. Are you prevented from walking on the hill pasture on account of the deer?—Yes, we are forbidden during the hunting season.

4939. Are you on friendly terms with the gamekeeper?—We would require it all, sometimes.

4940. Have you any other complaint to make?—They planted the school too far from us. The children have a wild moor to cross to get to it.

4941. How far?—Two and a half miles.

4942. Is it farther from your place than any other place?—No, but we have the worst road.

4943. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Could they have made it nearer to your place without injustice to somebody else?—Yes.

4944. Where?—If the school would be half the way, on the hill.

4945. Would that have suited everbody?—Yes, it would be an equal distance from each township.

4946. Who chose the site of the school?—The factor.

4947. Why did he choose it in that place?—I do not know.

4948. Where is the school?—In Dunan.

4949. Close by the sea-shore?—Yes.

4950. Was there great distress at Luib this winter or spring?—Yes; the storms damaged our boats.

4951. But was there any extraordinary want of food?—Not that we heard of.

4952. I suppose you had plenty herring?—Yes, we could get plenty herring, if we could cure them and make use of them.

KENNETH M'RAE, Fisherman, Dunan (54)—examined.

Kenneth M'Rae.

4953. *The Chairman.*—Are you a cottar?—I have a lot, but it is not a lot. It was taken from me, but my name is in the books yet. The school-

house, of which the former delegate spoke, was built on the half lot which I had, and the best part of the lot was taken from me—the part in which I used to plant potatoes, which I have been doing fer twenty years without changing seed. There was no other part of my lot cultivable except what was built upon for the schoolhouse. The schoolhouse was placed on it, and other land was promised me, but I never got it; and what was left of the lot to me? There are three gates on the schoolhouse wall. There are two gates to the roadway. The school enclosure was built so near to the sea that the people going that way cannot pass except through the school ground, and they break the wall for the purpose. It used to be a place for sheltering boats in—both boats of the natives and boats of strangers, and now they cannot save a boat at all.

4954. What do you pay for your little plot?—£1 of rent. That is not a big rent, if one had value for it.

4955. What area of ground have you with your house?—I can plant two bushels of seed oats in it and a barrel of potatoes; and I have to carry half of the soil I need to cover the sea-weed with which I manure the ground. The greatest depth in any two square yards of it is not 6 inches—the substratum being rock.

4956. But what do the other people generally complain of in Dunan?—I have nothing to say about these further than what is stated in the paper which was sent in for them, but they are fishermen altogether. It is as follows:—'Unto the Honourable the Royal Commissioners for the Highlands and Islands of Scotland: the following petition, from the crofter-fishing population resident at Dunan, humbly showeth the grievances they have to complain of. First, The amount of ground they at present possess is insufficient to maintain the population for three months in the year. Second, A part of land was taken from us some years ago to form another croft, for which rent is now paid, but no allowance has been made to us for it. Instead of a reduction being made on our rents, they were raised. Third, There are as many cottars crowded on the land as there are crofters. Fourth, We have to buy all the sea-ware we put on our land from the large tenant farmers. Fifth, The ground is so poor that there hasn't been a stone of meal made from all the corn grown on it for the last twenty years. Sixth, That there is no place of refuge for our fishing boats.'

4957. Do the large farmers charge money for sea-weed?—Yes; we always pay for the sea-weed, but we have not paid for this year's sea-weed yet.

4958. Are the farmers severe in exacting the payment, or do they let you off sometimes?—Sometimes they let us off without payment.

4959. You say you complain of having no pier or harbour. Is there a suitable place for building a pier or harbour?—I know of no place about more capable of it.

4960. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Is the sea opposite one of the best places for herring all about Skye?—Branches of it.

4961. *The Chairman.*—Could a pier be easily built?—Yes, the most convenient place about for the purpose.

4962. What sort of pier do you want,—merely a straight jetty out into the sea, or a quay along shore?—A quay extending out, and a breakwater at the end.

4963. How far would it run into the sea?—About 50 yards would do, or maybe less than that.

4964. Did you make a good fishing last year?—Yes, but I lost my nets at Loch Hourn; and I was only three nights at that fishing.

4965. How did you lose your nets?—I took too much herring.

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Kenneth M'Rae.

4966. Have you anything more to say?—There is a burn between us and the neighbouring township, and when the burn is in flood it is very dangerous for the children in the neighbouring township to cross to school. Their parents must meet them coming or going; and when the school skails, I cannot tell how many tracks they have through my cultivated land.

4967. Could you put up a foot bridge over the burn?—Yes.

4968. Did you ever ask the factor?—Yes.

4969. What did he say?—The factor granted us wood for the purpose, and the people were not able even to bring wood to the place or to erect the bridge.

4970. Why?—Because they can only get from the factor heavy trees to span the burn, and they have to lay stobs across this, and cover them with earth.

4971. Did you really try to bring the wood, or were you idle about it?—We were both idle and lazy about it. We are not complaining.

JOHN ROBERTSON, Cottar, Ashaig (30)—examined.

John Robertson.

4972. *The Chairman.*—You represent the cottars at Ashaig?—Yes.

4973. In general terms, what is the nature of your complaint?—Want of land,—want of a place from which we can extract a living. We have no means of living. All the land on which we live belongs to the tacksman, Mr M'Kinnon of Kyle. We have no security for our tenure, but the day we refuse to work for him we may be turned off.

4974. Do you pay your rent in work or in money?—We offered rent to him at first, but he would not take it, and now it is the rule that we have to work for him any day he requests us.

4975. Is he very hard in requiring the work, or is he kind, on the whole?—Every time he needs us, we have to work, and that is often.

4976. About how many days in the year?—Some years it may come to sixty days, and others to forty. We were thinking if we could get a bit of the land that was about us we would pay for it—land on which our forefathers were long ago.

4977. Do you go fishing?—Yes.

4978. Does the farmer ever prevent you going fishing at the proper season when it is necessary for your families?—If he requires our services at that time, we must needs leave somebody in our place to do the work.

4979. Does he make the women and the children work?—Yes

4980. Does he pay them in money wages?—No.

4981. Have you any land round your cottage?—Yes.

4982. About how much?—About one acre.

4983. Not enough to keep one cow?—We are not allowed to keep a cow, but we do it.

4984. How do you feed the cow?—We feed the cow with the produce of the acre, combined with what we get by half-foot cultivation elsewhere.

4985. Does the farmer allow you to keep any sheep on the hill?—No.

4986. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—How many families are there at Ashaig?—Six families who have land, and four who have no land at all—fifty-seven souls altogether.

4987. *The Chairman.*—And those who have no land at all, do they also pay rent to the farmer in labour?—They work for him, but they do not pay rent.

4988. Do they work as much as those who have land?—No. SKYE.
4989. Are the other three from the same place?—Yes. BROADFORD.
4990. And do they agree with what their friend has said?—Yes. John Robertson.

[ADJOURNED.]

ISLE ORNSAY, SKYE, THURSDAY, MAY 17, 1883.

ISLE ORNSAY.

(See Appendix A, XIV., XV.)

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.

ALEXANDER M'GILLIVRAY, Crofter at Aird, Sleat (about 60)—examined.

4991. *The Chairman.*—Are you a fisherman as well as a crofter?—I was a fisherman once, but not now. Alexander M'Gillivray.

4992. The paper containing your statement has been accidentally left behind, but in the meantime, till the paper comes, you may make a verbal statement?—We had not much in the paper which we made up, but one thing that we were complaining of was the way in which we are cramped in our township. We are over forty in a township, which was originally occupied by nineteen families; and we are quite as ill off as regards the sea as we are with respect to the land, and more so.

4993. Whereabout is Aird?—It is the extreme south end of Sleat. Any person of understanding can understand our condition. There are twelve years or more since we sent any seed to the mill in our parish. It is twelve years since the mill in our parish was working at all. We are in a bad place for boats, without a port or a quay, and in danger of our lives every day we are going out to sea.

4994. *Mr Cameron.*—How did the change come about from nineteen persons in the township to forty?—I was giving half of my lot to my son, and others were doing the same.

4995. It was owing to the subdivision of the township?—Yes.

4996. Are there any regulations on the estate regarding subdivision?—No, not that I am aware of.

4997. Has the proprietor or factor ever remonstrated against these crofts being cut up into small lots?—No.

4998. Were any persons brought from a distance and put on the township which you represent?—No, not that I know of.

4999. In fact the increase in the holdings is owing entirely to the subdivision?—Yes.

5000. Can you suggest any remedy for the state of things which you describe as to the fishing and the accommodation for boats?—That we should get a sort of a quay made, which would not be very expensive, to which we could bring our boats in bad seasons.

5001. Do many of the people in your township fish?—Yes, all of them.

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5002. But I understand from you that many more would do so if they had the proper accommodation for boats?—Yes.

5003. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Is your condition much worse than it was thirty years ago?—Very much more so, as we are turning the same ground constantly for the past sixty years, and it does not now yield crop.

5004. Do you think, if your numbers were again reduced to nineteen by any means whatever, your condition would then revert to its former prosperity?—Yes, very much.

5005. Would it be as good as before?—No, owing to the exhausted condition of the soil.

5006. Is there no way of recovering the condition of the soil?—Yes, there is, if the place were larger. The summing is so much, and though we should summer the summing, we are not able to winter them without buying food for them in other places.

5007. And what remedy do you propose?—There is no doubt the place would come to be as good as it was before, if it were occupied by as few.

5008. Would any of them be prepared to emigrate if they received sufficient assistance?—I cannot answer that question, as I did not consult the people about it.

5009. In what other way would you propose the population should be reduced?—I don't know. I would leave that to wiser people than myself.

5010. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You are down at the very point, I understand. What lands adjoin? Is it a set of crofter tenants, or is it a big farm that is next to you?—There is a small township in our own midst which was taken from us, I cannot tell how long ago.

5011. What is the name of that?—Drennoch.

5012. *The Chairman.*—In your parish there is a township called Carradale?—That is another place.

5013. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—What is the size of that township of Drennoch?—Five tenants.

5014. Was your rent taken down when these people were put upon you?—Yes.

5015. How much?—About £10, I think; but I am not sure.

5016. What was the name of the township taken from you?—Carradale.

5017. By whom is Carradale occupied now?—Macdonald of Tormore. It was taken not for him at all, but for tenants, and when the school board came in, the people were too far from the school, and it was too few to send a schoolmaster to them, and therefore they had to lift the people out of there and let them go; but we got the offer of the place again from Tormore, if we would take it.

5018. And you did not take it?—No, some of them would not, and some would.

5019. But you might have got Carradale if you had liked?—Yes.

5020. You did not object to the rent?—No.*

5021. You said that it would require wiser men than yourself to settle what should be done with the surplus population. What is the nearest land to where you are that they could be settled upon anew?—I do not know.

5022. You have come to state your grievances, but the Commissioners expect you so far as in your power to state your remedy?—I would wish to do that, as I have come, and I should be very glad if I could do it. There is another thing that is troubling us very much—trawling herring in our northern lochs. I believe it is keeping down the people of this island as much as anything else that they are suffering.

* See Appendix A, XXIV.

5023. *The Chairman.*—Did you say that Carradale had formerly belonged to you?—Yes.

5024. And that it was offered back to you, but some of the people objected to take it?—Yes.

5025. What were the reasons given by those who objected to take it back?—Some of them could not stock it. The place which they had was heavy enough upon them. Again, the school-rates are very heavy upon us.

5026. What is the summing of the croft?—It would keep six cows, if we could winter them.

5027. How many sheep?—Thirteen sheep.

5028. Any horses?—One horse.

5029. What is the rent at present without the public burdens?—I pay £7, 10s.

5030. For the full croft?—Yes.

5031. What are the public burdens in all?—Last year they were 19s. 5d.

5032. Does that include the money for the doctor?—No, there was 2s. 6d. of doctor's money besides that.

5033. What do you think a fair rent, considering your description of stock? how much for a cow, how much for a horse, and how much for a sheep, including wintering and summering?—We are leaving that to more intelligent individuals than ourselves.

5034. In what respect does the trawling for herring injure you?—When they are taking the small fish along with the big fish. The young fish are killed while they are useless, the young fish being what we put to the fishing next year. I refer to herring.

5035. How long have you been suffering from this evil of trawling?—There was not much done on our coast until within the past two years, especially last year, it spoiled them altogether.

5036. Where do the trawlers chiefly come from?—From the south, some from the north, and some from the east coast.

5037. Have you anything to complain of in reference to your dealings with the local merchants?—No, the merchants are very good to us. If they were not, we should be very ill off.

5038. Is it within your knowledge that at any time the factor of the estate was concerned in a shop?—Not that I am aware of.

5039. Are the people very much in debt generally to the local shops?—Yes.

5040. Have they at any time been obliged to sell their cattle to the factor and not in the open market?—No.

5041. They have no complaint of that kind at all to make?—No.

5042. Have you anything further to state?—I have nothing else to say, but I was expected to speak for the little township that I referred to—Drennoch. I have not much to say about it. They were complaining of being confined, as others were. They have only got holdings worth £2, and that was heavy enough upon us. It is small enough for them.

5043. Have they any hill pasture?—No, they have not much.

5044. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—They have some?—They have a little.

5045. *The Chairman.*—Was any hill pasture taken away from them?—No, not since they got it.

5046. Where were these people brought from?—Throughout the district here and there.

5047. How do they support themselves?—They fish.

5048. You complain of the danger of fishing. Have many of your number been lost at sea?—Yes, and in bringing sea-weed ashore. The

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following is the statement on behalf of Aird:—'There are nineteen lots 'in this township, all of them subdivided, some to the extent of being 'held by four persons. It was stated that the summing of stock was 'sometimes above and sometimes below the fixed estimate. It would 'appear that nearly all are both able and willing to take larger holdings 'and pay the rents. They complain that the mill stopped about twelve 'years ago, because there was little or no grain to grind, on account of the 'soil having run out through frequent cropping. With regard to hill 'pasture, it was stated that many years ago the township held the lands of 'Carradale and Point of Sleat, in addition to what they now hold, but 'that these two places were taken from them without consulting their 'wishes. Another complaint was, that about thirty-four years ago, a loan 'of public money was granted to the township for draining, and that 'interest on this loan still continues to be charged. It was proposed and 'agreed that Alexander M'Gillivray and Ronald Robertson be appointed 'delegates from Aird.'

ALEXANDER ROBERTSON, Crofter, Fisherman, and Sailor, Caligary (about 60)—examined.

Alexander Robertson.

5049. *The Chairman.*—Is there a written statement here respecting Caligary?—Yes. 'There are eighteen lots in this township, on which five 'entire lots are held by as many tenants, the remaining thirteen being 'subdivided into as many as six divisions. They hold a fair extent of hill 'pasture, but it was explained that owing to an estate regulation they are 'prohibited from having any sheep on it. The ground of this regula- 'tion was, that the tenant's sheep were in the habit of trespassing on the 'Armadale plantations when newly planted. The trees having long since 'grown up, and moreover a fence having been erected, the cause of the 'prohibition seems to have been removed. It was proposed and agreed 'to that Angus M'Innes and Alexander Robertson be appointed delegates 'from Caligary, and Dugald M'Intyre from Ardvaser.'

5050. Were you freely elected to be a delegate—Yes.

5051. How many crofters were present at the meeting at which you were elected?—They were not all there. There were eight or nine of them.

5052. How many altogether may have been there?—They were working at Armadale, and they could not attend the meeting till after six o'clock, and the meeting had to be held at five.

5053. But how many could there have been to attend it if they had been all to come?—There are eighteen lots in the township, and these are subdivided, and four of these lots are whole, and there is one of the lots upon which there are six families. They might have been there altogether, the people of the place. They did not understand what was the meaning of it.

5054. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—How many heads of families are there in the place?—The crofts are all divided except five. They are in two halves except five, and one of these lots is occupied by six families.

5055. *Professor Mackinnon.*—That makes thirty-five families?—Yes. There are two cottar families in the township who have no land at all, an cannot even keep a hen.

5056. Still I want to understand how many would have been present, if they had all been present. Are there about thirty or forty families?—Yes, the whole inhabitants of the township might have been there if they had understood it.

5057. About how many might have been there?—Every one of the families would have been at the meeting if they chose.

5058. Then there are about thirty five families or heads of families, and you were elected by about eight or nine. Was this statement all read to them?—Yes.

5059. *The Chairman.*—Will you have the goodness to make your statement on behalf of those who elected you?—I have not much to say about them. They are crowded upon each other. I myself only occupied the fourth part of a lot which my grandfather had, and my grandfather had twice as much as his neighbours had. Lord Alexander gave him two lots when the others had only one. When his Lordship was raising a regiment there were only seven families in the township at first, before the year 1803, and in that year the township was divided into eighteen lots, and everyone who would send a son to his Lordship's regiment would get a lot. Out of the seven families here in the township his Lordship got three recruits. There are some poor widows who have enough to do to keep what they have.

5060. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—How many people from outsiders were put in upon you?—Those who refused to supply his Lordship with soldiers got no land. They did not get land until after his Lordship's death. Three of these were Macphersons, and a factor named Macpherson came to the estate, and he gave these Macphersons land.

5061. That was three families. Any more outsiders?—The township of Linigary was cleared, and Ostaig was given to the mother of Major Macdonald, and the inhabitants of that township were scattered about Strath and Sleat.

5062. Did any of them come to this place?—One of these families was put in upon us. The occupants of the eighteen lots were made up by strangers from other places. There were some of them enlisted in his Lordship's regiment, and got the land, and when the regiment was disbanded those who were for joining the regulars enlisted into other regiments, and some of them never returned, but were killed at Waterloo. No strangers were put in upon us since I remember.

5063. Are you aware there was a written notice posted up upon the door of the inn at Ardvaser about dealing in goods at shops?—I cannot say I saw such a notice.

5064. Did you hear of such a notice?—I heard something about it, but whether it was true or not I do not know.

5065. What did you hear?—I heard a rumour about it Should I be sworn upon my honour I could not tell you about it.

5066. What was the rumour you heard?—It was one of the merchants who said something to me about it, but I do not remember rightly what he did say.

5067. You must remember you are to tell the truth, and the whole truth, here, and not to be alarmed?—I am not the least afraid, but I am not going to say anything that is not right. If the notice was there, I never read it.

5068. Will you tell us what the rumour was, to the best of your recollection?—The man who told me about it is not alive.

5069. That is no reason for not telling it?—The man who told me said to me, 'We must now pay £2 of rent.' That is all I heard about it.

5070. I put the question to you directly, was it to this effect, that an additional rent in the form of penalty, amounting to £2, would be put upon any man in the Sleat district who would deal in goods and provisions except at the shop at Isle Ornsay, in which it was commonly believed the factor had a share or an interest?—That is not right. Every person had

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liberty to go to any shop that he pleased. Who can say that the factor had anything at all to do with the shop? On the shop sign I only see Neil Kennedy & Co., and what would I know, or what does anybody else know, as to who is in company with Mr Kennedy?

5071. *Mr Cameron.*—You don't know who the 'Co.' is?—I don't know anything about it, and who can say who the company is?

5072. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Was a notice put up at the inn at Ardvaser seen by all the people in the district—some written notice which was afterwards torn down?—I heard that such a notice was there, but I never saw it.

5073. I am only asking what you heard?—I only heard a rumour in that way, but I know that no one was prevented from going to any shop he liked.

5074. Do you know that this matter got into the newspapers at the time, and was the occasion of comment in a newspaper at Inverness?—I heard some such rumour. I never saw it in the newspaper. I sometimes get a newspaper, and I never saw it, but it might be in the paper.

5075. *The Chairman.*—Have you heard that Lord Macdonald's factor has made a public declaration that no one shall be molested on account of anything that he says in connection with this inquiry?—I heard that, and I am not afraid that he will do anything to me.

5076. Are you, therefore, now speaking without fear at all?—I am not the least afraid of any living man, but I am not going to speak anything that is not right and just.

5077. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Is it not a fact that the factor, or somebody upon his behalf, was in the habit of going round at certain times of the year, or of sending notices to the people of this district of Sleat, to bring in their cattle for his inspection, and that he or some people authorised by him were in the habit of picking out, at their own prices, certain beasts?—The factor was sometimes buying beasts from us; but if he was, none of us were under the necessity of selling to him unless we liked.

5078. Would you prefer he should not come round in this manner?—I do not know. The factor has sometimes paid us more for our beasts than we could get at the market. He would go to the Broadford market himself, and give a start to the market.

5079. That is perfectly right, but would you rather or would you not have preferred to sell your beasts at your own time, at your own price, and in your own way?—Dear me, we might do that if we liked. We were not bound to give our cattle to the factor. He never laid that upon us to do. I am not aware he did it at any time.

5080. Why did the factor do it at all?—The factor was a drover already, and a good drover.

5081. Did he do it from philanthropic motives, for the purpose of benefiting the people, or was it for the purpose of making gain?—I have no doubt it was from both motives—to do good to himself and to do good to the country as well.

5082. We have heard, in some other places, that this factor—Tormore—was very hard upon the people. A witness said yesterday that he gave them the last blow in the matter of rent. Did you consider him a hard factor?—I cannot say we considered him a hard factor.

5083. Do you answer in that matter for yourself, or are you stating it for the township?—I can say for the township. I have known me go to the factor for the loan of money, wherewith to pay the rent, and he gave it to me. How can I say he was a hard factor? Every one in our township will say the same thing. He was born beside us, and we have known him since he was a boy.

5084. Was there any difference about the appointment of delegates at the time of your appointment?—I am not aware that there was any dispute about that. There was one man who was not for me being appointed.

5085. Who was that person?—Angus M'Innes, and he nominated himself as a delegate, and he was elected also, and he then withdrew.

5086. Who is Angus M'Innes?—He is a tenant in Caligary, and a servant to Mr Macdonald, Tormore.

5087. Why did he object to you?—The man was not understanding. He had not sufficient understanding. He was not understanding what he had to do.

5088. Were you or were you not objected to by M'Innes in respect of what it was likely you would tell here to-day?—I said already that M'Innes was not understanding the business, and did not know what he was saying.

5089. Was M'Innes afraid of what you might say?—He might not be afraid of that.

5090. Was he?—I do not know what fear was on him. I cannot say it was such fear that prompted him. He might not be afraid of anything I had to say here to-day. I was only going to say the truth. I would not tell a lie for any man I ever saw.

5091. Are you supposing I am asking you to tell a lie in any of my questions?—I do not think so.

5092. One question more about the shop. Is it or is it not a fact that it is thought in the district that the factor, when he was factor, had an interest in or was one of the proprietors of the shop?—I know that that was rumoured. How could I know? I heard that rumour.

5093. Are you in debt at the shop yourself at this moment?—I believe I am a little in debt.

5094. Do you deal with any other people in Glasgow or Greenock?—No.

5095. Do you deal entirely with the shop at Isle Ornsay?—Yes.

5096. Are most of the people going to the same place?—I believe so. I don't know how they could live but for the shop.

5097. Have you any idea that the prices charged at that shop are higher than they would have been to buy elsewhere in Greenock or Broadford or Portree?—I do not know about prices at Portree, but I am sometimes in Glasgow and Greenock and Liverpool, and sometimes I buy supplies which I send home; and I know that the merchant has to pay freight on his goods, and that he cannot sell his goods as cheap as I can buy them in Glasgow.

5098. You are quite satisfied with the shop?—Yes, I am; and I don't know how I would be alive if it was not there. I would not make a living out of the poor soil that I have.

5099. *Mr Cameron.*—What about the grievance as to the plantation?—When Caligary was cut into lots, it was about these years that the first plantation was planted at Armadale, and it was protected only by turf, and sheep were not allowed into Caligary until the plantation grew up. It was then fenced, and the plantation grew. No doubt, we would be the better of keeping sheep, but I believe our factor will give us leave to do that. I think so.

5100. What age is the plantation?—Part of it over eighty years. The plantation is being cut and replanted.

5101. As I understand, what the crofters wish is that the fence should be removed from the plantation, and they believe that a plantation of that age would not suffer injury from the sheep?—I do not mean that. The fence must not be moved. We don't want the fence to be touched.

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5102. Is the proprietor putting any fresh young plants into his own plantation?—Yes.

5103. Do you think the sheep will injure the young plants that are put in?—Yes, and we don't want the fence removed. There is a fence all round the plantation.

5104. Do the plantations at Armadale give much employment to the people?—They give employment to a few.

5105. If it were possible to plant more of the land which is suitable in your neighbourhood, would it be a benefit to the people?—There is no suitable land unless the landlord clears the townships of Caligary and Ardvaser, and plants them; and where the storm uproots the old trees, he supplies the places with young trees.

5106. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Is it a grievance to the people of the place that they have no sheep? Is it a loss to them?—Yes.

5107. And you think that now, because there is a good fence round the plantation, there is no reason whatever why the sheep should not be granted?—There is no reason why we should not be allowed sheep, because the plantation is fenced, and even Mr Macdonald's (Tormore) sheep cannot get over.

5108. And I suppose they could climb quite as well as any sheep the tenants would keep?—Yes.

5109. Did you ask the present factor whether he would allow you to keep sheep or cattle?—No, we were seeing that our present factor had too much to do since he became our factor, and we were not for troubling him much; but we are going to speak to him about it.

5110. Where there is recent planting, is there a good fence round the young trees as well as the old?—Yes.

5111. Did you ever ask the late factor?—Yes, but he told us we could not be allowed, as sheep were not included in our summing. Some of us had sheep, and we were wanting that all of us should be allowed to keep them.

5112. I suppose you could scarcely hold that a satisfactory reason, when his own sheep take the fence?—No, we did not think that was a satisfactory reason. I was asked to say that we were heavily taxed for school rates. I pay £3, 6s. of rent, and I pay 3s. 4d. of school-rates, 3s. 6d. of poor-rates, and 4s. for the doctor.

MALCOLM MACPHERSON, Mason, Kilmore (45)—examined.

Malcolm Macpherson.

5113. *The Chairman.*—Have you a croft?—My mother has a half croft.

5114. Do you also appear for Ferrindonald?—Yes.

5115. Have you been freely elected a delegate by the greater part of the people?—By all the township. The people of both townships were present.

5116. Have you any statement to submit on the part of the crofters?—Yes. '*Kilmore.*—This township consists of six lots; two are held by one 'tenant, two hold entire lots, and four subdivided lots. The same com-'plaint of holdings being too little prevails, though not to the same extent. 'At present they hold a certain extent of hill pasture, but about eleven 'years ago they were deprived of a large piece. It was proposed and 'agreed to that Malcolm Macpherson be appointed a delegate from Kilmore. '*Ferrindonald.*—This township consists of nine lots in all. The whole 'was about sixteen years ago thrown into one farm, the occupants of which 'were removed to different townships. Fifteen families were so removed.

'Two lots of the nine are now held by four families, who complain that 'they have too little. Three of these families state that they, three years 'ago, were, contrary to their wishes, removed from the township of 'Carradale to their present holdings. It was proposed and agreed to that 'Donald Beaton and Alexander M'Gillivray be appointed delegates from 'Ferrindonald.'

5117. Have you any additional statement to make, speaking first of Kilmore?—The smallness of our holdings. The Kilmore people complain of the scantiness of their land.

5118. You are to state things which, as much as possible, are not in the written memorandum?—I do not think we have anything to complain of other than what is written.

5119. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Where were the people who were occupants of Ferrindonald fifteen years ago removed to?—Some of them were sent to Stonefield, some others to Saasaig.

5120. Why were they removed?—To make room for one of those who were sent to Ferrindonald. I am speaking about the two lots which the man got who was put in upon us.

5121. Was not Ferrindonald made into a farm then?—When Ferrindonald was cleared, one of its families was put into our township. Four families at least were removed out of Kilmore for that one family.

5122. Who got the farm of Ferrindonald?—Macpherson, who was then manager at Armadale.

5123. Who has it now?—His sons.

5124. What rent do you pay yourself?—£2, 12s. bare rent for half a croft.

5125. What is your summing?—Two cows; and one horse is allowed to the whole croft, and I keep that horse.

5126. Do you find it sufficient to feed the two cows?—No.

5127. Have you any hill pasture?—Yes.

5128. Do you keep sheep?—Yes, a few—five; and some have more than that.

5129. What rent do the others pay?—They are all the same rent.

5130. £2, 12s.?—That is for a half lot.

5131. Are they better off with you or at Ferrindonald?—Well, I don't know.

5132. What is the general rent at Ferrindonald?—£3, 6s. and £3, 5s. the half lot.

5133. Why were the lots at Kilmore divided?—They were divided before I was born.

5134. Was your father there before you?—Yes.

5135. Had he only half a lot?—I think he had a whole lot, but he gave the half to his brother.

5136. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Do you know Donald Beaton, your co-delegate?—Yes.

5137. How long is it since he entered his croft?—About three years.

5138. Who was there before him?—The man who got the village after it was cleared was there before him.

5139. Was he a stranger?—Not that I am aware of. Donald was taken from Carradale to Ferrindonald.

5140. In whose place did he go to Ferrindonald?—The tenant of Ferrindonald gave two lots to this man who came from Carradale. Three came from Carradale, and the three have two lots between them.

5141. But whose possession in Ferrindonald did Donald Beaton come into?—One of the township lots.

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Malcolm Macpherson.

5142. Whose?—The ground officer had that croft before Macpherson got the town.

5143. I did not ask about Macpherson; I asked about Beaton?—There was nobody in the lot before him when he came. One man had the township, and he gave up two lots to the township.

5144. Who gave up two lots?—Macpherson.

5145. Who was Macpherson?—The man who had Ferrindonald.

5146. Do you know that Donald Beaton paid any money when he entered into that croft?—No, not to get into that place; but he desired me to tell that he was paying money for the croft which he had before he came to Ferrindonald. That was land he had in Carradale. His predecessor in the lot which he got in Carradale was £16 in arrears.

5147. And Beaton paid that to get in?—Yes; he has now paid it all but a small sum, and he paid a little of it since he came to Ferrindonald.

5148. Was the person whose arrears he was paying up any relative?—I am not aware that he was. The party was a widow.

5149. Have you ever heard of any other case where the crofter has had to pay the arrears of his predecessor before getting in?—That was common. It was common to ask that.

5150. Will you instance one or two cases?—I know it was the rule, but I cannot very well mention cases. I know that the factor was demanding the arrears from the incoming tenant.

5151. How long ago did this occur with Beaton? Who was the factor?—I think it was Tormore.

5152. That must have been within a few years?—I don't remember very well.

5153. *Professor Mackinnon.*—I understand Ferrindonald was cleared entirely sixteen years ago. By whom?—By Corrie.

5154. Who got it?—Archibald Macpherson.

5155. Who was he?—He was Lord Macdonald's manager at that time.

5156. Was it cleared by the factor to make room for the manager?—Yes.

5157. And then, shortly afterwards, this manager cut off two crofts for the people sent away from Carradale?—Yes.

DONALD BEATON, Crofter, Ferrindonald (42)—examined.

Donald Beaton.

5158. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You have heard what has been told by the previous witness?—Yes.

5159. It is true you paid £16 of arrears?—I have all but paid it.

5160. But that was the sum you had to pay?—Yes; before I got Carradale, that was the factor's rule.*

5161. Was the person who was in arrear any relation of yours?—No, she was no relation.

5162. *The Chairman.*—Why did you pay such a large sum of money to get into this croft?—I was without land, and I was wishful to have a piece of it.

5163. *Professor Mackinnon.*—How long were you in Carradale?—Seven years.

5164. What was the rent?—I was paying £2.

5165. So you paid £14 as rent, and £16 to get the privilege of paying it?—Yes.

5166. Was it with your own consent you came from Carradale to Ferrindonald?—No, but we had to go for the school. It was out of the way

* See Appendix A, XXIV.

of the township, and we were a few families of us, and we had young children.

5167. You could have been removed quite as well a year after you went there as some years after?—Yes.

5168. And you knew that when you agreed to pay the £16?—Yes, I knew I was liable to be removed, but I was believing that I would not be moved out of it so quickly as I was when I paid so much.

5169. Do you consider it a great hardship to be removed after paying the £16 of arrears and only £14 of rent?—I was thinking that I should have got a good place after being removed.

5170. Did you get a good place?—No, I did not. It is not very good at all.

5171. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Now you have been removed, and have not paid up the whole of the £16, are you expected to pay up the balance?—Yes, I am; and I expect to pay it up. I don't know that I will be requested to pay it, but I intend to pay it.

5172. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—How much is due?—I cannot very well say. I think there is about £5 still due, or over £4 at any rate.

5173. *The Chairman.*—Do you think it is right that you should pay it?—As it was a rule on the estate, I undertook payment.

5174. Was it frequently a practice on the estate for the incoming tenant to pay the arrears of the outgoing tenant?—Yes.

DONALD ROBERTSON, Crofter and Fisherman, Saasaig (65)—examined.

5175. *The Chairman.*—Have you been freely elected a delegate from Saasaig?—Yes.

5176. Were the greater part of the inhabitants present?—I believe they were all present except one.

5177. The statement that is made for your township is this:—'The 'same complaint of overcrowding and rents raised. It was stated that 'there are ten lots in all. At present the only two tenants hold entire 'lots, while all the others are subdivided—one of which among four 'families. The rent in this case also is for the last twelve years consider-'ably higher than it used to be. With regard to pasture, it was stated that 'about eight years the township held Glen Saasaig, of which they were 'then deprived, as the majority said against their will, the majority of 'eight as against two who held entire lots, these being a ground officer and 'a former ground officer's son. Alexander Macdonald, presently a cottar 'on one of the lots, complains that fifteen years ago he was deprived of 'his lands in a neighbouring township, and has ever since been anxious 'and willing to take a lot. It was proposed and agreed to that Donald 'Robertson—No. 9—and Lachlan M'Innes be appointed delegates from 'Saasaig.' Have you anything to add to this statement?—Not much about that. But I could speak about the place in which I was born and brought up, because I have been only fourteen years in my present holding.

5178. What was the place where you were brought up?—Kilmore. As you have heard already, there were two lots cleared there. Four widows were cleared off these, and a widower. They were cleared without any reason whatever, but just to make room for another man who was a ground officer.

5179. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—What was his name?—Ronald Macdonald. We were then placed in Saasaig. A brother and his family, and I with my widowed mother, were placed there, and the place which we got

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Donald Robertson.

in Saasaig was not much more than half the size of the place which we left. I did not get the house which I should have got with the land, as the factor and the landlord were against me. I was put into a small bothy that had been built for a stable and byre, and I sometimes could take the snow off the bedclothes with my hand while in bed. I dared not open my mouth about that. The woman who was left in the house which I should have got is still there, and I get no thanks for her occupancy of it. That is all I have to say about it.

5180. Do you think you were much better off, and had a much better house in Kilmore than the one to which you were brought in Saasaig?—The house I got in Saasaig was not fit to be entered by man at all. I built a house in Kilmore for myself. I quarried the stones, and I am sure I carted them for a distance of a quarter of a mile. That house was valued by the ground officer without asking me, and I only got £2 for the wood-work and all that the house was worth.

5181. *The Chairman.*—Did you get any help in building the new house at Saasaig?—No, none whatever, unless from the neighbours, from whom I might have got an occasional help.

5182. Have you now built a new comfortable house in Saasaig?—Yes, recently; but I lived eight years in that bothy.

5183. How much in money, besides your labour, has it cost you to build your new comfortable house?—It did not cost me much in money, but it cost me my time and my labour.

5184. Please say how much in money?—I spent no money on it. A brother and myself built the house, and the factor, Tormore, supplied me with timber for it gratis; and besides that he carried it free to my place, for he saw what sort of a place it was in which I was living.

5185. Did you buy any glass for the windows?—The windows cost me about 9s. or 10s.

5186. And the door?—The doors would cost me about 14s. or 15s.

5187. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You were put out of Kilmore for the ground officer? Is he there still?—Yes, but he is not the ground officer to-day.

5188. Is he a small tenant?—He has two lots. He has the same two lots that he got.

5189. *The Chairman.*—Did you say that the factor came to see you in the bothy, and saw it was bad?—Yes.

5190. And then gave directions to help you in building the new house?—Yes.

5191. Who was the factor?—Tormore. It was in Corrie's time I was put away from Kilmore, but it was Tormore who helped me.

5192. *Mr Cameron.*—Are you in a position to say anything as to the general condition of the crofters in your neighbourhood?—I cannot say anything beyond what is written.

5193. Have the crofts in your township been much subdivided by heads of families allowing younger members of the family to take up shares of the croft?—Not since I came to Saasaig.

5194. How long have you been in Saasaig?—Fourteen years.

5195. Has there been any subdivision of that kind before, so far as you know?—Yes, it is mentioned in the paper that there are four families on one lot and two families on other lots, what I have seen myself. I have seen the most of these crofts occupied by one family.

5196. Were they brought in from a distance mostly, or was that the result of subdivision?—I don't remember of any families brought in from other townships.

5197. Are the people in your township at all afraid of being removed

from their crofts, or are they satisfied with their position, and think they are not likely to be removed?—We are not at all certain we will not be removed.

5198. Are you afraid that you will?—I am not the least afraid myself. Should I he removed to-morrow, I would be put in a very bad place indeed, for I think I am in as bad a place now as possible. I have a little more to say. I am, since I was fifteen years of age, accustomed to go to sea fishing, and the place in which we are is very inconvenient for this purpose. It would be very easy at small expense to make a good place for it, for there is a bay on our shore. We cannot approach our shores in stormy weather, unless there are men enough to draw the boat up. And now, as to the trawling, it is doing us great harm, especially in the past year, for I have seen last year in Loch Hourn thousands of crans of herrings go to the bottom useless for any purpose owing to the trawling. The loch is narrow and shallow, and when the trawl is out it will almost sweep the loch of herring from side to side. By these trawling operations the herring were so disturbed that they could not be got with our nets. I know that there would have been ample fishing last year for everybody to satisfy them till they could stop it of their own accord, were it not for the trawling, as I have seen it in previous years.

5199. *The Chairman.*—Does the trawling destroy the young fish which are not fit for consumption?—Yes, I saw them last winter in Loch Hourn picking the biggest herrings out of the take, and throwing the small ones overboard by thousands of crans. There are plenty here who can bear evidence, and support me in saying that.

5200. Do you think trawling will frighten the fish permanently from returning to a particular spot?—There is nothing surer. It will scare away the herring from narrow and shallow lochs. The school-rates and poor-rates are coming very heavily upon us; and there are no wages to be earned here, as everybody knows.

5201. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Where is Kilmore?—It is Saasaig I mean for the pier.

5202. Where is Saasaig?—Just at the farm of Knock. It is a good bay.

5203. Could a pier be made by unskilled labour, or would it require skilled labour to make it?—The people of the place itself would help to erect it.

5204. What amount of help do you think would be sufficient to make that pier?—I think with the assistance of £100 or £120, the people of the place could make a very suitable pier themselves.

5205. *The Chairman.*—Would the stones have to be united with mortar and bound together with iron, or could they be placed loosely together?—No, I do not think they would require that.

5206. If they had to be united with mortar and bound together with iron, would there be people found about here who could do that, or must they be brought from outside?—There are people in our town here who could do every turn of it.

ALLAN CAMPBELL, Crofter and Labourer, Teangue (55)—examined.

5207. *The Chairman.*—Have you been freely elected by the people of Teangue?—Yes.

5208. Were there a number of the people present?—All but two.

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Allan Campbell.

5209. The statement submitted for the people of Teangue is as follows:—'The case of Teangue was first taken up, and the people present from that 'township were asked to state their opinions as to their circumstances 'generally. The great complaint seems to be the smallness of their hold-'ings, one man stating that he remembers when eight families resided on 'the same ground where there are now seventeen. That the gross rent, 'moreover, is now considerably more than it was when the families held it. 'That would be about thirty years ago. At present only two tenants hold 'entire lots, and these two only have the full complement of stock, the 'others having less, and some one cow, and others none at all. About 'twelve years ago an increase of rent of 11s. on some of the lots was 'imposed. On one particular lot there were no fewer than four tenants 'and one cottar. It will be apparent, from these facts, that, as is actually 'the case, the men have to seek employment in the south and elsewhere. 'It was proposed and agreed to that Mr Allan Campbell and Alexander 'Buchanan be appointed delegates from Teangue.' Have you any statement to make on behalf of the people of Teangue in addition to this?—Only the poverty of the people and the scantiness of their land.

5210. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Are you able to state what is the amount of stock held upon a lot?—Six cows and a horse was what was in use to be the case.

5211. And sheep?—Eight sheep.

5212. And there are only two men who hold a single lot and these are the only two who have the proper stock?—Yes.

5213. Is the croft quite able to support that amount of stock?—No.

5214. How much stock could they keep?—I have half a lot, and it gives me enough to do to feed two cows upon it.

5215. You have no horse?—Yes, a horse and four sheep.

5216. *The Chairman.*—Why did you say you were a labourer?—I am a labourer too. I have been a labourer for the past thirty-four years.

5217. *Professor Mackinnon.*—How much could the whole croft keep well?—It would be enough to do to feed four cows and a horse and eight sheep.

5218. What is the rent of the full croft?—The rents vary.

5219. There are only two full crofts altogether. What are the rents of these two?—£7, 10s.

5220. Without taxes?—Yes.

5221. Do you consider that croft reasonably big enough?—It is small enough.

5222. There are seventeen families, but there are only eight lots. If you were to remove the other nine, how would you propose to deal with them?—Give them land somewhere else.

5223. Where is there such land to suit them?—Plenty through the island.

5224. Is there land in this parish and on this estate?—Yes, plenty.

5225. Where?—All up and down about here.

5226. Would you name the farms?—Knock, Ord, Armadale, Ostaig, Tormore, Gillen; plenty land there under big sheep.

5227. Who occupies Knock?—Mr Kennedy.

5228. If that place were to let, would the people be willing to take it?—They would take a share of it.

5229. Would they be prepared to pay a reasonable rent for it?—If they would get it in a way they could live on it.

5230. Would they be able to stock it?—If they would get enough land that they would take their living out of it, they could stock it in time.

5231. It is stated here that there are some of them that have not stock for the small places they have?—They cannot feed them.

5232. That is the reason. It is not because they cannot buy the stock, but because the place cannot keep the stock?—Yes, the place is so small when there are four families on a lot that they cannot keep stock.

5233. But you think if they got a larger place they would be able to put stock upon it?—Yes, if they would get it at a reasonable rent.

5234. And they would be quite able to pay a reasonable rent for it?—Yes.

5235. What do you mean by a reasonable rent?—Rent that we could pay, and for land out of which we could extract a living.

5236. Your complaint is rather that the crofts are too small, not that the present rents are too high?—We have not much to say about the rent.

5237. It seems reasonable?—It seems reasonable, if the ground were in the way we could make a living out of it.

5238. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Are you well acquainted with this parish of Sleat?—Yes.

5239. Are you aware that a great deal of land that was once occupied by crofters is now in possession of tacksmen?—Yes.

5240. Supposing that all the crofters in Sleat were to receive the enlarged crofts you desiderate, would there be still sufficient land remaining for a good-sized tack?—I think so.

5241. Can you mention the number of large tacksmen there are in Sleat?—Yes: Mr Macdonald, Ord; Mr Macdonald, Tormore,—he has Ostaig; Duncan M'Innes, Gillen; Mr Kennedy, Knock. Ferrindonald I may include in the number of tacks; it is in the hands of Mr Macpherson.

5242. Are these all the big tacks? There is Kinloch?—Kinloch is not in this parish.

5243. You have mentioned a Mr Kennedy as a tenant of Kinloch. Is he the man who keeps the shop here?—Yes.

5244. Have you any complaint to make, or is there any dissatisfaction in the country about there being no other place where you could get articles to buy except at this one shop?—It is the only shop in the district. Doubtless, if there were four or five or six other shops in the district, it would be easier for people to get goods, and cheaper.

5245. Can you read writing?—No.

5246. Do you occasionally come down to Isle Ornsay?—Yes.

5247. Did you ever see or hear of a written document connected with a penalty for going to provision shops, which was put up at the inn here?—No, I did not hear.

5248. Or any other place?—No, it might be without my knowing it; should I see it, I could not read it.

5249. Did you hear of such a thing?—No, I never heard anything about it.

5250. *Mr Cameron.*—How did the seventeen families get on to the land where there were only nine crofts?—There is one lot which is subdivided into four shares—these being subdivided to the sons of the family.

5251. Do you think, if the crofters got larger crofts upon these lands you have mentioned, their holdings would likely be subdivided in the course of years, as those places have been?—Possibly they might come to be so subdivided in time.

5252. Are the people very poor in your township?—Yes, very poor.

5253. Have they any money in the bank?—Some of them have.

5254. And some of them have not?—Some of them have not. Very few have money in the bank.

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5255. How would they be able to purchase the stock to take these larger holdings?—Earning it by working for others.

5256. But to make a start?—If we would get the land we would be trying to stock it.

JOHN MARTIN, Crofter and Catechist, Camuscross (60)—examined.

John Martin.

5257. *The Chairman.*—Are you a catechist in connection with the Established Church or the Free Church?—The Established Church.

5258. Have you been freely elected a delegate?—Yes.

5259. By a large number of people?—Yes.

5260. The following is the statement from Camuscross:—'This seems 'to be one of the poorest of the townships. It was stated that all the land, 'both pasture and arable, which they hold, is less than one mile square. 'On this there are forty-seven families. The lots seem to be considerably 'smaller than in other townships, being not more than two acres in average. 'The soil, of course, in consequence is much run out. Only two lots are 'occupied by more than one tenant, the others being all held by one each; 'but, owing to their smallness, they are not able to keep any great stock of 'cattle. One particular case was mentioned, in which eight families had 'only four acres, and not a beast of any kind. The average rent of 'each of these is 9s., in addition to which they have to pay for ware, 'besides assessments of various kinds. They have no horses or sheep, and 'they greatly need more land to enable them to keep these. It was 'explained that there was a lot for which rent is paid twice over by the 'holder, and the rest of the tenants. It was proposed and agreed to 'that John Martin and Lachlan Campbell be appointed delegates from 'Camuscross.' Have you any verbal statement to make in addition to that which has been put in on this occasion?—Only that the place is so much confined. That is the particular complaint we have to make.

5261. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—You speak of one lot as twice paid for. What is the meaning of that?—The lot was originally laid out the same as the other lots, and the man who got it did not take it, and the township took that lot again for a passage for the cows, and the rent was laid upon themselves. After that another man got the lot, and the rent was never changed, and the man who got that lot was paying it to the landlord.

5262. The rent of your lots is now 9s. What was it before they took this lot?—I can only say that since that lot was taken from us, our rents were somewhat increased.

5263. What were your first rents?—I cannot be sure; only that I know it was raised a little.

5264. How long is it since the lots were laid out?—I cannot be very sure, but I think it is upwards of sixty years ago.

5265. What do the people of Camuscross live by, as it is evident they cannot live upon their lands?—Their earnings. Every man is now in a hurry to get the spring work past to be off to his work—to be off to work on sea and land all through the kingdom; and when they return, if their earnings have succeeded well, they pay the shop, and the shopman supplies them on credit, as they require it. There is no doubt it has put them to very great inconvenience and hardship that their holdings were reduced, and the land was exhausted with constant cultivation during the past sixty years. The summing of our lots is two cows each, and the crop that grows upon our lots will not feed these two cows.

5266. Do you pay 9s. for your lot, and these two cows?—These are small lots.

5267. What is the rent of a lot that will support two cows?—From £2, 18s. to £3, 10s. besides dues.

5268. Now, the people go away to work. What wages do they bring back to the country with them on an average?—That is difficult for me to say—as Providence will deal with them. Some bring less or more than others.

5269. Can you name a sum that would be thought a large sum to bring home?—I would think between £15 and £18.

5270. And how long has a man to absent himself from home to secure that?—From five to thirteen months. The one whose earnings did not succeed very well might only have to stay away four or five months.

5271. Now, as far back as you remember, when people used to go away did they bring back the same amount of money as they do now, or less money?—It is getting slacker. It was at fishing that the people made most money, and now the fishing has got slack. They only fish on shares, and some of them in that way may only incur debts.

5272. What do you mean by fishing on shares?—That the master is giving half the fishing to the crew, and they are paid according to the amount of fish, and if they don't make a good fishing they get nothing.

5273. This refers, of course, to the east coast fishing?—Yes, and to the south country and everywhere else.

5274. Have any of the people here boats and nets of their own?—Very few.

5275. Have those who have boats of their own been doing well of late years?—Middling. The fishing about here during the past two years was not very good, except on two short occasions.

5276. But do the men with boats and nets not go away to Barra, Stornoway, and the north coast fishings or Irish fishings?—Yes. They go with their own boats to these fishings.

5277. Have they done pretty well of late years?—Very middling. They did not succeed very well.

5278. You have said that those who go as hired hands, and are paid by shares, have not done so well of late years. Would they have done better if they had had boats and nets of their own?—That is my opinion, that they would do better if they had fishing appliances of their own.

5279. What would be the cost of a proper boat and nets for a crew of five men?—I cannot very well speak about that, for it is not my work, but there are some fishermen here who can tell.

5280. Have you been long at Camuscross?—I was there ever since I was born.

5281. Do you notice much difference in the condition of the people there from what it used to be?—I know that in times gone by it was easier for people to come through than to-day.

5282. Do you think that they are better clothed and better shod than in the times gone bye?—The clothing and shoes of to-day may be quite as good as the clothing and shoes of my early days, for at that time people were not earning the wages they are now, and the merchants are giving such extensive credit to the people now that the merchant with whom we deal is dealing very freely indeed with the people.

5283. Do you think the people spend more money now-a-days than they used to do when you were young?—I know that they do.

5284. May that not contribute to the poverty which prevails?—In the way the people were in my early recollection, the people had to live on

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whatever they could grow out of their own holdings. Since that time the crops began to go back, and then, of course, when they had to buy from the merchants, it must be heavier on them than before.

5285. But had they not a considerable amount of potatoes cultivated *in olden times*?—Yes, *in my early recollection.*

5286. Is not the meal they have now better food than the potatoes?—We don't make meal at all now.

5287. But you eat it?—Yes, when we buy it. We do not grow it.

5288. Did you ever grow any great amount of meal here?—Yes; but the ground has become so slack that the corn crop has to be used for feeding cattle unthrashed.

5289. Have you about two acres of land yourself?—Yes.

5290. What is the most meal you can recollect having made off it in one year in bygone times?—I cannot make that out, the time is so long since I did make meal of it.

5291. Would you make four bolls out of it in the olden time?—No.

5292. What is your consumption of meal at the present day?—Three to four individuals, I think, will consume a boll of meal in twenty days, and that will amount to a considerable quantity.

5293. Sixteen bolls in the year?—Yes; and sometimes in harvest time they may have some potatoes.

5294. Therefore, even according to the former state of fertility, it would not supply them at all with the amount of meal they need?—No.

5295. And you need larger crops?—Yes, but I know that it is the smallness of the holdings of the people that has caused a great deal of the poverty; and if our holdings were somewhat larger we would be more able to stand our credit, and we would be very much the better of it.

5296. How would you propose to enlarge the crofts?—That cannot be done without breaking in upon land in the occupancy of others.

5297. *Mr Cameron.*—Has there been much subdivision among the crofts in your township?—No, our crofts are so small already.

5298. They never were subdivided in old times?—No. The land is so small that when it happens the son comes to years, he has to go elsewhere.

5299. Are there the same number of crofters that there were?—Yes, for the past sixty years. I think there are only two lots on which there are two families each, and that is all the difference.

5300. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—You are a native of this parish?—Yes.

5301. How long have you been a catechist?—About nineteen years.

5302. I suppose you go up and down regularly through the parish, and are well acquainted with all the townships?—Yes.

5303. You have heard all the statements that were made to-day?—Yes.

5304. So far as your knowledge goes of the circumstances of the people, do you agree with the statements that were made?—Yes. There may be part of what was said to-day that I may not be very well up in.

5305. Was the condition of the people very bad this winter?—Yes; They were under great hardships.

5306. Do you know many cases of families here in want of food?—Yes, some of them, but the merchant here was very favourable to them. I never saw him taking advantage of the people; when they would be hard up he would relieve them.

5307. They got all their meal from his shop, I suppose?—Yes.

5308. What is the price of it?—A guinea a boll; that is the credit price.

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the facility of obtaining peats?—Every other township has peat mosses close to them on their own ground. The township in which I am is most inconvenient in that way to the whole of them.

Rev. FINLAY GRAHAM, Free Church Minister, Sleat (42)—examined.

Finlay Graham.

5329. *The Chairman.*—How long have you been a minister at Sleat?—Eight and a half years.

5330. You have heard the description which has been given by several persons here with reference to the general condition—physical condition—of the people at the present time, contrasted with its former condition. Do you agree with their statements generally?—Generally speaking.

5331. You think there is really a deterioration in the condition of the people of late years?—Well, I think about this time is the poorest time, owing to the general destitution over the island.

5332. Do you think there is any hardship connected with the supplies of the people being almost exclusively procured from one shop?—Well, I have thought over that subject. I do not know that there is any, comparing it with any of the other parishes.

5333. You don't think there is any hardship?—That is to say, things are not dearer here than in other parishes.

5334. You don't think they are dearer?—I would not say they are.

5335. Supposing there were two or three opposition shops established, do you think that the custom of the place would give a sufficient support to other shops?—Well, I think it would give support to two or three at least.

5336. Some reference has been made here to-day to an alleged notice or placard which was set up in connection with the custom of the people at this particular shop. Have you any personal knowledge of such a thing having been done?—I would rather not state it; but if I am compelled to state, I will tell the truth.

5337. I think it would be desirable, in order to prevent any misapprehension on this subject, that a full statement should be made?—I have seen the placard with my eyes.

5338. Will you kindly state what the nature of the notice really was?—To the best of my memory it was this, that no shopkeeper—that is petty shopkeeper—would be allowed to sell things without an additional £2 of rent.

5339. That no new shop would be allowed?—Yes, in Sleat or Broadford.

5340. And that an additional rent would be imposed upon those who bought at such a shop?—No, but upon the shops.

5341. That the additional rent would be imposed upon any person who established a shop?—It amounted to that.

5342. Did that cause any discontent among the people at the time?—Well, it was just said, I think, among the people at the time—'What are 'we coming to?'

5343. How long was the notice left at the place where it was fixed up?—I cannot say how long it was, but I have seen it at the inn of Isle Ornsay, and the innkeeper is here. It was fixed on the door of the inn.

5344. Did it profess to be issued by any authority, or was it an unsigned, unsanctioned notice?—To the best of my recollection, it was written 'Estate Office.'

5345. Was there any signature attached to it?—No signature.

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5345. Was there any signature attached to it?—No signature.

5346. How long ago was it?—I should say about five years ago.

5347. How was it removed?—I cannot say. I was just passing, and noticed the statement, and wondered at it.

5348. Did it gradually disappear, or was it removed by violence?—I cannot say.

5349. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Are you aware that it attracted some attention, and was taken notice of in the newspapers?—There was a rumour to that effect. I did not see it in the newspapers.

5350. But it disappeared very quickly. At least you did not see it but the once?—I did not see it but the once.

5351. Have you heard that it was intended to circulate copies of this notice, and that it was actually in print, but was withdrawn in consequence of the notice that appeared in the newspapers?—It is possible, but I cannot vouch for it.

5352. In regard to the school board elections, have you some knowledge of the elections of the school board?—I have some knowledge of that.

5353. Has there or has there not, in your opinion, in past times, been influence used in the election of the members of the school boards?—Well, at the time I thought so, but as it was an old story I was willing to forget and forgive.

5354. But you think there was influence used?—At the time I did.

5355. Do you know anything about the story we have heard as to the selection of animals by the factor or ground officer?—I do not know exactly what that means.

5356. That once a year the people of Sleat got a message on a certain day to gather all their beasts together, and the factor or ground officer went and made an inspection, and bought the animals at his own price, or something to that effect?—There was a rumour to that effect.

5357. What is the name of the doctor of the parish?—Dr Graham.

5358. Is he here?—Yes.

5359. Do you know anything about sea-ware in this parish of Sleat? Are you aware that, though the tenants have been in many cases refused sea-ware, eight vessels came here, and were allowed to carry away ballast in the shape of stones, which are useful to keep the sea-ware together?—I have never heard it as a grievance.

5360. Do you know a man named Alexander Macdonald, Saasaig?—I know the person.

5361. Are you aware he alleges he has a very serious grievance?—I have not heard it.

5362. *Mr Cameron.*—What is the population of Isle Ornsay?—There are only a few houses in Isle Ornsay.

5363. But in the parish?—About 2000.

5364. Do you think, if there were two shops established at Isle Ornsay, there would be any reasonable amount of profit to the shopkeepers?—I don't know about that. I speak of the parish.

5365. You think there might be another shop established at the other end of the parish?—I should think so.

5366. Are you aware that shops, as a rule, pay a higher rent than ordinary houses where no business is conducted?—That is very true.

5367. Do you think £2 extra, for a man who keeps a shop as distinguished from an ordinary house, is a very high rent, or a very great grievance?—I don't know how to answer that question.

5368. This notice you talk of stated that if anybody kept a shop besides the shop which existed, £2 would be laid upon the persons so keeping the shop. Don't you consider £2 a very moderate increase of rent for a

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person who keeps a shop, beyond one who lives in an ordinary dwelling house?—Yes, I would think that was a moderate rent, if that was the only object.

5369. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—As a matter of fact, are there any other petty shops in the parish?—There are a number of petty shops.

5370. Do these pay £2 extra?—I don't think so.

5371. *Professor Mackinnon.*—The local influence you talk of with respect to the school board election was not more keen than the usual influence that is exercised in parliamentary elections?—Well, I thought so; but I did not expect to be examined on this point. I thought it was keen enough at the time.

5372. But keener than when there *is* a contest for the county?—I think so.

5373. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—What was the reason given commonly among the people for setting up this placard?—That was a well understood reason—that they would purchase at Isle Ornsay.

5374. That was the common reason alleged?—That was well understood. I do not know that there was any secret about it, that Tormore was a partner in the business.

5375. It was held to be the general opinion of the place that that was the reason for setting up the notice?—Yes.

5376. The document which has been given in by the different townships seems to have been prepared at the sight of yourself and the minister of the parish, and you were both present?—Yes.

5377. I suppose you both agree generally, so far as your observation is concerned, not only in the truth of the statements there, but also that they are correctly stated by the people?—I do not know whether the Rev. Mr Cameron concurs in the statements, but we thought we had a duty to perform in preparing the people for the Royal Commission, and we performed it together.

5378. Have you anything further to say?—There is a grievance, and I make it a grievance of my own, because the parties of whom I speak have not the proper attention I thought they were entitled to, and these are the paupers. Our inspector of poor is at Portree. He was at Isle Ornsay, and when he went to Portree he carried the office of inspector with him to Portree, and his assistant-inspector is ground officer and sheriff officer, and school board officer and several other offices, I think. Now, in my judgment, I think he is not a proper man,—the man I would like to see in charge of the paupers, if there were a responsible person in Sleat. I would not complain, but I don't think he has the full powers he ought to have in dealing with cases. He has often to consult round at Portree as to what he is to do in cases of that kind, and it is a hard thing sometimes, and I could give instances of hardships I have seen to paupers suffering. I know that even at this day, although our factor ordered the houses of some paupers to be repaired, it is not done yet. It has not been done for a year. I think the arrangements are entirely unsuitable for the parish. I would not deprive an old man of eighty of his office, if there was a responsible man in the parish to have charge of the parish.

5379. *The Chairman.*—Who is the inspector at Portree?—Mr Mackenzie. He is road inspector, and holds several other offices.

5380. Who are the members of the school board in this parish?—Lord Macdonald; Mr Macdonald, Ord; Mr Macdonald, Tormore; Mr Cameron, and myself.

5381. Do you think it would be agreeable to the people connected with the crofting community to have a representative on the board of their own class?—I don't think they thought they would have that privilege.

5382. But have you ever had occasion to know that they desire it, or that it would be acceptable to them?—I have not.

5383. You don't think it ever occurred to them to aspire to a seat upon the school board?—I don't think so.

5384. They probably look on you as their particular representative?—I think so, at least the ministers.

5385. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Were any of the little shops closed in consequence of that formidable placard?—No, but they were alarmed.

5386. *The Chairman.*—I thought the placard meant that any other shops, any new shops which should be opened, should pay £2 additional rent. I did not understand it to mean that the petty shops existing should pay additional rent?—I did not take that meaning out of it; I thought that the existing shops should pay £2 additional.

5387. Without any additional accommodation in the way of building or convenience to be afforded them?—Quite so.

DONALD M'INNES, Crofter, Duisdale (75)—examined.

5388. *The Chairman.*—Have you been freely elected a delegate?—Yes.

5389. Are you a fisherman also?—No, I have become too old for that.

5390. Were you a fisherman?—I was.

5391. The following is the statement from Duisdale Beg:—'The chief 'complaint here seems to be that the rent is too high for the amount of 'land held. In one case, it was explained that the land is exceedingly 'wet, and required to be drained. It was also stated that two pieces of 'hill pasture were taken from them without the rent being reduced. It 'was agreed to appoint Donald M'Innes as a delegate from Duisdale Beg.' Have you got any statement to add?—Not much. We are four of us, who have a bit of ground as I have, and the four of us can only keep a stock equal to what is kept upon a full lot. We four of us only have half a lot each. One of us, who occupies a piece of a lot, pays £12 for that piece, and is only able to keep upon it two cows, and the other two pay £2, 15s. and one £4, 15s.

5392. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—What pasture did they lose?—It was a piece which was upon the hill taken off our pasture. The part of our grazing which was taken from us was a piece that extended to the back of the tack marching with us, and it was taken from us in order to straighten the march.

5393. Was the march then fenced?—No.

5394. Was there no iron fence put up?—No.

5395. What was it straightened for?—Because the tacksman had ground on each side of it; on the north and south of this piece which was taken from us.

5396. Was there not a trifling reduction of rent on account of this?—No.

5397. Who is the tacksman?—Mr Macdonald, Ord. We had it for a year before Mr Macdonald got the tack on the other side, and when he got the tack he insisted upon getting this piece of our ground also.

5398. Did you only have this piece of ground for one year?—We had it for one year, but it always belonged to our place.

5399. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—How long have you been there yourself?—From the time the township was originally settled,—all but seven years.

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Donald M'Innes.

5400. What do you mean by settling the township—was it from the first of it?—Yes. Tormore made the township to give it to poor people.

5401. There were no poor people there before?—No, it was part of a tack previously. It belonged to the tack of Knock, and before then one farmer had it.

5402. Where did you come from yourself?—From Strath. I was in Boreraig, and when Boreraig and Suishnish were cleared I came here. I was going to the landlord with my rent for the lot, and I was turned back, and he told me my lot had been given to another person.

5403. What lot?—It was in Drumfearn that I got a place after I was put out of Boreraig. My rent for it was refused at Martinmas, so that I could be summoned to be removed at the next term.

5404. Do you remember about the removal of the people from Boreraig?—Very well. I was upwards of thirty years there.

5405. Were your people there before you?—Yes, my grandfather was paying rent to the first of the Macdonalds who came into the property.

5406. Were there not some great hardships endured when these people were put out of Boreraig?—Yes, there were some of the people perished through the hardships—putting them out of the houses.

5407. Did you see that yourself?—Yes. I was neighbouring with the people, and I knew them perfectly well,—as well as I knew any of my family.

5408. Did more than one person perish?—One man perished. It was in time of snow when they were evicted.

5409. Was that the cause of his death?—His death was caused by his being evicted in bad weather out of the house.

5410. What time of the year was it?—Winter and spring.

5411. Were you in a comfortable condition while you were there?—Yes, until others were put upon us there; when other townships were cleared, and the inhabitants were placed among us.

5412. How long were you at Drumfearn?—Not above three years.

5413. Why were you put out of that?—The ground officer preferred to give my lot to another.*

5414. How many cows have you in Duisdale?—Two.

5415. How many sheep?—Two or three.

5416. A horse?—No horse.

5417. Of course you have to live altogether upon bought meal?—Yes.

5418. How do you make the money to pay for it?—By selling my stock and earning the rent.

5419. Do you work yourself?—Yes.

5420. At what?—Herding cattle and sheep.

5421. How much did you pay for meal since the new year?—Four or five bolls along with the little potatoes I had.

5422. What beasts did you sell last year?—Two.

5423. What did you get for them?—£4 or £5 for one, and £3, 10s. for another.

5424. Is that an ordinary thing for you in the year?—Sometimes, according to the price that is going. There is another thing. Where we are to-day upwards of twenty families from Camuscross cut their peats on our cow's grazing.

5425. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You seem poorly clad; have your circumstances fallen off since you were a younger man?—Surely that.

5426. Have you a family to help to support you?—I have only two of my family staying with me.

5427. *The Chairman.*—How many different places have you been settled in during your life?—In the three—Boreraig, Drumfearn, and Duisdale.

* See Appendix A, XXIV.

5428. Where were you born?—Strathaird. I was taken to Boreraig when I was twenty days old. I was thirty-five years in Boreraig; then I was taken to Drumfearn, where I was for three years; and then I was brought to Duisdale.

5429. Then you have been removed from Boreraig to Drumfearn, and from Drumfearn to Duisdale. Have you a better or worse croft in Duisdale than in Drumfearn?—The croft which I have would not be worse than the one I had at Drumfearn, if there were means of draining it.

5430. And the croft you had at Drumfearn, was that better or worse than the one you had at Boreraig?—It was not better.

5431. Was it worse?—Yes, it was worse than the one I had at Boreraig.

5432. What was the name of the eviction in which you said some one perished?—Boreraig and Suishnish. The man belonged to Suishnish.

5433. Where were these people removed to?—Some of them were sent to this part of the country, and others to Breakish in Strath.

5434. Did the man perish on account of the exposure he was put to, or was he a person in weak health who might have perished otherwise?—The man was found dead at his own door after he had been evicted. That was when the trustees had the property.

5435. Were the houses pulled down and the fires extinguished? Did the people go out against their will?—Yes; their fires were extinguished, and their houses knocked down, and themselves put out very much against their will—the officers compelling them.

5436. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—What was the name of the person who died?—Alexander Mathieson.

5437. About the drainage of your present croft, have you applied to the factor to have drainage effected upon your crofts?—Not much. We have not done much yet. The factor himself is seeing the crofts are wet.

5438. But if the factor would employ you to drain the crofts, would the land be very much benefited?—Yes; what we ourselves drain is doing well.

5439. Would you pay a little additional rent as interest on the money the factor spent in wages?—Yes, we would be willing enough to pay interest, if it would not be very heavy.

5440. Is the land which you yourself drained benefited very much by it?—Yes.

5441. Does it bear better crops?—Yes, very much.

5442. Are the potatoes healthier?—Yes, but sometimes the river which passes near the ground of some of our number takes away our potato ground.

DONALD MARTIN, Crofter, Kylerhea (65), assisted by MALCOLM MACPHERSON (about 60)—examined.

5443. *The Chairman.*—Are you a fisherman?—Sometimes I fish.

5444. Were you freely elected to be a delegate?—Yes.

5445. Have you a statement to make on the part of those who chose you?—That we had at one time our land very much cheaper than we have to-day. Our rents were raised twice upon us, and the reason why we had the land less at first was that we were engaged at the ferry at Kylerhea, and all the cattle leaving Uist and Lewis and Skye were ferried across this Kyle. Our land was then rented at only 25s., as we had to be in constant attendance at the ferry. At that time there were neither steamers nor trains to relieve us of that work, but now there are both, and we have no

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work at all; and our land was after that raised twice. Our summing is two cows, but we have to keep one of these upon the stance of the droves, and we can only winter one of them with what grows on our own land.

5446. Have you any horse or sheep?—Neither. We have to be out 16s. in sea-ware to plant our potatoes.

5447. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Each of you?—Yes. There is no sea-ware on our own land at all. What we have of sea-ware on our land would not plant a bag of potatoes. This man and I are furthest out of our townships, and it is very little of either corn or potatoes or clover that grows on our land that is not consumed by the deer. I may say this is the case with three of us. Our township is not fenced, and we are not able to fence it. The proprietor will not do it.

5448. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—How much has your rent been raised?—Corrie increased our rents 15s. and Tormore 15s. Our rents are thus double what they were then, and we have only a small bit of ground.

5449. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—How many families are there?—Thirteen families have land. There are eleven crofters in our township, and the innkeeper has another croft or two.

5450. You stated as a reason why the original rent was so low that you had to work the ferry. Did those who worked the boats draw the toll of the ferry?—We were getting 6d. for every head of cattle we ferried, and the half of that went to the innkeeper. There were five of us manning the boat, and the threepence was divided among us, except what was charged for grass and oats.

5451. What do you make in a day in the average?—Since the trains began to take away the stock we get little or nothing. There was one time when we would make £13 or £14 in the year, and now we will not make more than £5.

5452. Are you compelled, at this moment, as part of your condition, to serve at all times at the ferry?—We must always attend to the ferry. We must be in constant attendance at the ferry.

5453. Whether there are passengers or not?—We have to be in constant attendance for the ferrying of stock, but not for the ferrying of passengers.

5454. Then, I presume, that does not mean daily attendance?—There is only ferrying to be done at the market times.

5455. Are you compelled, all the year round, to be present, traffic or no traffic?—Yes. We have to be in attendance, whether there are markets or not. We are the crew of the boat.

5456. Then your grievance is this, that formerly, before the steamers were coming regularly, when there was a good deal of traffic of that kind, you drew a good deal of wages, and the rents were low; whereas now your rents are high, and the traffic has almost disappeared?—Yes.

5457. *Mr Cameron.*—Who pays you for attending to the ferry?—We are paid just according to the income of the ferry. We get half the dues.

5458. Supposing you refused to attend on those terms, what would happen?—He would put another person in my place, and he might expel me from my land.

5459. The innkeeper?—Yes.

5460. Do you hold from the innkeeper?—We are tenants of Lord Macdonald.

5461. Then how can the innkeeper expel you?—He might bring in another man who would do his work.

5462. But how would he have power to expel you from the croft, if you hold from Lord Macdonald and not from the innkeeper?—He had only to say one word to the proprietor that I would not do my work, and another would be put in my place.

5463. Have you ever explained to the proprietor that you are expected to attend constantly at the ferry, and get £5 a year only?—No.

5464. Don't you think Lord Macdonald would listen to your complaint, and remove the grievance?—I cannot say anything about that.

5465. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Would you make more if you were not thirled,—if you were allowed to be a free man, and to work as you liked?—There is no one who is able to work for wages who would not earn more than £5.

5466. *Mr Cameron.*—In regard to the grievance as to the deer, could a fence be erected so as to keep the deer from eating your crops?—Yes, very easy.

5467. How long would it be?—About half a mile.

5468. Would that do the whole?—Yes.

5469. Would that protect the other eleven crofters as well as yourself?—I do not know but it would need more than that, but the half mile would be scanty. It would fence our three lots.

5470. Do you think a mile would do the whole township?—Yes, and less than a mile

5471. Have you ever asked the factor about this?—I did; I asked Tormore.

5472. Would you be willing to pay a small rate of interest on the cost of the fence?—Yes, we would.

5473. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—How long is it since the deer began to attack you?—Twenty or twenty-one years.

5474. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Are they getting worse?—Yes, they are coming in tens and twelves about our houses. They are just coming to our doors. They were not there twenty years ago. They consume our corn quite as much as if it were consumed by the muir bird.

5475. *The Chairman.*—Did you ever get any compensation for it?—No, never.

5476. Did you ever pay anybody to herd the land or protect it?—No.

5477. What sort of a fence would suit you best,—a stone wall or a wire fence?—A wire fence.

5478. Do you consider that a wire fence is a better fence for the protection of arable ground than a stone fence?—With reference to the deer, a wire fence 7 feet high would be a better protection against the deer than a stone dyke.

5479. If a stone dyke were made, 5 feet high, would that be a protection against deer?—Doubtless it would.

5480. Do you consider generally that a stone fence or a wire fence is better for the protection of arable ground?—I myself would say that a wire fence was a better protection.

5481. You both concur in that?—Yes.

5482. If the proprietor should put a wire fence to protect your arable ground, would you assist by bringing the materials to the ground, and by assisting so far as you could in placing the fence?—Yes, we would be very glad to do that.

JOHN M'INNES, Crofter and Fisherman, Drumfearn (about 67) assisted by PETER KELLY and JOHN NICOLSON—examined.

5483. *The Chairman.*—The following statement is submitted on behalf of Drumfearn:—'Here it was stated there were ten lots, and only 'one tenant has a whole lot all the others being subdivided, the two chief

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'reasons of this subdivision being that tenants from other parts of the 'country were crowded in upon them; and also, that when a son got 'married, his father often grants him the half of his lot. The consequence 'of this is that the land is overcropped, and therefore not so productive 'as it was in former years. It was explained that there are no less than 'three lots on which there are three families each. The complaint in this 'township is, that the rents are too high, inasmuch as they have to pay 'extra for sea-ware. It is one of the conditions of their holdings that 'they take their ware from the parish of Strath, for which they must pay 'whether they use it or not. They also complain of interest charged 'against them for public money borrowed for drainage. This loan was 'granted some thirty-four years ago. The rents were increased some seven 'or eight years ago, and they consider that they were high enough rented 'before then. It was also explained that a great part of the land was 'swampy, and often liable to be flooded. It was proposed and agreed to 'that Mr John M'Innes and Peter Kelly be appointed delegates to Drum-'fearn.' Have you any further statement to make on behalf of those who have elected you?—Nothing further. Our ground does not yield crop, as every delegate has been complaining of to-day.

5484. *Mr Cameron.*—How many crofters are there altogether on Drumfearn?—Twenty families on ten lots. There are two of the lots with three families on each.

5485. What is the summing of the stock kept on each lot?—Seven cows.

5486. Any sheep?—Thirty sheep and two horses.

5487. Is that on each of the ten lots?—Yes, but there is only one who has got a whole croft.

5488. And the ten lots are divided among twenty families?—Yes; one of them is whole, and two of them have three families on each.

5489. There is an average of two families on each lot?—Yes.

5490. So that each family, on an average, would have three and a half cows, fifteen sheep, and one horse?—Yes.

5491. But some of the lots are divided to a greater extent than two? Some are divided into three, and that you consider too small?—Yes.

5492. The principal grievance among you is that two lots have three families?—There are three lots on our township, with three families each.

5493. If these three lots could be reduced in the numbers who occupy them, would the remaining families have sufficient land to be comfortable?—No.

5494. Would three and a half cows, fifteen sheep, and one horse be sufficient for one family?—No.

5495. What do you consider sufficient?—If they could keep themselves in good order, and have work for their horse all the year round, and to keep the crofter and horse in work, all the year round, with as much stock as they have, they would be a good deal more comfortable than they are now. But we don't go out with our horses except for a month or six weeks or so in the spring.

5496. Can you give us any idea what amount of land and what amount of stock would be sufficient, including all you say about the horse, to make a family comfortable?—I cannot give a proper idea.

5497. About the sea-ware. It is stated that one of the hardships is that they have to take their ware from the parish of Strath, for which they must pay whether they use it or not. Is there no sea-ware on your own shore?—Yes, but there is not enough.

5498. Where do you take it from in the parish of Strath?—From Heaste.

5499. To whom do you pay the dues?—To the proprietor of the country, Lord Macdonald.

5500. Is it a township of crofters that you take it away from?—Yes.

5501. Do the crofters complain of its being taken away from their own doors?—I am informed by some of the old men in the town that they did once, but he did not regard their complaint about the sea-ware being taken from us, and so we paid and cut it since.

5502. What do you pay for it?—£4 a year.

5503. For the whole township?—Yes.

5504. That is a fixed sum, and for that you may take away as much as you like?—It was valued at £4.

5505. And you pay that, and you may take away as much or as little as you like?—Yes.

5506. Do you take it away every year?—Yes; the most of it.

5507. Is there any other place more suitable than Strath where you might get sea-ware if you were allowed?—There is a nearer place opposite us.

5508. What is the name of it?—We get it from Ord. Mr Macdonald, Ord, gives sea-ware to those who ask for it; but we pay for it.

5509. Then you get your supply of sea-weed from Ord, and from this place in Strath?—Yes.

5510. If this £4 were remitted to you, would you still go on taking the sea-ware from Strath, and paying for it as you took it, or would you take all your sea-ware from Ord?—There are some in our township who do without sea-ware at all. There is on the township what would do for some of them.

5511. Would you explain what it is you would like done about it?—That we should get the sea-ware money taken off us, and the drainage money also, and the last increase in our rents, and that we should have the land at the rent which was put upon it in the late Lord Macdonald's time. The father of the present Lord Macdonald had the property valued, and we would like to have our crofts at that value.

5512. Would you like to have the sea-ware from Strath without paying for it, or would you like to pay for it as you took it without there being a fixed sum whether you took it or not?—I would rather be relieved of the sea-ware money. If we were relieved of that money, we would not go to Heaste for sea-ware.

5513. When were the rents raised?—Four or five years ago the last time.

5514. Was any reason given for raising the rents?—No. When we got the Government drainage money, we were informed it would be paid up in twenty years' time, but we have been paying it for thirty-four years.

5515. But you know of no reason why the rent was raised?—No reason whatever.

5516. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—What year was it that the lands were valued?—About fifty years ago, in the time of the present Lord Macdonald's father.

5517. Has there been any rise in the rate of wages since that time?—I believe so.

5518. Have you any notion what the rate of rise has been?—I cannot say.

5519. Has there been any rise in the price of cattle?—I am not sure what the price of cattle was at that time.

5520. In your own lifetime, has there been any rise in the price of cattle?—Yes, the price of cattle is much higher than when I was young.

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John M'Innes.

5521. You don't know how it was at the time of the valuation?—No.

5522. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—What was the rise put upon them when their rents were raised seven or eight years ago?—Eight shillings on an average. The lots are not equally rented, but I think the average would be 8s.

5523. Was any reason given for putting that on?—No reason.

5524. Did you remonstrate against that rise?—We said nothing about it. We would be speaking about it amongst ourselves, but we did not complain either to the landlord or to the factor.

5525. It is stated in the paper that some people were put in upon you formerly from outside places; where did they come from?—Borrorig and Suishnish and Carradale—one family from Carradale, and one or two from Suishnish, and one from Teangue.

5526. *Mr Cameron.*—Were a greater number born in the place?—Yes, a greater number.

5527. *Professor Mackinnon.*—You stated that the one lot carried two horses, seven cows, and thirty sheep. What is the total rent of that lot?—£8, 4s., and more than that in some of them; £10 in some of them without taxes; some are up to £12.

5528. Do you consider that croft big enough?—It would be too small. It would be small enough, suppose one man had the whole lot. It would be better than the way it is.

5529. Do you consider £10 or £12 too high for a croft that would carry that stock?—Yes, and the cattle are very small.

5530. Does it require two horses to work that lot?—We have only small ponies; one good horse would do.

5531. How many acres of arable land would be in it?—I think the whole croft would come to seven or eight acres, but the land is very bad; and we were better off when prices of stock were less, because our land was better—in better heart, but now the crop is so scanty that we have to buy food for ourselves and for the stock.

5532. *The Chairman.*—Do I understand that one whole lot of thirty sheep, two horses, and seven cows, would be sufficient for the support of a family?—Yes, it would be leaving them comfortable.

5533. Do these full lots support the summing you have mentioned—seven cows, thirty sheep, and two horses?—Some years. It did not do so this year, the season was so bad.

JOHN MACDONALD, Crofter, Tarskaveg (71)—examined.

John Macdonald.

5534. *The Chairman.*—Have you been freely elected by the people of Tarskaveg?—Yes.

5535. The statement from Tarskaveg is as follows:—'A good number 'of years ago, but within the memory of some of the oldest inhabitants, 'Tarskaveg was inhabited by only four tenants, who had the ground 'divided into five equal portions at a very moderate rent. They were in 'a pretty comfortable condition, living solely on the produce of the ground. 'Subsequently, as evictions and clearances became prevalent throughout 'the parish, sheep farming got the preference; people evicted from other 'townships began gradually to crowd in upon us, till, at the present day, 'our township is inhabited by forty tenants, occupying patches of ground 'varying from 1½ acre to 3½ acres. It therefore, stands to reason that, 'out of such a small portion of land, it is an utter impossibility to make

'a livelihood, as the ground is of very inferior quality. The manure 'chiefly consists of sea-weed, which we have to purchase from the pro- 'prietor, and in some cases we have to carry it for about five miles. Our 'rents have also been raised in the time of the late factor, but rack rents 'are not our principal grievances. What we desire more especially is a 'reasonable share of the land, whereof we can make a livelihood, without 'being obliged to go to distant parts of the country to earn a living, which 'is at once meagre and laborious. There is sufficient land to distribute, 'and land formerly cultivated by tenantry, but of late converted into 'sheep farms. If, therefore, some such lands were laid out into smaller 'portions, it would greatly help to ease us who are overcrowded on small 'patches of barren soil. We have also grievances as to public roads, for 'which we pay our annual sum to the landlord, but which he fails to keep 'in repair where roads have been made; and, in some places, where roads 'are greatly needed, there are none. We have further to complain that, 'some years ago, we were deprived of a piece of ground without getting 'any abatement of rent. It is, however, right to explain that our present 'factor was generous enough to restore it to us at the moderate rent of £2. 'A loan of Government money was given us some thirty-three years ago, 'which we agreed to pay with our rents at the rate of 5 per cent. per 'annum for a period of twenty years. At the expiry of that time we were 'to have received an abatement of 5 per cent. of our rents, which we have 'not yet received. The delegates appointed for Tarskaveg were Angus 'Mackinnon and Alexander Nicolson and John Macdonald.' Have you a verbal statement to make in addition to what has been read?—One thing I have to tell. It was with injustice that I myself was placed there forty years ago. I was put out of Ferrindonald and placed in Tarskaveg, and Ferrindonald was three times set since then. I have nothing further to say concerning our township except what is written.

5536. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—How long is it since these additional tenants were driven upon the land of Tarskaveg?—When Linigary and Kilbeg were cleared, a family from each of these townships was settled in Tarskaveg.

5537. How long ago?—It is a long time since then. It was in factor Macpherson's time. I was young at the time, but I well remember it.

5538. Was Tarskaveg under four tenants then?—It was at first under four or five crofters.

5539. What was the date of that?—Long, long ago. Their grandchildren are now in the place.

5540. And then it was under ten?—Yes.

5541. How long is it since then?—That was before the land was divided into lots.

5542. Is that in your own remembrance?—In the year 1811 the lots were first divided.

5543. How many lots were divided?—Thirty one, and nine or ten of these have now two families settled upon them.

5544. It was in 1811 they were made into lots. When the people were settled there in 1811, had there been any clearances?—I cannot say anything about that.

5545. These thirty-one lots in Tarskaveg, were they filled by Tarskaveg people, or were people brought in to fill them?—The people of Tarskaveg got the lots as a matter of course—the most of them; but there were some families taken away from other places.

5546. And these double lots, have any of them arisen from the increase of the families of the people, or are they all due to people being brought in?—There are only three of these lots the families on which have

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arisen by natural increase, and in the others the increase has been by strange families being brought on.

5547. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—What was the Government loan for that was given thirty-three years ago?—For drainage.

5548. It was at the time of the destitution, was it not?—That was the year the potatoes failed when we got the Government money.

5549. The people were paid by the day?—We were paying it out of the rent again.

5550. Five per cent?—Yes

5551. And you paid it for twenty years?—We are paying it still.

5552. How do you know it was only to extend over twenty years?—That was the account of it I got when we got the order to make the drains.

5553. Have you made any representation to the factor about it?—I am not aware we ever spoke to the factor about it.

5554. How far are you from the high road?—The church of Kilmore is about five miles from us. I believe the head of the roadway is 2 or 2½ miles from us.

5555. What sort of a road is it?—Only a footpath.

5556. Is there a school at Tarskaveg?—Yes.

5557. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You say you offered no remonstrance about the payment of the drainage money. Now no drainage money was advanced by Government for such a long time as thirty-three years, and will you, therefore, the next time you pay your rent, ask what the meaning of it is?—Yes, I believe I will.

5558. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Is Tarskaveg a good fishing place?—It is not very good; it was at one time good.

5559. But you have boats there?—Yes.

5560. Have you a good port there?—There is no place where we can draw up our boats from the march of Tarskaveg at all. We go to the south side of Tockavaig pier.

5561. Have you no sort of pier?—We have a sort of a quay, but it is spoiled with the sea.

5562. Could a good pier be made for the protection of the boats?—Yes.

5563. Could it be done at moderate cost?—There is a good part of it made already. We made it.

KENNETH MACDONALD, Crofter, Stonefield (58)—examined.

Kenneth Macdonald.

5564. *The Chairman.*—Have you been freely elected a delegate by the people of Stonefield?—Yes. Our statement is: 'There are at present four-'teen families here, where at one time there were but five. This was about 'seventy years ago. The size of the lots run from about three to four acres, 'and the rents run between £4, 10s. and £5, 5s. Three of the lots are sub-'divided, and in two cases one tenant holds several lots. It is a complaint 'that they are still charged interest on public money, borrowed about 'thirty years ago for drains. It is complained that the rents have been 'raised on lands which they themselves reclaimed from mossy hogs; also 'that, whereas they consider there ought to be a right to cut ware attached 'to the township, they have to go a distance for it, and pay from 7s. to '10s. each for it. It was proposed and agreed to that Kenneth Macdonald, 'Donald M'Innes, and Angus Macpherson be appointed from Stonefield.'

5565. Have you any further statement to make?—I have to say that

in the crofts which are divided into two halves, the occupants of each half have such a small stock, the half lot only keeps one cow and a three-year-old; and should it happen that one of these beasts would get into a quagmire or be lost otherwise, we would then be as good as without stock. Now, if a man had a place on which he could keep four or five cows, if he lost one of these he would not feel it. The increase of the rest of his stock would be coming on, and he would soon be able to replace the lost one. Again, if he has a young family growing up, the one who has so little stock as I mention has to keep his children in clothing and shoes; he has to send them to school, and to pay the school fees regularly. Now it is not easy for him to feed them when he cannot get that feeding out of his own ground. He has not got ground that will yield crop, it is so weak. He must needs cultivate every bit of it each year—he cannot leave any of it out; and if he does not use all the corn that grows to him in feeding his stock they will die on him. Then in spring he will need to buy seed oats. If he had as much land as would keep work to one man all the year without the necessity of leaving home, I would undertake that he would take out of that food for himself and his family, and have his stock as well—so that his stock would be strong and in good condition for the market. And it is the smallness of their holdings that has brought them to poverty entirely—where they are crowded together like sheep in a fauk. I may say they are surrounded with iron shepherds, iron herds, and that they cannot move a foot. Now, what has left such a small proportion of land for the people, and plenty of land wasted in the country without an inhabitant? It would be easy enough to take them out of these straitened circumstances with so much land to relieve them. About the drainage money, the people themselves were at fault. When the time had run during which the money was to have been paid, they should have spoken to the factor, and seen if that money was to be taken off them at the time. Perhaps, if they had spoken at that time, it might have been taken off, so they themselves were to blame.

5566. We have often heard the complaint made about the drainage money, and we have often heard it stated that the factor, when the money was first applied, engaged that at the end of the term the increase of rent should no longer be exacted. Was that promise made in any distinct form; was it made in writing or publicly? Can you show it was really made?—I cannot say it was a written promise. None of that was made in my presence.

5567. Was the drainage then executed beneficial to the land?—No doubt of that.

5568. Does the improvement still appear in the land at present?—Yes, the land is better to the present day.

5569. If the land has been permanently improved in this way, is it unjust that they should continue to pay a small advance of rent?—They are complaining that, perhaps, the rent is high enough as it is.

5570. What is the summing of the croft?—I have only half a croft, but the summing of a full croft is three cows and a two-year-old.

5571. Any horses?—Yes, a horse to each lot. I am keeping a horse, and buying pasture.

5572. Any sheep?—Twelve sheep.

5573. What was the rent, without the public burdens, for the whole croft?—About £5.

5574. Do you think £5 too large a rent, if the land keeps a full summing?—I am thinking if I had a full croft that I could pay it.

5575. But you have only half a croft?—Yes.

5576. Is it more difficult to pay half the rent on a half croft than the

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Kenneth Macdonald.

whole rent on a full croft?—No doubt; because the increase of my stock will not be so much.

5577. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—What rate of interest were you paying for the drainage money?—One shilling in the pound.

5578. Did you expect that that rate of interest should come to an end in twenty years?—I am not sure, but I think that is the amount of interest they were paying. I made no terms about it. I had not this land at all when the expenditure for drains was made upon it.

5579. Then, as you took the place, you took it merely at a rent?—I took it at the rent at which it was.

JOHN MACDONALD, Crofter, Tockaveg (48)—examined.

John Macdonald

5580. *The Chairman.*—Have you been freely elected by the people of Tockaveg?—Yes.

5581. The statement from Tockaveg is:—'The complaint here is that 'the tenants continue to pay interest for borrowed money for drains after 'the proper time for relieving them had expired Another great complaint 'is that, some years ago, the rents were considerably raised on lots which 'the tenants had greatly improved entirely by their own labour. The 'increase of rent amounted, in some cases, to £1, 12s., consequently they 'are deterred from further improvements for fear of their rents being 'raised. It might be explained that, in the cases where no improve-'ments were effected, the increase of rent was not so great. They desire 'it also to be stated that their land is run out, and not nearly so productive 'as in former years. It was agreed that Alexander Macdonald and John 'Macdonald be appointed delegates from Tockaveg.' Have you anything to add to that statement?—Not much. The principal cause of my complaint is the increase that was put on our rents, especially on my own rent. I was feeling it most. I consider my rent was increased greater than that of any other lot.

5582. What is the size of your croft, and the summing?—It was only a disordered place, the ground being full of holes, and rocks, and trees. I cannot tell the acreage of it.

5583. What is the summing?—Three cows and a two-year-old, and twelve sheep and a horse.

5584. What is the present rent without the public burdens?—£5, 4s. Eight or nine years ago, I was only paying £4, 7s. 6d. Sixteen or seventeen shillings of increase was then made on my rent.

5585. Will you explain the nature of the improvements you made upon the croft?—Draining; I myself draining it without any remuneration. Besides that, I am paying the interest of the former drainage money that was got from the landlord.

5586. As to the drainage you made yourself, was it upon some ground that was drained by the Government money, or upon different ground?—The drainage I made myself was upon ground which had been previously drained.

5587. What kind of drains did you put in?—Stone drains.

5588. How long ago is it since you made these improvements?—Some of them this spring itself; and if I was not improving my lot in that way, I might not put down any crop at all.

5589. Has your rent been increased since you made any of these improvements yourself?—Yes.

5590. How long ago is it since you made your first improvements?—About thirteen or fourteen years ago, when I got the croft.

5591. How long after the period of your improvements was the first increase put on?—I think seven or eight years after that.

5592. Did the factor come over and see these improvements?—Never.

5593. How do you know that it was in consequence of your improvements that the rent was raised?—I do not think it was in consequence of the improvements, but according to his own conscience.

5594. How many years does your memory go back as a crofter?—I cannot very well say.

5595. Do you remember back twenty years?—Yes, I remember some things very well.

5596. For what price did you sell a stirk twenty years ago?—Various prices. The price of stock does not last long at the same figure.

5597. But what was the average price?—I cannot be very sure.

5598. Was it less or more than it would be now?—I believe the prices were less then than they are to-day.

5599. And the same for sheep?—Yes, I think so.

5600. If the prices of the cattle and the sheep have, in that time, risen very much or a good deal, do you consider it very unjust that there should be a slight increase of rent?—No, I do not think it unjust so to increase the rent if the good prices should continue, but what is entered into the landlord's books lasts.

5601. Did you ever hear of a reduction of rent in consequence of prices falling?—No, never.

5602. Have you not heard of such a thing in connection with the large farms—with the tacksmen?—We do not hear of anything of that kind.

5603. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Does Lord Macdonald ever reduce his rents or give an abatement?—I never heard of any such thing.

5604. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Was the £5, 4s. exclusive of the interest on the Government drainage money?—Including it. The drainage is included in the rent. I spoke to get the drainage money remitted to me.

5605. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—To whom did you speak?—To the present factor. I knew by him that he would rather increase my rent.

5606. You got no satisfaction, in fact?—No.

5607. *Mr Cameron.*—How many are there in your township?—There are eight families.

5608. Have any of the others had their rent raised in consequence of their own improvements, as you have?—Yes.

5609. How many of the eight?—Every one of them had his rent raised.

5610. Have they all made improvements?—Yes.

5611. How does your rent stand by that of your neighbours—is it higher or lower?—My rent is smaller than that of my neighbours, or the other lots are larger than mine. I felt the increase on my rent more because it was an increase on me.

5612. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Did you observe that the rent was raised more upon those who improved most?—That is what I cannot tell.

5613. The paper says so.—You may leave it as it is in the paper.

5614. Did the factor, on hearing of your improvements, and raising the rent, prevent your continuing the improvements, or did you continue?—We continued working all the same.

5615. The increase of rent was not greater than the increase in the value of the land?—We are of opinion that the land is dear at any

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rate, for a crop does not grow on it. I have to buy the seed with which to sow it.

John Macdonald.

ALEXANDER MACDONALD, Torckoveg—examined.

Alexander Macdonald.

5616. *The Chairman.*—We have already heard the general case of Torckoveg, and cannot hear it again, but we understand you have some particular statement to make to us?—My father and myself did a great deal of work on our lot. It was very bad at first, and after having done so, the rent was very much raised upon us.

5617. Did you hear the statement of John Macdonald?—Yes.

5618. Do you agree with it?—Yes.

5619. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Do you know whether the rents were raised in proportion to the improvements?—I know that our own lot had the rent increased more than any other lot in the place; and the lot that was next to ourselves, there was no drainage work made on it, and there was no increase.

5620. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—What rise was put upon you?—£1, 12s.

5621. What was it before?—£3, 15s. 6d. Then 3s. was added to it, and then £1, 12s.—that is £5, 10s.

5622. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Have you, in consequence of the increase of rent, ceased to make any improvements?—Yes, I did. I am afraid to make any improvements on the lot.

5623. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Was it distinctly in consequence of the the great improvements upon your lot that you think your rent was raised?—Yes, surely.

5924. Is your lot susceptible of more improvement still, if you were not afraid of an increase of rent?—Yes, the lot is very wet.

5625. Would you do it if you were assured you would not be disturbed or your rent raised?—Yes, very glad to do it.

DONALD MACDONALD, Farmer, Tormore (46)—examined.

Donald Macdonald.

5626. *The Chairman.*—You desire to make a statement to the Commission?—Yes. It has come out in evidence that I was for several years factor for Lord Macdonald, and I simply wish to touch upon one or two points that have come out to-day. In the first place, on the farm of Caligary, it was said they were not allowed to keep sheep. I refused to allow them to keep sheep, because they were not included in the summing. It was against the rules of the property to allow them to have sheep. Most of them, however, have a few sheep, and these graze for the greater part of the year upon my own ground. If they keep sheep they certainly must reduce their present summing,—that stands to reason,—unless they got additional ground. It would certainly be a very great benefit to them if they could keep sheep; and I should be very much pleased, so far as I am concerned, if they kept sheep even to my own personal loss. I pass from that to the evidence of Donald Beaton, Carradale. He was a cottar, and the son of a cottar, who never held land. A lot became vacant at Carradale, and remained vacant for some years. I did not want to let that lot, as I knew the place would ultimately come to be cleared. He pestered me till he got the lot at Carradale, on the understanding that it was a temporary holding. His paying £16 of arrears against a former

tenant requires explanation. Without having my books to refer to, I cannot exactly give a satisfactory explanation, though I will he very glad to do so on a subsequent occasion. But I should like to ask the witness what privileges he got on entering, and whether he is not mixing up the sum he had to pay to the proprietor for arrears against the former tenant with an account which he owed to me personally? I know he did not pay to Lord Macdonald one single fraction of rent for the arrears of that tenant. It may be necessary for me to state that I had dealings with the tenant, but it was a thing I could not possibly avoid at the time. He was certainly under a misapprehension when he stated that he had to pay £16, for I know perfectly well that he had not to pay £16. I said his going there was a temporary arrangement. He knew perfectly well that he should be removed very soon after. He was removed from there to a better place,—I hold, a most decidedly better place, and a better bargain in every way. Carradale was 4 miles from the nearest point to any public road. The cause of the tenants being removed from there was on account of the Education Act of 1872 coming into operation about that time, and the parish could not afford to build a house or keep a teacher for the few tenants that were there. Two of the tenants had previously left that farm to better themselves, and I may say, speaking truly, there were only four tenants instead of six. It has been inferred, I am afraid, by the Commissioners, from questions that have been put to different witnesses, that I wanted to remove these tenants to make room for myself. Well, I may state that I sublet a farm of very considerable extent in the immediate neighbourhood of the farm of Carradale, the rent of which was charged something like £15, and the tenants paid £12, and I offered it to the Carradale tenants who had been previously deprived of it by a predecessor of mine. I sublet a large portion of my farm, which is in the immediate neighbourhood. The rent of this farm is £15, and the rent of the other is £120, and I consider that in value they are something like proportionally rented. In my time as factor I changed no tenants except the Carradale tenants, and I wish that any one here present should come forward and state without any fear of suffering from my hands—and it has been explained to them that they will not suffer from the proprietor or the present factor—whether I have changed any tenants except the Carradale tenants, and these were changed to benefit themselves and the parish in general. A good deal has been said to-day about a notice as to shops. There were several witnesses examined as to a notice that was put up or said to be put up about those shops. The Rev. Mr Graham gave very strong evidence. I do not for one moment doubt that Mr Graham saw the notice to which he referred, or he would not have spoken to it; but I will say that if that notice was put up it must have been a most decided forgery, because I never ordered a notice to be put up, and it is a queer coincidence that the innkeeper and his son are here to-day, and several merchants and others, who still testify to what I say. No such notice was ever put up. The only way in which I can account for the statement is this, that I did put up a notice in the very words or to the same effect that is borne out by Mr Graham,—not on this property, but on the property of Glendale. Well, I did that with the full instructions, after very careful investigation on the part of the proprietor, who was not a man at all to do a thing hurriedly; and I may explain to the Commissioners that my reason for doing so was that in the small district of Glendale, which though small is a very populous district, the small shops were becoming a nuisance. In every township there were four, five, or six shops. There was a good deal of sheheening going on. The people bartered a good deal, giving their eggs and other produce to go south, and

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getting whisky in return. This was considered by the proprietor and myself to be very injurious to the district, and I put up a notice,—which, I may say generally, was put up more to keep people in order than as necessarily to be acted upon,—that any one opening a shop would be charged an increase of £2. I can only account for the notice that is spoken of as appearing in the parish of Strath and in the parish of Sleat on the ground that it has been mixed up with this notice that I put up at Glendale. I most emphatically deny that I put a notice at Strath or Sleat, but I did put it up at Glendale, and I have given the reason. Whatever connection I may have had with the Isle Ornsay shop,—it is quite unnecessary to go into detail on that matter,—I certainly did not keep down shops in Sleat, and I think there are several small shopkeepers here who will testify that neither by myself nor by any one connected with me did I object to shops. In fact, I encouraged shops, and after the letting of Isle Ornsay I lent a man in the little village of Ardvaser £150 to prosecute his business as a shopkeeper. I am sorry to say he came to grief, and I lost my £150. If I had been so much connected with the Isle Ornsay shop as people wish to make out, it would be queer that I should set up an opposition shop, and lose my interest there. It has been alleged that I bought cattle, and that I have taken advantage of the people in buying cattle from them at a cheaper rate than they would otherwise have got. I challenge any man or woman, or anybody having cattle to sell, to come up and say to me that I ever said to them—'Sell 'me your beast cheaper than I could get it at the market rate;' and I say conscientiously, without wishing to give myself any credit for it, that I never bought a beast at home that I was not giving full value and sometimes giving more than the market value for. I was said to be a drover. I am not a drover. I was a very extensive grazier, and I could afford to give more than an ordinary drover, because I gave the cattle grass, and they grew upon my grass. Another thing was not only hinted at, but was most decidedly brought forward here,—and I am sorry to say it was brought forward by a minister, Mr Graham,—that undue influence was used by me at a school board election. I was factor at the time, and my clerk was returning officer; and I wish to explain the circumstances. I speak from a very bad memory, but, so far as I remember, Mr Graham was coming with me from some place in the north of Skye, and I gave him a seat in my cart up to Ostaig. I told him that, with the view of avoiding the expense of a poll, I had asked Dr Campbell, tenant of Knock, my brother-in-law, who was one of the candidates, to retire in favour of Mr Graham, who I thought ought to have a seat. It seems, however,—and I do not blame Mr Graham for it at all, because I think he is above doing it,—that Dr Campbell (who is now dead) told me not long afterwards—'I agreed to resign my seat at the school board in 'favour of Mr Graham, but Mr Graham has gone about not believing your 'statement that he would be appointed in my stead, canvassing for votes, 'and as he has chosen to do that, I shall certainly go on,—we shall have a 'poll, and I shall stand, I don't care a bit; if Mr Graham carries the day, 'well and good,—he is as deserving as I am.' There was a poll, and my clerk was the returning officer. I was there. I do not deny that I had a great deal of influence with the people. Certainly it was not more than was natural, as factor; but I will say most emphatically that not one single bit of influence was used against Mr Graham or any other man, and that the election was carried on as straightforwardly as any election ever was in Scotland. In my capacity as factor, I perhaps have the interest of the proprietor more at heart than that of the tenants; still I never neglected the tenants when I could do otherwise. As to the rise of rent that came

upon this property, and, unfortunately for me, happened in my day, times were prosperous and rents were going up. Rents in other parts of Skye, without naming anybody in particular, were going up 50, 70, even 100 per cent. There was no rise upon Lord Macdonald's property, and Lord Macdonald naturally turned to me, and said—'Here, I have had a valuator round to value the sheep farms.' He asked me what was the increase on the sheep farmers' rents. I said it was about £2000. I did not want to hurt the tenants by any means. Lord Macdonald is one of the best men in the world. He did not want to hurt the tenants. He did it from the most kindly motives; but still every man should have his rights. Well, a valuator came from the east coast to value the large sheep farms. Every one was put up. I said I would not like to raise the crofts according to the value put upon them by an east coast man, but I asked him if he would allow me to have them valued. 'Certainly,' he said, 'I have 'implicit confidence in you. Put £1000, or £500, or 5s. upon them just 'as you please.' Well, the matter was left in my hand, and if there was any blame I take the whole responsibility of it. Well, I got two competent men, and sent them over every inch of the property. They gave me their report. I told the tenants the nature of the investigation, and asked them if they would have an east coast man put upon their land to value it, and they said no,—they would agree to anything I did. I asked them —'Will you all agree to my estimate?' 'Yes, most decidedly.' I spoke to each tenant as he came up to pay his rent, and asked if he was pleased, and I never heard a murmur? One man said—'We have paid enough; 'we don't want to pay more.' These facts can be borne out, because the valuation roll will show what the rent was before my time and what it was afterwards; and I don't think I am speaking erroneously when I say that on the aggregate 5 per cent. will be about the rise. Well, another thing that I want to point out particularly is this. There has been a great deal said about drainage and about the improvements the tenants have made. I distinctly told the people whom I sent out to give this report not to go by the case of a man who had improved his lands, but most decidedly to go by the old value of the croft,—that is, what had been put upon the croft at the first settling,—and the tenants were not charged for their improvements, but simply charged an increase of land according to the first value, so far as a report was given to me and so far as I could judge. I will not say there may not have been a case in which one man was charged more than another, according to the first value, but I say that was the basis on which the valuation went on. Something has been said about the sea-ware. That is a very small matter, and not one I daresay in which I had very much to do; but I will say, in the interest of Lord Macdonald, that the sea-ware is not charged by the proprietor separately. The sea-ware is given to the tenants along with their lands, and they are not charged separately. In some townships, I admit, they have not in every case a sufficient amount of sea-weed, because sea-weed, like everything else that is overcropped, has deteriorated in bulk and in value, and in some cases the tenants may have to go to another township and buy from there, but that does not put one shilling into the pockets of Lord Macdonald; it goes into the pocket of the tenant holding the land from which the sea-ware is drawn. Lord Macdonald does not pocket a single shilling. As for me, I may say I have about three miles of coast on which there is a considerable lot of sea-weed, and I am afraid I may appear egotistical, but after all that has been said I may be privileged to say that all that sea ware is cut now by the tenants in my neighbourhood, and one single shilling I never received.

5627. What is your farm?—Tormore and Ostaig. I previously farmed

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Gillian, which I held for a small number of years, and I had been in the habit of selling sea-weed to the neighbouring farms. That went on, and I did get a very small sum occasionally for it, but it was more for the principle than for the object of getting money. That farm is sublet to a man now, who no doubt has his pound of flesh. John M'Innes, Drumfearn, said that his rent went up a few years ago. I should like to ask John M'Innes what was his rent ten years ago, and what is his rent to-day,—what amount of land he held ten years ago, and what amount of land he holds to-day. Some of the Drumfearn people said there was a Carradale man settled there. The Carradale men were simply drafted into places that became vacant. No man was dispossessed to make room for a Carradale man, and there was one man from Carradale who got into possession of a lot that was vacant at the time, and for which there was no tenant. A good deal has been said about drainage money. I was fortunate enough, during the time I was factor, not to borrow any money for drainage, because I saw that the people were not pleased with it, and in fact did not understand it; but I am now in the unfortunate position of having to pay £20, £30, and £40 of drainage money for drains made by the previous tenant; and though I say it is a misfortune to pay it, still I say the land is worth the additional rent. I do not know what is done on every property, but I do know what is done generally on the west coast, and that is, that when Government money is borrowed, the outlay is considered, when it is done judiciously, to be a permanent improvement, and though the interest and capital is got back in twenty-five or twenty-one years, still the rent goes on, because it is considered to be a permanent improvement. I do not think—and I speak for myself as well as for others—that the tenants have any reason to complain of the rent here. I shall now be very glad to answer any questions that any of the Commissioners may put.

5628. I should like to ask a few questions about the alleged practice on Lord Macdonald's estate as to incoming tenants paying the arrears of outgoing tenants. In the particular case alluded to, the crofter said he had paid arrears amounting to £16. We understand from you that, though he may have made the statement honestly, you are under the impression he has mixed up two questions?—He has mixed up two or three questions.

5629. A payment to Lord Macdonald with the payment of a debt due to yourself?—Yes, and a debt which I do not expect ever to recover.

5630. I should like to ask you whether this system of payment of arrears by the incoming for the outgoing tenant is one which is generally followed or enforced on Lord Macdonald's estate?—It was a practice that was pretty general, and it was enforced; but I think that most people are under a misapprehension in respect to it, and I think perhaps the tenants themselves are, because, in dealing with a question of this kind, the outgoing tenant would make certain arrangements with the factor. He might, for instance, give up the crop at Martinmas, and give up the tillage, or give over his house, and then he might in fact be entitled to some little bonus for improvements. I would not say there might not be a question of arrears, because singular matters have come before me in which the arrears of the former tenant have been paid to myself by the incoming tenant, but it was a simple matter of arrangement in which when the incoming tenant came forward and said, 'I am quite willing to 'take this place; the outgoing tenant requires so much; he may be going 'to America or Australia, or to exchange to some other part of the 'property, but he will not go unless he gets so much, and it will be a 'benefit to me and a benefit to him if this exchange takes place. I am

quite willing to pay the money down, and let the contract go on.' Well, the factor steps in and carries out this arrangement. The man who comes in may not have the money to go in for it at once, but it is carried out. Sometimes, certainly, the arrears of the former tenant in such cases have been paid, but it is not commonly in practice.

5631. In regard to the question of your alleged participation in the profits of trade, you have heard it said there was one principal shop kept in this place, and it is also stated that you had an interest in the shop, and were a partner in it. I would like to know whether that was so during the period you were factor for Lord Macdonald?—I did not expect to be examined on that question.

5632. If you prefer to make a statement at your subsequent public examination at Portree, you are quite at liberty to do so, but I thought it would be more agreeable to you to do so on the present occasion?—Well, I am not afraid to make a statement. I supplied meal, I am very sorry to say, to a lot of tenants in this parish. The shop at Isle Ornsay became out of lease, as the former tenant would not give the rent that was put upon it by a valuator. He was offered it, and would not take it. I induced the man Kennedy, who holds it, to come forward and give a rent certainly very little different from the rent which the former tenant had offered, but a rent at which he had been pressed by me and Lord Macdonald's Edinburgh agents to take the place. I induced Kennedy to come forward, but Kennedy was not at the time prepared financially to come forward and take it. I became personally responsible to the bank and otherwise for him. That arrangement, I may say, has still continued. I did not at all intend to participate in the profits or to be a partner in the concern, nor am I; but I will say this to corroborate my statement, that since the time Kennedy took the place, eight, nine, or ten years ago, I never examined a ledger, I never examined a cash book, and I do not know in the very slightest degree how Mr Kennedy stands financially. I may have asked him in an offhand way whether the shop was doing well, but beyond that I know nothing; but whether I owe money to Kennedy, or he owes money to me, is a question I think the Commissioners need hardly inquire into.

5633. My question has no reference whatever to your relations with this trade except as regards the period when you were Lord Macdonald's factor; and I take the liberty of asking whether your connection with this establishment, whatever it was, took place with the knowledge and approval of Lord Macdonald, or whether it was entirely a matter of your own?—It was a matter of my own, to induce this man to come forward and give Lord Macdonald a higger rent than he would otherwise get; and I said to Kennedy that if he could not manage the concern, which is a very large concern, if my influence or my name was of use to him, it was at his service.

5634. I can perfectly understand that the proprietor might justify and sanction a factor taking part in commerce of this kind, and I can imagine a factor undertaking the part with a benevolent purpose. In a poor country of this sort, it might be very desirable to open a store in order that the people might be supplied with a purer quality of goods and at a lower price. I wish to know whether this shop was supported by you in reference to the benefit of the public, or to please this man, or for your own profit?—Well, I did it for the whole combined,—certainly not for my own profit. I gave the people a good deal of meal at the time, and I admit I wanted to get out of that. I went into it at hap-hazard and without due consideration, but the one had nothing to do with the other. Kennedy did not take over a penny of my accounts. They are due by

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the people, and very likely still will be due. I certainly had no wish to benefit myself; and as for saying I wished to benefit the people, that is a question which I must be permitted not to answer.

5635. With reference to the purchase of cattle upon the estate, were you, in your capacity of an independent farmer, in the habit of buying cattle from Lord Macdonald's tenants while you were his factor?—I did, on several occasions, because, as I said, I am more of a farmer and grazier than a factor. I took the office of factor simply because I was driven into it. I should not have been a factor, and I am sorry I was. I bought the cattle with a very pure conscience, and I never got an animal from the people at a shilling less than they would have got from another; and generally, I think, I was paying a great deal more.

5636. *I personally, and I am sure the Commissioners, are willing* to believe that in your transactions with the people, while you were factor, and now, you had no intention of taking any unjust advantage of of them, and that you only did what you believed to be your duty; but at the same time did it never occur to you, while you were factor, that in trafficking with the people in this way in your capacity of farmer you might expose yourself to imputations, and that it might be misinterpreted by others?—No; and I did not do it very largely. I bought extensively at the markets, where a man can exercise his freedom in any way he likes. I must say,—and I think any tenant here will back me out, unless it is somebody very much interested against me,—that on any occasion on which I bought cattle from them, I was pressed into doing it, and it was difficult for me to avoid it. During the time I was factor, I always had an eye to being out of it. It was a thing I got into, and I always wished to get out of it, and I always continued more or less my capacity as grazier and farmer.

5637. Then I am to understand in general that it was your practice to buy as much as possible in the open market from tenants?—Yes.

5638. And not go about from individual to individual for the purpose of purchasing?—I never went, so far as I know, to a man's house to ask him to favour me by selling me beasts.

5639. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—About these valuations, a man named Duncan Finlayson said yesterday that none of the people had seen the valuators, and that nobody had ever heard of the valuators. Do you remember who they were?—Perfectly,—Ronald M'Donald and Duncan M'Innes. I may further mention that, in a locality like this, if I was asked to value a croft in the parish of Sleat,—in any portion of it, and it is a wide district,—I could do it as well sitting at my desk as if I went to it.

5640. How?—From my knowledge of the land, from my knowledge of the soil, and from my general knowledge of the place altogether. I know what every man in the parish of Sleat does pay, and what he should pay, —and in the parish of Strath too.

5641. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Have you got maps and accurate surveys?—There are old maps of the Macdonald estates in the factor's hands.

5642. *Mr Cameron.*—Can you tell me if the six-inch Ordnance Survey gives the measurement of the arable ground of the smaller crofts?—I rather think it does, but I cannot speak from memory. I think I have taken it myself from that, but I really would not like to say definitely.

5643. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—I understand, Mr Macdonald, you are to be asked to attend at Portree. Were you aware of that?—I was aware that power would be given me to attend at Portree. I don't know that I shall attend; but if there is a lot of dirt thrown at me, as has been done of late, I don't mind going up and trying to throw it off.

ALEXANDER MACDONALD, Tacksman of Ord (51)—examined.

Alexander Macdonald.

5644. *The Chairman.*—How long have you been in the occupation of your farm of Ord?—I came to it fifty years ago. My father took the first lease of it, and I succeeded him as tenant in the farm.

5645. You have been brought up and have been constantly resident there?—Yes.

5646. What is the extent and rental of the farm?—The rental, with some additions, is £329.

5647. And the acreage?—I cannot say, but I should guess there are from 5000 to 6000 acres,—hill, wood, and roads.

5648. What is the extent of the arable land?—When my father came there was none, but now there are seventeen acres.

5649. And 5000 or 6000 of pasture?—Yes.

5650. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—We have heard a good deal to-day about the increasing poverty of the people. You have crofters near you?—Yes, all crofters around me except on one side, where I am bounded by the sea; on the other sides, unfortunately, by the crofters.

5651. And you have seen a good deal of their circumstances and condition?—Yes, and know all about them.

5652. Is it your opinion that they are deteriorating very much in their circumstances?—No, it is not my opinion, and the reason is that I cannot see why they should deteriorate in their circumstances. I am giving three times the amount of wages to-day that I gave twenty-five years ago,—three times, to men and women, and to some of them four times,—and goodness knows how much more than my father was giving forty-five years ago.

5653. Do you observe a great many cases of individual poverty amongst them?—No, I do not, except among the paupers. When their families leave and scatter in all directions, they come to great poverty, but then they have got the poor-rates before them. They are not in any way poorer than in my earliest recollection.

5654. Do you observe that their land does not give so much produce as it used to give?—Yes, I see that, and I think one great reason of it is this: Twenty-five years ago, I could easily buy a stirk for 15s. or 18s, and 21s. was a tremendous price. Now, for that very same class of cattle I have to pay to-day £7 or £8, and perhaps guineas.

5655. I am talking of the produce of the ground?—They do not thrash it now. What I mean is, that the price of cattle is so great now that they give the grain unthrashed to their cattle; but at the time when there were low prices, and when meal was not so conveniently got in the neighbourhood, they were obliged to thrash it, and their cattle were not so extravagant. I have so small an amount of arable ground that I have to cultivate it continually, and it has been continually in cultivation for forty-five years. I raise grain, and give it to the horses. We used in my father's time to thrash it, and grind it into meal. That could be done yet, there is not the slightest doubt, but it would take a little management.

5656. Do you think you get the same returns from oats from your land as in your father's time?—Yes, in a fair year. Last year was an extraordinary one.

5657. Do you know what your oats weigh?—Yes, and have seen them weight 42 pounds, and as much as 43 pounds per bushel.

5658. Is your land cropped every year?—Until within the last ten years, it was cropped every year,—one year corn, another year potatoes. I then began to lay down some of it in clover.

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5659. But before you began to lay it down in clover, it still continued to bear well?—Yes, but I manured it well. I kept a lot of Highland cattle and that enabled me to manure and cultivate it well; but it was always under crop from year to year.

5660. Has there been a great increase in the population in your time about you? Are the crofts smaller than they used to be?—No, they are not smaller than they used to be, but there are more living on them.

5661. *Are there not more people using the hill grazings?*—*Far more.* I believe the population has far more than doubled since 1821 in the neighbourhood of Sleat. I do not know anything about any other parish.

5662. And if the population is doubled, the land that is to be divided among them becomes smaller to each one?—Yes, they have subdivided it greatly. When a son marries he gets half a lot. Then a man may marry a daughter, and she gets the other half.

5663. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—I find from the census returns that the population of Sleat in 1811 was 1936; in 1821, 2608; and in 1881, 2052. That has been all the increase since 1811?—I have been told by one who was a registrar in Skye for a number of years, that he believed it had doubled in twenty years.

5664. It was in 1801, 1903; 1811, 1936; 1821, 2608; 1831, 2957; 1841, 2706; 1851, 2531; 1861, 2330; 1871, 2233; 1881, 2052.

5665. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Are there fishermen about you?—In my neighbourhood there are a good many who go to the east coast and to the Irish fishing.

5666. Have any of them boats of their own?—No, most of them that have boats in this parish have smacks, and they go to Barra and Stornoway, and even to Ireland.

5667. Do you know if it is the case that some of those who have smacks leave them drawn up on the beach, and go away as hired hands themselves?—Yes, because they have no money to get a new supply of nets, and they cannot afford to pay hands, and they have been unsuccessful for the last four or five years.

5668. And consequently the smacks are now idle?—Yes.

5669. There has been a certain amount of discontent in Skye, and complaints have come before us. In what way do you account for the origin of this discontent?—I account for it in this way. It began, so far as my knowledge goes, in the north end of the island by two gentlemen—the one an Irishman named M'Hugh, and the other named Murdoch—who came among the people to tell them of their rights; and I suppose, the seasons having been bad, and many other causes of that kind, made them think it was a good time to make their demonstrations. That is my opinion.

5670. Of course, in the management of a large property like Lord Macdonald's, it is not unnatural that mistakes may be made, and occasional complaints may have arisen. Have any such occasions of complaint come under your notice,—any good cause of complaint?—None in this parish that I know or have heard of, except in so far as I have no doubt they would say here—'Well, if the people of Glendale got land for nothing, 'why should not we get land here for nothing?' I do not myself see why they should not; it was a very sensible thing of them to think so.

5671. *Mr Cameron.*—What wages do you give to those whom you employ as crofters?—I give my ploughman £30, besides a cow's keep, and six and half bolls of meal, and potato land. I give another ploughman £20 and perquisites. When I have women working in the fields I give them a shilling a day, and men who are working in the fields, who

live on the farm and get potato land,—who are cottars,—2s. a day; and I charge them nothing for the land or the sea-weed.

5672. Do you employ them all the year round?—Mostly; they generally earn—there are two of them—about £15 each in money, and those two have a cow each, and I charge them no grass for the cow at all.

5673. When you employ extra labour for some temporary purpose, what wages do you pay for that?—I never get that unless at the time of smearing the sheep.

5674. In harvest, for instance, do you employ extra labour?—It would be impossible to get them. They are all engaged with their own work.

5675. What other employment do the people in this parish get locally?—They get no employment locally, except those who are just hired from one end of the year to the other, like those I have mentioned.

5676. Is there any work going on at Armadale?—During every summer perhaps ten or a dozen about the gardens, and so on.

5677. Do the people at Armadale employ chiefly crofters on the estate?—They may be tenants down about Ardvaser and Caligary.

5678. In what way do the smaller crofters, who have not land enough to occupy themselves all the year round, find employment?—They go away to the south, and work in all sorts of places. They go to the Irish coast fishing—the younger ones; and a number of the girls go to be house servants in the towns; and those who don't do that go to work with farmers in the Lothians and on the east coast of Scotland.

5679. Do the people show as much disposition to go south as they did formerly?—They show ten times the disposition, because they knew nothing about it formerly. It is of late years that this migration business commenced.

5680. In fact, in that respect also you consider they are better off now than they were formerly?—Well, if money means being better off, there is, I should say, four or five times the amount of money coming into the country than was coming into it twenty-five years ago.

5681. Through the wages earned by the people who go to the south?—Yes, and in fishing and all sorts of things. Why, there was no money coming in thirty years ago, just a few miserable pounds, except what was got for cattle at the market. Now, hundreds and hundreds of pounds come in.

5682. What size of croft do you consider best for a crofter?—In my own neighbourhood I have known crofters in very comfortable circumstances for their class with about nine acres of arable land and six or seven cows, because they count three stirks equal to one cow. You may have four cows and three stirks, or seven cows, and thirty sheep, and they ought to be able to live upon that; and a horse, which is indispensable for them.

5683. You say that would form a sufficient croft to make them comfortable?—As they used to be comfortable, but I don't know if it would be what they think comfort now.

5684. But you say that would be a sufficiently large croft to make a man comfortable; and as it is impossible that all the inhabitants of Sleat can have such large crofts as that, what remedy do you propose to mitigate the poverty under which they suffer?—The first remedy I should suggest would be this: I would wire fence all the grazings presently in their hands; I would have them all wire fenced—the grazings of each township—so as not to have their sheep worried and chased by the 'iron shepherd,' as the man remarked of the tacksmen, and they could keep one-third more sheep if they had their own share fenced. They would not be such a trouble to the tacksmen, and their stock would be in better condition. They employ boys to keep their sheep and horses off the tacksman's land, while the

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tacksman employs shepherds to keep them off, so that the two are chasing round the unfortunate animals. I do not see how much can be got out of them. That would be the first thing to benefit the tenant, and the cost would be small. £30 a mile would do it.

5685. But do you approve of another class of crofters besides those large crofters who could live by their crofts, and would not require to go to the south? Do you approve of another class who would have much smaller crofts, and would have to earn their subsistence by earning wages at fishing?—Yes, I approve very much of that. There might be a class who would pay £2 or so for their houses, with peats, and one or two cows. I would approve very much of that.

5686. Otherwise, it would be impossible to find land for all the present holders of crofts if the crofts were large?—Well, for the present population of Skye I have no doubt it could be had in Skye, but all the tacksmen would require to walk away.

5687. Would you like them to take some of the land of Ord?—No. If it were very hard pressed I would give them all Ord, but I would not like to give them some.

5688. Would your farm be suitable to be divided into holdings for crofters?—No, they could not grow a pound of anything. They might have cattle and sheep, but they could not grow corn.

5689. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—How many acres of arable land have you?—About seventeen under crop.

5690. Was there any more under cultivation at one time?—No, I do not think there was any more, but it was more scattered. In the olden times, before my father went there, there would be a small field cultivated here and there round about—a 2-acre field here, and another about 500 or 600 yards away from that. Well, when this was reduced, and had gone out of heart,—three crops being the general ratio,—it was allowed to rest for three or four years, and they would take another small patch on the farm, and work it in the same way.

5691. But you had 17 acres, could much be taken in to advantage beyond these 17 acres? How much more could be taken in?—If there could have been one, I would have had it in long ago.

5692. You say your lands are not going out, though there is a good deal of cropping successively. Does not that arise because you are able to put on a good deal of manure from the number of cattle you keep?—Yes, that was the reason.

5693. You stated that the crofters ought to be a great deal better off, because wages are a great deal higher, and you were afterwards asked about the work in which they were engaged. What work is going on?—There is no work going on, consequently there is no money earned at home; but now there is money from the south and all quarters—there are scores who go every fortnight to New York, and Australia, and Canada, and other countries.

5694. Do you think there is much money in the Skye banks from the parish of Sleat?—I do not know, but I don't believe they would leave it there long.

5695. You seem to have been under some misapprehension as to the increase of the population. In place of the population being doubled within the last forty years, it has very much decreased?—Yes, I see that.

5696. Then how is it that under those circumstances—the population being much decreased—it is necessary for the people to go away to the south to earn wages?—I think that is owing to this, that they live much better than in the times of which I speak. They are far more extravagant in dress. I have seen men with shoes made almost entirely of the raw

hide of the cows, and fastened with a thong cut out of a sheep's skin. You will not see that to-day; and I see that the ladies have high-heeled French kid boots.

5697. Do you assign the improved habits of dress of the people as one of the reasons why it is necessary for them to go out of Skye, and earn wages in the south?—That is exactly what I mean.

5698. You have probably read in the newspapers accounts of some of the examinations that have gone on, and you are no doubt aware that in almost every locality the people have come forward stating their grievances, and have very much concurred in what those grievances are. You are surely not going to say that those grievances of which they complain don't exist?—As to small holdings, and all that sort of thing, I think the one township has taken it up from the other, expecting a great deal to be done for them. I don't believe they have the grievances they have stated all round.

5699. You don't believe them?—No, I don't believe it at all.

5700. You are aware that some of the very large farms in Skye are of comparatively modern creations?—Yes.

5701. Do you approve of the system that once took place of clearing the small people off the land and putting them down on the sea-shore?—No, I think it was a very great mistake; but now that the mischief has been done, unless you can give them the land back again, I do not see what is to be done.

5702. From your knowledge of Skye altogether, don't you suppose it quite possible to replace all the crofters upon good and fertile land, and yet leave all the present tacksmen with very good possessions?—Well, I don't know if I can answer that. You might leave them, but I don't know but the present tacksmen would think what you consider a fair tack to be a very indifferent one, and probably you would take the very best land I have.

5703. Take your own farm of 5000 or 6000 acres, and a rental of £329. You think that is a moderate sensible farm?—Yes, a moderate sensible farm.

5704. I don't suppose the crofter is jealous or envious of your land, but if you find a man with nearly three times the extent of that hill land and a great deal of old arable land, and numerous crofters with confined holdings in his neighbourhood, do you think the tacksman there a man deserving of very much consideration, or the landlord who lets it to him?—I am not going to answer that question. I think the landlord is deserving of some consideration, whatever the tacksman deserves.

5705. I put this question to you because you are very fair, as I expect a native of Skye to be. Suppose there was a proper division of lands in the form I have mentioned, and that the crofter in these enlarged crofts would give as much and fully as much rent as the present tacksmen, would it not be wise that those people should get the chance of being replaced or restored?—I will tell you what I would do in these circumstances. The first lease that would be out of one of these big farms, I would not give a renewal, and then I would put so many crofters on some parts of it,—300 of them,—but I would not put in a lot of crofters upon every tack.

5706. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Do you think the crofters would be able to take that farm?—Never, unless there were some generous people, like myself, who would give them money to take it.

5707. Then you say you would do it at the end of the first tack?—To please Mr Fraser-Mackintosh. That would be the most sensible way—not to go and patch at the thing, but take it all round.

5708. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Some of these people here stated they are not able to pay the rent of the croft, because of their crofts not being

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able to produce a proper quantity of crop. In fact, they say it would be easier for them to pay double or three times the rent for a proportionately larger croft. Is that true?—No, unless Mr Fraser-Mackintosh gave them £1000; but if I had not a shilling to stock it, how could I promise to pay the rent, and how could I do it without money? The case would be exactly the same. You cannot pay the rent unless you have the money to stock the ground.

5709. But some of them say they have it?—No, not one of them.

5710. Then Skye must be very poor?—If a man who has two cows now got a bigger holding, if he got a favourable year, he might be able to arrive at a holding with four or five; and in twenty years he might come to have six, but he could not take it in at once; and, looking at the tacks of the big farms, why, some one would require to give compensation, and buy the sheep and cattle of the tacksman, for the land you are taking from him.

5711. Let me put it this way. He has a small stock—the man whose croft we propose to enlarge. He is paying a large sum for meal—perhaps £14 or £15. What stock does that man require to put on? He does not require to put on a full stock at first?—Yes, because he cannot pay the rent unless he gets the stock.

5712. But he is paying it already in respect of the meal?—He would be paying it then. He would not eat a stone of meal less with a bigger croft. He would require to be eating meal all the time till he was able to increase the stock on the croft.

5713. *Mr Cameron.*—Is it not the fact that every one of those large farmers is held bound to deliver over his stock to the incoming tenant at a valuation?—Yes.

5714. So the incoming tenants, whether one man or five hundred, are bound, at a valuation, to take over the stock?—Yes, but what I understand from hearsay is, that they would like to get these farms without being able to stock them at all.

5715. But it is the fact that in every lease the stock is to be handed over at a valuation, and therefore the small crofters or tacksmen succeeding the big tacksmen would have to pay for the stock in ready money?—Yes, either the incoming tenant or the proprietor; so, if the incoming tenant would not do it, we would expect the proprietor to do it.

5716. *Professor Mackinnon.*—There is no doubt that there is too much overcrowding of the crofts?—No doubt about that.

5717. I think you stated that you would like to see the crofts made larger?—Yes.

5718. And also that others of them should be perhaps smaller?—Yes.

5719. And people earning wages in the south?—Yes.

5720. Would you prefer that they should be encouraged in the fishing at home?—Well, you would require to have people to teach them to fish at home, and give them boats and smacks. It takes time; and if you like to hear an instance of what I heard the other day, there is a smack from the east coast in the loch which is just opposite me. They have been fishing there all this spring. That one smack went out. She has a skiff attending her, and the skiff goes out to fish. They have from 2000 to 3000 hooks and long lines. They got one haul this spring, and they said a 20 feet keel boat could not take the haul. Our people were there with their small skiffs—sixteen or seventeen feet long, and they had not a twenty feet keel in the neighbourhood of the smack.

5721. Have you considered the question whether some of the people should not remove permanently away from the place altogether?—Yes, I think it would be best for themselves and for those who would remain,

5722. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—But they are decreasing every year?—Yes, it depends very much on the time the census is taken. Perhaps a great many might have been away.

5723. *Professor Mackinnon.*—But the decrease has gone on for fifty years?—But a great many go away now. All the men who were on my farm when I was young are married now in Glasgow. They were only cottars on my own farm.

5724. Then you say there has been a decrease going on for fifty years?—Not very great.

5725. So great that it is 900 in that short time, and a still greater crowding together on the crofts. Does not that mean that the land is being continually cleared? But where?—There are none cleared.

5726. We have heard from these old men of its being done?—Oh, it is not within fifty years. There has been very little clearing these fifty years. There has been no clearing at all since 1812 in Sleat, except an occasional one here and there.

5727. And how do you account both for the overcrowding and the decrease of the population?—I think there must have been always that for the last twenty-five years.

5728. But you say they are much overcrowded?—I cannot account for that. You had better account for it. You say they are fewer, and it is a fact that the land was subdivided. I cannot answer such a mathematical question as that.

5729. *The Chairman.*—You stated that, in case of one of the large farms falling vacant, you would advise an experiment to be made, that it should be offered to the crofters, and then you added that the crofters were incapable of stocking it. Without suggesting that the whole farm should be offered to the crofters, do you not think that in some cases, in which the hill pasture has been withdrawn from the crofting community, a portion of the farm might be restored to the crofters so as to enlarge their hill pasture, or to afford them hill pasture?—Added to their grazings.

5730. That a piece should be taken out of a large tack, and should be given to the crofters so as to restore a sufficient amount of hill grazing to them, always supposing they are able to pay the rent properly?—I think it would be a very good plan.

5731. But do you think such a partial restoration to the crofters might be made without seriously impairing the value of a large sheep farm?—I think it would completely destroy it, if the crofters were all round it, but if they would only be on the one side or one end of it, a piece might be taken off a large farm in some cases easily, and would still leave a very good farm.

5732. You mentioned that you attached great importance to the fencing of all the sheep pastures. Do you think it would be also desirable that the arable portion of the crofter's ground should be fenced as well as the hill pasture?—I think the arable land would do without that, because those crofts are so small that it would take a great deal of money to fence all round four acres here and four acres there, as it would be continuous. They have already a fence round their arable.

5733. I don't mean that the arable of the crofts should be separated from one another, but a ring fence should be put all round the arable?—There is a ring fence round every township I know of, to keep their own cattle or horses from eating their own corn.

5734. Is not that fence frequently very imperfect? Is it not frequently ruinous and dilapidated?—Yes, they have a certain time of the year for repairing it, and there is no damage caused by that that I have heard.

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One horse may be active and jump over it, but that they settle among themselves.

5735. There is no complaint, then, of a want of a fence round the arable?—No complaint.

5736. We have heard on several occasions complaints of the deer. Have you any knowledge of the alleged ravages caused by the deer upon crofts?—Yes, the deer came to my farm twelve or thirteen years ago—one or two came. Now, I think there are about twenty-five or thirty in the parish of Sleat, back and forward. They do no harm to anybody in Sleat except to me; but I keep them effectually away by firing shots at them in autumn. They can be easily scared; but in another township in Sleat there is one crofter who suffers very much—John Macdonald—and also one shepherd of mine. The lessee of the shootings—Mr Kettlewell—paid my shepherd for the damage, but this crofter John Macdonald never made any claim.

5737. And what you advise is to discharge shots to alarm the deer?—Yes.

5738. Do you think if the crofters discharged shot to alarm the deer, the gamekeeper, or landlord, or shooting tenant would approve of that?—No, I don't think they would, but if they knew as much as I do they would not care. I know it is a very difficult thing to shoot a deer at night, and I don't think there is a crofter who could do it.

5739. But instead of firing shots to alarm the deer, might it not be better to put up a fence?—Yes, it might be better to put a 7 feet fence round the arable of the township, but they are not so destructive as to make it worth while to put up such a fence round the whole township, because they only injure one or two people in this parish of Sleat.

5740. Then you don't think it would be advantageous to impose on the landlord the duty of putting up a deer fence?—No; I am next door neighbour myself to the deer, because I have high rocks and trees, and they come down at night; but I never would think of asking Lord Macdonald to be at the expense of putting up a 7 feet fence round my small arable.

5741. Do they get into your arable?—Yes, and it is then that I frighten them by firing at them night after night.

5742. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Then you have a grievance?—No, I don't consider it a grievance at all.

5743. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—If there were a wisely-devised emigration scheme set on foot by Government, do you think the population of this parish would take advantage of it to any extent, supposing they were to be conveyed away to desirable colonies in families?—I am afraid they would not, because the young men go already. I know some who have been in America and Australia, and will not stay there. I know two from my own farm.

Rev. ALEXANDER CAMERON, Minister of the Established Church, Sleat—examined.

Rev. Alexander Cameron.

5744. *The Chairman.*—How long have you been settled in Sleat?—Only one year and a half.

5745. *Professor Mackinnon.*—You have heard the story of the people about their distress and their bad crofts, and especially this bad year?—Yes.

5746. You quite agree in the main that the story is true?—Yes.

5747. The people are very poor?—Very poor, in the main. There are some well off, but in the main they are very poor.

5748. And without reckoning this exceptionally bad year, there are still a good many of them very poor even of late years?—Yes.

5749. You know the condition of the people in this part of the country perfectly well?—Yes, and comparing those whom I know in other parts of the country, they are decidedly poorer here, as a whole.

5750. And you have known the same class of people ever since you were a boy?—Yes.

5751. What parts of the country do you refer to?—Loch Broom, Invergarry, and Wester Ross.

5752. And you consider the people here are poorer?—So far as I have seen them, I think they are,—of the same class.

5753. How do you account for that state of matters?—I cannot account for it. I know the fact exists. That is all I can speak to.

5754. Do you attribute it very much to the subdivision of the crofts?—I do very much indeed.

5755. And that subdivision is going on from year to year?—So the people tell me.

5756. I suppose, from the reluctance of the people to leave in families: young men and women do go, but families don't?—Yes, the people themselves are very much against the subdivision. They see the folly of it, and have several times expressed their approbation of a rule to be enforced against it.

5757. But there is no rule against it on the estate, or at all events if there is it is broken?—I have heard it is, though I cannot give any authority for that.

5758. Have you turned over in your mind in any way any reasonable scheme of putting things upon a better footing?—On that I have not sufficient knowledge of this part of the country to enter. I may have thought of various things, but I have not matured anything.

5759. Have you thought of emigration?—Yes, I have. There are some who might and ought to take the advantage of it. I would not say there are very many.

5760. Have you thought of the increasing of the holdings in so far as that was practicable?—Yes.

5761. From your knowledge of the parish you know that in the large farms, if it could be had, there is a considerable amount of land quite suitable for crofters?—It used to be suitable; but I don't wish it to be understood that I want to take anybody's land from them. There is undoubtedly land suitable for crofting.

5762. We had a statement yesterday or the day before yesterday, that crofting should be distinct from fishing, made by some of the crofters themselves. Do you think the fishing in the district might be developed in such a way as that some of the people could become fishermen and so, by that means, increase also the crofts of those that remain?—And give up their crofts altogether?

5763. Yes, unless they might have a potato patch and a cow?—Yes, but so far as possible I do not see why they should not be fishermen on a small scale and have a croft too. By a small scale, I mean going across to Loch Hourn. I do not think they can possibly fish in the way the east coast fishermen do and carry on both occupations.

5764. If they were to engage in that pursuit they would require to give up, practically, all their croft except their potato garden?—Well, to judge from what successful fishermen are in other places, I should say so.

5765. If they had boats and appliances there is no reason why they

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should not compete with other fishermen on equal terms?—I see no reason.

5766. They are good boatmen and strong men?—They are all that.

5767. In regard to education, we have heard that the compulsory clause is not much enforced?—I am sorry to say it is not what it should be.

5768. You are a member of the board yourself?—Yes.

5769. Can that be remedied in any way?—I think it might be.

5770. How?—By various means—by trying persuasion so far as that can go, and that has been tried to a very great extent.

5771. Education has improved?—It has improved slightly, though it is not what I would wish it to be. It is improving slightly, but I quite see some steps must be taken unless it gets better than it is now.

5772. You have no doubt that in Loch Broom and Invergarry, and here as well, the general education of the country is very much improved?—Yes; no doubt about that.

5773. The common education of the people?—Yes.

5774. Every year you find an improvement?—Yes.

5775. *The Chairman.*—You heard what was stated by Mr Macdonald of Ord?—Yes.

5776. You heard Mr Macdonald stating that considerable sums of money were now brought back to this country by those who went south to work; and that there is a far greater circulation of money now than there was in former times. Do you see, within your own knowledge, any evidence of a considerable amount of money being brought into the country?—I cannot say my knowledge of the country is so great that I can say very much about it. There is undoubtedly money coming into the country from the south. I have known several instances of money being sent from the south to friends here, and undoubtedly money does come, though I cannot give you any instances of it.

5777. As to those who go to distant parts of the country, either for the purpose of fishing or for the purpose of general labour or service, are they married or unmarried?—Chiefly unmarried. Some married men do go, but they are chiefly unmarried who go, both males and females.

5778. Have you ever observed that this practice of the married men going away, separating from their families for a length of time, has a bad effect upon the morals and happiness of the people, in relaxing their domestic relations in any way?—I have no doubt that is the case. I don't know I can give instances, but I think it is possible it may, and I have no doubt it does, have a bad effect.

5779. But did you ever hear of any case of desertion of a family by the father or a husband?—I cannot charge my memory with any particular case.

5780. In general, you think they act faithfully by their families?—I think, in the main, they do.

5781. And that they bring home their wages?—In the main they do. There may be some cases in which they don't, but I think, in the main, they do.

5782. Do you know many cases of sons and daughters sending relief to their parents?—There are some cases, but they are not so numerous as they might be.

5783. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You heard the observations of Mr Graham in regard to parochial matters, but particularly about the inconvenience of having the inspector at Portree. Do you concur in that?—Yes. I intended to speak of the very great inconvenience to which the parish is subjected. It seems to me there is a difficulty connected with it, namely, that in the parish at present I do not know that there is anybody

disengaged who is very suitable to undertake the office of inspector. There are people perfectly able to do it, but they are engaged otherwise, and there is that difficulty,—a difficulty which is not insurmountable,—but at present a very serious inconvenience does exist.

5784. So far as you have observed, are the people in Sleat peaceful and well-behaved?—So far as I believe, they are.

5785. You have a considerable attendance at your church?—Yes.

5786. A regular attendance?—Yes.

5787. Are you aware that the children, up to a certain age, don't go in consequence of their clothing?—I know that that is the case, and some people even who are not children.

5788. You are able to say that?—Yes.

5789. Is it not a fact that while the head of the house, the father, is well-dressed, yet in his family there is great poverty of apparel?—Yes.

5790. This would not exist if the father was in possession of a supply of proper clothing?—Well, I should say not. If he were in a better position he would endeavour to clothe them.

5791. I mean, judging from their character and attendance?—I quite think so. I just wish to say, with regard to the soil here, that the remarks some people made might seem to imply that it was naturally bad. I don't think the soil is naturally bad. I think it is naturally fertile, but from the constant cropping it has undergone it has lost its fertility; but naturally it is a very fertile soil indeed. As regards my connection with the appointment of delegates, I fear there may be some misconception. I thought it my duty to take steps to enlighten and guide them, and the statements which were read to-day were their own statements put down at their own request.

5792. *The Chairman.*—What was the nature of the misconception you allude to?—I thought there was an observation in the evidence of one delegate that the people had not a full opportunity of expressing their wishes. If so they had themselves to blame, because they got full notice of the meeting and of the nature of the meeting too.

ALEXANDER MACDONALD, Cottar, Saasaig (65)—examined.

5793. *The Chairman.*—You have handed in a paper containing a statement of your grievance?—Yes. 'In the year 1866, I, along with seven 'other families, was removed from the township of Ferrindonald. These 'families were scattered throughout the parish, for the sake of putting 'the township into one farm, and at the time of clearing it, the first man 'who occupied it as a farm was one of Lord Macdonald's servants. This 'man, who first occupied the farm, never possessed lands on the Macdonald 'estates nor elsewhere; and I can honestly state that I had my rents paid 'to the time of being removed, not being a farthing in arrears. I improved 'my croft very extensively, and I was worthily considered the best crofter 'in the parish, and my croft still shows the great improvements I made. 'Had similar crofts been worked in the same manner, I have no hesitation 'in saying that the value of the Lord Macdonald estates would have 'greatly increased, and that crofters would not require such outside assist-'ance as they have been receiving from the south and elsewhere for some 'years. My father and grandfather were resident in the same township, 'both holding crofts, and during their lifetime ground officers to Lord 'Macdonald. The present farmer of this township of Ferrindonald only

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ISLE ORNSAY.

Alexander Macdonald.

'works my lot and my father's, which we improved, and the remaining 'five lots are in a miserable condition, without the slightest improvement. 'I am living for the last thirteen years as a cottar on one of the crofts of 'Sasaig, in a house which is not fit for a human being to live in, as the 'medical officer for this parish said when attending to my child on her 'deathbed, her sickness being brought on by the coldness and dampness 'of this house. I am still willing to take a croft and benefit myself and 'family. During all the time the croft was in my possession I never had 'cause to leave the parish, but when it was taken from me I had then to 'go to the south and elsewhere to earn a living for myself and family. I 'will be sixty-five years of age on the 10th of July first.—ALEXANDER 'MACDONALD.'

5794. Have you any other statement to add?—That the township was taken from us by that man, and fifteen other families were removed on his account also.

5795. How long ago is it?—About sixteen years ago.

5796. Who was the factor at that time?—Corrie.

5797. Did you receive any compensation for your house?—I got the value of the house I left.

5798. How much did you get?—I think it reached up to £5 or £6.

5799. What was the nature of the improvements you made upon your croft?—Draining, and putting a fence about it; and I was working that croft till it was considered an example to the country about. My father was forty years ground officer in the township, and my grandfather before him. I was farming with my father always until Lord Macdonald gave me that lot, and when Lord Macdonald died Archibald Macpherson was his grieve in Armadale, and his son a butler in the castle, and that is the way our township was cleared and the people were scattered through the country.

5800. Did you receive any compensation for your drains or dykes or fence?—No, nothing but the house.

5801. Were you inspector of the poor?—Yes, for thirteen years.

5802. Are you still inspector of the poor?—No. I had my brother as clerk. My brother was in the township, as I was myself, and he was put out of the township to another, and I was put to Camuscross. We are 4½ miles from each other. The general inspector was not thinking it suitable there should be such a distance between my clerk and myself, and I resigned for that reason. I then got to be sub-inspector under Mr Findlay.

5803. How do you earn your subsistence now?—No other way but just depending upon the crofters in the township for peats and ground on which I can plant potatoes.

ANN MACDONALD, Kilmore (60)—examined.

Macdonald.

5804. *The Chairman.*—Are you a widow?—No my husband is alive.

5805. Where is he?—At home, in the house.

5806. Why didn't be accompany you here to-day?—He is sickly.

5807. Does your husband know you have come here?—Yes.

5808. Will you be so good as to make your statement?—My husband got sick, and we had a croft from Lord Macdonald for nothing, but we wanted that the land should be left with us till our children got strong or till their father should get better. When Lord Macdonald died the lot was taken from us without warning at all. I went with £5 on the

rent day at Martinmas to the factor, but he would not take it from me, and the man who got the lot went to pay for it the day before the rest of the tenants went to pay. The factor then had the father and the children put upon the roll of paupers, and he was on the list of paupers for three months.

5809. Do you mean the factor put your husband on the list of paupers?—There was 6s. a month allowed to him for three months.

5810. What was the matter with your husband?—He went wrong in his mind.

5811. Is he still wrong in his mind?—No

5812. Do you not receive any support?—No.

5813. Why were you deprived of your house, and to whom was the house given?—The house was not taken from us. It was a broken house. The one end of it only was up.

5814. But the land was taken from you?—Yes.

5815. Whom was it given to?—To John Anderson, farm servant with Dr M'Lean, Ostaig.

5816. How much were you in arrears?—£6, I think.

5817. How many years had you been without paying your rent?—I believe there were two years or three years of arrears against us.

5818. How does your husband now support himself?—He takes turns at fishing with a little boat he has.

5819. Are your sons growing up?—Yes.

5820. Do they assist to support the family?—Yes; it is they who are helping.

5821. Have you got a cow?—We have not had a cow since that time.

[Adjourned.]

BRACADALE, SKYE, FRIDAY, MAY 18, 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.

Murdo Mackay, Struanbeg (60)—examined.

5822. *The Chairman.*—What is your occupation?—I was a cottar till last Whitsunday. I have a house.

5823. Have you been freely elected a delegate by your people?—Yes.

5824. Were there many of them present?—Yes. There were nearly as many present as are here present to-day.

5825. What statement have you got to make on the part of those who elected you?—I have a great deal to say. I remember when Dr M'Lean was tenant of Talisker, and removed two townships which are opposite here—Fiskoveg and Ardhoil. He was not long there when he left and went to Rum, where he was tacksman.

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5826. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Mention the number of families in this township?—I cannot tell the number in the township.

5827. *The Chairman.*—Can you tell about how many?—I believe the number was not under ten or twelve, between the two townships.

5828. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Where did they go?—To every place about. Some of them went to America, and others were scattered about the country. Then Hugh M'Askill became tenant of Talisker, and he removed the tenants who were in Ardfreck and Heille. There would be fifteen or sixteen families in these two townships. Some of them went to Roag and some went over the way to Snizort. He then began to remove the crofters from Ferrinlea. The number of families in it was about sixteen. He placed some near the distillery those who could not leave the township. My father was one of those removed from Ferrinlea. Some of them went to Unish, Waternish, and others to the island of Rum, some to Roag and Ulinish, wherever they could get a hole to live in.

5829. Was your father a crofter?—Yes.

5830. What rent did he pay?—£3. I then went to service, and then came to Bracadale and took land in Struan, though my house is a good price the other way, at Struan House. I was paying £5, 16s. of rent and what I could grow upon my holding would not winter one cow.

5831. To whom did you pay that?—To the tacksman of Ulinish, and though we were paying that amount of rent we would not be allowed to keep a pet sheep, and he himself had grazed his sheep for half a year over our land.

5832. They were not allowed to keep sheep themselves but the tenants sheep pastured over their ground in winter?—Yes. I have no more to say.

5833. How long is it since you came to this tack?—Twelve years.

5834. *The Chairman.*—Are we to understand that all those families who were cleared from the two places you mention, ten from one and fifteen from another—were crofters?—Yes.

5835. Then how was the tacksman or tenant able to evict them? I thought that they would have paid the rent to the landlord?—The landlord gave the place to Mr M'Askill, Talisker.

5836. With the crofters upon it?—Yes.

5837. Then they had nothing to do with the tenant?—Yes! it was to Mr M'Askill we were paying when he got the tack.

5838. What became of the land which was taken away from all those people. Was it given to the tacksman, or given to other tenants?—He added it to his own tack.

5839. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Do you represent any place except Struanbeg?—No.

5840. How many people are living in Struanbeg now?—I am the only occupant of Struanbeg.

5841. Who are the people who elected you?—The people of Struan hereabout.

5842. How many are there in Struan altogether?—Eighteen families. My croft used to be in Struanmore, and I reside in Struanbeg.

5843. Do they hold the land from the landlord or from the tenant?—We now hold from the landlord wholly.

5844. Has the landlord got possession of the farm?—Yes.

5845. You mentioned you had held land up to last year. Did you give it up of your own accord?—I did not give it up of my own accord. I could get land along with them here, but I could not remove my effects. I have no family, only my wife, and I am ill with rheumatism myself. My wife is ill.

5846. Then though you have a house you pay no rent now?—I have a cow yet, and I pay for the grazing of it. I don't know yet till we settle at Whitsunday what it will be.

5847. Are you going to pay for the cow's grass?—Yes.

5848. And for the house?—Yes, I will not refuse to pay anything that is asked of me.

5849. And you expect to be asked?—Yes.

5850. What is the customary rent in the country for a cow's grass and a house?—In Struanmore it used to be £3, 10s. for the outside pasture of a cow.

5851. And that included the house?—Without the house.

5852. What did you pay for the house?—I was paying £5, 16s. for the sort of croft I had in Struanmore.

5853. Including cow's grass?—Yes.

5854. Have the other tenants now that Lord Macdonald has the land in his own hands, any direct advantages they did not have before?—Yes, the cow's grass is not very dear now.

5855. What may their rents be now?—£2, 5s. is the outgrazing of a cow.

5856. What are they paying for their crofts?—£3, 10s. between the cow and the croft.

5857 What are they likely to keep for that?—One cow.

5858. No sheep?—No.

5859. And for every additional cow they have to pay £2, 5s?—Yes, we have no right to keep sheep. There is a fence between us and the landlord.

5860. Have you a horse?—No. There is no saying when they had the right to keep horses.

5861. What size of crofts are these?—Most of them not more than two acres of arable ground, and scarcely that much of properly arable ground.

5862. And there is some pasture with it?—Yes, now, when the fence will be put round it.

5863. But that is common pasture?—Yes. That is common pasture and they can keep on it what they choose.

5864. What like is the pasture?—Hillocks and rocks that a person cannot make use of.

5865. Do the tenants keep their cows upon it?—No, it is among the potato and corn ground they do so; it is not wide enough. They cannot get a peat till the crop is taken off the ground.

5866. How long is it since Ferrinlea was cleared out?—About forty years ago.

5867. Was your father's family in Harlosh then?—We have three brothers there.

5868. How long is it since Ardfreck and Heille were cleared?—Fifty years ago.

5869. And you cannot give the date of the clearing of Fiskoveg and Ardhoil?—Fifty-five or fifty-six years ago.

5870. You are not fit now to keep a lot or stock a lot?—I have no family, but I have an acre or two besides my house and the cow's grazing.

5871. Did you build the house in which you are?—Yes, and I am still not the better of my labour in building it. There was not a stone on the ground when I commenced it.

5872. Was it from the difficulty of shifting your house that you did not take a part of the ground with these tenants?—Yes.

5873. What would it cost to build a house?—Between £13 and £14.

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5874. Do the other tenants that have now got land from Lord Macdonald complain about anything?—They are more contented than they were before.

5875. *Mr Cameron.*—Were any of those evicted tenants who went to Unish and other places left on the ground as cottars?—Not in Minginish; none of those who were removed lived in Minginish.

5876. In fact, they are all away?—Yes.

5877. None of them had their condition changed from crofters into cottars, through land being taken away, and their houses left?—No.

5878. What was the arrangement you spoke about with regard to the sheep pasturing on your crofts in winter. Was that by a special arrangement and included in the rent you paid for the croft?—No it was no part of the agreement. But when Dr M'Lean would find our sheep in the fauk, the owner of any sheep who was not prepared to pay half a crown on the spot for it would have the ears of his sheep cut close to its skull at once.

5879. But under what arrangement was the tacksman at liberty to put his sheep on the grazings of the crofters?—It was no part of our agreement about the lot.

5880. Was any money paid by the tacksman to the crofters for the pasturing of those sheep?—No, it was no part of our agreement with the tacksman of Ulinish that his sheep should graze on our lots for six months of the year.

5881. Did they stray there or were they put there?—We had a shepherd protecting our crofts, and we also had our crofts enclosed with a dyke during the crop time, but when it was reaped the sheep came in upon us.

5882. At the present moment do any of the large tacksmen send their sheep upon the crofters' pasture for six months of the year and pay the crofters for it?—I don't know of any instance of that for some time past. There are others here who may tell.

5883. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—It is about twelve years since you came to Ulinish?—Yes.

5884. And you agreed to pay £5, 16s. for the croft you had?—Yes.

5885. You took it from the tacksman of Ulinish?—Yes.

5886. And it was part of your bargain that his sheep for a part of the year were to have the wintering of the croft?—There was no word of that when I took the croft. I found that rule existing when I came to Ulinish. I found that practice existing in the time of my predecessor.

5887. Did you know the tacksman was to have the wintering of the crofts?—Yes, I knew that that practice existed.

5888. *Professor Mackinnon.*—If you kept up the fence yourself could you not have kept out the sheep?—A turf dyke would not keep them out.

5889. But if the turf dyke was kept up would it prevent them getting in?—We never tried to keep them out.

5890. So they just got over the wall and came in because there was better pasture?—Yes.

5891. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You say you would like a little land near where your house is. In whose possession is the land that adjoins your house?—It is in the hands of Macleod of Macleod.

5892. Have you applied to Macleod or his factor for a bit?—I asked the factor twice for a bit of ground near the house, and I have not got it yet.

5893. Do you expect to get it?—I would be expecting it, but I don't know if I will get it.

5894. Who was the factor?—Mr Macdonald of Portree.

5895. In regard to the story of the evictions, beginning with Dr

M'Lean, how soon after M'Lean got possession of the tack did he remove the people. Were they there for a year or two?—I think he was not long in Talisker when he began the work, but I cannot tell how long.

5896. I repeat the same question in regard to M'Askill. How long was he in possession before he began to remove them?—M'Askill would be about a year or two in possession when he commenced the clearances.

5897. Did those people get summonses from the sheriff court to remove, or did they go of their own accord?—They were warned to remove.

5898. Did you see the warning and read it?—I could not read it then. I saw him get the paper and all the people get it also.

5899. Was the summons at the instance of the proprietor, or tacksman, or both?—I cannot tell; I cannot be sure—the people were so ignorant at that time. People who are so ignorant are removed for nothing.

5900. I presume there are other large farms in Bracadale here besides Talisker?—M'Askill had them all. He had Minginish entirely, and it is now in two tacks.

5901. Who are the tenants?—The Camerons—Mr Cameron, Talisker, and Mr Cameron, Glenbrittle.

5902. Do you know John M'Askill, Ferrinlea?—Yes.

5903. Is he here to-day?—Yes.

5904. Is he a delegate?—Yes.

5905. Do you know an old man named Mathieson?—Yes; he is here.

5906. Is he a delegate?—Yes.

5907. Were the people, so far as you know—the numerous families you have referred to as having been removed by M'Lean and M'Caskill—in comfortable circumstances?—Yes, they were that. They had cattle and horses and sheep at that time.

5908. Are you aware they were in arrear?—No. I know that some of those who were removed had money to get from M'Leod, the landlord.

5909. Do you mean by that, that they deposited money with him?—They were at that time earning it in making the road.

5910. Have any of those evictions you refer to taken place under the present M'Leod?—It was in the time of the present M'Leod's father that the clearances were made—in Dr M'Lean's time.

5911. Do you recollect whether the M'Askill clearances were also in the time of the late M'Leod?—The clearances in M'Askill's time were made in the present landlord's day.

5912. Are you aware of any family among these numerous families that were removed in this manner, and that settled down in Skye, that they have become prosperous or risen in the world?—Yes; the family of one of them is in Roag. His sons are doing well. None of the heads of the families are alive. Another family of them went to Durinish; those who went to Unish were again scattered.

5913. *The Chairman.*—I want to understand more about the price of your cow's grass. Supposing a man who has got land wishes to hire summer grazing for a cow from a tacksman, how much does he pay for the summer grazing?—It is £2, 5s. I paid.

5914. I thought you said something about £3, 10s.?—It was £3, 10s. in the time of the tacksman.

5915. But what is the common price in the country. What is it usual to pay to the tacksman?—I don't know indeed.

5916. When you paid £3, 10s. to the tacksman, was that an unusual price. Was it more than common?—Yes; it was £3 that was paid at first, but the manager laid on an additional 10s.

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5917. Would you say £3 was the ordinary price paid to a tacksman?—Yes.

5918. How many months does the cow graze on the hill in the summer?—From Whitsunday to Martinmas.

5919. How does the man who has got no ground get the winter keep for his cow?—Buying from those who can afford to sell.

5920. How much would it cost you to buy the wintering?—About £5 or more.

5921. Then the whole expense for keeping a cow—summer grazing and winter keep—to a man who has no land, would be about £8?—Yes.

5922. Is it better for a family to have a cow, and to pay £8 for the whole year, than to have no cow at all?—We would be better without the cow if the people were healthy, but where there are sickly people they would need the milk.

5923. You spoke about cutting the ears of sheep. I understood you to say that if the crofters kept the sheep and did not pay 2s. 6d., then the ears of the sheep were cut off. Did you ever see the ears of a sheep cut off?—Yes, I did see that in Dr M'Lean's fank at Talisker. I never saw it before or since.

5924. Was that a punishment of Dr M'Lean's invention, or is it the custom in this country?—I never saw it with anybody but himself.

5925. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Had you any name for that mode of marking sheep?—No, we had no particular name.

5926. Did you ever hear it called the thief's mark?—Yes, I heard it called the thief's mark.

5927. *The Chairman.*—Have you any further statement to make?—No.

JOHN M'CASKILL, Shoemaker and Cottar, Ferrinlea (43)—examined.

John M'Caskill.

5928. *The Chairman.*—Have you been freely elected a delegate?—Yes.

5929. How was the election conducted. Did the people meet freely together without any influence, or was it managed by the clergy or anybody else?—By their own free will entirely.

5930. Have you any statement to make on the part of the people of Ferrinlea?—I can speak concerning the commencement of the clearances. I have learned from older people than myself that they commenced seventy years ago at first—then by Dr M'Lean, as a former delegate said, from Talisker side. M'Askill had only Rhu Dunan in his possession at that time. Glenbrittle was occupied by crofters in comfortable circumstances, and it is likely he asked for Glenbrittle; but, at all events, he got it, and cleared it, and made a sheep run of it. We don't know how many families there were, but at that time there was a church in Glenbrittle, and there is nobody there now to use it. The church is now in ruins, and the manse is converted into a shepherd's house. M'Askill was clearing on the Glenbrittle side, and the doctor was clearing on the Talisker side, from one to the other, and, as Murdo Mackay said, Dr M'Lean was not long in possession of Talisker when he had to leave it, and I understand that his circumstances to-day are such that he is on the poor's roll or the next thing to it.

[*Sheriff Nicolson.*—Are you not aware that he died some years ago?—I am not.]

There were in Duisdale about a dozen families of crofters in comfortable circumstances. Some of these went abroad, and as Murdo Mackay mentioned, some went to the parish of Durinish, some to the parish of Snizort, and others to the cities. These clearances were going on under Dr M'Lean on the one side, and M'Askill of Rhu Dunan on the other. I will take the tack of Rhu Dunan at first. The M'Askills cleared Rhu

and a township called Saatran, Glenbrittle, Mercadale, Trean, Crackinish, Brunal, Brac-einart. The people of these townships were scattered through the country, and some of them went abroad.

5931. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—How many families might there be in those townships?—I heard there were sixteen families at one time, in Crackinish, and there is nobody there now but the shepherd. There were ten or twelve in Glenbrittle. There were twenty or more families in Rhu. In Saatran there were four or five families; and there would be about six families between Trean and Mercadale. There would be six to ten families in Borlin, and in Grul, so far as I have been able to ascertain, there were not more than four or five families, and four or five in Brac-einart. I think that includes the whole of the tack of Rhu. When Hugh M'Askill succeeded the doctor, he got Talisker and the places that were cleared by Dr M'Lean, and he was barely settled when he commenced the same operations himself. Ferrinlea was a big township occupied by thirty families when he got it.

5932. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—When where these families removed?—About fifty years ago. I belong to Minginish, and in regard to it there was Borlin—a big township in which there were twelve families. The township was called Loch Learish.

5933. What became of the twelve families?—They were scattered through the world by the same person. A family was in Borlin called M'Leod. The M'Leod family commenced the clearances, and M'Askill finished them. There were two Fiskavegs and two Ardhoils. The families occupying these have been given already. There was another township called Carbostbeg, near Ferrinlea. There were four families there, very well off; and the daughter of a widow who was living there told me that her father gave Hugh M'Askill when he came to Talisker £180 to help him, and M'Askill put the widow out of the place after that. He cleared Carbostbeg for himself for the purpose of erecting a distillery in Carbost. The same widow's daughter told me she saw her father's corn shovelled out into the river when seeking a place for the distillery.

5934. *The Chairman.*—Is that the whole list of clearances you have to mention?—No; as I said, what the Assyrians left undone the Babylonians finished.

5935. You refer to the present tacksmen as Babylonians?—Yes.

5936. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—What about them?—Those whom I named before are dead, and I want now to speak about the living. I will begin with Mr Cameron, Talisker, as he succeeded M'Askill.

5937. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Is that the present tacksman?—The present tacksman. He got the tack thirty-three years ago, and when he came on he made up his mind that there should be nobody in the place at all, for M'Askill had left remaining some of the people for his own convenience. When Mr Cameron came to Talisker he was not to do with any of the people, and as I have understood, he began to litigate with the landlord, holding out that the people being allowed on the tack was not mentioned in the lease. For five years he would have nothing to do with this. He would give us nothing, and he would keep nothing from us. The matter then came that he would have to take the tack as he got it, or leave it, and he stuck to it. He then deprived the cottars of the grazing which they had, and grazing for cows could no longer be got, not for twenty years or so. He took from us our peat mosses, and gave us a bog which neither man nor beast made use of up to that time.

5938. Was that for peat?—For peat moss, and that was measured out to us by the yard a lot for each family. In Fiskaveg, where cottars had

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been left by M'Askill also, they were deprived of their peat mosses. There was bad land near their houses which could not be called earth or moss, and the poor people had to cut their soil as it was to make fuel of. Then he removed ten cottar families which had been left by M'Askill in Cortenanshiarich, and before them there were ten to twelve families in Ferrinlea, and he made places for the Cortenanshiarich families on the land which these ten or twelve families had in Ferrinlea before them. He deprived the township of Ferrinlea also of a piece of land for the accommodation of his shepherd. Then he took ten or eleven families from Fiskaveg and another township and put them into Ferrinlea also, and again divided the existing holdings to make room for them. We were under the necessity of attending to the tacksman of Talisker on any day he would require us to work; and when paying us, a strong man, should he be as strong as Samson, would only get 1s. a day, and our women 6d. a day, and do the work according to where the work was,—nine or ten miles,—besides doing the work, whatever we would be at,—I have an instance myself, in my own case,—whatever we were at, for we had to support ourselves. I myself am a shoemaker, having learned the trade, and my brother also, and we would have to leave our work and attend to the tacksman's work. We, who are engaged in trade, sometimes get credit to the extent of £40 for our trade purposes, and we would be losing our business for the sake of doing Talisker's work at 1s. a day. He commenced to complain of us as a family, when I would not work and my brother would not, and that was the same thing. He commenced to complain of the manner in which we were working. We were attending to our work. My mother was the head of our family. She is a widow, and we were working for her and supporting her. I am the eldest of the boys; and the very day he was complaining of the inefficiency of the work my brother was working for him. He commenced to complain, and I understood it would not be easy to satisfy him in any way. I said to him I could not stop my work for him entirely, and that I would pay him the equivalent of our work according to the rate of wages in the country; and because I had the boldness to say that to him—to shorten my story my mother and myself were served with a summons of removal. There was nothing now for it but that I should either apologise to the tacksman and sign the paper that I would be obedient to him at any time, or I would leave the country with the whole of our family.

5939. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—What was your mother's age?—About seventy-five. When my brother saw what was likely to be, he went to Talisker to make the peace, and he said he would go in for the land, and to let the matter pass by. We have been allowed to remain on that footing.

5940. *Mr Cameron.*—In regard to the present condition of the people, you say you are a shoemaker. Do you follow any other occupation?—No, but I sell a little groceries.

5941. You are a sort of merchant?—Yes.

5942. How long have you been engaged in that occupation?—About twenty years now.

5943. When you commenced that business did you start with any capital, or did you start from small beginnings?—I began shoemaker twenty years ago. About nine or ten years ago I commenced to sell groceries.

5944. So you began gradually without any stock at all?—Yes, and by the good opinion which the merchants from whom I was getting my goods had of me.

5945. What sort of house do you live in now?—Middling good. It is built with stone and lime now.

5946. Did you build it yourself?—Yes.

5947. You must have been in pretty good circumstances to have done that?—As a family we are diligent. We can employ ourselves on sea as well as land. There are three brothers of us, and every one is helping the family yet.

5948. So you throve pretty well, in spite of this little difficulty with Talisker?—Yes, in the course of providence; but little thanks to Talisker, or anything we were getting from him.

5949. Judging from your statement, I should suppose that the people in this district have some money to spend upon groceries and such like—shoes and such things as you have to sell?—Yes, it is with money and that that they are paying for the shoes, but money earned in many ways—earned by fishing and work outside the country—sailors, over the whole world.

5950. Do you give much credit to your customers?—Yes, six months; I myself am getting that.

5951. Are they much indebted to you?—Yes, many of them are sunk in debt to an extent that they can never pay.

5952. Are there any other merchants in the place besides yourself?—Not in my township.

5953. In the district?—Yes.

5954. Will you name them?—Alexander Mathieson and Catherine M'Caskill, post-mistress—she began this year to keep a few groceries. That is all I know. There is another girl named Cameron—she keeps little groceries; but these are all.

5955. Have those people succeeded in their business as well as you have done?—I cannot say about their circumstances.

5956. Apparently, judging from their houses and their general appearance?—Alexander Mathieson's circumstances appear to be as good as mine.

5957. What do you charge for some of the various articles you sell? For instance, what do you charge for tea?—Three shillings.

5958. Never any more?—No.

5959. Nor any less?—No, that is the common price.

5960. What do you charge for meal per stone?—Three shillings.

5961. What would that be a boll?—24s. a boll—17½ lb. per stone.

5962. What do you charge for a pair of men's shoes?—12s. in general, and 9s. for women's shoes.

5963. And a pair of men's boots?—17s., and 12s. for women's boots.

5964. Are these the prices usually charged?—I cannot say. I am more afraid when the time for my own payment comes, that I will have to borrow the money.

5965. How did you know about the litigation of which you spoke between Talisker and the landlord?—As I was hearing from the people of the place.

5966. Did Talisker tell you of it?—No.

5967. Did the landlord tell you of it?—No.

5968. Or the lawyer?—No.

5969. Did you read it in the newspapers?—No, but Mr Cameron of Talisker told me that the landlord had blamed him for his usage of the people.

5970. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—I understand the landlord did not wish the people to be removed?—I can say, with regard to the first clearances, that were it not for M'Leod's interference there would not be a representative alive of the families of the original inhabitants of the district to bear testimony to-day.

5971. I understand that the present Cameron of Talisker had a dispute

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about the clearances between him and the landlord?—Yes, that was what caused the dispute.

5972. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Does Talisker exact his labour at 1s a day from every one of the cottars on his farm?—Yes.

5973. Can he select one in preference to another, or does he take them evenly all over? Does he call on one oftener than on another?—His plan is that he divides the townships into districts, and he requires the people, so many from the one district to-day, and so many from the other the next day.

5974. What is the kind of work on which he employs them?—Field work.

5975. Does it occur at all times of the year?—Yes, at all times, when the work is there to be performed.

5976. On an average, how many days in the year are you or your family called upon to work for Talisker at 1s. a day?—He ceased to make up accounts with us the last few years, and I do not remember the number of days the work would amount to.

5977. Would you tell us something about the number of days—once a week or twice a week?—Three days a week, by dividing the people into two companies and calling upon the one upon each alternate day.

5978. Are you actually employed at Talisker each alternate day through the year?—In spring and summer and harvest—while field work is being done.

5979. How many such tenants has Talisker on his farm?—Twenty-three or twenty-four families, and three families in Glen Einart.

5980. Fifty years ago there were thirty families. How many of these families were evicted?—Twenty families.

5981. And there were ten left?—Yes.

5982. What lands were left to those ten?—A park which was in the township.

5983. Was it the same land they held before?—It was part of the land they held before.

5984. Had those ten the same rights with regard to sheep and cattle which they had before?—Before twenty families were cleared the township had sheep and cattle and hill pasture, but afterwards they were reduced to one cow, but some had two.

5985. Did they take away the right to the grazing of these cows?—Yes.

5986. Do I understand you to say they got it back again?—We got the grazing of one cow back a few years ago.

5987. And there are twenty-eight families now with one cow's grass each?—No, they have only, between them, seven cows.

5988. Is that because they are not entitled to keep them, or because they are too poor?—There were some of those who had not cows, who were refused to be allowed to keep them.

5989. I understand you to say that some who might have had them were too poor to keep them?—Yes, and some were refused.

5990. Do you pay anything for this cow's grass beyond the service you render?—We pay a fixed sum for the cow's grass of £4.

5991. Each cow?—Yes, and that for the cow's outfeeding. We have to winter the cow besides.

5992. The cow has the right to go on the hill through all the year, I suppose?—Yes.

5993. Do the cottars pay anything more for their house rent or for their croft?—The croft is two acres and a chain, and we are charged £2 for that, and we were paying that £2 with our work if our work amounted to as much, and if not we had to make up the balance in money. A few years

ago he ceased making accounts with us for the land, but we have to attend to his work any time he wants us.

5994. But now you pay £4 in money and give the labour required of you free?—We give work in the name of rent for our croft.

5995. And in the days when there was an account kept, you did not practically work forty days in the year?—We have to take into account that very often the women would be working.

5996. But had you oftener to pay a balance to Talisker or to get it?—When we were making up accounts it often happened that we would have to pay money to him, but when settling for the cow's grazing we have often got 30s., the balance of the price of our stirks, as he himself bought our stirks.

5997. To what age are you allowed to keep your stirks on the grass?—A year.

5998. What price are you getting for stirks?—Sometimes £5, 10s.; we got that last year.

5999. Are you obliged to sell stirks to Talisker?—We never refused them, as he was in the way of buying them.

6000. Would he give as good a price as any other man for them?—We cannot be sure. Buyers were not coming our way.

6001. Have you any ground of complaint on that score?—I don't think we have.

6002. *The Chairman.*—Does Talisker allow you to find a substitute for your labour for him? May a man hire another man to do his work for him?—Yes.

6003. Have you been in the habit of finding a substitute for yourself?—When we had a servant we would be sending her.

6004. You mean a woman servant?—Do you ever hire a man as a substitute?—No; when there was man's work to be done, one of ourselves had to go.

6005. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Are you aware that the population of this parish has been falling off rapidly for many years?—Yes.

6006. Is there not plenty room for all the crofters and others now remaining in Bracadale to get good sized crofts without much interfering with the two tacks?—Yes.

6007. Is there or is there not a lot of fine land that was once under cultivation upon these tacks, and that is now out of cultivation?—Yes; every township is. I may say the whole parish of Bracadale is one sheep tack altogether, and at one time it was supporting a population of 4000, before the clearances commenced.

6008. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—I have no doubt you believe that to be true, but the largest population of Bracadale was in 1821, when it was 2103, from which it has fallen to 922.

6009. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—The previous witness stated he wanted a small piece of land near his own house, and he did not know whether he would get it or not. Now do you want any land, if you could get it?—Yes, I want land also.

6010. Are you quite able to stock a nice croft?—If the land had been left which our forefathers had, there would have been no occasion to ask that of us to-day. The stock would have descended to us.

6011. But are you able to stock a large croft?—I will tell you this, and it is the mind of the people that I speak; if we would get the land at a reasonable rent, and what we call fixity of tenure, we would get plenty who have money to assist us in stocking that land.

6012. You would not require the assistance of Government, as some people in other localities have told us. You would require private

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assistance?—In whatever way we would get it, I do not know what would be the best way, but we would get it.

6013. Is not the lease of Talisker about to expire?—It has seven or eight years to run yet.

6014. *Mr Cameron.*—Do you know the value of the stock upon Talisker?—That is not easy for me to tell.

6015. Do you know whether the incoming tenant is not bound to take it all?—That is the practice that is going.

6016. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Is the tack of Ulinish, upon which we are now sitting, in the landlord's own hands?—Yes, since the death of the last tacksman, and the lease being expired also.

6017. Why don't you and the others go to M'Leod and ask to get proper crofts out of Ulinish? Have you not done so, and if not why have you not done so?—We in our place are so much distressed with removings that it is hardly easy for people to make flittings who are sunk in poverty. And perhaps, even after they had flitted to Ulinish, they might, in a short time, be evicted to make room for sheep again.

6018. Do you give that as the only reason for not making application to M'Leod?—Yes; there is land enough about us, near us, and we are not as a people able to leave and to build new houses. We are tired of that work, and we don't know what time we may be turned out. That is a sufficient reason.

6019. Has M'Leod himself been here, and is it a long time ago?—He comes generally every autumn.

6020. Does he converse with the people?—Yes, he will be speaking to those who are near himself; but we don't go near him at any time.

ALEXANDER M'CASKILL, Cottar, Cuilore, Drynoch (65)—examined.

Alexander M'Caskill.

6021. *The Chairman.*—Have you been freely elected?—Yes, by the people of the township.

6022. What statement have you to make on the part of those who have appointed you?—I have not much to say. I have never seen any of them better off than myself.

6023. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—How long have you been in Cuilore?—Fifty years.

6024. Was your father there before you?—Yes.

6025. How many families are there?—Eleven.

6026. Has the number increased or diminished in your time?—Very much decreased.

6027. How have the numbers diminished?—Some were living, many of them dying.

6028. Are they crofters or cottars?—Poor people—cottars.

6029. What rent do they pay generally?—£2 for a long time now, but before then it was £1.

6030. When was it raised?—Forty years ago.

6031. What cattle, if any, are you allowed to keep?—We are not allowed to keep a cow at all. But some of us keep one on a rope on our land. The land was not giving crops.

6032. How many families keep a cow?—Five.

6033. Have they any sheep or horses?—Some have two or three sheep tethered, and keeping them on tether, and others have none at all.

6034. Were they better off formerly than they are now?—No.

6035. Had they never more land?—No, not to my recollection, but in my father's time.

6036. Had they a hill then?—Yes.

6037. Was it taken from them to be given to the farm of Drynoch?—Yes.

6038. How do they make their living at Cuilore?—Going every year to the south and elsewhere to work for wages.

6039. Do they make anything by fishing in the loch?—No, there is no fishing there at all.

6040. Do their young men go away to the fishing in other parts?—Some of them. Some are sailors, and these again help those at home.

6041. Have any of them ever petitioned for an increase of their land or pasture?—I do not think they did. I am not aware.

6042. Have they any particular grievances besides the smallness of the land they have?—The smallness of our holdings is what presses most upon us.

6043. Have there been people removed from the farm of Drynoch in your recollection?—Yes, all in our township have been taken off other townships.

6044. What other townships?—Some in Meddale, some in Somerdale, some in Craigbreac, some in Bendhu.

6045. Where are these places?—Up Loch Harport. There is not a creature there to-day. They are all crowded into Cuilore.

6046. Can you mention the places from which the people have been removed, and the time, if possible?—Yes, I can mention many of them. Meddale was first cleared, and I think there were ten or twelve families in it. There were ten families in Somerdale; in Craigbreac ten or eleven families, and six families in Bendhu. I myself remember these.

6047. When was the first?—About forty years ago.

6048. Who was the tacksman of Drynoch at that time?—Norman M'Leod, father of Martin M'Leod.

6049. Then the Somerdale people?—At the same time. The whole of them were cleared at the same time.

6050. And all their land was added to the farm of Drynoch?—Yes, and all these townships are now vacant.

6051. Where did they go to?—Many of them at that time went to America.

6052. Where did the rest go to?—All who could went to America and other places, and those of them who were poorly, and could not flit, and could not emigrate, remained at home, and were sent to Cuilore.

6053. Have you heard how the people who went to America succeeded?—Some succeeded, and some did not.

6054. The tacksman before the last went to America himself?—Yes.

6055. Are you abliged to work for the present tacksman?—Yes.

6056. How much?—Any day he requires us.

6057. Could anything be done to you if you refused to go?—I am sure the tacksman would not wish us to refuse.

6058. What payment do you get?—It was 1s. a day at first, and recently we have been getting 1s. 6d. a day for men's wages, and 6d. until recently for women, when the wages were raised to 10d.

6059. Have you heard of anybody being threatened with eviction for not working?—Yes, the man is in the house.

6060. What is his name?—Alexander Cameron.

6061. Has he got warning?—I think he did.

6062. *Mr Cameron.*—Is Alexander Cameron a cottar or a crofter?—He is just as we are.

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6063. A cottar?—A cottar.

6064. Is it understood the cottars are supposed to do labour for the tacksman on whose farm they live?—Yes, that is understood. They are doing the work.

6065. Is the difference between crofter and cottar that the crofter has land and farms it, and that the cottar has no land, but only a cow, and is supposed to work on the farm of the tacksman?—Yes, that is the difference.

6066. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Speaking of the farm of Drynoch, you have described the townships that were cleared, I don't think you have done the whole. I am informed ten townships were cleared by Captain M'Leod?—Yes, I know that. They were cleared by the father of the captain.

6067. Then name them, besides the others you have already mentioned, and the number of the families?—Ferrinnan-caillach.

6068. How many families were evicted there?—I don't know how many families were there. There were five or six.

6069. What was the next?—Colbost; there were four or thereby. Glen Bracadale; there were about two families there. Glen-na-chadhaloch; there were three families there, but these were removed before my time.

6070. Any more?—Invermeadle; five or six families there. Boust; four families. There is not a creature in any of these townships now unless the shepherd.

6071. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Do you pay any rent for your land besides the labour?—No.

6072. But you get 1s. a day?—Yes, if we have any balance to get after paying our rent.

6073. Do you generally have a balance to get?—In the case of some they get money back.

6074. Does this prevent them going away from home to work?—No, the tacksman is not preventing us going to another place to work.

6075. They are only bound to work when at home?—Yes, that is the case.

6076. *The Chairman.*—Does the tacksman allow them to find a substitute?—Yes.

6077. As to the shepherds who remain upon the large farms, are they generally people of the country, or are they brought from the north or south of Scotland?—Some of them are fetched from other counties.

6078. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Have you any inconvenience in the supply of your peats?—We have no inconvenience in getting peats.

6079. Was there a wood growing at Cuilore once?—I did not see it. It was rocky and bushy, I believe.

DONALD M'QUEEN, Bracadale (about 90)—examined.

Donald M'Queen.

6080. *The Chairman.*—What is your occupation?—I took up the profession of religion when I was young. When the Rev. Mr Shaw was minister here, I went as a teacher to the island of Soay under the Religious Education Society.

6081. When you were a young man, do you remember if it was still the custom in this country to go up into the mountains for summer pasture, and live in shealings?—Yes, it was the practice in the island.

6082. Did many of the people do it?—I cannot tell if there were many, but it was the habit in some places.

6083. Was it a great convenience to the people to be able to do that?—Yes, it must have been a convenience to them, for they had cattle and sheep and horses, and was not that a convenience to them when they had cattle and sheep and horses on the hills; and the shealings, therefore, were a convenience.

6084. Was everybody allowed to go up and take his summing of cattle as he liked, or was it set off for particular places and particular numbers?—I am not sure about these things, but the hill pastures were common. I cannot go particularly into these things, for I was not personally concerned with them.

6085. Do you think, from your recollection, that the people of those days were better off and happier than they are now?—Is it not likely they would be better off in their circumstances and more contented, when they would have food and cattle and sheep and houses of their own in plenty, as they have not to-day?

6086. Was there more religion in the country in those days than there is now?—I have seen a great deal of the power of the gospel. I saw at first a revival begin at Trotternish, and spreading through the island. I have seen again the Rev. Mr Shaw in Bracadale—it was he who brought me here—and I then saw the Rev. Mr M'Leod, and in his time the gospel had great power, and was spreading through the district in Trotternish and M'Leod's country and Durinish and over other places.

6087. Long ago were there many of the people who had not been baptised?—I don't think there were.

6088. Are the people all baptised now?—I don't know how they are in that way. I believe there are some unbaptised.

6089. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—You say that in your young days you had plenty of everything. Do you recollect of any destitution in families at that time?—I remember of an occasional summer when people would be buying a little meal that would be coming into the country—barley meal.

6090. Don't you recollect times when people used to feed upon shellfish for want of anything else?—I did not see much of that.

6091. Do you think there is any difference in the character of the people since these former times?—During the most of my time I have seen in this district plenty of food of all sorts—flesh and fish and milk—as Sheriff Nicolson well knows, who was reared in Bracadale. I have seen Mr M'Leod who was in Ebost, when that farm was a granary supplying food of all sorts to people as they required it, and a number of townships belonging to the crofters themselves. Three glens were in the hands of the people about here, and other places as well, and Minginish over on the other side of the loch—as likely you have got account of—in possession of people, and it is now under sheep.

6092. Were there not also a good many crofters at Ulinish?—Yes, there were some that had cows grazing from tacksmen, as the remains of their houses will evidence.

6093. Have they all been removed from Ulinish and Ebost?—I don't know. I believe there are some there yet. I was away out of the district when these changes were brought about. I was in Waternish, for the most part of twenty years, before I came back, and I cannot know very well how these things were. I don't wish to speak by guess. I may say this, that there are sixty years since I went to Soay, and I was in this district before going there close upon twenty years. I was a good part of twenty years in Waternish, and have been since then a good while in this district, and I believe this district is now in a worse condition than it has been all that time.

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Donald M'Queen.

6094. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Have you heard of the white peas, when there was a scarcity of food, and peas were brought into the country in 1783?—I don't know if I was born at that time.

6095. *The Chairman.*—In connection with the clearances, did you yourself witness a great deal of sorrow and suffering?—I did not see many of these clearances. I am not going to say what I do not know.

ALEXANDER MATHIESON, Cottar and Merchant, Carabost (53)—examined.

Alexander Mathieson.

6096. *The Chairman.*—Have you any land?—I have a small bit of land.

6097. Have you been freely elected by the people of Carabost?—Yes.

6098. Have you any statement to make on the part of the people of Carabost?—I have to complain of their poverty and the miserable houses that they have. The families till they are grown up have to sleep in the same room. It is a sheer violation of human nature. Our meal mill has gone to ruin, and for the past twenty years there has not been a peck of meal ground in it. I remember being with my father waiting for a whole week to get my turn at the mill. That was before the first potato blight. It is the prevalent opinion that we were grinding between 300 and 400 bolls annually in this parish previous to the first potato blight.

6099. *The Chairman.*—Do you mean the potato blight of 1836, or the other?—Previous to 1846.

6100. *Mr Cameron.*—Are the houses at Carabost worse than the houses in other parts of the island?—They are none of them better anywhere.

6101. But are they worse? You talk of families living in one room. Did not they do that in other places?—I think they are. Most of them are very bad.

6102. You heard the witness who gave evidence about the shop and the goods which he sold to the people?—Yes.

6103. Do you sell your goods at the same price he sold his at?—Mostly about the same price.

6104. There was one item he was not asked about; what is the price of sugar?—The average is 5d. for good crystallised sugar.

6105. The previous witness said you had been very successful in your business. Is that so?—I manage to make both ends meet.

6106. Do the people find it very difficult to pay the debts that are owing to you? Have you many bad debts?—Yes, a lot of them; but they cannot help it. As a rule, the cottars are as honest a people as are under the canopy of heaven, if they could be so.

6107. They may be honest, and yet poor?—Yes, if they had the means.

6108. What is your opinion about the state of the people now compared with what it was when you first set up your shop?—They are sinking more in debt.

6109. Still they seem to spend a good deal upon articles of groceries and similar articles?—As a rule, tea and sugar, as they have no meal. Most of them have no meal, and that is the only thing they have to put down their morsel of bread.

6110. Do most of the people buy tea and sugar, and use it?—Yes.

6111. You sell bacon and cheese?—Yes.

6112. Do the people buy the bacon and cheese too?—Just a very

small quantity, and I very seldom sell bacon or cheese, but I keep a little.

6113. Where do the people get the money which enables them to buy these stores?—A lot of the money comes from the market towns, Glasgow and Greenock, and from manufacturing towns, and from people going to fishing and earning money. There is no money to be earned in Skye.

6114. Do they earn much money amongst the tourists?—No, there are very few tourists come this length.

6115. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You have heard a previous witness speak about the evictions upon Talisker and Glenbrittle and Drynoch. There were two other large farms. Can you give any evidence about Ulinish and Ebost?—Only what I heard. I heard about the evictions by Dr M'Lean and Talisker—that was called the Reign of Terror.

6116. We have heard of it, but I want you to tell of any people that have been removed from Ulinish and Ebost?—I heard so, but I cannot mention particulars.

6117. Is there anybody here who can tell the particulars?—There is a delegate here.

6118. Is there a Donald Cameron from Ulinish here?—Yes.

6119. Can you give us any information about the evictions upon any other places in the parish except the three places mentioned?—That is all. I don't mind of any except what was mentioned.

6120. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—You go back to the year 1846. You have always lived at Carabost?—I was for some time absent from the country.

6121. How many people are there in Carabost now?—Very, very poor.

6122. How many families?—There are ten or twelve families.

6123. How many families were there in 1846?—Double that number.

6124. Then the evictions took place after that?—There were no evictions after that, but evictions before that. The people flitted out of it after the potato blight.

6125. It was not on account of the evictions that they left, but on account of the potato famine?—Yes, about Carabost.

6126. And that is the reason there is not so much demand for a meal mill?—Yes, and the smallness of the crofts.

6127. When were the crofts made small?—Upwards of forty years ago.

6128. Since 1846?—Yes.

6129. I am talking of the year when you had to wait a whole week at the mill?—That was before that.

6130. Then the want of the demand for a mill arises from this, that the people have left the country on account of the potato famine?—Some of them.

6131. And others have had land taken from them since that time?—Yes.

6132. What places have had land taken from them since that time? There were some at Carabost?—Yes, and a lot of them emigrated to Australia at the time of the famine.

6133. Were there many people who went of their own free will?—Yes.

6134. Is that the cause why the population has decreased so much?—Yes, and a lot went to Glasgow and Greenock and a great deal of them to the market towns.

6135. If there was a good mill here now would there be corn to grind at it?—Oh, they raise no crop at all.

6136. As regards the houses, they are built by the people themselves?—Yes.

6137. You are upon Talisker's ground?—Yes.

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6138. If they built a better house, would Talisker leave them in it?—Yes, I don't know of any of them being turned out. A lot of remarks were made about John M'Caskill, but I was absent from the country at the time.

6139. But I am talking of those very bad houses at Carabost which you say are too small for a family properly to live in?—Far too small.

6140. The houses are built by the people themselves; they might build bigger ones if they had the means?—Yes, they would very soon improve them if they had the means.

6141. Then it is the want of means that prevents them building bigger houses?—That is so.

6142. They are not afraid of being turned out of the bigger houses?—No, for I improved my own, and I am not afraid of being turned out.

6143. And you have no hold of it?—No more than I have of this church.

6144. *The Chairman.*—Would they be afraid of the tacksman charging them a higher rent if they improved?—No, I don't think so.

6145. If they improved their houses, you don't think they would be asked to pay a higher rent?—No, I don't think it. Their own neigbbour may take a set of it, to give more money for it.

6146. Did you ever hear that the proprietor or the tacksman or any one had offered to assist the people in getting better houses?—Never in my life.

6147. Did they ever show any interest in the lodging or the welfare of the people?—Not that I am aware of.

6148. Has the proprietor or the factor ever been in the habit of visiting the people in their own buildings and inquiring into their condition?—Never, to my knowledge; and I never heard anything about it.

6149. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You stated, in reply to Sir Kenneth Mackenzie, that several people from some of the townships emigrated. Were these cottars or crofters?—Cottars.

6150. No crofters?—No crofters on our side of the loch at all.

6151. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—The distillery where the famous whisky known as Tallisker is made is at Carabost?—Yes.

6152. We heard from M'Caskill that injury had been done to some of the people there at the very time it was erected. Has it been of any benefit to the people? Are there many of them employed in it?—There are about half a dozen of the people employed in it altogether.

6153. Has it done any injury to the people in the district?—No, but at the time of its erection they were complaining bitterly of it. They were turned out wholesale by the distillery—to make the distillery.

6154. Is any of the Carabost whisky drunk in that quarter?—Not a gill.

6155. I suppose they cannot afford it?—No, it is too dear.

6156. Where do they get their own whisky from?—From the market town—from Greenock or Glasgow.

6157. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Has that distillery ever done any good to that locality?—Not that I ever heard of, except only a few men to get employment about it.

6158. Are they people connected with the country, or are they strangers?—There is one of them in it ever since it was erected. There are strangers and natives in it both.

6159. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Have you known or heard of the people of that district having been subjected to very considerable inconvenience, amounting to persecution, after the time of the Disruption?—There was some little grievance of that kind at the time of the Disruption.

6160. What form did it take?—Well, it cooled down.

6161. Were they not obliged to worship on the sea-shore?—Yes, for a couple of years.

6162. Because they could not get a place on land?—Yes; I remember it myself.

6163. Whose fault was that? Was it the laird's or the factor's?—It was the late Hugh M'Askill and Donald M'Askill of Rhu Dunan. The landlord was not blamed for it, so far as I know.

6164. There is nothing of that sort now?—No.

6165. No disagreeable feelings between the Established Church and Free Church people?—Not that I am aware of. It has cooled down long ago.

DONALD CAMPBELL, Crofter, Struanmore (55)—examined.

6166. *The Chairman.*—Were you freely elected to be a delegate?—Yes.

6167. Have you any statement to make on the part of the people of Struanmore?—May I not tell what happened to the people that were put out of these places?

6168. Yes, let us hear it. Did you hear what was said before by Murdoch Mackay?—Yes.

6169. Then you will have the goodness to tell us something new, and not to go over the same ground?—The tack of Ulinish has now added to it five townships. There was one gentleman in Ebost and another in Ulinish, and Struanmore was in possession of a farmer, and Struanbeg was in possession of another farmer. The leases of Ulinish and Ebost being out, Mr Gibbons who was factor to M'Leod, took the tack, and added the five townships to that one tack—Colbost, Ebost, Ulinish, Struanmore, and Struanbeg. The glens above that we have heard about to-day there were tenants there. There were eleven tenants between two glens—five in Glenmore, six in Glen Colbost. I do not remember how many families were in the third glen,—Glen M'Caskill. When Gibbons took the place he put away the tenants out of the glens. They were in very comfortable circumstances, with cattle and sheep and horses. He sent them away at the term of Whitsunday. He then sent eight families out of Garamore and Ebost. There were plenty people at that time at Ebost and Ulinish. He sent five of the remaining families to a wet black place called Garamore, which had not been inhabited before. Of those who were in Ulinish he sent twenty families to Struanmore. He there gave them the corner of a piece of ground plotted out among them all, and none of them had a cow but one. He was a merchant. That was in 1841. They are there cultivating that ground every year for the past forty years. He left three or four neighbours. My father was one of them, and these were not at all the best off. He compelled them to give him four days' work cutting peats each year, and for which he was giving them a lippie of meal. Mr Gibbons was fifteen years in possession of the place. Then his lease expired, and he left the tack with Mr Norris, his nephew. I was living in Ulinish, and he was not better than Gibbons. If a son married in a man's family the father dared not give him shelter for a night. All the young men that we had must needs leave and go to the cities, and every one who married in this way would have to leave. The tenants, when they became old, were becoming poorer till they came to be on the poor list, as their children were not allowed to remain with

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them. After Norris there was another farmer, Mr Simpson, a brother-in-law of Mr Norris, who took up the farm. He was not a residenter. He had a manager on the farm, and that manager was the worst that ever came to us. He was treating the people very badly. He was ten years in the place. I should have told that five other families went to Australia of their own free will, to try and better their circumstances. Mr Robert Macdonald took the farm after Mr Simpson. Mr Macdonald raised the wages of the people to 2s. and some to 2s. 6d. per day. It is twelve years since he came into the farm, and he remained in possession eleven years, when he died. Now, as we had been reduced to such poverty, during all that time, we sent last year a petition to the landlord asking him to give us land or better justice than we had experienced. We got a reply through the factor that we were to get something, but we did not get what we requested. He enlarged our holdings a little more, and he gave leave to every one of us who had not a cow to get one. This enabled every one who had not a cow to get one. The factor also put a fence between us and him. The place is very confined for all the stock that is on it. We have eighteen cows. Ulinish is now in possession of the landlord, and managed by the factor for him. We are now holding under the landlord himself. I have no more to say.

6170. *Professor Mackinnon.*—How many are there of you in Struanmore?—Eighteen families.

6171. And with this enlarged holding from the proprietor, what stock are you allowed to keep?—One cow.

6172. On each lot?—We have no grazing outside of our lots for the cows.

6173. How much will that grazing keep?—It will only enable us to keep that cow.

6174. Have you a cow inside and a cow out?—We have but one cow.

6175. What rent do you pay?—£3, 10s., besides rates.

6176. Of course, that includes the arable ground?—Yes.

6177. How much will you have of arable ground?—About three acres now.

6178. And you till it all with the *cas-chrom*?—Yes.

6179. There is no horse in the place?—No.

6180. Have all the eighteen been able to get a cow?—Not altogether yet. They have not all got them yet.

6181. Is that because they are poor?—I cannot say. I believe there are some of them that cannot easily get a cow. They were so long in poverty.

6182. Have they to pay the whole rent, whether they have a cow or not?—Yes, they must.

6183. You would think then that if they could afford it they would put a cow on?—It is only last Martinmas we got an addition to our holdings.

6184. And there is no great inducement to put a cow on till the summer grazing comes on?—No.

6185. How much land did you ask from the proprietor?—We did not state how much; but we had a meeting among ourselves, and we were thinking of asking him for twelve acres a piece, but we did not ask him that yet.

6186. Is that of arable ground?—Yes.

6187. What stock upon hill pasture would you wish to have along with that arable ground?—We would need four or five cows, and from twenty to thirty sheep.

6188. Have you settled among yourselves what rent you would be

inclined to pay for that croft?—We are for honest honourable people, other than ourselves, to come and fix a fair rent.

6189. And you would be inclined to pay the rent those honourable people would fix?—Yes.

6190. Is there plenty of suitable land near you to make such a croft as that which you state?—Plenty, both hill pasture and arable land.

6191. For each of the eighteen?—Yes.

6192. Would the eighteen be able to stock the land?—I believe they would not be able at first.

6193. Have you considered what ought to be done then?—I was thinking we would do our best, and if we got money by which we could drain and improve our land, we would then be able to stock it. Should we not be able to do it at once, we could do it gradually.

6194. How would you be able to pay the rent?—We spend in meal annually as much as would pay the rent, when nothing at all is growing in our ground except a little potatoes. It is twenty years since the mill up here ground a boll of meal, and that shows the poverty of the people.

6195. If you got such crofts, would you prefer to have a lease of them? We would prefer a lease, so that we might not be put away for any reason but non-payment of rent, for without a lease they could put us away when they pleased.

6196. What length of lease would you consider reasonable?—Fifteen years is a common period for leases in this part of the country.

6197. You would be quite satisfied with that?—I would. I am growing old and getting old at any rate.

6198. Have you a family?—No.

6199. Is there plenty of arable land?—Any one who travels and goes the road can see there is plenty of land, and for double the number of people.

6200. I would like to ask about the steadings. Could you manage to remain in your present houses if you had these crofts?—No, we would need to put a house on each of our crofts.

6201. That would involve the building of a house, and a barn, and a byre?—Yes.

6202. Would you be willing to undertake that on a fifteen years' lease?—Yes, but it would not be slated houses.

6203. How was the piece of ground that was fenced in fixed by the proprietor? Was there a boundary there or not?—No, a piece that the factor set apart by guess.

6204. Now, eighteen people, with ten or twelve acres each, would take up about two hundred acres. Have you considered how that would affect the farm out of which you would take it? If it were taken out of a neighbouring farm, would that still remain a farm that anybody would take?—It would not be as large as it is; but it would make a good tack still.

6205. It would have a reasonable amount of arable and pasture land after all?—Yes.

6206. And would have good land in it?—Yes.

6207. You heard one of the previous witnesses speak of fixity of tenure? Is that what you mean by a lease of fifteen or twenty years?—Yes, I mean by a lease of fifteen or twenty years fixity of tenure.

6208. And you believe that in this matter you express the opinion of the people of the place?—Yes.

6209. You heard the statements made by the other people as to the clearances all round, and as to the condition of the people long ago?—Yes.

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6210. Do you quite agree with those statements?—Yes, so far as I know, but I was not acquainted with the state of matters on the other side of the loch.

6211. But so far as your memory carries you back before the clearances began in the place where you live, you quite agree that the people were more comfortable then than they are now?—Yes.

6212. And you believe that if you got these crofts at reasonable rents on leases you would be able to work back into a comfortable condition again?—Yes.

6213. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Were the eighteen heads of families in Struanmore present when you were elected?—Yes. There might be one or two absent, but there were others besides Struanmore people present.

6214. When was this?—About a week or a fortnight before the Commissioners came to Bracs. The papers came down telling us the Commissioners were coming.

6215. You saw the notices posted?—Yes. Mr Ross, the minister, told us. We sent word to the two ministers to come and take charge of the meeting. Neither of them came.

6216. Have you had any meeting since to discuss what should be said to-day?—No.

6217. Did you not meet yesterday?—I was not aware. I was not present at any rate.

6218. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Have you been present all the day?—Yes.

6219. You have named certain townships in Ulinish and Ebost to-day. You have heard an enumeration from previous witnesses. Can you mention the names of any other places from which people were dispersed that have not been named yet?—Ose and Balmeanach.

6220. How many crofters were in Ose?—Three or four families. They were shifted to another part of it. They were made to build their houses on peat soil beside the river, and when the river was in flood some of them had to leave their houses for fear of their tumbling upon them.

6221. In fact, they got a place upon Ose which was very much for the worse?—Yes.

6222. Now, as to Balmeanach, how many were there?—The Balmeanach crofters had been removed before my time. I only saw two cottars there.

6223. But have you not heard old people speak about it?—I don't remember having heard how many families were in Balmeanach.

6224. Are there remains of houses there?—Yes.

6225. Considerable?—Yes; many up in the glens, and by the sea-shore. There was a small township in Balmeanach called Grauban, and there were tenants there also, and there were tenants also in Shagary. I did not see the tenants, but I was told of it.

6226. Did you hear how many were there?—I cannot tell. I did not hear. These townships were part of Balmeanach.

6227. For whom were they dispersed in Ose and Balmeanach?—For the tacksman, Mr Stephen, a lowlander.

6228. Did he get Balmeanach?—Ose and Balmeanach were two tacks before then, but both, as well as Glen M'Caskill and Glen Ulinish, were made into tack for Mr Stephen.

6229. Can you mention any more?—I do not know any more townships in that place.

6230. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Were there any people in Balgown?—There were a few in Balgown. These were not sent away at all. One or two left of their own free will, and the others died out. None of the old people that I remember are there to-day.

6231. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Have any of the people from Bracadale or Minginish been sent to Glendale?—All the people of whom I have told that were removed by Mr Gibbons were sent to Glendale. The crofters were sent to Ramasaig and Lowergill, and those who were removed from Garamore and Ebost were sent to Meiloveg.

6232. How many were sent to Glendale altogether, do you think?—Nineteen families out of the tack of Ulinish.

6233. Are some of the people themselves now living?—A few are still alive, but their descendants are to the fore still.

6234. Do you know of any application being sent to the landlord quite lately, by people about here, to get more land, and being refused?—Yes, I heard that the Garamore people requested the landlord to be removed from their present place at Garamore, and they were refused; but the people were here to-day, I believe, and they will tell. There is a man here—Malcolm M'Leod—who was one of them.

6235. And they did not get their request?—No.

6236. To whom does the nice land now under clover and grass belong—near the end of the inn, below the road?—To Mr Butters, Sligachan, who has got the inn here.

6237. Who took in the land originally?—The man who had the inn before Norman M'Leod.

6238. But do you know who originally took it in?—That is the first man I saw in possession, and in my father's time it was in possession of Dr M'Caskill.

6239. On the opposite side of the bay there is a small township. What is the name of that?—Cuilore.

6240. Is it a very confined place?—Yes, indeed, and bad land.

6241. What about the fishing in this loch?—There is no great fishing for our families for the past few years. No herring comes into it.

6242. Where had you the meeting yesterday?—You said you were present at a meeting. When did the meeting take place at which you were a delegate?—A week or a fortnight before the arrival of the Commissioners at the Braes.

6243. And it is the only meeting you attended?—Yes.

6244. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Were the people of Ebost and Ulinish comfortable there, when you were a boy?—Yes.

6245. How many cows had your father?—Two cows and a horse.

6246. Was that common among the people there?—Some of them had it.

6247. None of them had less than one cow?—No, none of them less than one.

6248. And at Ulinish the same?—Yes, at Ulinish the same.

6249. And they had some sheep too?—Yes, they had some sheep, but I don't mind about them.

6250. You said there was only one man who had a cow at Struanmore?—Yes, Alexander Macdiarmid.

6251. Where did they get their milk?—They got no milk at all.

6252. And the children all those forty years were brought up without milk?—Yes.

6253. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Had you more than one meeting?—Yes, I recollect we had a meeting first ourselves, and then we had another meeting last week.

6254. Who was with you then?—Mr Mackenzie.

6255. And he can tell about that?—Yes.

6256. Was Alexander M'Caskill picked out at that meeting?—Not the first day.

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6257. He was picked out the second day?—Yes.

6258. *The Chairman.*—You stated that you would consider a lease of fifteen years sufficient to enable you to take in new ground, and build a new house, and build a new barn, &c., but you said that because you were an old man it would not be worth your while?—Yes.

6259. Do you think a lease for fifteen years enough to induce the younger people to embark upon such an undertaking?—I know that what our young people are wanting is that they are not to be liable to be removed at all as long as they pay their rent.

6260. Do you think, without going so far as that, that a lease of thirty years would be greater encouragement than a lease of fifteen years?—No doubt, it would give us more encouragement.

6261. Do you think it would be an encouragement if the ground were given them for a smaller rent at first, and gradually increasing?—That would be the fairest way with us; but there is no saying but the rent might rise to be too high.

6262. But the maximum rent would be a fixture from the first?—We would be pleased enough with that.

6263. Then do you really think that if the landlord offered them the land on terms of that kind there would be a good number of people willing to attempt to commence building new houses and cultivate new crofts?—I think that all in our district would be willing to avail themselves of such terms.

6264. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Is there not a good deal of arable land in Ulinish and Ebost on which fine crops were grown, forty years ago, where heather is growing now?—Yes, where the heather and ferns are growing now, plenty of good arable land.

6265. You have seen good crops there yourself?—Yes, I have seen that.

6266. *The Chairman.*—If a new croft were set off of the kind of which you speak, and the summing were fixed,—so many cows, so many sheep, so many horses,—how much would you think a fair valuation per cow, per horse, per sheep, in money?—It is too much what we pay for a cow's grazing here, but in crofter's townships they only charge from 15s. to £1 for a cow's grass for a year.

6267. Including winter keep?—Exclusive of wintering, but I am not sufficiently well acquainted with crofter's townships.

6268. You cannot state your opinion how much a fair rent would be per cow, per horse, per sheep?—If a man had a good croft he would have enough wintering for a cow.

ALEXANDER M'CASKILL, Cottar and Boatman, Soay (53)—examined.

Alexander M'Caskill.

6269. *The Chairman.*—Have you been freely elected by the people of Soay?—Yes, among the rest. There are four or five of us.

6270. Have you got a statement to make on the part of the people of Soay?—Yes: my grandfather went to the army—at least he was forced to go—and his bones are bleaching on a West Indian island. My father served in the militia as long as there was service. My brothers served about fifteen years in H.M. Navy, and now the grandson is evicted to a rock or island that is not inhabited.

6271. That is the case of your particular family, but I want you to speak first on behalf of those who elected you. What is the complaint that the people who live in this island generally make?—They are paying

£3 for the croft and the grazing of a cow. At first the agreement was that we were to have four milk goats and followers.

6272. What was the original summing of the croft?—Four milk goats and one cow. We had ten sheep and a horse, but no horse can stand upon it.

6273. What is the rent you pay for that?—£3.

6274. What happened after that?—The next farmer that came began to reduce us. He took the sheep altogether.

6275. Who was he?—Hugh M'Askill.

6276. What reduction did he make?—He was taking them in by degrees. He had a battle about taking them, because we were not willing to let them go.

6277. Did he reduce the rent?—Not a farthing. He raised the rent upon us another pound, and summoned my father for being disobedient, because he would not sign this agreement.

6278. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—He took him into court?—He took him before the sheriff.

6279. *The Chairman.*—What next?—Well, we were that way till he died. Then the present master came. He reduced that £1 of rent.

6280. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—What is the name of your present master?—Mr Cameron of Glenbrittle. Then, next year, going on at that rate, I went over to see Mr Cameron about the accounting, if there was anything due, and instead of the £5, I was charged £6 again. I am paying also £2 for the grazing of a cow.

6281. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—An extra charge?—Yes; I said I would not do it as long as the sun shines upon me. My order was 'you will be 'evicted.' So when the proper time came I went over to appear before the sheriff, and I met Mr Cameron. Well, Mr Cameron told me to return, and that he would reduce the rents—that it was his manager's fault that did it; but I said—why, in the name of Heaven, was my brother, that was incurable for twenty-five years, evicted, and my sister was attending upon him, unless it was that he was asking some relief from the parochial board. Glenbrittle told me it was the factor in Talisker's establishment that did that, as he would not go to that royal establishment for the poor.

6282. *The Chairman.*—Were your brother and sister living with you?—Yes. He was incurable for twenty-five years.

6283. Living in your house?—Yes, and I kept him all since that time.

6284. What happened next? Did you arrange matters?—I arranged to stop it then. It went no further, and we are that way still.

6285. How many families are there living on the island?—There are twenty-three families on the island. In the time of the former proprietor,—Rhu,—there were two crofts. I forgot to say that Mr Cameron made his cottar build his house on my croft for five years, and all the crop that grew on it during that time was 5s. worth. He had two cows and a sheep, and a lot of poultry, and it would take a good man to keep them out.

6286. Is that changed now?—Yes, he has his father's croft now.

6287. You say there are twenty-three families. What kind of crofts have they generally got?—Some of them are bogs and rocks, heather and fern; that is all. There are portions of it where, if I would throw a pail of sea-ware off my back you would suppose you were standing at the foot of Mount Etna—it would shake as long as there was bog to shake.

6288. Has there been no drainage done?—Baron Rothschild's money could not drain it.

6289. If the crofts are so bad, what ought to be done?—To remove the inhabitants out of the island altogether.

6290. What use would you make of the island after that?—I would

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take 100 acres of a farm at the same rent as the present factor is paying for it, stock it, and build a house.

6291. You would make a farm of the island?—No, it is quite impossible. I mean I would take a farm on the mainland.

6292. But what would you do with the twenty-three families?—Do the same with those who were able to take it, and let the rest die. There is no relief for them unless they go to the poorhouse.

6293. Perhaps they would rather stay on the island?—They will die on the island.

6294. Is there any fishing?—We live by fishing. Every cent. we get is by fishing, and by the sea.

6295. Is there a harbour?—There is a creek, but the entrance is dry at low water.

6296. Is it a good station for fishing? Is it well situated for fishing?—It is not good for ling, but for herring.

6297. Would there be any use in building a harbour and improving it for the sake of the fishing?—There is a bay on the south side, if there was a pier there, but this wee harbour that is in it might be cleared and made a fine harbour for boats.

6298. Do the people generally complain of the amount of their rents?—There is not a word but that.

6299. *Mr Cameron.*—I think you were going to tell us what you would like to do yourself, if you got away from the island?—I would have 100 acres of a farm at the present rent that is paid. I suppose it is not paying above 1s. per acre. I would have 100 or 150 acres.

6300. On which farm?—Any of the farms—I don't care which; but let me get arable land where I will get to that croft from the sea with my boat.

6301. Which farm would suit you best?—They tell me that our former minister said he saw oat crop growing in Glen Bracadale, and that he never saw better growing in the Lothians.

6302. How is that land occupied now, and what is the rent of it?—Just outside where you are standing and down the farm here. That is what I was told.

6303. Then with regard to these twenty-two other families, you don't really mean they are to remain and die on the island, but what do you suggest should be done with them?—Every one who can take that measure let them take it, because there are a lot willing to do it.

6304. How many of the twenty-two would be willing to do it?—I don't know; I never asked them.

6305. But you know their circumstances?—I know their circumstances. I know they were for a fortnight this year living on shell-fish, and I know there were three families whose only subsistence for a week was the carcass of a stirk that died.

6306. That is very distressing to hear, but would it not make it still more heavy for those people to take farms of 100 acres and 150 acres?—Surely, but if they would get 60 acres and pay £3 for it, it would do them well, and let them get fixity and tenure, so that no landlord or factor could put them out—only Her Majesty.

6307. But according to you, they have too much fixity and tenure on this island. The island is so bad they don't require much fixity?—No, but where they are going.

6308. What stock would they require—taking even a smaller holding than 60 acres?—I don't know.

6309. Assuming that the farm of Glenbrittle is out of lease next year, can you suggest any mode by which the land of Glenbrittle might be

utilised without any great loss accruing to the landlord, and by which not only those twenty-three families, but many other families in this parish might be benefited, and get a share of it?—I don't suppose the landlord would be a whit the worse of the poor crofters having 60 or 100 acres than he has by giving it to big sheep farmers.

6310. That is your opinion?—That is my opinion, and a good opinion too.

6311. Can you suggest how it could be done?—Just give it to one that is able to take it.

6312. What is to be done with the sheep on the farm? Who is to buy them?—The proprietor. He is bound to take the stock.

6313. What would he do with them?—Sell them.

6314. How is the stock to be put on the ground to replace that stock?—We will do the best ourselves.

6315. How would you pay the rent if you had no stock?—That is my own secret. With regard to my croft, I cannot take the wintering of a cow upon it. There is not a blade of grass growing there, and it is so soft I must put sea-manure upon it. There is not a blade that a scythe could reach without that. When I sow a bushel of oats, it would not be difficult to count how many blades would come out of it.

6316. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Has the big tenant stock on the island?—The man that was there before laid them on my crop, and in spite of my neck he just plundered my crop with sheep.

6317. How many sheep has he on just now?—There are about 400 or 500 hoggs wintering off my lot.

6318. Suppose the big farmer were removed altogether, and that you had the island—the twenty-three families of you paying rent to the landlord—would that benefit your circumstances?—It would not in the least, because there is no possibility of keeping cattle when you cannot grow corn. It would pay a sheep farmer very well to have the grazing of it.

6319. Then I distinctly understand from you that you want to be removed to the mainland?—We want to be removed.

6320. Have you been there for a very long time?—I have been there, in and out, since I was born.

6321. Have all the twenty-three families been there a long time, and their predecessors?—It is ourselves that went first into it, before there was a wholesale eviction by M'Caskill of Rhu. He took three or four of my grandfathers and granduncles and smuggled them away. Whoever would not pay £10 to him, he would leave them helpless.

6322. Sixty years ago, before the evictions began, how many families would be upon Soay?—There was only a herd, so far as I know.

6323. Then was it in consequence of the clearing out of the people from the mainland that they were glad to come to this place to get a home?—Exactly. It was not good enough for sheep.

6324. And now you want to revert to what it was before—that there should be only one herd upon it?—I want to have nothing to do with the island.

6325. Not even a herd for the sheep?—What would he herd? It could not afford sustenance for all the families.

6326. But you would not like that it should be left so that nobody lived on it but a herd for the sheep?—I would not care although they should remove it into the sea.

6327. Have you applied to M'Leod with reference to the circumstances of the people of the island?—If I would open my mouth I would be sure to have my teeth drawn. After I did a year's work for the other

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man he would pay me with a boll of meal and a pound; and he told the proprietor to give us meal, and when I went I had to pay £5, 10s. for a brother of mine who had got a boll of meal, and was dead on his croft.

6328. Things are getting worse with you?—Worse every day.

6329. Have you and your co-tenants within the last two or three years not considered it worth your while to make a representation to the laird to benefit your circumstances, by giving you a place on the mainland?—No, we knew well enough it was of no avail, and unless Her Majesty will do it he will not do it.

6330. That is your firm opinion?—I am certain sure of it, as sure as I have to meet my death.

6331. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Have you a church at Soay?—Yes. There was an old church over at the island which was destroyed. We took a piece of the old pulpit and one or two pews. The proprietor belonged to the Established Church, and he sent us to Portree. I went there, lost two days, and was sent to Edinburgh, and the authorities there were so kind to us that we were not out of lodgings till we came home.

6332. You mean the Calton Jail?—Yes.

6333. Have you a minister living at Soay?—Not one. We did not see a minister these five months back.

6334. Where is the nearest church?—Bracadale.

6335. That is your parish church?—Yes.

6336. Then you would need balloons to go to church?—Yes, or give us the 'Lively,' and we will go.

6337. You have a schoolhouse?—Yes.

6338. Are the children attending pretty well?—Yes.

6339. Where is the nearest doctor to you?—Carabost, and the nearest post-office is at Carabost.

6340. It is a day's journey from Soay to Carabost?—Yes.

6341. Have you any paupers on the island?—Yes.

6342. Where does the inspector of poor live?—At Carabost. He was two or three times this year at us; but I daresay it was two or three years before he was there before.

6343. There is a story about a number of people having been kidnapped, or induced to remove from Soay and other places in Minginish long ago?—I know it well.

6344. How long ago was it?—It is seventy years ago since my grandfather went, and it was before that.

6345. There were a lot induced to emigrate to Canada?—They took them away in spite of themselves.

6346. And they were not taken to Canada?—No, it was to Charlestown, where they were sold for slaves. He left them poor enough and robbed the clothes off their backs, before they came back to the same farm again.

6347. Who did that?—Old Kenneth M'Askill.

6348. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Of the farm of Rhu Dunan?—Yes. I have heard news from people who went to America. Many of them say they would rather be home in their native place yet, if they were the way they were before.

6349. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—How many people are in the island?—About one hundred.

6350. *The Chairman.*—What is the acreage of the island?—I cannot say.

6351. How long is it?—It will be twelve miles in circumference with creeks and all, and it is nearly cut in sunder, and there is not 200 yards of breadth altogether in the centre.

6352. With your various means of support, do you yourself make a tolerably comfortable living?—I just keep soul and body together with my own labour at fishing. I was for twenty years roaming about at sea, and I have had to stay at home to keep my aged parents out of the poor-house. That is what kept me on that barren island.

6353. Then, considering the employment you find, are you satisfied you would be better if you took up a croft on the mainland?—That I am. But to get it to that extent and at that rate, and fixity of tenure—no eviction.

JOHN M'RAE, Cottar and Fisherman, Soay (35)—examined.

6354. *The Chairman.*—Have you been freely elected a delegate by the people of Soay?—Yes.

6355. You have heard what the last witness has stated respecting the condition of the people on the island. Did you understand the statement, and do you agree with it?—Yes.

6356. Have you something to add to that statement?—Yes, I have to say, in the first place, that I could not put down either potatoes or oats in my ground this year, as the ground is so soft—nothing but peats and bogs, and I could not get back what I put into it. I am for the past twenty years getting ground from others in which to plant my potatoes and sow my oats, and my father was for thirty-five years the same way. I have no place on which to build a house. My present house is built on the township, and the tide rises to it, and every stormy night that comes I have to watch and put out all the furniture—such as it is. A sister of mine was employed one night last winter putting out the furniture, and she was sickly, and she died in consequence of hurting herself that night. I tried with carrying some peat soil on my back to make up soil on my ground, but it defied me. I have to pave a way for my cow with stones through my lot in order to get out to the hill, otherwise she would get drowned. She would never have got her feet out of the ground, it is so soft. I do not think I have anything more to say. I have been through England, Scotland, Ireland, and France, and I have not seen such an awful place for people to be living in as Soay.

6357. Were you a seaman on board ship?—Yes, a yachtsman.

6358. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Do you concur with the last witness that the only remedy is to be removed off the island altogether?—Yes. We take our meal from Broadford, and it costs 5s. a bag, to the Loch Slapin, and from there we have eighteen miles by boat to Soay; and it may happen I have to spend 15s. to £1 for lodgings in going for this meal, should bad weather come, and those at home may be starving. No person can believe the sort of place it is unless he has seen it.

6359. Have you asked the tacksman or proprietor for a place to build a new house?—I don't remember I asked him for a place to build a house in, but a brother of mine asked him for a stance to build a house, and he built a house near my place, and the tide destroyed it, and he died himself.

6360. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—You are all fishermen at Soay?—Yes.

6361. Either fishermen or sailors?—Yes.

6362. If it were made a fishing station, do you think they could make a living there?—No.

6363. What kind of boats have you?—Boats which we get home from

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the south. A boat which belonged to me was destroyed by the last storm, and I applied for relief to the distributors of the fund that was collected for repairing the fishermen's boats, and I was refused. I was obliged to get another boat instead.

6364. Did any of the people in Soay get new boats?—Yes.

6365. What was the reason of your being made an exception?—I don't know.

6366. Who had the distribution of them?—Mr Macdonald, factor, Portree; Mr Cameron, Talisker; Mr Cameron, Glenbrittle; and the minister of Bracadale.

6367. Was your boat quite destroyed?—Not quite.

6368. Was she fit to be repaired?—Yes.

6369. Perhaps that was the reason for not getting a new one?—No; some blacksmiths and tradesmen got part of that money, and I got none, I who was making my living by fishing.

6370. There are no big boats at all now?—No.

6371. Do you practice herring fishing to any extent?—No, our herring fishing is gone.

6372. Don't you go to Loch Hourn?—We have no nets.

6373. Did you make anything at the fishing here last year?—No, nothing to speak of. We were fishing lobsters.

6374. Is the lobster fishing good there?—Middling.

6375. How long does it last?—About three months.

6376. What do you get a dozen for the lobsters?—Sometimes from 5s. to 7s.,—5s. when they are plentiful, and 7s. when they are not.

6377. Are the whelks lifted off the shore there?—Yes.

6378. Are they regularly called for, or do you send a boat with them?—We ourselves take them to Loch Slapin, and pay a cart to take them thence to Broadford.

6379. What do you get for them?—Sometimes 10s. a bag.

6380. How many bushels does a bag hold?—About four.

6381. How long would it take one to collect them?—Two spring tides. There are no whelks now.

ALEXANDER CAMERON, Cottar and Tailor, Cuilore (38)—examined.

Alexander Cameron.

6382. *The Chairman.*—You have handed in a letter to the Commissioners, in which you say:—'I was summoned before the Sheriff for disobedience in not keeping a maid servant for Mr Scott, the sheep farmer. 'Wages for summer 6d. and 8d. per day, which would not keep soul and 'body together. I got a letter from the factor to come to an arrangement, 'and he told me to be humble under the hand of oppression, as the laird 'did not care a straw should Mr Scott put every living soul of us out in 'the sea.* I then had to submit under the yoke, and had to pay an extra 'pound all round, and a year last spring at the last account, then I was 'able to pay the last of the tithe. I got a letter from Scott that my 'brother and sister were not allowed to cut the peats, till forced to yield, 'I sent this note to the proprietor, telling him Scott's demand was reasonable. I then went to Dunvegan, and laid my grievance to him, but no 'remedy.'

6383. Then your complaint is that you are obliged to supply labour to the farmer for 6d. or 8d. a day? Is that the case?—That was the way at first, but as I was not performing the service, I had to pay £1 more. But this extra payment ceased a year last spring.

* See Q. 6491, p. 361.

6384. Then you have to supply the labour of a woman to the farmer? How often is the labour exacted;—how many days in the year?—I believe not more than fifty days.

6385. When you or your family entered their present place of residence, was it understood that this was one of the conditions on which they got their place?—I was not aware of anything of the sort.

6386. Ever since you have resided there have you always had to supply labour to the farmer?—We were paying the rent for the place, and when a person could get home to do the work we sent that person. It was I myself who was doing the work all along, but he was at me to get a woman servant to do the woman's work on the farm.

8387. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Had you such a person in your family?—No, and therefore this extra money was laid upon me till it was taken off last year.

6388. *The Chairman.*—Was this woman a substitute for the labour of some member of your own family?—Not when it began with me. I had a sister, but she got married. It was after my sister married that it began.

6389. Did your sister do this work before she was married?—Yes, she would be giving days' work like any other person in the village; but should I get a servant to work all she would get to do would not keep her in food for three months.

6390. Have you asked the tacksman to accept some payment instead of the services of the woman?—No. The rent was reasonable, and I was paying it.

6391. Do they now ask you for that woman's labour at all, or has the whole hardship ceased?—Yes, my cause of complaint ceased last year, but he has taken a good deal of money off me because of it. It is a case with several others in my township as well as myself.

Rev. JOHN M'LEAN, Minister, Bracadale (43)—examined.

6392. *The Chairman.*—You desire to make a statement?—I have no particular statement to make, but I am ready to answer any questions.

6393. How long have you been minister here?—Six years in January last.

6394. You have heard generally what the delegates have said to-day, and you have heard particularly what they have said about the deterioration of their condition in connection with the repeated evictions and consequent overcrowding?—Yes.

6395. Do you agree generally with their statements?—Yes, I do. I ascribe their poverty primarily to the smallness of their holdings. I believe they will be better off if they have larger holdings.

6396. Have you yourself observed, since you have been here, a deterioration in their physical condition?—No.

6397. What part of the country do you belong to?—I am a native of North Uist.

6398. Do you think generally that the people are better clothed and better fed than they were at the earliest period of your recollection?—Well, I cannot say in reference to this parish.

6399. But generally in the island?—Not in my native parish. I think they are as well off there as they used to be. I cannot say anything except for the past six years with reference to the people here, but I think

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the want of milk is a very great want in this parish, and is felt severely. I think it is a very great hardship to rear children without milk.

6400. Do the people then, in reference to their condition here, compare favourably with the people of your native place?—Decidedly they do.

6401. Do you think that if the proprietors were inclined to enlarge their boundaries and give them greater access to the soil, many would avail themselves of it?—I believe many would.

6402. Are you aware there is any considerable amount of money brought into the parish by the younger people in the form of wages?—A great deal. All the young people leave early in spring—at least as soon as they are done with their tillage. They go south, and earn wages there, and send a great deal of money to support their parents and friends at home.

6403. Do you think that would help their parents to take up land and improve it, and build their houses?—Yes, I think so.

6404. Have you observed here, in the course of your ministry, any solicitude on the part of the proprietor or his factor for the welfare and improvement of the people generally,—any active interest?—I think they are both very indifferent about the circumstances of the people in this parish,—both the factors and the proprietor, they are distant.

6405. Have you any other suggestion of your own, besides the enlargement of the croft, towards the greater welfare of the people?—No.

6406. How do you find the children? Do you find them miserably dressed—so ill-dressed that they are incapable of going to church or school?—Yes, they are very poorly clad, and that interferes very much with their education. Whenever we find fault with parents for not sending their children forward to school, the reason they assign for their absence is that they cannot keep them clad, that they have not shoes, and that if the weather is anything severe they cannot send them on to school.

6407. Do you think that they make that an excuse?—There is a great deal of truth in it.

6408. How are the paupers looked after in this parish?—There is an inspector appointed in the parish to look after them, and there is a parish doctor.

6409. Do they do their duty actively and industriously?—I think they do, so far as I know. I hear no complaints. It is very seldom I see any one before the board with any serious complaints in reference to the administration of the poor law in the parish.

6410. Do they make tolerable allowances for the paupers, or are they parsimonious?—They are the most liberal board in Skye, I believe.

6411. Have you observed any sign of increasing poverty this year or last year?—This year, of course, people are hard pressed, but that is general all over Skye, and for that part all over the west coast.

6412. Have they obtained some useful relief?—Yes, they have.

6413. Have they got seed generally, and potatoes?—Yes, they got a little, and we have a surplus,—I mean the parochial committee,—to relieve the poorest, in the shape of meal through the summer, for perhaps the real pinch is scarcely on yet. We kept a reserve fund.

6414. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Are the people generally a very quiet, peaceable, well-behaved people?—Remarkably so. I don't think there have been two criminal cases in the whole parish since I became minister of it.

6415. Have you ever been able to visit the island of Soay?—I have been once there visiting the school, as a member of the school board, and I beg to say, in the absence of my friend the Free Church minister, that Soay is not neglected to such an extent as M'Caskill said. There is a

catechist resident always in the island, and it is very seldom the island is without the services of a missionary; and very often a licentiate of the Free Church. I may say the whole of the people in the island are Free Churchmen.

6416. So far as you know about that island, do you concur in the views of the delegate, that it would be wise they should be removed?—Well, the soil is very poor; it is a very poor island.

6417. *The Chairman.*—Have all the people been baptised; have they the advantage of the sacraments of the church?—Well, in former years baptism was neglected.

6418. In Soay?—There were two adult individuals belonging to the island of Soay that I baptised.

6419. Is the holy communion administered there?—No, but they come here.

6420. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You wish to make some explanation about one of the delegates, saying that no assistance was given by the clergy in arranging for the selection of delegates?—In reference to the election of delegates, it was simply this, that four or five individuals, cottars from the township of Cuilore, called on me and asked me to preside at their meeting. I told them, first of all, it was a very simple thing, and that I thought they were quite capable of selecting delegates themselves. I then drew up a paper for them calling a meeting, which two or three of them signed. At the same time I declined to preside at the meeting, because I was under the impression that there was another gentleman in the parish who would be far more acceptable to the parish in general. It was not at all owing to being ashamed or afraid to attend, for it was a lawful meeting, but I was under the impression that another gentleman would be got whose presidency would be more acceptable to the people—I mean Mr Ross. It was all owing to a misunderstanding.

6421. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Where does the doctor live?—At Carabost.

6422. If there were a sick person requiring medical attendance, how long would it take to send for him from Ose?—That would depend on the weather.

6423. If it were a beautiful day?—A boat could do it in two or two and a half hours, but it is a very long route by the road.

6424. Supposing you had to send round by road?—It would take three and a half hours from Ose to Carabost.

6425. Do you think any great inconvenience is caused by the doctor residing at Carabost?—I think it is the most central place now.

6426. Then, speaking of the people being well behaved, was there any policeman here when you came first?—No.

6427. Are there any now?—There are two.

6428. What were the two sent for?—One was sent two or three years ago, and the other recently.

6429. Do you think two persons are required to preserve the peace of the parish of Bracadale?—No, I think it is a superfluity. I think we could do very well without them.

6430. Is it in any way disagreeable to the inhabitants that the police force has been increased?—Not so far as I know. I have never heard a complaint.

DONALD M'LEOD, Labourer, Garamore (27)—examined.

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6431. *The Chairman.*—Are you a cottar?—I am a cottar's son.

6432. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—It was stated in evidence here that the people of Garamore asked land and were refused. Can you tell us about it; when did they do it?—This year.

6433. Since Martinmas?—Before Martinmas.

6434. To whom did you apply?—I spoke to the factor, and we wrote to the landlord—M'Leod; but we did not tell M'Leod the place in which we were—we thought he knew it himself already.

6435. Are you upon a tacksman's farm?—We were on the tack of Ulinish, but it is now in the landlord's own farm.

6436. What exactly did you ask for?—Some of us were asking a place near to where we were, and we were asking to have homes given us where the others were allowed such.

6537. Was there more than one letter, or two different requests made in one letter?—We only sent one request.

6438. Some wanted land at Garamore, and some wanted land where others got it?—Yes, some were wanting land near where they were at Garamore.

5439. What was the answer they got?—M'Leod said in the letter which he sent to us that possibly that might suit us, but it would not suit him.

6440. Did you keep the letter?—We did not keep the letter.

6441. And there the matter ended?—Yes. I have to say the sheep are spoiling our crops. They go all through our crop, and we have no means of preserving our crop.

6442. What is the state of the land there?—I cannot tell. It is not much worth. We cannot cultivate the sort of land it is. We are only allowed to keep a cow.

6443. *The Chairman.*—From whom did the letter come on the part of the landlord? Was it from Mr M'Leod himself or from the factor?—The landlord himself wrote us.

6444. Did you see the letter?—Yes.

6445. It was written in English?—Yes.

6446. And you understood it?—Yes.

6447. Repeat again, so far as you can recollect, exactly what the letter said?—What was in the letter was, as I said already, that the request might suit us, but perhaps it might not suit him.

6448. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Was there a verbal statement made to the factor?—Yes.

6449. Was that before or after you received that letter?—Before.

6450. What did he say to it?—I cannot be very sure what the factor said to us.

6451. Was it to ask them to write to M'Leod direct, or did it refuse you?—It did not grant our request, neither did it ask us to write to the landlord.

6452. Then, have you given up the matter?—We have not given up the matter; we expect it.

6453. How many concurred in this application?—Five of us in the township, and one of them is a shepherd to M'Leod, and he did not put his name to the letter; but the four of us concurred in it.

6454. Did they put their names to it?—Yes, each name.

6455. *Professor Mackinnon.*—What was it you asked?—We were for getting a piece of land.

6456. Over here beside the people at Struanmore?—Yes.

6457. Did you say how much land?—No.

6458. How much were you looking for, or are you looking for? How much would you wish to get?—We would take as much as would keep three cows and a horse and about fifty sheep.

6459. Each of you would take that?—Yes.

6460. And you would be able to stock such a piece of ground if you got it?—I suspect we would require help.

6461. But you would be able to do a good deal of it?—I think we would.

6462. Did you offer any rent for the place?—No, we did not offer until we should know what we were to get.

6463. Do you think you could pay the same rent that was being paid for it when it was under a tacksman?—Yes, I think so.

6464. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Were you quite in earnest? Did you talk over it several times among yourselves before you made up your minds?—Yes, and we are still quite in earnest.

6465. And you are still wanting it?—Yes.

6466. How far is the schoolhouse?—Three miles.

6467. Were you attending it yourself?—Yes.

6468. Summer and winter?—Yes.

6469. The children are almost all able to read and write?—Some of them.

6470. Are there more children now than when you were a boy able to read and write?—I do not think there are so many children to be learned.

6471. I don't mean in your own place, but about the school. You think there are not so many children now as there were at one time?—I don't think it.

6472. But those that are, say for the last ten or twelve years, are they able to read and write more readily than they did before?—I am not sure; I cannot say.

6473. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Who is the schoolmaster of this parish?—It is a female teacher we have.

6474. How long has she been here?—She is only here a week or a fortnight.

6475. *Professor Mackinnon.*—You say you are still expecting to get that land. Have you any reason to suppose you will get it?—We are thinking it is for that that this Commission has come.

ADAM SCOTT, Drynoch (25), and KENNETH GILLIES, Cottar, Old Drynoch (69)—examined.

6476. *The Chairman.*—You desire to make a statement to the Commission?—*Mr Scott.* Yes, I am the son of the tenant of Drynoch.

6477. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Do you manage for your father?—Yes, but not at the time the occasion of these complaints took place. As to the letter that Cameron presented, he said that he never understood that it was an understood thing that each crofter on the farm supplied female labour, and I wish to state that it has always been understood, and there are several cottars here who, if the question were put to them whether they understood it, will tell you that they did.—[*To Kenneth Gillies.*] Is it not an understood thing that each cottar on Drynoch supplies female labour?—*Gillies.* Yes.—*Mr Scott.* Has that not always been understood and acted upon?—*Gillies.* Yes.—*Mr Scott.* I may also say that the

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Adam Scott and Kenneth Gillies.

request would never have been made for any man to keep a female worker if he had not such already in the house; but as to this man who speaks —when the complaint was first made against him, his sister lived with him, and I don't remember at what time his sister got married, and the charge was continued for some time after the sister got married; but the complaint would never have been made if she had not been there. When the other woman came to the work, she would remain behind, and it was for the sake of example that it was done, because, of course, if one hangs back and does not fulfil the conditions it is a bad example to the rest.

6478. *The Chairman.*—Do you mean that after the sister was married she continued to live on the farm?—No, but after she was married the additional charge was taken off, but it was continued some time after the sister was married—it was in vindication of the principle.

6479. But it was not intended to be a permanent charge?—It has not been a permanent charge.

6480. What was the money payment exacted?—I am not quite sure of the figures. There was £1 a year added to his rent, but the light in which it was put was this, that the croft was worth more than what he was paying, unless it was for the advantage gained to the tacksman by the labour he supplied; and when he refused to supply the labour this £1 a year was put on.

6481. The £1 a year was put on in substitution for the female labour?—Yes.

6482. Is that to be continued?—It has been taken off already.

6483. Why has it been taken off?—I don't know exactly when it was taken off. I think it was taken off last year.

6484. If it is taken off, what will the other crofters say?—Well, he has no longer a sister living with him. I may make another statement as to the wages, which were stated at 1s. 6d. That is the wage for female work, but it is the minimum. There are others up to 2s. and 2s. 6d. for draining, building, smearing, and so on. In short, they got at the rate of far more last year than 1s. 6d. It is misleading, then, to say it was 1s. 6d.

6485. Are the wages of the female labourers raised in harvest?—Yes, to 1s. The witness said 6d. or 8d. That is a point I am not sure about. It is 10d. now, but I am not sure whether, at the time the dispute took place, it was 10d. or not. I rather think it was, but I was not manager then.

6486. What part of the country does your family come from?—Roxburghshire; but we have been three generations here.

6487. [*To Kenneth Gillies.*]—You desire to say something for yourself?—*Gillies.* When Captain M'Leod was at Drynoch we were not paying at all. Then when Dr M'Caskill came he laid rent upon us, and after that he only lived three and a half years; and then Mr Scott came, and Mr Scott left us all along as he found us. About ten or fifteen years ago he raised our wages. When Dr M'Caskill was there we had only 1s. a day. Mr Scott raised the wages 1s. and 6d. Dr M'Caskill shifted us from the holdings we had from Dr M'Leod, and we now want to get that land which we had restored to us—it is more convenient to the shore,—and also sufficient land to keep a cow. We are not able to take more.

6488. Do you consider that your condition is better now than it was in M'Caskill's time?—We know that it is very much better. We have a good master. He never refused us money,—man, woman, or child, he never refused. He keeps a meal store open to us every day of the year.

6489. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Are you employed by Mr Scott from

year's end to year's end?—He cannot keep us in regular work all the year round, but if he had work to give he would give it to us in preference.

6490. Are you employed all the year round?—No, but we get work when he has it to give.

ALEXANDER MACDONALD, Esq. of Treaslane, and Factor, Portree—re-examined.

Alexander Macdonald.

6491. *The Chairman.*—You desire to make an explanation?—Yes, in reference to the letter which has been given in by Cameron. It states—'I got a letter from the factor to come to an arrangement, and he told me 'to be humble under the hand of oppression, as the laird did not care 'a straw should Scott put every living soul of us out into the sea.'

6492. He does not state who was factor?—Either I or my father was the factor at that time,—I do not know which.

6493. Do you know anything about this matter?—I beg most distinctly to repudiate the whole thing as a gross calumny upon M'Leod of M'Leod and upon myself also. I know M'Leod takes the greatest interest in his tenantry, and would like to act well to them. I have now been connected with the land for about twenty years, and I think I have only seen two evictions during that time, both for misbehaviour or alleged misbehaviour—one being the man Donald Nicolson, whom I have seen in the papers called a 'brave old crofter,' and another an old woman who was also petitioned against by her neighbours from the Skeabost estate. As to this man Cameron, I believe Mr Scott never intended actually to evict him, but simply to teach him to fulfil his obligation; and I know I used my influence, if it was necessary, to make things smooth between Cameron and Mr Scott; but even that, I think, was scarcely necessary, for I know Mr Scott to be a most kind, considerate, and just man, and well known to be so through the whole of Skye.

6494. The letter states that Cameron received a letter from the factor. Did you ever write a letter?—I may have written him—I don't remember; but I know I did not write to the effect that has been alleged.

6495. Then he goes on to say—'he told me.' Had you ever any conversation with him personally?—Yes, I had; and I know my influence was used to try and get him to agree with Mr Scott. Personally, I am very much against evicting tenants forcibly. I have rather committed an error in allowing too many people to settle on the land, rather than evict them. That is the chief error I have committed.

6496. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Did you act as law agent for Mr Scott in that case between him and the man?—I did.

6497. There were proceedings taken?—There was an ordinary summons of removal, because this man would not fulfil his obligations to Mr Scott, and he came to me, and I tried over and over again to smooth matters, and I could produce a long correspondence to show that my mind was entirely against evicting him.

6498. *Professor Mackinnon.*—As man or as factor, because it is as factor that your name is brought in?—As a man, and a law agent, and factor—in every way.

6499. *The Chairman.*—In fact, you repudiate ever having used any expression resembling the expression there mentioned?—Yes, or ever entertaining any such sentiment, or M'Leod either.

[ADJOURNED.]

GLENDALE, SKYE, SATURDAY, MAY 19, 1883.

(See Appendix A, XIII., XXIV.)

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 MACPHERSON, Crofter, Lower Meiloveg (48)—examined.

John Macpherson.

6500. *The Chairman.*—Have you any other occupation than that of a crofter?—A fisherman sometimes.

6501. You have been freely elected a delegate by the people of Lower Meiloveg?—Yes, their names are attached to the paper which I have here; but I wish to make a preliminary statement.

6502. Have the goodness to make your preliminary statement now?—I would wish, my Lord and Gentlemen, that I would not be blamed for telling the truth—that no hurt would be done to me—for I got sixty-one days' imprisonment already for telling the truth, and asking for justice. That is my preliminary statement.

6503. Do you ask for an assurance on our part?—We are not able to give you any such assurance. It must be explained to you that the Commission cannot interfere in any respect between you and your landlord, or between you and the law, in case you should fall under the law; but we understand that no molestation will be offered by the landlord or by any one here on account of what occurs to-day. That assurance has been given to us already, on the Macdonald and on the M'Leod estates, and we hope it will be the same on the Macpherson estate.

[*Mr Robertson*, factor on the estate.—On the part of the trustees of this property, I beg to say that no interference whatever will be made with John Macpherson or any other witness here, for giving such evidence as they think proper.]

6504. *The Chairman.*—Is this statement which you produce the statement of the people who have elected you as their delegate?—Has it been communicated to them, and have they all signed it?—I believe so.

6505. Is it drawn up and written by yourself or others?—It was another person who wrote it.

6506. But you understand it perfectly?—Yes. The statement is—'I 'am forty-eight years of age, and was born in the township of Meiloveg, 'in which I am a crofter for twenty-eight years. My father and grand-'father were crofters there also. From time immemorial up till the year '1845 the township was tenanted by eight crofters, paying a rent of £7 'each, or a total rental of £56. Each crofter kept six cows, a horse, and 'sixteen sheep; thereby living very comfortably, and buying very little of 'foreign produce, if any at all. At that time M'Leod of M'Leod was 'proprietor of this estate, as also of that of Bracadale, of which he is yet 'the proprietor; and by the evicting of the most of the tenants of 'Bracadale and Minginish, and also of many from other portions of 'M'Leod's estates, in order to provide the evicted land for sheep farms,

'and also by the evicting of ten or a dozen from the estate of Major 'M'Donald of Waternish, father of the present proprietor of that estate— 'the evicted land in this case being put under deer*—the townships of 'Meiloveg (Upper and Lower) were overcrowded, as well as other town- 'ships on this estate. The division of the township into crofts was 're-arranged, and instead of eight as formerly there were now seventeen 'crofts, and the rental was increased to about £80. These changes with 'regard to the Lower Meiloveg township was made in the year 1845; each 'crofter paid from £3, 16s. to £5. As may be supposed, the crofters were 'from the said changes only to hold three cows, eight sheep, and no horse. 'At present there are twenty crofts, or more properly seventeen crofts, and 'three of these subdivided, and two cottars. Our crofts produce only about 'one and a half times what we sow. My croft is about three acres of very 'shallow land, and the other crofters in my township of Lower Meiloveg 'have same amount of land and same quality. We and our wives do the 'ploughing and harrowing of our land, turning or tilling it with the '*cas-chrom*, the most primitive mode of tilling I believe in existence. As 'the land does not get any rest, by leaving part of it uncultivated some 'years, it has been, as may be supposed, rendered very unproductive and 'poor. Our hill pasture has decreased in quantity and quality in propor- 'tion to the decrease of the amount and quality of our croft holding, from 'the following cause, viz., that formerly there were only eight families in 'Lower Meiloveg to cut peat from the hill ground (for your Lordship must 'know that our peats are cut on our hill pasture), whereas there are now 'twenty-two families cutting peat from the hill, so that it will be seen 'what amount of land this peat-cutting by twenty-two families since '1845 would take up, and besides the hill grazing is scarce enough for 'our cattle and sheep. And owing to this, they suffer badly, and instead 'of the milk they had formerly, now only treacle and tea to wash down 'the food; that is, if there be anything to buy the said commodities. We 'are frugal and not extravagant in our way of living, our staple food being 'meal, potatoes, fish when it is got, our only drink and beverage being 'tea. On an average, we consume about sixteen bolls of south country 'meal. Were it not for our potato crop the year it grows well, we would 'have no value in the crop, for which we pay so dear, with regard to what 'we make of meal. We have very miserable dwelling-houses, and never 'got aid from our proprietors to build better ones. They are thatched 'with straw; and as our crofts do not produce the required amount of 'straw necessary for fodder for the cattle and thatch for our houses, and 'as we are prohibited from cutting rushes or pulling heather by the 'proprietor, the condition of our dwelling-houses in rainy weather is most 'deplorable. Above our beds come down pattering the rain, rendered dirty 'and black by the soot on the ceiling above, through which, as has been 'shown, for want of thatch, the rain has free access, and in consequence the 'the inmates of the beds have to look for shelter from the rain in some 'dry place on the lee side of the house. Of the twenty crofters' houses, 'there are only two in which the cattle are not under the same roof with 'the family. Now we leave it to your Lordship to see what this 'revelation of the condition of our dwellings reflect on the boasted 'civilisation of the nineteenth century. Since forty years back we never 'get a day's work on the estate for pay, except two families who about six 'or seven years ago got a piece of road to construct. We live on the 'wildest part of coast from the Mull of Cantyre to Cape Wrath, and when 'returning from our nets in the Uist Channel we were prohibited from 'landing on the lee side, that is when the wind blew so that we could not 'land in Loch Poultiel, below our houses. We were not allowed to land our

* See Appendix A, VII.

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'boats on the Waterstein side. With regard to our demanding Waterstein, 'it is very convenient for us if we had it. In conjunction with the 'township of Upper Mieloveg, we desired this farm from the proprietor, as 'we needed it for the enlargement of our sheep and cattle grazing, and 'we were quite willing to pay the same rent as Dr Martin, the last who 'had it, paid for it. His lease expired at Whitsunday 1882. In conclu-'sion, we would give a query—Why were not the Glendale letters sent 'away at 2.30 P.M. instead of 5 P.M. on 17th of April last, as by this 'delay in despatching them, caused by registered letters that day in the 'post-office, provisions coming home for our families were delayed a week? 'We now state the demands of the crofters:—(*a*) The right to buy our 'holdings for so many years' rent, and to have them increased to as much 'land as will support a family in comfort; (*b*) That we shall not be 'removed from our holdings as long as we pay fair rents; (*c*) That that 'rent be fixed by a land court; (*d*) That we shall have compensation 'for whatever improvements on our dwelling-houses and crofts, in the 'event of our being removed; and (*e*) The power to buy our lands after 'paying our rents for so many years to Government.—ARCHIBALD 'GILLIES, JOHN M'KINNON, MALCOLM M'LEOD, MALCOLM SHAW, MALCOLM 'MATHIESON, JOHN GRANT, NEIL M'LEOD, WILLIAM M'LEAN, and DONALD 'M'DONALD.'

6507. You do not sign this yourself?—It is in the paper at the beginning.

6508. There are nine signatures attached to this, which makes ten including yourself. Are these ten persons all the crofters in Lower Meiloveg?—Not all of them. There are twenty crofters.

6509. Twenty heads of families, do you mean?—There are twenty-two families, but there are only twenty paying rent.

6510. What is the reason that the other ten persons interested in Lower Meiloveg have not given their signatures to this paper?—It was quite as easy to get other ten to put their names to it, but it was thought quite sufficient to have the names of the ten who have signed. The other ten can be had yet if required.

6511. You have reason to believe that the other ten concur in the statement of opinions made in this paper?—I am sure that they do.

6512. Have you any further verbal statement to make on your own part?—Not much for myself, but I will be willing to answer any question that is put to me.

6513. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Up to 1845 there were eight crofters here, and there were seventeen after 1845; were the additional nine brought from Bracadale?—Yes; I believe there were only eight in the township in 1845 belonging to the place.

6514. Did the nine that were then brought in come all from Bracadale?—The place was five years without an inhabitant, being under sheep belonging to M'Leod of Orbost.

6515. What became of the eight original tenants during those five years?—They were sent to the places about here.

6516. Did they afterwards return to Lower Meiloveg, or are their families there still?—Some of these returned with families from Bracadale and other places.

6517. What year was it then that they were taken away from Lower Meiloveg when the place was left vacant first?—They were removed from Meiloveg in 1840.

6518. Then in 1845 were there seventeen families settled there?—There were seventeen in Lower Meiloveg and sixteen in Upper Meiloveg.

6519. And now there are twenty-two in Lower Meiloveg?—Is that the

natural increase of the population?—No, they were brought to the township from other places.

6520. Where were the two cottars brought from?—They belong to the place. One of them is a widow of a man who came to poverty in the place.

6521. Was she dispossessed, and another person brought in in her place?—She was deprived of the land, after the year of her husband's death.

6522. And who got the place?—A man who was first taken out of Lowergill and placed in Ramasaig, where he was for two years, and then he was sent to this widow's lot.

6523. Then the whole twenty-two are people who have been brought in? There has been no increase of the holdings or families from the natural increase of the people of the place?—I don't know a case of subdivision of our lots for son or daughter.

6524. I think you mentioned you got one and a half returns of seed; I presume that is oats?—I refer to the oats.

6525. What return of potatoes do you get?—According to the year.

6526. I mean in an ordinarily good year?—I cannot say about others, but last year it was middling good with myself. I planted about six barrels, and I had about forty in return.

6527. That was last year?—No, the year before.

6528. And last year, was it an entire failure?—I had last year no more than ten barrels.

6529. From six barrels of seed?—Yes.

6530. Are forty barrels of potatoes about the whole produce of each croft in the place on the average?—Some of the crofts would be better than that, and some worse.

6531. But in ordinary years the average will be forty?—Yes.

6532. Then, retaining six barrels for seed, you have about thirty-two barrels of potatoes for food?—About that.

6533. And you require sixteen bolls of meal along with the eight bolls of potatoes for the year's consumption?—Yes, that is little enough for the year's consumption.

6534. What is the size of your family?—Seven children and my wife.

6535. You have spoken of the prohibition to land at Waterstein in bad weather. Are you aware there has been a letter in the papers contradicting that?—Yes. But I know there were letters stuck at the post-office which put that right, for I knew whom to get them from.

6536. Do you mean placards?—Yes.

6537. Of course, in bad weather, when you could not land in the bay here, it was necessary to land at Waterstein?—Yes.

6538. I suppose, in spite of prohibition, you were obliged to do it?—Yes, we were obliged to do it, otherwise we would be in danger of drowning.

6539. And was any notice taken of that?—No; but he ordered, in these notices, the shepherds to give us up to the law.

6540. For landing in bad weather?—For landing at all.

6541. And you understood it meant that even in bad weather you were prohibited?—Yes, we understood that the prohibition referred to the bad weather also. We don't know very well, but we understood it meant a prohibition to us to go ashore at Waterstein at all, and walk over the hill to the shore. There was another posted up at the same time forbidding us to keep dogs even, and we have a dog licence.

6542. Were the dogs doing harm among the sheep?—I am not aware that they were.

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6543. There was no report of a sheep killed here by a dog?—I did not hear it.

6544. If all the arable land on the estate were divided among them, would there be enough for the people?—If the families who were taken from other places—from Bracadale—and placed among us, were taken away, there would be three times more land for division among us than we would need.

6545. But Bracadale now belongs to another proprietor, and how do you propose to arrange that?—They are his people, the people belonging to him. They were possibly natives of M'Leod's property, and I should think it would be proper to settle them where they grew.

6546. Were most of the present generation not born in the place here?—Yes, but if they had been left where they were, they would have been born in Bracadale.

6547. If everybody was left where they were born, the world would never fill?—I would let people go away of their own accord, and not be sent off against their will.

6548. That is quite true, but we are talking of what is to be done at the present day, not of what was done in the past. How is this thing to be remedied?—To give us the land, as there is plenty of it, and when we are quite willing to pay for it.

6549. Have you the means of paying for it?—No, some of us have not. I think it would be proper that the Government should give us the use of the money, and we would pay it back willingly.

6550. There are two expressions of wants in this paper here. The first is the right to buy your holdings for so many years' rent, and to have them increased to as much land as will support a family in comfort; and the last is the opportunity to buy your lands by paying your rents for so many years to Government. What is the difference between those two demands?—I mean that if I was paying rent for twenty-five years, that I would have a preference to it if it was for sale; that I would have the preference in purchasing it to anybody else on the estate.

6551. Do these demands mean the same thing?—I don't think there is any difference between them. I mean, paying so many instalments.

6552. Do you think the present rent of these lands is sufficient to pay both interest and capital, or would you pay a higher rent while this was going on?—I know what rent we have already paid. My father, my grandfather, and my great grandfather and myself have already paid in money far more than the value of the land.

6553. Are you taking into account the rate of discount?—Yes.

6554. And the interest of the original purchase price?—Yes, but even adding the interest, we have paid sufficient to exhaust the price.

6555. What interest do you think the ordinary rent of land affords on the purchase price?—I cannot go into these things, but I know this, that I don't want to entail any loss upon the proprietor; but I want that we should be able to do better for ourselves.

6556. Everybody would be glad that you should do better for yourselves, but are you not aware that the rent of land affords the lowest rate of interest of any investment known in this country?—Yes.

6557. Then how can the present rent pay both interest and capital?—Look at the rent that we pay.

6558. But if that rent only pays the proprietor 2½ per cent. after deducting the rates, how does it pay capital and interest?—Look at the amount the rent has come to for the last one hundred or two hundred years.

6559. I want you to understand that the rent does not pay the ordinary

rate of interest, let alone the capital?—We know that the proprietors here don't spend a penny on the property.

6560. But I suppose they paid money for it when they bought it?—Yes, I know that.

6561. Then, it is the interest on that money I am speaking of. The landlord would expect interest upon his money, and would expect it to be repaid to him, and the rent does not pay the interest?—We would be quite agreeable to leave the settlement or arrangement of these matters with the officers of the Crown like yourselves, and accept your decision.

6562. Then would you be willing to pay higher rent than you pay now for a considerable number of years, in order to become owners of the property eventually?—Yes; if the rent which would be exacted from us would be at all likely, as the officers of the Crown will see reasonable.

6563. The public have heard a good deal about the Meiloveg and Borrodale Alliance. Can you tell me about it?—Yes, but there are some present who can tell about it better than I can.

6564. But I understand there are none who can tell as well as John Macpherson. He is the best spokesman in the place?—I am not from Upper Meiloveg, but from Lower Meiloveg. There are some names now left out of the list of delegates who know better of it than I do.

6565. But were you a member of that alliance?—Yes.

6566. What was the object of the alliance?—I don't think we made any alliance—no distinct binding of ourselves individually. All the alliance we made between ourselves was that we wanted to get Waterstein to help us, as we were poor, and as Dr Martin who had the place gave it up, and that we had as much right as anybody else to get it, as we were as much in need of it. We were more needy than those who had five or six tacks already, seeing that they had only one mouth and two hands like ourselves, and seeing that we were quite willing to give as much rent as they could give.

6567. What measures did the alliance propose to take in order to secure their object?—When we heard that Waterstein was vacant, we sent a letter to our factor; and we told him how great our need was of the hill, and how many families and souls there were between the two townships, and that we were thinking he would see it proper to let us have the hill, when we were willing to pay the rent for it. He replied to us telling us that our landlord was coming to the place, and that he himself was coming to Colbost; and our landlord sent us word that the factor was coming to Colbost, and he asked us to meet the factor there. We told him what we were wanting, and he told us that he himself had taken Waterstein, but that he would give it up for our sakes.

6568. Did I understand that Dr Martin had taken it?—No, it was Tormore who took it.

6569. And Dr Martin had given it up?—Yes, and it was added to the tacks which Tormore had already in his hand.

6570. Tormore said he would give it up to them?—Yes, and he asked us how we would take it, and would we pay the arrears which were upon us if we would get it. We said we would. He asked us what rent we would give for it. We said that although we should make an offer somebody else might give a higher offer, and he told us that there was nobody to give a higher offer but himself, and that he would not do it; and that we were to write him as to how we proposed to take it, and that he would write to the trustees on our behalf. We wrote and told him that we would give the same rent that Dr Martin was paying for it, and we also sent a petition to the trustees saying to them that we would leave it to

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their own consciences whether it would be more proper to give the place to us, while we were willing to pay the rent for it, and our arrears, or to give it to Tormore, who had already Dibidale, Olhisdale, Lowergill, Ramasaig, Hamara, Ostaig, Park of Nairn, and Craggie, and who, as I have already said, had only one mouth and two hands and one body like ourselves.

6571. And you say Tormore promised it to you?—Yes, in presence of two hundred witnesses. He then sent us word saying that the trustees were coming to see us, and that they would put matters right with us. The trustees did come, in May last year, and the weather was bad the night they came, but in spite of that there was a bonfire on every hill. When they were a week in the place we went to them, and they gave us no satisfaction, but told us to have patience. We told them that our forefathers had died in good patience, and that we ourselves had been waiting in patience till now, and that we could not wait any longer,—that they never got anything by their patience, but constantly getting worse. The trustees never said to us that we would not get the hill; but the first man who out-and-out refused was Tormore, the man who had promised it to us.

6572. This was in the month of May last year. Was not Dr Martin in possession up to that time?—Yes, it was at Whitsunday last year that Dr Martin took away his cattle off the hill. Tormore did say to us that we would not get the hill, and we said to him that as he had promised us the hill before, we would retain possession of it until the trustees would deprive us of it.

6573. When was this?—A little after this time last year. Tormore went that day to Waterstein, and he began to clear off what sheep and cattle were on the hill—for there were sheep and cattle on the hill belonging to other townships as well as to ourselves—and he began to clear them off the hill on to our holdings. We said to him that we would not allow him to do such things, and he said in presence of all these people that he would bid good-bye to us, and that he would never see us again. He had his own stock upon the hill, and he made his shepherds drive them away out of my sight to Ramasaig.

6574. Whose stock was this?—This was Tormore's own stock.

6575. That came from his other farms?—Yes. At that time the people of Borrodale had a great many more sheep than their own land would carry, and the people of Meiloveg sent the Borrodale sheep on to the Borrodale people's own pasture, and as they themselves were telling me they went to Tormore to ask him to buy them, as they had no place on which to keep them.

6576. The Borrodale people?—Yes. Tormore said he could not buy them, but asked them to send them to his own tack of Ramasaig.

6577. Were the Borrodale people, when they asked him to buy the stock, willing to allow him to retain possession of this Waterstein hill?—They were in a company here to take Waterstein along with us.

6578. But if they were going to sell their sheep, what was the meaning of this?—They were going to sell their sheep because Waterstein had been refused too.

6579. And they did not intend to take any violent measures to secure Waterstein?—I don't think that they intended that, but we were thinking that the trustees would give us a place, as they never refused it.

6580. If they thought the trustees were going to give them the place, why did they sell their stock?—The factor said to them on the day to which I refer that they would not get the place, and they were believing the factor.

6581. And they had lost hope of getting it at that time?—The Borrodale people lost hope, but we did not. Then these interdicts were served upon us a few days after that, and a few days after the interdicts were served we went to the fishing.

6582. What was the interdict served for?—The interdict was intended to prevent us from trespassing on Waterstein to go to the sea-shore, or to put our foot on the place at all, or our stock.

6583. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Did it not especially prohibit you from putting stock upon Waterstein?—Yes, that was mentioned, and it was mentioned that we were not to stand at all upon the ground.

6584. Have you a copy of the interdict?—I believe I have at home, but not here.

6585. *The Chairman.*—Will you bring it on Monday?—I will do so. I and others of our number went to the fishing a few days after we got the interdicts. It is the practice of the place, that when any one gives grazing on our ground to other sheep and cattle, they are in the man's own charge for a year, with shepherding and all other attention required.

6586. What man are you referring to? Are they under the charge of the man who takes them, or the man who gives them?—The man who gives the grass. When a tenant buys grazing from another, the man from whom he buys it is in charge of that beast for the time the grazing is taken.

6587. He does not relieve the owner of all risk of it?—Not all risk. It is charge. When we went to the fishing Mr Robertson, Grishornish, took up the factorship instead of Tormore; and I understand that immediately on his becoming factor the 150 or 200 sheep belonging to Borrodale, which had been allowed to graze upon Ramasaig by Tormore, and were straying on to Waterstein, were driven off Waterstein to our ground by Mr Robertson or his shepherds, and also every strange sheep which was among them was so driven. Mr Robertson went to the shepherd who was in Meiloveg, and said to his father to help his shepherds to keep Waterstein clear. The man said that if he—Mr Robertson—would keep off the sheep for which he had given grazing on Ramasaig, he would keep the Meiloveg sheep on our side. The shepherd went for fourteen days to keep off the sheep along with him, and it was on our side that they were constantly kept. When the shepherd saw that Mr Robertson was not keeping his own sheep away he gave up the business.

6588. After fourteen days?—After fourteen days. Mr Roberston then came to the lad's father, and said he did not fulfil what he had promised. The shepherd said that he was fulfilling his part of the agreement, but that Mr Robertson was not. The matter was that way until we came home from the fishing. The strange sheep and the Borrodale sheep were kept upon our holdings during the twelve weeks. When we came home we went to the shepherds, to prevent their driving the sheep upon us, and they defied us to keep them from driving the sheep upon our lands.

6589. You have made reference to the duty of the person who gives the grass to take charge of the sheep; does that refer to the Borrodale sheep which were taken on to Ramasaig?—Yes.

6590. And the shepherd at Ramasaig ought to have taken charge of the sheep?—Yes. The shepherd at Ramasaig ought to have taken charge of the Borrodale sheep, as he gave them grass there. Mr Robertson came to us when we had come home from the vessel, and asked us not to meddle with the shepherds. We said we would not interfere with them, if he would keep his own sheep on his own side.

6591. Had you been meddling with them?—We interfered with them to prevent them driving their sheep upon us.

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6592. What sort of interference?—We interfered with them so much that at last we drove them out of the place. I have nothing further to say about it.

6593. And have you got possession of Waterstein?—No.

6594. Are there sheep on Waterstein now?—Yes.

6595. Whose sheep?—I don't know whose sheep they are.

6596. But not your own sheep?—No.

6597. Do you agree with the shepherds now?—Yes; we are expecting much good as the result of the visit of the Commission; and so we are not doing anything about it.

6598. When you met the trustees or Tormore and asked for Waterstein, were your manners civil, such as Highlanders are accustomed to use in talking to those of superior social station?—I was one of the spokesmen on that occasion, and I was put to jail for the cause, and Mr Robertson and the herd of Glendale are here to-day, and I will let them testify if I was uncivil, or if they saw anything wrong in me in speech or behaviour.

6599. In regard to the rest of the people, were they generally civil?—They were civil enough to the gentlemen.

6600. And to the factor?—I think they were also civil to him.

6601. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—In the meantime, have the people determined not to pay any rent at all till they get Waterstein?—No; it is not the case.

6602. But when the rent was last collected that seemed to be their state of mind?—Yes. They asked us if we would pay the rent, and the arrears of our present holdings, if we would get the hill, and we said we would.

6603. What time was that?—A year last March.

6604. There has been a collection of rent since then; when was it?—Mr Robertson was perhaps two or three times wanting rent since then.

6605. But none paid rent except two or three?—No, we have not paid rent during that time. I was speaking to the people to-day, and they said that they would never pay a penny to the factor—that they would not pay to Mr Robertson especially—because he is not a suitable factor to be over them, as he does not speak their language, and many of the families who had children were afraid that Robertson would take the shellfish from them.

6606. What made them think that?—Because he deprived his own tenants of them.

6607. Did he deprive them of anything but the oysters?—I don't know; I did not hear. He is not a suitable factor for us, for he does not speak our language, and many of us cannot speak English.

6608. But it seems, from the case of Tormore, that knowledge of Gaelic does not make a suitable factor?—We would prefer Tormore to him. People were saying to me to-day that they would accept of any factor who would be placed over them who could speak their language, and of good character, from anywhere in the three kingdoms; and as the year was hard upon them, they would pay as best they could. That is what they said to me about it.

6609. Are there not a good many of them several years in arrear?—I don't know, but there were no arrears upon me until a year last Martinmas,—not a penny.

6610. Were any of these warnings that were sent before this term served upon you?—No.

6611. Did any of the people here take the letters that were sent to them?—I don't know. I was not at home.

6612. You were living in another place?—Well, you were there yourself.

6613. Is there anything wrong with the post-office here as to the hours at which the mails come and go?—They were telling me there was something wrong with the post-office hours—that that day the letters were not sent off in proper time, and consequently the food supplies which we had ordered were a week behind.

6614. Whose fault was that?—We don't know; the postmaster is here, and will tell.

6615. Do you know anything about the removal of the people from Lowergill and Ramasaig, or do any who are to come after you know more about it? How many families are in Lowergill now?—Not one.

6616. How many were there fifteen years ago?—There are some here who know better than I do.

6617. Name?—Alexander Mackinnon, crofter, Lower Meiloveg. He is here.

6618. How many did you hear them say?—Six families.

6619. Where were they sent to?—There were twelve before that.

6620. There were twelve sometime before that?—Yes.

6621. And on this last occasion where were these six families sent to?—One was sent to Trotternish, one to Pabbay island, one to Fasach, Glendale, one to Meiloveg, and one of them is in Ramasaig still. The other left of his own accord.

6622. And how many are in Ramasaig now?—Three.

6623. How many families were there fifteen years ago?—There were over twenty.

6624. Where were they sent to?—They are scattered through Glendale, except perhaps one family which went to Trotternish.

6625. Were new lots given to them, or part of the old lots?—Lots were subdivided for their accommodation.

6626. Were these people removed at their own desire?—No, not those from Lowergill.

6627. I have heard it said they wished to go, because it was such an inaccessible place?—That is not the case, so far as Lowergill is concerned.

6628. Is it so with regard to Ramasaig?—I cannot say about Ramasaig.

6629. Were they very well off for cattle and everything else at Lowergill?—One thing I can say, I would rather be paying rent in Lowergill than have my present croft for nothing.

6630. Are you aware whether the people of Lowergill were in arrears at the time of these removals?—I know there was no more than 10s. in arrears on the place, if there was even that much, and that they had sufficient sheep stock to pay arrears, even should there be any of them.

6631. It has been said that these lands were held by Tormore. How did you know that?—It was Tormore who took the sheep off our hands, and it is our men who took charge of them, and marked our sheep for him with his mark.

6632. Was he not acting as factor then?—He was factor.

6633. And was the shepherd acting for the trustees?—Not at that time. It was M'Leod of St Kilda who was landlord when the tenants were put out of Lowergill.

6634. Do you know anything of the people that were removed from the other townships to the east of them—Dibisdale and Ollisdale?—No, that was long ago.

6635. Do you know how many of these Lowergill or Ramasaig people have come in among you in Meiloveg?—Two families in Meiloveg.

6636. Has that inconvenienced anybody besides the two persons whose lots they got a share of?—They are spoiling the hill upon us—cutting too many peats.

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6637. Is your peat moss barely sufficient for yourselves?—Yes; the hill is very small altogether.

6638. Did any come from Ramasaig also?—Both of these came from Ramasaig latterly.

6639. Have any of them been removed into some other of the townships here, such as Lephin?—They will tell themselves.

6640. Did not the cod and ling fishing here use to be pretty good?—I have been fishing ever since I could handle an oar, in winter, and I do not think it would keep me in food all that I ever fished; and I was amongst those who did best at that fishing.

6641. Is the fish taken from you, and kept in the curing-house here?—That was the case, but not now.

6642. When was it given up?—About one year ago it stopped.

6643. Then you don't prosecute the cod and ling fishing regularly at all now?—No, but the most of us, when we come home in harvest, have nothing else to do. We must needs go out to fish, and now, after we have done the spring work, we have to go everywhere out of the country for work, and many of the young people don't come home at all.

6644. A gentleman told me that another person had told him that the tenants here sell a great many eggs—in fact, that they can pay their rent with eggs. Is that true?—I don't think he was a gentleman who told that.

6645. But as to the quantity of eggs, do they keep a good many hens?—I did not count the number which we have at home, but I don't think it is more than five or six.

6646. Is it not profitable to keep hens?—We would have to buy feeding for them from Glasgow and these places, and that would take away the price of the eggs—it would reduce it.

6647. What price do they get for their eggs here?—Sometimes 4d., and in the winter time when they are not to be found, 1s. and 11d., but there are none then.

6648. *Mr Cameron.*—I think you stated you were prohibited from cutting rushes to thatch your houses?—We were forbidden to stand at all in these places. I don't refer to our own ground.

6649. What was the reason of the prohibition? What harm could you do by cutting rushes?—They were thinking that the cutting of rushes was injurious to the ground or to the sheep.

6650. You stated that the people would like to have larger crofts, and that they should pay a sum of money for those crofts to Government, I understand?—Yes, and that we should have the whole of the soil of the country, and that we should have a motive for defending our country when need arose.

6651. Are you at all afraid that in process of time, many years after this, that the land which you want to get would be again subdivided by families being planted upon them, and their own families growing amongst them, so that each lot would get smaller and smaller?—No, I think if I had such a good croft, that I could educate my children, and when they would be educated they would learn so much about other countries, that of their own accord they would go to these other countries, when they would see that these places were better than home, and where they would not be evicted.

6652. Do you think that any scheme of emigration to other countries—America and Australia—that was aided by the Government would be acceptable to you or your neighbours?—I think it would be more satisfactory to the people if the money which such a Government scheme of emigration would require should be spent at home, and, when the land at home would be peopled, then to send us away to other countries.

6653. But if you propose yourself so to educate your children as to give them an ambition to seek their fortunes in other countries, why do you think that would not be desirable now, when the people are worse off than you say they would be?—I think that the children would then go of their own accord, as they would be single men and women, and I know that if I go to another country at this time of day it will be against my will.

6654. But still don't you think there is a very great field open for the energetic of this country in foreign countries?—Yes, and I think it would be a capital thing for those who have the £1800 tacks to go there, and then there would be no crofters in their way.

6655. Have you any friends abroad in Canada or Australia?—Very few.

6656. You mentioned that some of the people who are now crowding down upon Meiloveg might be disposed of by being sent back to Bracadale. Have you any reason to think that this would be agreeable to the people themselves?—Yes, and it would be very agreeable to me too. I would go instead of any one of them who would be unwilling to go.

6657. These removals took place nearly forty years ago?—Yes.

6658. Would not the people rather find themselves amongst strangers there, or would they not mind that?—No, the people of this place are not strangers to each other—they are so friendly.

6659. Now, how many of the tenants of Meiloveg could take the stock that would be necessary to stock Waterstein?—They themselves were going to stock Waterstein if they got it, if there were no stock upon it when Dr Martin had taken away his.

6660. But how many of them could afford to pay their share of it?—One gentleman told me he would pay for the whole stock for us, if we had got the place.

6661. How many of your own people would be able, putting yourself out of the question, to pay for their stock?—I don't know if there are any who could pay for their own share without help.

6662. Have they ever considered what arrangement would be practicable, supposing that some of the tenants were able to pay their share and others were not; whether any arrangement could be practicable to divide it equally among the tenants—that is to say, that the tenants who had money should lend to those who had not, so as to give them all a share of the stock?—That was arranged. It was arranged between us that those who could pay for more than their own share of stock were to help their neighbours, and that their neighbours would pay them back gradually.

6663. But you said just now that none of them would be able to pay their share?—We could get it from friends outside of our own number.

6664. When the trustees refused to give them this hill, do you think that that was one reason why they refused to give the hill, or do you know of any other reason the trustees had?—They asked us how we could stock it. We told them if they would give us the ground that they would see we could stock it in a few days.

6665. What did the trustees say then?—They said nothing, but told us to have patience, and that they did not mean to make us worse off than we were.

6666. Now, I understood you to say that Tormore had promised that, whoever took the hill of Waterstein, he would not take it for himself?—Yes.

6667. And that when this meeting took place with the trustees, Tormore either had taken it or was about to take it?—The trustees told us at the meeting that Tormore had taken the place, and that he was the most suitable man for it.

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6668. In fact, Tormore did not fulfil the promise he had previously made to them?—No.

6669. Has any explanation ever been made by Tormore as to this allegation?—No, he simply told us that the trustees were not for letting us have the place.

6670. Was he to pay more rent than Dr Martin?—We don't know about that.

6671. Did Tormore make no explanation as to why he did not fulfil his promise?—No; but Mr Robertson went one day in autumn last to mark out a piece of Waterstein for us which was next to our march, and which piece would not be worth much to the tacksman of Waterstein, and we showed him before we parted that this piece which he was for adding to our holdings would not enable each of us to keep more than a sheep.

6672. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Are there two properties in this glen?—Yes.

6673. What is the boundary between them?—Partially a river and a boundary dyke.

6674. Your township is upon the eastern division?—On the west side of the burn.

6675. What is the name of your proprietor?—The trustees we called them,—Professor Macpherson, Edinburgh, is one of them.

6676. Didn't you say that the proprietor is in this church at present?—Yes.

6677. Is he of age?—I believe he is above twenty.

6678. Is there any arable land upon Waterstein?—Yes.

6679. How much?—There is a great deal.

6680. Do you know how much rent Dr Martin was paying?—I am not sure, but I think it was £135 or thereby.

6681. And your present township's rent is £80?—About £80.

6682. And you don't think it too great an undertaking, being cramped at present, to go in for this place for which apparently you would have to pay about £140?—No, we thought we would be very much better by having Waterstein,—that we would come on by time,—that we would never improve our condition as we were.

6683. You were not bound to pay for any of the stock upon Waterstein?—There was no stock upon it, for Dr Martin had taken his stock with him.

6684. Was any reason assigned by the trustees for refusing your offer?—The only reason they gave was that Tormore had already taken the place, and that the place had been advertised eight months, and why did we not ask for it then. We told them we never heard the place was advertised, but that whenever we heard that Dr Martin was quit of it we then applied.

6685. At the time you made this offer, did you get the guarantee or promise of this gentleman whom you have referred to, that he would assist them in stocking?—No, we had no occasion to ask his help till we should be assured of getting the place.

6686. Apart from this gentleman altogether, are you aware that, among your own friends, there are a large number in the south from whom you would get sufficient help to stock the farm?—I know that we would try and do our best, and through time, if we got the place, we would be able to fully stock it.

6687. You stated that you are obliged to buy sixteen bolls of meal on the average?—Yes.

6688. What is the value here, on an average, of a boll of meal?—About 22s. a boll in these later years.

6689. In fact, you pay between £17 and £20 for meal?—Yes.

6690. Would it not be much better for you to pay that £17 additional rent, and get the produce of it out of the land?—I am paying up to £5 in rent already, and the £17 for meal, and I believe if I had the value of that sum of rent, that I would not require to leave the country at all after I got the land stocked, when the working of the ground would give me enough to do; and when my family and myself would be very much more comfortable and contented, instead of having to wander over the country by sea and land trying to earn a living.

6691. Is there or is there not enough land on the estate of Glendale, if properly re-located, to support the people of Glendale without going to another estate?—I believe it would be scarce enough for them, as they have been so crowded upon each other here.

6692. But a good number, I presume, could be accommodated on the estate?—Yes, a good number; there are six or seven townships at present without an inhabitant, unless there may be four or five shepherds between them all.

6693. Is there any tack here,—of which we hear a great deal in other places—a large extent of ground on which the tenant is not resident?—Yes, while Tormore had Waterstein. I do not know if it is he who has got it now.

6694. Is Ramasaig also in his possession?—Yes.

6695. And what other places?—I do not know who has that tack now which Tormore had.

6696. Then they cannot be resident?—No; whoever has it is not resident, unless the tack is in the occupancy of the trustees. Our previous landlord—Sir John Macpherson M'Leod—was only in the place once in twenty years.

6697. How long was he proprietor?—About twenty years.

6698. I want to ask you about the value of cows. You have travelled a good deal about and been in different parts?—Yes.

6699. There is, I suppose, a good deal of difference between the value of a cow here and in the east country or in the south?—A single Aberdeenshire cow would outweigh three of ours.

6700. With regard to the production of milk, is it or is it not the case that the produce here, particularly among the crofter's cows, which suffer from a want of grass, is much more meagre than that of a well-fed cow?—Yes; is is very meagre. In fact, we can only say that there is milk; and the cause of that is solely the want of proper feeding for the cows. We keep three, and all our feeding would not do justice to more than one cow. The prices which we get for our stirks are spoken of, but the food with which we winter our stirks we have to buy in Glasgow; in fact, we have to feed them with the meal which we purchase for our own families—feeding the stirks with the meal, and paying for the meal with the stirks.

6701. Is what you give to the cattle included in the sixteen bolls?—The cows don't get any of that meal, but if there is a stirk we give a little to it.

6702. But the sixteen bolls are either consumed by the family or given at a pinch to the animal?—Yes, that is the case.

6703. Now, if a person in the south or east reads in the newspaper that a croft contains three cows and so many sheep, and that the crofter is paying £5 of rent, might he not be very much deceived as to the position of the man?—I have been often asked about it in the south country, and when I told them my rent, and the amount of stock which I kept upon the croft, they thought I was well off, and that I was a gentleman.

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6704. And, in point of fact, a good deal of misconception naturally prevails when people in the south read of the quantity of stock on those crofts?—Yes, that is the case. I myself was staying with a farmer, and I know that one of his cows was better than any six of ours in the way of yielding milk and butter.

6705. There is a summing put upon most of the crofters, and the place is supposed to keep so much, and you pay according to that. Is that so?—When we went to the place the land was better. It was five years under sheep, and the summing was then three cows, and one of these cows was better than our present three; and the only cause for that is that we have too much stock, and that the land has become exhausted.

6706. You have not exactly taken up what I mean. I am speaking now generally. Is it not the case that the people generally in Skye complain that the summing on their township is rather high?—The summing is three times more than it ought to be according to the grass.

6707. And if there was no summing put upon them at all, would it not be better for them to have fewer and better animals?—They are desirous of having a numerous stock; the one that has most stock will have the more for his family.

6708. Will you explain that?—When they get leave to keep three, some of them have to buy food for them at present; and should it be the general wish to have the summing reduced to one cow, the man that has three may not be willing to agree to this reduction.

6709. With regard to Waterstein, are you aware of any reason whatever why the offer of the crofters should not be accepted by the landlord?—No, only that we thought the trustees were more willing to give a place to a big man; and on the other other hand we were hearing that the trustees were gentlemen, and before they left Edinburgh they were saying they were going to come and see the place, but when they came to Skye, and went to visit gentlemen's houses in Skye they were in a different mind.

6710. Were the same gentlemen who offered to help you in the stocking willing to become bound for your rent?—We ourselves were ready for the rent, and we said that to the trustees. We told them that the stock on the ground would be their security for the rent.

6711. We have been told, in many places, in fact all over Skye, that there is a general feeling against emigration. Now, is it not one of the reasons why young people don't want to emigrate that they don't like to leave their parents and other old people helpless behind them?—Yes, and because of the attachment which they have to each other, as well as to their parents.

6712. Is a good deal of the money that is spent in this locality earned by people going to the south and getting wages?—Yes, all the money which we get is mostly coming from the south country, unless we may be able to sell a stirk, and we are not home scarcely for a week with our earnings when we pay it over to the proprietors, and they are off to London and elsewhere abroad to spend it, and not a penny of it is spent on the place for which the rent is paid.

6713. It is upon this estate that there was some question about the proprietor wanting the first option of selling fish?—No.

6714. *Professor Mackinnon.*—You have your own stock yourself, but there is a good number in your place that have not their full summing?—I have not got a full stock myself.

6715. But there are a good number who have much less stock than you?—There are a good number who have less than I have.

6716. It also came out here, as well as elsewhere, that the Borrodale people have a large number of sheep more than their stock?—Yes.

6717. How was that? Is it a better place, or why?—No, Borrodale is a worse place than ours.

6718. How did they come to have so many?—They had more sheep stock than they ought to have had, because they were keeping them upon other people's ground.

6719. I also understood that these Borrodale people were among those who joined together to ask for the hill of Waterstein?—Yes, that was the case.

6720. And that after they got the grazing, whether free or not, at Ramasaig, from the factor, they no longer asked for the hill at Waterstein?—That is the case.

6721. Was it the general belief that the one was the cause of the other? Was it because they got the free grazing at Ramasaig that they ceased to ask for Waterstein?—Yes.

6722. And was it the general belief that that was the reason?—I cannot say that it was, but it was our notion.

6723. You stated there was a gentleman who would stock the hill for you, and that you told the trustees that your stock would be security for the rent, and that that ought to be sufficient. Did you tell them about this gentleman who had agreed to stock the hill for you?—Not at the time. We did not know of it at the time.

6724. Have you told them since?—No, we did not see the trustees since.

6725. It seems reasonable that when there was a large number in your place who had not their stock, the trustees might naturally ask how you could stock the hill. Now, if you were to tell them there was a man of means to stock it, and if you got the means guaranteed, would it not help you much to get the hill from them?—I do not know indeed, but they were not inclined to give it at that time at all; that was my opinion.

6726. Might it not be part of the reason that you had not even your own summing upon your own place, and might they not very well consider how you could be able to stock the hill?—Well, we told them we would have the hill stocked in two or three days, and they never asked in what way we were going to stock it, and we had some hopes before we would tell them that.

6727. I suppose the people of Meiloveg have all along been agreed that it was as a joint affair they would take the hill?—Yes.

6728. Were there some among you that would have liked to take the hill leaving out the others?—No.

6729. Have you ever heard such a rumour as that?—Not I.

6730. Did you hear there was a rumour that there were some among your own selves who wished to take the hill leaving the others out?—I never heard of it; they were all willing.

6731. I understand there was such a rumour, but you never heard it?—Yes.

6732. And if there ever was such a rumour, there was no foundation for it?—If there was such a rumour I would bear it, but I never heard it.

6733. I am told that it was stated in the *Scotsman* newspaper that that was the case?—Well, whether they had a reporter here or not, there was many a thing besides that reported which was not true.

6734. But your belief is that there was no foundation for such a report in this particular case?—No, it was not true.

6735. About your remedy for the whole matter, the cause of the distress of the people, you say, is the small crofts and overcrowding?—Yes, and I will prove it.

6736. And, in the first place, you wish to remove these people who came from other estates back to their own places?—If we got the estate, I think that would be right.

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6737. And then make these suitably sized crofts?—Yes.

6738. And I think you mentioned about the stock that a suitable sized croft would hold?—Yes, and not wanting to hurt our lairds, but to better ourselves.

6739. Do you thiuk the people would be able to stock these reasonably sized crofts?—Well, I think they will get help from many a one, but in the course of time I know they would be able to pay this, and have their stock to themselves.

6740. That means they would be able if they got voluntary help?—Yes, we have had nothing before us but starvation in our lives, and then you in the south would not require to be begging for us all through the kingdom.

6741. Apart from the statements in the paper, if you got such a croft on a long lease, what would you say to that?—I would be as bad again as ever at the end of the lease. I would like to have it and work it, and not be cast out when I had worked it.

6742. That is, you wish that the lease would be very long?—But when I would not pay it I would agree to be cast out, with payment for improvements.

6743. You know that in the south all the land is held npon lease?—Yes, they have better justice in the south than they have in the north. There are two sides to the law; but we never saw the just side, always the worst side.

6744. Have you considered whether, in making the crofts you were talking of, you should have them all of the same size?—No, I would like to give a man what he would think proper for himself.

6745. And you would like the crofts to be of different sizes, to enable an energetic man to work his way up through crofting as well as other lines of business?—Yes, I would not give too much to any man.

6746. What would you consider a maximum?—If I had £20 worth at a value, I think I would be able, if I got it stocked once, to pay all customers, and be an honest man, but now I cannot be an honest man.

6747. Now, in regard to these reasonably sized crofts, would you have a regulation that would prevent their subdivision again?—I would not allow a croft to he broken at all.

6748. And you would compel the overplus of the people to leave the place?—Let them leave, or do as they like, but I would not split the crofts on any account.

6749. You approve of voluntary emigration, but, after all, though so many of the Bracadale people were sent away, don't you think there is room for emigration just now?—I only know about myself, and I know I would not be willing.

6750 But you see a large number of the young people of the place going away to the south and coming back again. Would you not think, if you were young again, it might be worth considering whether some of them might just go away to those better lauds?—I see a good many young men going to be sailors and going to foreign kingdoms, and they are very willing to come home in the evening of their life.

6751. But don't you think, if they had emigrated as you would approve of your own children doing, that they would make homes for themselves?—I believe if a man had a family in a foreign kingdom, it would not be very easy for him to come home even if he had the will, but I know every one I speak to thinks there is no place like home.

6752. You yourself believe that, as an arrangement for the future, voluntary emigration should form a part. I would like you to consider whether, at the present moment, voluntary emigration should not also

form a part of it, because you believe that must necessarily come in the future?—I have nothing against it, if they do it willingly.

6753. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Now?—No, nor at any time.

6754. *Professor Mackinnon.*—You would use your influence among the people to encourage it, as you would do among your own family in the future?—Yes, I always want young men to go away in these places, but I would not like to force any man to go.

6755. But would you advise them, instead of being sailors, or farm servants in the south, that they should permanently emigrate, and make a home for themselves in other lands?—At present, when we consider things, we see no reason for it, as there is plenty of land in our country, and I don't know how we do not get it; and I know again that we would supply our friends in the south, as well as those big farmers, with everything.

6756. So you would first re-people your own land, and when it was thoroughly re-peopled you would people other places? You would scatter people over this place until it was covered, and then the overplus of them would be sent to other lands?—It might be that that would never happen—that they would go now and then.

6757. And you would not on any account subdivide the crofts again?—No, I would not.

6758. You say that rent should be fixed by a court. I suppose you mean valuators appointed by the Crown?—Yes.

6759. And whatever rent they would fix upon as reasonable, either under a long lease or under an arrangement by which you could purchase the holding altogether, you would accept that?—Yes. I would not like to be a bound person, but to stand for the kingdom as we used to do in olden times, but at the present time we have not much courage to stand for the kingdom.

6760. You think, if there was such an arrangement, the people would be encouraged and more willing to take part in the defence of the country by joining the army and navy?—Yes, and standing for the kingdom; but this is not our kingdom—we have nothing where we are.

6761. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Is the gentleman you refer to who was willing to help you in stocking the land a native of Glendale?—I don't think there is anything to be done with that, but I am sure he will stand to his word.

6762. I merely want to bring it out that he has an interest in you?—He must, or else he would not do so.

6763. He is a *bona fide* person?—Yes, and a good-hearted one.

6764. *The Chairman.*—I wish to examine you upon the proposed purchase of crofts by the crofters. You have stated that your croft maintains three cows, and that you have about three acres of arable ground. Have you any sheep?—I have only six, but eight is my summing.

6765. What rent do you pay?—£4, 13s. with rates.

6766. How much without rates?—£4, 4s.

6767. Do you consider that that is too high a rent?—I was not complaining of the rent. I was complaining of the smallness of the holding for which I was paying it.

6768. Do you consider it too high a rent, or do you not?—It is too high for the value which I have for it; and I may say that even should I get the croft for nothing, I would prefer to have to pay three times the amount for a croft three times the size of it.

6769. Suppose you applied to Government to assist you in becoming purchaser of the croft, you are aware that in fixing the price of the croft, the interest would be taken into consideration?—Yes, I understand that.

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6770. You understand that so many years' rent—it may be twenty-five or twenty-eight years' rent—would be regarded as the value of the croft?—Yes.

6771. Then would you expect your present rent to be taken as the basis of the valuation, or would you expect a new rent to be fixed by the land court?—I would be quite agreeable to any method which the Government would adopt—either to adopt a re-valuation, or to value it higher or lower than at present.

6772. It is probable that if the Government consented to assist in the purchase of crofts, the Government would expect the purchaser to pay down a certain proportion of the capital value at once, say one-fourth or one-third. Do you understand that?—I understand so.

6773. That payment would be made as a security for the industry and character of the purchaser?—Yes.

6774. Do you think that some or many of the crofters would be found who would be able to put down a proportion of the value?—I believe that many of them are not very able to pay, but I know that they would try every method to raise the money.

6775. Do you think that their families, who go out to labour in other places, would make a sacrifice to assist their parents?—I fully believe they would for I believe, there are no children anywhere who are more willing and ready to help their parents than the children of this country.

6776. You understand that, under such a system, the payment would be a heavy one, because it would represent both the rent and the repayment of the capital?—Yes, I understand so.

6777. Do you think that, with security of tenure, and with a prospect of becoming proprietors before them, the people would make such efforts to improve the crofts that they would raise a greater annual value out of them?—I believe that the people would do so—that they would improve their crofts, and so work them that the crofts would be very much improved, and the man who would not do so would not deserve to get help to purchase his holding.

6778. Now, I wish to speak, not of the purchase of the croft, but of the rental of the croft,—of fixing a fair rental for the croft. What do you think is the most important thing to do in that matter? Do you think it would be to fix the proper summing for each croft?—Yes.

6779. Supposing that a measure like this were sanctioned,—supposing that the crofters should select a representative, and supposing that the proprietor should select a representative, and that they should have the power of selecting an oversman in order to fix the proper summing of each croft, would that satisfy the people?—I should think that that would be a good plan.

6780. Do you think that the summing might be arranged between the crofters and the proprietor without the interference of lawyers and commissioners, who cost a deal of money?—I am afraid that the landlord and the tenant would not agree about the summing.

6781. I said there was to be an oversman above both?—I think that with an oversman the proprietors and the tenants could arrive at a proper summing themselves without the intervention of lawyers and officials, which would be expensive.

6782. You stated previously that you rather objected to any scheme of emigration until the land had been in some degree restored to the people, and they had had an opportunity of settling in their own country?—Yes, I said so.

6783. You also stated that one cause which prevented the young people emigrating freely was that they did not like to leave their parents behind?—That is the case.

6784. Now, supposing that the Government passed some measure giving them some security in their holdings at a fair rent, and supposing the Government proposed a measure for voluntary emigration which would take in whole families—parents and children—don't you think that the improvement at home and the emigration abroad might both go on together, and might both be useful?—Certainly.

6785. With regard to Waterstein, supposing that Waterstein was not voluntarily given by the proprietor to the people, have the people ever taken a resolution by force to prevent Waterstein being occupied by the proprietor or by the tenant?—We never thought of anything of the sort.

6786. Suppose that the proprietor or tenant at this moment proposed to put a fence round Waterstein, would the people prevent him doing so by violence?—I don't think we would interfere. We leave everything in the hands of the Commission to put things right.

6787. But that is not quite a distinct answer. Would the people by violence prevent the proprietor or tenant exercising his lawful right in putting a fence up?—I did not ask such a question at them, and I don't know how I should answer that.

6788. Would you advise them to do it yourself?—I would not advise them to resist the proprietor.

6789. To resist the putting up of the fence?—Yes.

6790. In the year 1845, when the new division was made of these crofts, was any hill pasture taken away from them?—No, but sixteen were crowded in instead of eight, and the half of the township was taken from us.

6791. You mentioned that some of the people were crowded into these crofts from Waternish long ago, and you said that they were evicted from Waternish on account of deer. Are there any deer there now?—I don't know that they were evicted on account of deer; but I know the deer are now in that place.

6792. Is there a deer forest at Waternish?—I refer to Island Isay, on which there were twelve crofts.

6793. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—That was long ago?—But the deer are on it now. I don't know how many there are.

6794. *The Chairman.*—But the deer are not doing any mischief at present?—No, but I mean that twelve crofters could live where they are.

6795. But I am asking you particularly about the deer at present. Do you mean twelve crofters could live where deer are now?—Yes.

6796. When you stated you were put into prison for sixty-one days for telling the truth did you mean you were put into prison for generally telling the truth, about the state of the country, and advocating the cause of the people, or did you mean you were put into prison in consequence of the statements which you made before the Court of Session?—I know I was put in prison in consequence of my statement—of my admissions to the Court—but I know I was taken to the court because of my speaking the truth in the cause of the people.

6797. Do you think you were arrested for speaking the truth in favour of the people, or on account of your conduct in connection with the interdict of the Court of Session?—There was no breach of interdict proved against me, unless trespassing on the ground could be held to be such.

6798. As you seem to believe, or seem to say, that you were arrested and imprisoned in some degree on account of telling the truth about the state of the people and the country, I should like to ask you whether you were ever threatened with the displeasure of the proprietor or with eviction from your holding, or with any other molestation, on account of the part you have taken as a representative of the people?—No, there was

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nothing done to molest me outside of the interdict; but Mr Robertson told me I would long ago have been put into prison but for him, but I did not understand what he was meaning.

6799. Would it do the fishermen much good if there was a pier or breakwater erected in the bay here?—I know that those who do go to fish would be the better of a pier.

6800. But if there was a pier to be built here, would it not also be necessary to build some kind of harbour on the other side,—on Waterstein?—I don't think that a pier or breakwater would be possible of erection on Waterstein, the place is so stormy and wild.

6801. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Is there not a good place for steamers to call at here to land goods?—There is a good place down at the store-house; but there are none calling, for the want of a pier. There is a road to it, and I believe if there was a pier they would come oftener.

6802. Steamers sometimes call with and for goods?—Yes, and I believe they would call oftener.

6083. And there is no way of putting goods on board or on shore except by boats?—No.

6084. *The Chairman.*—Have you any other statement you wish to make before you retire?—I have nothing further to say. I think I have said enough.

6805. Do you think you would be able to get me a copy of the notice, which you say was put up preventing the people landing in bad weather on Waterstein?—Yes, there are some in existence still, and I will try and get one.

6806. A book has been handed to me, entitled *Highland Clearances*, on page 465 of which there is a notice, but this notice has reference not merely to landing on the shore, but to the alleged habit of the people to land for the purpose of carrying away drift timber on the shore. It is as follows:—'Whereas parties are in the habit of trespassing on the lands of 'Lowergill, Ramasaig, and Waterstein, and searching for and carrying 'away drift timber,—Notice, is hereby given that the shepherds and herds 'on these lands have instructions to give up the names of any persons 'found hereafter on any part of such lands, as also any one found carrying 'away timber from the shore by boats or otherwise, that they may be dealt 'with according to law.—*Factor's Office, Tormore, 4th January* 1882.' Is that the notice you refer to?—It says any part of the lands. We cannot get home without travelling on the lands. The notice prohibited us from landing hereafter on any part of said lands.

6807. Supposing people returning from fishing had really been obliged, on account of bad weather, to land at that spot, but not with any desire to remove timber or anything else, do you think that the tacksman or proprietor would have prosecuted them for merely landing in consequence of the bad weather?—I don't think he would prosecute us under such circumstances.

[ADJOURNED.]

GLENDALE, SKYE, MONDAY, MAY 21, 1883.

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(See Appendix A, XIII.)

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 MACPHERSON—re-examined.

John Macpherson.

6808. *The Chairman.*—You wish to make an explanation as to a particular point?—Yes, in regard to the fixing of the summing of the croft.

6809. This was what was put to you and what you said. (*Q.*) 'Now, 'I wish to speak not of the purchase of the croft, but of the rental of the 'croft—of fixing a fair rental for the croft. What do you think is the 'most important thing to do in that matter? Do you think it would be 'to fix the proper summing for each croft?—(*A.*) Yes. (*Q*) Supposing 'that a measure like this were sanctioned,—supposing that the crofters 'should select a representative, and supposing that the proprietor should 'select a representative, and that they should have the power of selecting 'an oversman, in order to fix the proper summing of each croft, would 'that satisfy the people?—(*A.*) I should think that that would be a good 'plan. (*Q.*) Do you think that the summing might be arranged between 'the crofters and the proprietor without the interference of lawyers and 'commissioners, who cost a great deal of money?—(*A.*) I am afraid that 'the landlord and the tenant would not agree about the summing. (*Q.*) 'But I said there was to be an oversman above both.—(*A.*) I think that 'with an oversman the proprietor and the tenants could arrive at a proper 'summing themselves without the intervention of lawyers and officials, , which would be expensive?—I was thinking that the oversman would be from the Government, for I am sure that any other oversman would be more favourable to the landlord than to the people; for it is written that 'a gift will purchase the wise man, and much more will it purchase the 'simple.'

6810. Do you mean that, in your opinion, the oversman should be appointed by Government? Do you mean that in each particular case a different oversman should be appointed, or do you think that there should be one general oversman who should be oversman for all cases?—Yes, I would be agreeable to it so far as our own property is concerned, and no doubt it would suit perfectly well, if those upon other properties would consider it as we do here.

6811. *Professor Mackinnon.*—You have no objection to it so far as this property is concerned, and you see no objection to it elsewhere?—That is so.

6812. *The Chairman.*—Do you wish to say anything else?—I am from Lower Meiloveg, and the people of Upper Meiloveg have another matter to put before the Commission. They have not yet come, but they will soon be here. I have nothing further to say in explanation.

6813. In your memorandum your people express their desire to be

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allowed to purchase the ground. Do you mean that that purchase should take place with the consent of the proprietor, or that the proprietor should be compelled against his will to give the ground for sale?—If he would be agreeable to part with the property, I would see it proper to ask his consent; but if he should not be willing to sell the estate, we would wish he should be compelled by Government to do it. I know that Sir Kenneth Mackenzie was putting a great many questions upon me the last time as to the purchase of the land, but I know that many of our landlords never purchased the properties which they have—that it was our forefathers who purchased the properties with their own blood, and that, therefore, we have as much right as anybody else to have it by purchase.

6814. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—My questions related to the property of Glendale, which was a purchased property?—And who sold it to the proprietor of Glendale? It was one who never bought it. In regard to the oversman, what I mean is that I believe a general oversman from the Government would be suitable for all properties, and please all sides.

ALEXANDER ROSS, Crofter and Fisherman, Fasach, Glendale (48). —examined.

Alexander Ross.

6815. *The Chairman.*—Were you freely elected by the people of Fasach to be their delegate?—Yes.

6816. Have you got a statement to make on their behalf?—Yes; but I am very desirous that I should have the assurance of the landlord that nothing will be done to me on account of anything that I may say here. I heard it from the factor, but not from the landlord. We have not confidence in the factor, for everyone on the property put their names to a paper that they would not accept him as factor, with a few exceptions.

6817. This witness has expressed reluctance to accept the factor as representing the landlord, and would be more comfortable if the landlord would give a personal assurance.—

[*Rev. Hugh A. Macpherson.*—Certainly; on behalf of the trustees, I guarantee that any of the crofters on the estate may give their evidence in the fullest and freest way possible with perfect confidence.]

6818. This is the statement of the Fasach tenants which the delegate has handed in:—'Sixty years ago the whole of the hamlet of Fasach was 'tenanted by twelve tenants, each tenant paying £6, 9s. Of the £6 9s., 'only 3s. was paid in money, the six guineas being paid by each tenant 'manufacturing two tons of kelp for the proprietor, Macleod of Macleod. 'Mr John Tolmie of Uignish rented it from Macleod of Macleod, divided 'it into sixteen crofts, and though he deprived us of a great tract of hill 'pasture, imposed on us a rental of £8 each,—total, £128. Subsequently 'Macleod of Macleod himself divided it into twenty crofts. Most of these 'have again been halved, so that to-day there are thirty-one crofters in 'Fasach, and six cottars. Now a crofter holding $\frac{1}{40}$th of the whole hamlet, 'pays from £5, 5s. to £5, 9s., whereas sixty years ago, one holding $\frac{1}{12}$th 'part only paid £6, 9s. Of these thirty-one crofters, two have been sent 'from the parish of Bracadale, five from the hamlets of Ramasaig and 'Lowergill, which two hamlets forty years ago were tenanted by twenty-'two tenants; now only three cottars remain. Both hamlets are now 'under sheep. When Macleod of Macleod divided it into twenty crofts, 'each crofter had to give him one day for cutting peats. His factor, 'Donald Maclean, thirty-eight years ago, engaged two friends of the ground-'officer to cut them, and we at next Martinmas had each to pay 2s. 6d. of

'additional rent. We have continued to pay 2s. 6d., even though Macleod 'of Macleod has sold it long ago. Sixpence was also annexed to our rents 'for sea-ware, but every time we obtained any we had to pay to the ground 'officer, Mr James M'Raild, 1s. 6d. per cwt., and very often we only got 'eighteen creels of ware for the 1s. 6d. One crofter in Fasach, Mr Angus 'Macleod, fell one year in arrears. Next April he got no notice of removal, 'but was forced to leave the house and croft by Mr Macdonald, factor. 'Mr William Macdonald from Ramasaig was put in his place. This William 'Macdonald has also been evicted—he is now one of the cottars in Fasach '—and Mr Donald Cameron, also from Ramasaig, has his croft. When the 'hamlet was divided into twenty crofts, we obtained an extensive hill 'pasture to the south of the Glendale river, for which we paid £15 yearly. 'This extensive hill pasture was that which we ourselves formerly pos- 'sessed. Thus we were compelled to pay £15 for that which was once our 'own. After six years we were deprived of the half of it, but were still 'paying £15 for the half left. Thus for the last thirty years we have been 'paying each year £7, 10s. which we had no right to pay; total, £225, 'excluding interest. Last year, however, we re-obtained the half which 'was taken from us, but what about the £225? Besides, when any of 'our stock strayed to this piece of pasture which we ourselves paid, the 'shepherds would pound them, and we had to pay 1s. for each sheep, 'and 2s. for each horse, as poundage money. Within sixty years then, 'the rental and the number of crofters of Fasach, have been about 'trebled; while the land is becoming, year by year, less productive. 'The delegate, Mr Alexander Ross, will give instances of the oppression 'to which we were subjected by our late factor, Mr Macdonald:—(*a*) Case 'of removal not for arrears; (*b*) The ways and means he devised for killing 'the dogs we had for herding our flocks; in particular, the placing of 'poisoned eggs and poisoned doughs about our dwelling places. The dele- 'gate Mr Allan M'Caskill, who was removed from Ramasaig to Fasach, 'will relate the peculiar circumstances under which Mr Macdonald, factor, 'compelled himself and his fellow crofters to quit Ramasaig. We would 'therefore respectfully lay before you the urgency of our obtaining—(*a*) 'Larger holdings at reasonable rents; (*b*) Neither proprietor nor factor to 'have power to remove us except for arrears; (*c*) Compensation for 'improvements in the case of removal; and (*d*) Assistance to enable us to 'erect commodious dwelling places on our so-increased holdings.' Signed by twenty-six crofters and four cottars.

6819. In what year was the township divided into twenty crofts?—About thirty-eight years ago.

6820. Was that in the time of the present M'Leod?—M'Leod of M'Leod was the proprietor then.

6821. Was it during the tenure of the present M'Leod of M'Leod, or was it in his father's time?—In the present M'Leod of M'Leod's time.

6822. Was he quite young—was it before he attained his majority?—He had attained his majority, and had possession of the estate when this was done. I have here an extended story which I produce as the story of Allan M'Caskill, who is mentioned in the general statement. It is as follows:—'*The Statement of a Fasach Crofter evicted from Ramasaig four 'years ago.*—I remember of Ramasaig and Lowergill being occupied by 'twelve crofters in each township; the crofters who were settled at 'Lowergill were evicted from Bracadale, also some of the Bracadale 'crofters settled in Ramesaig; these were all evicted to make room for 'sheep. Four years elapsed, when some of the Lowergill crofters were again 'evicted for the same purpose, to make room for sheep. As the south side

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'of the Lowergill burn was added to Dibidale, the nearest sheep farm, six 'crofters were left on the north side of the burn. They lived pretty com- 'fortable, as they were not overcrowded. Later on Ramasaig was sub- 'divided into twenty-one subdivisions, instead of twelve. Hugh M'Caskill 'was the first factor. There was a market held on the hill of Lephin, 'near Ramasaig. By the order of the factor, the crofters had to send their 'cattle to this market, so that his manager would value them. Some of 'the men put two and some three cows to this market. My father put 'a good young cow and a two-year-old quey to it. My father and many 'more besides him never heard the valuation, and never got any thing for 'them. Mr Harry M'Donald succeeded Mr Hugh M'Caskill as factor. 'There was no change of any consequence during his time as factor, only 'he was bound to lift the rents whatever way, though the rent was so 'high and times so bad that it was impossible that poor crofters could 'make both ends meet; but he never interfered with stock or land to 'make room for sheep. Mr Macdonald, Tormore, succeeded Mr Macdonald 'as factor. The first thing he did against our will was a joint stock of 'the sheep which we previously individually held. This joint stock was 'marked when the men were from home in other countries, trying to earn 'what would support their families, and pay their rent and every other 'demand. Women and children, and few old men were at home to 'resist, but little could they do, but some of them hiding themselves with 'fear. The crofters of both Lowergill and Ramasaig were warned or sum- 'moned for resisting the joint club. We did not understand so well at 'first what he had in view when he carried on his purpose; but I for one 'have suffered by this system; I had to deliver my share of sheep for 'another man's arrears; the share of sheep came to £20, 12s. At the 'same time the factor had three or four bolls of meal against me. I asked 'him would he be kind enough to cancel one boll of the meal for the '£20, 12s., but nothing of the kind. It was not long after this when I 'had to remove from Ramasaig as well as my fellow-crofters; I had to 'take the place offered to me, or else want. The half croft which I took 'is the one-fortieth part of Fasach. There was a kind of a house on the 'half croft which I took, but after hand it became known to me that there 'were three families in this one house on my croft, therefore it was 'impossible that I would think of depriving these three families of their 'own humble dwelling, and expose them to the elements, though I had to 'be so myself. I had to accept of the other half croft, and build a house 'of my own; and although I asked assistance from Mr Macdonald, factor, 'he would not give any. Only a month was allowed me in which to build 'it, and transfer the roof of the old house in Ramasaig to Fasach. There 'was no public road between Ramasaig and Fasach then, so I had to carry 'it a mile to the shore, and bring it round the wild point of Waterstein 'by boat, and again carry it from the Glendale shore, a distance of a mile 'and a half up hill. During this time, my mother, who was eighty years 'of age, a half-witted brother, and I, had no place of abode, the new house 'being unfinished, and the old one pulled down; consequently that year 'I could not get to the fishing. Both this and my expense in building 'the house greatly reduced my circumstances, besides being now settled 'in a place far inferior to the place I left, though we complained there of 'high rent, and had reason. And when we had cause of complaint in 'Ramasaig, we have three times the cause now. Any man needs not ask 'a surer sign of poverty than that Highlanders are come to the state that 'they would reveal, confess, or expose their poverty as they now do, and 'all caused by the smallness of their crofts, and high rents, which are not 'sufficient to keep or sustain two persons for two weeks of the year,

'especially if one or two cows are on the croft;—these poor cows suffer far 'more than ourselves, being always half-starved with want of grass. We 'have the name of having cattle, but a stranger would think it incredible 'that in some cases these cows have calves once in three years. Also in 'some cases they come to six and seven years of age before they are in 'calf. Even at this present day it can be ascertained by witnesses that 'this statement is true. The crofts are so much exhausted by turning, 'digging, ploughing, and delving since the memory of the old people of 'the place, that it yields no crop of any consequence—only useless weeds, 'not fit to be used for man nor beast, therefore we derive not much profit 'of the cattle, being too scarce of wintering and no grass in summer—this 'keeps only the life in them. People are obliged to rear the calves with 'eggs till they come to chew the cud, then have to feed them with 'porridge, &c., because the cows have no milk to nourish them. We 'need not expect to have good strong-boned cattle while they are not 'nourished with milk when young. We have to buy the meal we con-'sume from the south, not only what the families consume, but what keeps 'cows when other provender is done. All this is the result of too small 'holdings and high rentals. Having been elected by the Fasach crofters 'to represent them as a delegate, I have consulted them as regards the 'remedy they think proper for the prevailing distress among the people. 'The mind of the people is, that although the land is bought by their 'forefathers and themselves, still they only want—(1) An increase of 'holdings; (2) Fixity of tenure; (3) Fair rent, and the land valued by 'competent men of good report, irrespective, and qualified for the office, 'not landlords nor factors; (4) Compensation for improvement when 'removing; and (5) Power to buy the land as their own, after paying 'rent for so many years as honest and trustworthy men deem proper. I 'am an eye-witness of evictions that took place five years ago. Of the 'last five crofters who were evicted from Lowergill, two were sent to 'Ramasaig and settled there. At the end of a twelve month, one of them 'had to carry his furniture, goods, and all he had back the same way to 'Lowergill, not to stop in it, as it was then a sheep farm, but to get the 'said furniture aboard the craft loaded with wool for Tormore, and this 'crofter is now in a small island on Lord Macdonald's estate. The other 'crofter already mentioned was evicted at the end of the eighteen months, 'and is presently in Glendale.—ALLAN M'CASKILL.'

6823. *Mr Cameron.*—It is stated in this paper that sixty years ago there were twelve crofters in Fasach, and that afterwards Mr John Tolmie of Uignish rented it from M'Leod of M'Leod. Will you explain what he did rent? Did he rent the whole of these crofts, or what was it?—It was not in crofts when Mr Tolmie rented it. It was a runrig system that was in force when Mr Tolmie had it.

6824. How long ago was it when Mr Tolmie had it?—I am not very sure.

6825. Was it subsequent to this period of sixty years ago?—It was long after the period of sixty years that I speak of.

6826. But it is stated Mr Tolmie divided it into sixteen crofts. What did he divide into sixteen crofts?—I am told it is forty-six years since Tolmie divided it.

6827. But I want to know what exactly he divided?—It was M'Leod of M'Leod who divided it into crofts.

6828. But it is stated here that Tolmie divided it into sixteen crofts?—We are meaning to say that Mr Tolmie was renting it—that the rents were raised by him.

6829. Was renting what?—Fasach.

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6830. The crofts?—It was not in crofts at all then. It was made into crofts when Tolmie lost it, about thirty-eight years ago.

6831. Who were those twelve tenants who had Fasach forty-six years ago, before Tolmie got it?—Some of the descendants of those twelve crofters are here to-day, and I am one of them myself.

6832. Then it was divided into crofts before Tolmie got it?—It was a runrig system that was in force during Tolmie's occupancy of Fasach and subsequently.

6833. What became of those twelve tenants when Tolmie had it? Did they pay rent to him?—Yes, they paid rent to Tolmie.

6834. Then it was divided afterwards by M'Leod into twenty crofts, on the present system, each crofter having a separate holding of arable and a common hill grazing. Was that the case?—Yes.

6835. How did M'Leod get it back from Tolmie?—I don't know. I don't know if Tolmie had a lease of it or not.

6836. Did Tolmie hold any other land besides Fasach?—He had Uignish, and I believe he had Skiniden also.

6837. When M'Leod established these crofters and took Fasach away from the tenant of Uignish, was Uignish let to another tenant without Fasach?—Mr Tolmie remained at Uignish after he lost Fasach.

6838. Do you know what change was made in Tolmie's rent by losing Fasach?—I don't know anything about Mr Tolmie.

6839. You say that there were originally twelve tenants in Fasach, and that subsequently, some time after M'Leod established it as a separate crofting farm, there were thirty-one crofters. There were twenty first and then thirty-one?—There were twenty when the crofts were at first portioned out, and they were continually coming in and increasing, until there are now thirty-one families and six cottars besides.

6840. Now, it is stated here that of these crofters who came in two came from Bracadale and five from Ramasaig and Lowergill, which makes seven?—Yes.

6841. That added to the twelve makes nineteen?—When these came in there were twenty families.

6842. Then where did the eight come from that increased it from twelve to twenty?—Partly the natural increase of the township, and that they could not get any other place to go to.

6843. And you say that the families of the crofters who were already there established themselves as separate crofters?—Yes.

6844. Then there are four crofters to account for still. Where did they come from?—I don't know. They were coming out of everywhere when they could not get places elsewhere.

6845. Did they come from outside, or was it owing to the natural increase?—I believe it was to the natural increase of the township that these four are attributable.

6846. How did the six cottars come there?—Some of the crofters of the township who came to poverty, and one who came from Ramasaig, and one who came to poverty in Fasach.

6847. So five of them were crofters, and belonged to the place, who were reduced in circumstances, and became cottars, and one came from Ramasaig. Now will you explain about the poisoned eggs that the factor put down for the dogs?—They were saying it was the gamekeeper who was in the place that was laying down these poisoned eggs.

6848. What was his name?—Duncan M'Lennan, I think.

6849. When was this done?—About seven years ago.

6850. How many dogs were poisoned?—I don't know—many a dog. I myself saw some of them dying.

6851. How near to the houses did he place these poisoned eggs?—I don't know how close to the houses of others it was, but poisoned eggs were placed within sixty or eighty yards of the house of my neighbour, and the poisoned doses also. The poisoned doses were like little rolls of meat with poison laid in them.

6852. Did you complain to the factor or the keeper?—Yes, and I complained to the sheriff also.

6853. What did the keeper say when you complained?—The gamekeeper was denying placing the eggs with the poison.

6854. What reason had you to suppose the factor did it?—It was the factor who settled the gamekeeper here, and I myself put the question to the gamekeeper who was in the place before him, and the gamekeeper's reply was—'If it was I who gave it to him, it was themselves who gave 'it to me, requesting me to give it to him.'

6855. That is rather mixed, who is 'I' and who is 'him'?—It was I who gave it to M'Lennan, the gamekeeper.

6856. Did the keeper say he employed poison for killing vermin, such as hoodiecrows, and the like of that?—I did not ask him, neither did he tell.

6857. Are there any rules on the estate about keeping dogs?—Yes.

6858. Then if the factor could enforce these rules, why should he have gone to the extreme measure of poisoning?—He enforced the rule upon my dog, when he shot him with his gun in the well, and the well is dry since then, although it was one of the best wells in the country before then, but since then it has denied water.

6859. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—What was the dog doing in the well?—My dog was following my wife, and she was coming home from my brother's house to her own house, and the dog following her. The dog was lapping the water of the well, and there he was shot.

6860. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—He killed the dog and he killed the well?—I do not know what he did to the well; but likely if he could kill the well, he would do it.

6861. *Mr Cameron.*—If there are rules on the estate which the factor can enforce about keeping dogs, why do you suppose he would poison them secretly, when he could insist upon their being removed?—I cannot judge a factor's heart by the heart of any man.

6862. With regard to the £15 for the hill pasture which you got at the time of the land being given to the twenty crofters, you say that hill pasture was extensive; how many cattle would it keep?—I don't know, but it was a place where we were keeping horses and farrow cows, and a few sheep.

6863. Have you any idea of the stock they kept?—No, I never tried to ascertain strictly.

6864. How many persons kept stock there?—There were twenty lots, and also the half lotters. They would be placing half the summing on it, and the herd also had his summing.

6865. The whole thirty crofters had their beasts there?—Yes, if they had stock to keep on it.

6866. They sent their yeld cattle and some horses and some sheep?—Yes, some of them, but some did not.

6867. Will you explain what you mean by wishing for assistance to enable you to erect dwelling houses?—I mean that the houses which we had formerly were broken down and made into sheep fauks, and it would not be easy for us, should we get the land now, as we are in such poverty, to build new houses, but if we got the land, we would try in some way to build our houses. It is the land we want.

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6868. That is exactly what I want to find out. What is the nature of the assistance you would like to build the houses?—Money or material—wood and lime.

6869. What proportion of the house would you do yourself, and what proportion would you wish to get in the shape of assistance?—We would try to build the walls at any rate. There are plenty stones and rocks in the place, and we would desire to burden our helpers as little as possible.

6870. Would you like to get the wood and the slates, or would you rather roof the houses with some other material?—Slate would be the best for us, if we could get it.

6871. As I came up the hill I saw some houses roofed with felt. Do you approve of felt for roofing houses?—Felt is better than thatch at all events, which lets in the rain, and thatch is not to be had. Our ground does not yield crop to enable us to thatch. It will not feed the cattle. We have to supplement it with feeding stuffs from Glasgow.

6872. Does the felt make a sufficiently warm roof?—I don't know. I never spent much of my time under it.

6873. What do you consider the cost of building the house would be, everything included?—I believe it would cost up to £50.

6874. But you would be satisfied if you got the wood and roofing material—slates, or whatever else was used?—We would be striving with it.

6875. Could you manage to buy the lime yourself?—Some could, and some could not.

6876. What is the price of lime, landed here per barrel?—2s. 6d. for unslacked lime here.

6877. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—How many years is it since Macdonald, Tormore, came to be factor?—Nineteen years last spring, to the best of my recollection.

6878. When did he leave it?—A year ago.

6879. What lands or farms did he take when he was factor upon the estate?—Ollisdale, Dibidale, Lowergill, Ramasaig, Hamara, and some tell me he had Waterstein.

6880. Were there people removed,—I will not go into particulars, because we had some of them already,—were there some tenants and crofters removed from each of these places?—From Lowergill, Ramasaig, and Hamara, there were small crofters removed.

6881. What has he in his hands now of any of these towns?—Some say that these townships are in the hands of the trustees, and some say they are in the hands of Mr Robertson, the factor.

6882. But all these townships have not been restored in any way to the small tenants?—No.

6883. Do these lands, including Waterstein, comprehend a very considerable proportion of the whole estate of Glendale?—Yes, the best part of the property.

6884. Do you know Waterstein property well?—Yes; I have been in the habit for the past twenty years of walking over it.

6885. Is there or is there not a good deal of land that was once in cultivation, and that is now gone out, upon that farm?—Yes, a very great deal.

6886. Good land?—Yes, as good as can be got this way.

6887. Were there persons of some importance living upon Waterstein and farming that land at one time?—Yes, but I don't remember. One Mr William Beaton was staying there. Mr Beaton was succeeded by Mr Kenneth M'Rae.

6888. Was Mr Beaton a clergyman?—Yes.

6889. Who was in possession of the part of the hill that was taken from the Fasach people, as they complained of in their petition?—It was restored to us last year.

6890. Have you then the whole that originally belonged to the town?—Yes.

6891. And who had this part that was restored?—The first man who deprived us of it was the factor for M'Leod of M'Leod when he was under trustees. He was Hugh M'Caskill. Then Captain M'Leod, Orbost, took it from Hugh M'Caskill. It was then in the possession of Tormore until it was restored.

6892. Who was the tenant of Waterstein until last year?—Dr Martin had it.

6893. Is Dr Martin the proprietor of considerable land in this neighbourhood?—Yes, he has a large estate.

6894. He does not seem to have had enough of land, and therefore he comes and tenants the land of a neighbouring proprietor?—It appears that he did not think that what he had was enough, on his own property.

6895. Which is the largest estate—Dr Martin's or Glendale?—Glendale is the largest. Both properties were included in Glendale as it belonged to M'Leod.

6896. The Rev. Mr Macpherson's property is greater than Dr Martin's?—Yes.

6897. Have the Fasach people been complaining of their circumstances for some time?—Yes.

6898. Did they present ever a petition to Parliament?—Yes.

6899. Who gave them back this hill land?—The heir and Mr Macdonald, Tormore.

6900. Have they applied to the heir lately to redress the grievances of which they are now complaining, even after they got back the hill? Have they made any application to him personally or otherwise?—We sent such a request to the trustees before the young heir came into possession.

6901. But he is now in the country, and is here present; have you made any application to himself personally?—No, I don't think they did.

6902. Considering he is a young man, and also a clergyman, everything thus telling in his favour, don't you think their proper step now is to make a proper application to him to redress their grievances?—We had good hope concerning the trustees, and they did not do anything to improve our condition, and I myself spoke to the trustees concerning my condition, and how I should be used, and Professor Macpherson replied to me, 'I will take your holding off your hands,' and there was no word of what I was to get instead. I said to myself there was no use doing anything further about it—that it would only be the gallows succeeding the fever.

6903. No doubt that was a very disheartening answer, but, notwithstanding all that, don't you think they would do wisely to go under the circumstances to their young laird?—I don't know what the people's ideas may be on that subject. They were waiting till the Commissioners came among them, and as the case has gone to the Commission let the Commission do what they themselves think proper. If the proprietor is for dealing justly with them, I don't know but our people will be willing to accept that from him. He looks like a real gentleman, if he will not be spoiled.

6904. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—There was a case of a man whom the gamekeeper brought into the sheriff court for some difference that took place between them about a dog. Was that you?—Yes, I was the man, and no wonder should I remember him.

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6905. Were you summoned by the gamekeeper?—No, but I summoned him.

6906. For the killing of the dog?—Yes, and for firing a gun in the direction of my wife.

6907. What was the decision?—The gamekeeper was fined 10s., with the alternative of three days' imprisonment.

6908. There was a man who gave evidence in that case who was afterwards deprived of his croft?—Yes, and I will show you a letter which he sent me to give up his own state, to lay before the Commissioners how he was dealt with. This is the first letter I got from him since he left, and I did not write to him.

6909. This is a private letter, but it contains this statement, speaking of some friend of yours:—'He told me you were to be one of the leading 'men here to meet the Commissioners, and I trust I will see your state-'ment before Lord Napier, as I read all the reports in the *Mail*. Tell 'him about the way Tormore put me and you about for bearing witness 'in the court house at Portree against him for your mistress, and the way 'he thrust me out of my country with bad law, having my rents and 'debts cleared with all customers.' That is dated 10th May 1883, Ayrshire. Are you sure there was no other reason for putting him out of his croft except his being a witness in this case?—He was the best neighbour ever I had at any rate.

6910. And to your personal knowledge, he was not in arrears?—I know he was not in arrears.

6911. And how soon after that sheriff court case, was he put out of the croft?—He gave evidence in the beginning of May at Portree, and next year both he and I were warned to remove.

6912. Are you a member of the Glendale Land League?—What land league do you mean?

6913. Those who bound themselves together not to pay rent until they should get more hill?—No, no.

6914. Is there any such league?—I don't know.

6915. But we have been told that there is, and that the members are bound under penalties not to pay rent? I don't know. The Commission should put it to proof.

6916. Is there no such thing in Fasach?—I am not aware of such a thing. They are not wanting the land without payment at all.

6917. Do you know or have you heard of anybody who refused to join others in refusing to pay rent, and who suffered any injury in his cattle or his implements?—I heard there were such.

6918. Do you not know yourself of any particular instances?—No; I don't even know if it is the case.

6919. The Commissioners have heard of such things, and are desirous to ascertain the truth. Can you not assist us? We are hearing so many rumours that we don't know what to believe. We are reading things about ourselves in the newspapers which we did not know before.

6920. Have you found news in the papers about things which happened in Glendale, which took you by surprise?—Yes, and reports which we know to be false, and we are quite troubled by them. We are hearing such reports even down from London. They are imputing to us in London, that we are a lawless people, and I will give you one case of the law which is in force here. Two steamers came to this parish for the past two years, and the place is very straitened with poverty, and want, and you may know that when the steamers are coming twice a week they are bringing plenty to eat, but there is no store-house in the place. The goods have to

be placed on the shore in tarpaulins, and I never heard of a penny worth being stolen of these goods during that time. There has been a policeman sent among us about a year ago, and he has not had a case yet except about one old teapot which he took from a tinker. The tinker's horse had eaten some corn belonging to a woman, and the policeman went for the woman to get him to pay for the damage.

6921. *The Chairman.*—Have you heard, not through the newspapers, or from outside, but in the place, of any case of persons suffering injury in their property or in their employments on account of not joining the popular cause in this matter—not joining the other crofters?—If I heard such I don't remember; but I heard of a man who went to plough in Waterstein, and some of whose implements were taken from him, but I don't know if that is true or not. I did not say anything to that man about it.

6922. Would you state the name of the man whose implements were said to have been injured or taken away?—Roderick Campbell. That is all I heard about it.

6923. You have stated that a number of things are said in the newspapers and in London and elsewhere of which you know nothing here. Here is one of the statements, taken from a newspaper—the *The Daily Free Press*:—'About the same time the following warning was put up:—'"Notice.—Any one of the tenauts of Skiniden who will pay his rent, '"not only his house and property, but his life will be taken, or any one '"backsliding'"?—I never heard a word about it till now.

6924. You never heard a rumour of such a notice?—I never heard a word about it, and I am very close to Skiniden. We march with Skiniden, and I did not hear a word about it till this moment.

6925. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—I wish to ask, as to the assistance for building houses, whether you want it from the Government or from the proprietor?—We would have more hope of getting it from the Government.

6926. And do you expect to get it for nothing, or on payment of interest?—We never get anything without paying for it, and we don't expect to get such help otherwise.

6927. You would be glad to have the power of borrowing money to build houses?—Yes.

6928. In this paper reference is made to the rent sixty years ago. Is it a matter of complaint that the rent has been raised at all, or is it a matter of complaint that the rent has been unduly raised?—We are complaining that the rent has been unduly raised.

6929. You don't think it improper that the rent should have been raised in the last sixty years, to a certain extent?—No, but we don't think that the increase that was made on our rents was right, and I will give you proof of that if you wish.

6930. Can you give it?—Sixty years ago the township was valued, and there were only at that time twelve families cutting peats. There were just twelve fires in the village, and there are now thirty-seven fires kept burning from that peat moss from year to year, and any one may understand how the pasture has been burned with that consumption of peat since that time.

6931. If the number of the families had not been increased, would you have thought it unfair that the rent of the land should have increased in like proportion with the price of cattle?—That is right enough. It would be right enough, if we had the land in such a way that we could live upon it.

6932. I understand from the complaint here that you object to any

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rise of rent whatever, but you do not object to any rise?—We don't object to a small rise, but yon is out of the question altogether.

6933. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Do you possess a whole croft or a half croft?—A half croft. I have had a whole croft since I came to Fasach.

6934. There is another family on the croft—a cottar?—Yes.

6935. Then you pay the whole rent of the croft yourself?—Yes.

6936. What is the rent?—The last factor informed me that the rent was £5, 6s. 2d. including assessments.

6937. Now, what is the summing of the croft? How much stock are you allowed to keep?—Four cows, but it will not keep two; I have two.

6938. A horse?—Yes.

6939. And sheep?—Yes.

6940. How many sheep?—Twenty sheep is the summing.

6941. You have one horse?—Yes.

9942. And two cows?—Two cows and a three-year-old, and eight sheep.

6943. Why don't you have a full stock of sheep?—It defied me to get the sheep to put on the hill.

6944. For want of money?—Yes; it is just a year since we had the half of the hill pasture restored to us.

6945. Would you consider your arable land is about two and a half acres or so?—I think so, and it is very shallow.

PETER M'KINNON, Crofter and Postmaster, Lephin (55)—examined.

Peter M'Kinnon.

6946. *The Chairman.*—Have you been freely elected a delegate by the people of Lephin?—Yes.

6947. In the statement presented by John Macpherson, on the part of the Lower Meiloveg crofters, there occurs the following passage:—'In conclusion, we would give a query—Why were not the Glendale letters sent away at 2·30 P.M. instead of 5 P.M. on the 17th of April last, as by this delay in despatching them, caused by registered letters that day in the post-office, provisions coming home for our families were delayed a week?'—I am instructed to give all such information to the surveyor-general when asked, as I am provided with books of rules in connection with the post-office, and it is of course unreasonable. This is the report of the people, and the report should be forwarded to the proper quarter, and then I shall be ready to explain this to the post office department. It is not proper to make such known to the public. That is according as I understand it by the book of rules, but I shall be prepared to explain this and to answer this when the report shall be reported to the postmaster-general, and I shall be prepared for my own department.

6948. Then you do not consider that under the regulations you are at liberty to make an explanation on this occasion?—Just so.

6949. Now, speaking as a delegate, have you any statement to make on the part of the people of Lephin?—Yes; I have here first my own personal grievances, and then I put the account of the people. I wish to read the statement on the part of the people.

6950. You were freely elected a delegate?—Yes.

6951. And was this statement which you have put in read to the people? Did they all see it?—Not all; some were not at home, but to such of my neighbours as were at home, all who were living at home—because the able-bodied people are away.

6952. How many were present when this was read to them?—Two.

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6953. How many residents are there?—There are only six in my township in Lephin.

6954. And there were only two present?—Yes, the rest are away all through the world. 'As a chosen delegate on behalf of my township, I 'am requested to state a few remarks of their present and past grievances, 'wishing to remind all friends either here or elsewhere of our sending 'full details of our state to the trustees of the estate. Some time ago, 'being patiently waiting a redress for a long period, except that the 'Meiloveg crofters could hardly bear the yoke placed upon their necks by 'the interdict of Tormore, to which the Supreme Court had given consent, 'in preventing landing or even standing upon any part of the lands be-'tween the point of Dibidal and Lower Meiloveg, the distance of about 'twelve miles, or taking out any licences or exemption paper for dogs, and 'from handling drift timber, under pain of their being reported by 'shepherds and herds. Under those circumstances of extreme depression, 'it appears that matters changed otherwise, when almost all the tenantry 'of the estate and of Dr Martin preferred hoisting a flag of independence 'against local rulers, at the same time unfurling their flag of distress for 'observation of the British Parliament, under whose hands are ample stores 'of provisions, so as to grant timely aid to the needy. There are twenty-'nine crofters and four cottars in the townships of Holmasdale and Lephin, 'paying about £80 rental, instead of ten tenants paying rental of £48 'fifty years ago. They are composed of evicted tenants from the parishes 'of Bracadale and Waternish forty years ago, others who had been 'removed from Meiloveg about forty-four years ago, when under a lease 'for the late Captain M'Leod of Orbost, who evicted the old Meiloveg 'crofters from those townships, where they had many privileges in connec-'tion with their holdings, viz., horses, sheep, moderate rent, and double 'summings of all sorts than at present, Holmasdale being the hill pastur-'age of Lephin, where the women used to milk their cattle and sheep, as 'no cattle were then allowed about the clustering hamlets. It was to 'this desolated, uncultivated barren moor the poor forsaken tenants of 'both Meilovegs had to flee, where stones could not be got for erecting 'huts for themselves and their cattle, so that toils might be compared to 'the ancient Hebrews for want of materials wherewith to form bricks or 'stones for abodes in their new discovered colony. The rental of both 'arable land of Lephin including pastnrage being formerly £68, comprising 'ten shares, the former tenants being evicted to make room for sheep 'abont eleven years previous to this new settlement, whereas the new 'settlers of the hill being charged £10 above the old rent, although minus 'of the arable. Under present depressed conditional circumstances, we 'would humbly pray for relief:—1. Fixity of tenure; 2. Enlarged holdings; '3. Fair rent fixed by law courts; 4. Compensation; 5. Power to buy 'holdings similar to other nations. To all concerned, PETER M'KINNON, 'crofter; LAUCHLAN MORRISON, crofter; PETER M'DONALD, crofter.'

6955. There are twenty-nine crofters and four cottars in the townships of Holmasdale and Lephin. Do yon represent Holmasdale as well as Lephin?—Holmasdale and Lephin,—Lephin being the proper township. It has been subdivided of late. There is another delegate chosen from Holmasdale. Lephin is the proper township, Holmasdale being anciently the pasturage of Lephin, and now there is a new name given, and the ancient place subdivisioned for some years past.

6956. Have the people of Holmasdale elected you to speak for them?—There is another delegate.

6957. But are you authorised to speak for the people of Holmasdale?—Oh, yes, they can show that by a show of hands.

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6958. Did the people of Holmasdale hear this paper read?—Yes.

6959. How many of them heard it read?—I don't recollect. I read it openly and publicly to the people.

6960. Then there is a statement on your own part. Have you got a particular grievance on your own part?—Yes. 'I am a native of Glendale, 'born at Borrodale on the 15th May 1828, left Glendale at the age of 'sixteen years, enlisted in the Royal Navy on the 4th January 1852, 'having passed my examinations as first-class gunner of the Royal marine 'artillery at Portsmouth in 1853, and embarked on board H.M.S. "Royal 'George" the same year as candidate for actual service for the Baltic, 'having been transferred to H.M.S. "Spiteful" in 1854 for the Black Sea 'Fleet as lance bombardier, having been at all engagements from 17th 'October 1854 until the end of the Russian war, having served also in 'H.M.S. "Nile" and H.M.S. "Sanspareil." I was invalided at Haslar 'hospital in 1860, through injuries contracted in and by the service, with 'first class certificates of abilities in all branches in which I served, includ- 'ing gallantry, most exemplary conduct, and other honours, with pension 'extended to few years for reappearance for further examination, either 'for continual service or pension, being recommended by the naval 'medical doctors for retiring to my native land for the benefit of my 'health. When finding my health and strength improving in my native 'Glendale, and few hundred pounds of money at my command of my 'hard earnings, I wrote a humble petition to the late Sir J. Macpherson 'M'Leod, for permission of erecting a shop for general dealings at the 'roadside at Lephin, where I was at the age of half a year old to six years 'old, to which petition a favourable reply was sent through the factor, 'late H. M'Donald, requiring the approval of the inhabitants of such a 'shop being for the interest of the locality. Having obtained sufficient 'signatures to the effect required, full permission was favourably granted 'by the late most honourable proprietor of the Glendale estate. As soon 'as I started business, the factor told me that I would have to become 'surety for payment of the rent of the croft upon which my house and 'shop was built, or that he would evict its possessor for failing payments 'ever since he got it, as said possessor, late Kenneth M'Kay, apparently 'being possessor two years previously. I conceded to the request, rather 'than see the poor man deprived of his little plot of ground, in con- 'sidering the poor man of being incapable of maintaining either himself 'or his heavy family of six sons and one daughter, who was considered 'by all his neighbours of being of unsound mind, and quite indifferent to 'all consequences of evictions. I afterwards got possession of the one-third 'of Hamara, and the post-office on the retirement of the late John Campbell, 'who was first appointed postmaster of the district. The tenants of Hamara 'were served with summonses of removal in 1867, when the whole town- 'ship of Hamara was relet to me, on faith of fixity of tenure, as long as I 'would pay the rent for same. I was again served with citation of 'ejectment from the township of Hamara in the spring of 1869, when 'having a long debating regarding the agreements made with the factor 'that I should not be removed without cause or non-payment, &c. The 'only plea the factor offered was that he wanted the township of Hamara 'for his own accommodation, and that he would allow me the sole use 'of the lot at Lephin, as he was under a vow of depriving M'Kay of his 'last and only cow for payment of meal; and as there were so many 'applicants for said No. 2 lot of Lephin, he was about letting it to some 'one named Donald Nicolson, Glasphin, who offered to build a new house 'upon it, as he would not think of removing me out of my own premises, 'since his being aware of my getting full authority from the proprietor

'of building premises for the interest of tenants and proprietor as post-master and general dealer. I continued paying my rent as formerly until 1881, when, having many charges against Tormore on account of bad neighbouring, and for many losses of ill-usage of my sheep and cattle in his protecting the township of Hamara by dogs, instead of the customary dykes, as anciently kept in repair, when good neighbouring and fair play being naturally expected from crofters and proprietors. He then charged me of being repeatedly claiming justice from him, and if he were in my place that he would knock his head against the stones. I told him of his foolish redress and unsound advice, as a magistrate and meditator between tenants and most esteemed proprietors. He reminded me of my not paying the arrears of the former tenant, amounting to £6, 10s., two years rent. I told him of my never hearing of such contract being mentioned in our specification until then, and if such an amount were owing to the landlord, it looked quite careless to him as manager allowing two cows, worth £20, be taken away by two dealers from off said property until the honest proprietor would have his own, and that I might justly charge him fully £100 for his interferences and non-interferences as a sole judge and ruler of all matters on the estate for a period of about twenty years. I there and then paid my rent, and left the paying office of Hamara lodge, having pocketed my receipt and proceeded homewards; and after arriving home I discovered that I had been fairly or rather unfairly cheated; by my perusing my rent receipt, found myself as heir of the heirs of the estate of Kenneth M'Kay, being watching and waiting consequences ever since then until I had the pleasure of acknowledging, per receipt a registered letter on the 16th of April last, and finding enclosures quite unjustly and quite contrary to reason, which might easily be proven by original rent receipts, and hereby declare my having paid quite regularly my divers dues as sole possessor of No. 2 lot at Lephin ever since 1861 to 1881, and that my father paid said lands at or within a few yards of same stance from 1828 to 1834, making clear payments of twenty-six years, besides the unsettled period of two years, for which I offered payment to the present factor, on terms of my being fairly served with proper co-efficient receipt as formerly, so as to correspond with former settlements. I have so far endeavoured showing my having been served with three summons of removal within the last twenty years, without any reasonable cause, except imaginary and unfair accusations of the following natures:—1. For claiming fair play and protection as a British subject; 2. For my being reading newspapers, thereby causing the enlightenment of my fellow-mortals; 3. Writing for poor people for admission of obtaining charity, &c.; 4. For speaking openly as shareholder of public opinion, as regarding voting for suitable members for Parliament and school boards, &c., for passing any remarks upon either Conservatism and Liberalisms; 5. Claiming good rules between factors and tenants, so as to have fair understanding between industrious honest crofters and honourable just landlords—until brought so very low as common degraded thief placed abaft the mizen-mast, after undergoing punishment of the seven bell cat-of-nine-tails, but living in hopes of obtaining the usual quantity of sweet oil for soothing my scratches at the hour of sunset, so as to enable me drawing my pound and pint at five bells in the morning.'

6961. The statement of your own case is so full and accurate that I shall not ask you any questions about that, but I wish to ask you one or two questions about Holmasdale and Lephin. Am I to understand that the settlement at Holmasdale is made out of the hill pasture that formerly belonged to Lephin?—Yes, the hill pasture belonging to Lephin.

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6962. Was there a township at Holmasdale before, or was the whole of the settlement at Holmasdale placed upon the hill pasture at Lephin?—No, there was no township at Holmasdale before.

6963. And the people who now live at Holmasdale were brought and settled upon the hill pasture of Lephin?—Yes.

6964. How many families are there now at Holmasdale?—Twenty-nine families between the two.

6965. But how many are there at Holmasdale?—Twenty-one; nineteen paying rent, and two cottars.

6966. How long is it since the first settlement was made at Holmasdale?—About forty-four years ago.

6967. Were the families all brought at once, or have they come one after another gradually?—They came nearly all at once.

6968. Where were they brought from?—From Upper Meiloveg.

6969. All of them?—The most part of them; about eighteen of them, I believe.

6970. Was that in consequence of the land being taken away from Upper Meiloveg?—Yes.

6971. Why was the land taken away at that time from Upper Meiloveg?—For the purpose of making room for sheep.

6972. What was the name of the land taken away?—The land of the Upper Meiloveg.

6973. Does that form part of the farm of Waterstein?—No, it is still under tenants. It is the tenants or crofters of the Upper Meiloveg. They were removed at this time to make room for sheep, and afterwards it was lotted again, and the same place is under crofters.

6974. The people were taken away from Upper Meiloveg, and the land was given to a tacksman or to sheep, and then the land was restored afterwards to the people of Upper Meiloveg?—Yes.

6975. But you also say there were evicted tenants brought from Bracadale and Waternish?—Yes.

6976. How many tenants are there in Lephin now?—It is supposed to be six; but there are nine families, including the cottars.

6977. But six crofters?—Yes.

6978. Have each of them got a whole croft, or are there any of the crofts subdivided?—There is one croft subdivided, and another cottar who pays 25s.

6979. What is the summing of the whole croft?—It is supposed to keep ten sheep and two cows and a stirk; no horse.

6980. What is the rent?—From £3, 5s. to about £5.

6981. What is your own rent?—I am paying generally £3, 10s., but since I left off paying I don't know what it is. It is going up and down.

6982. You are now living in a house which you built yourself?—Yes.

6983. You don't pay anything extra on account of the house which you built being a good one?—No.

6984. Nothing is charged on your own improvements?—No.

6985. Have you made any improvements on the croft itself?—A great deal; it is worth twice as much as it was when I got possession.

6986. Draining?—Draining and trenching.

6987. Have you been charged any rent on account of the improvements?—No.

6988. You say you have taken an active part in the discussion of public questions, politics, and the affairs of the country. Have you been threatened with removal or molestation by the proprietor or factor on account of the language you have held, and the part you have taken?—I

never attempted taking any part without bounds of law, but I say I have been accused of such.

6989. But my question is, have you been threatened?—Yes, I have been threatened.

6990. What have you been threatened with?—By my factor, Tormore.

6991. What did he say he would do to you?—He said that if I should go against him, I was sure to go against all his equals, or my superiors and gentlemen throughout Skye, because I would not side with him in all his opinions.

6992. What did he say he would do to you? What did he threaten you with?—He would become my enemy, of course. He would look after me with his enmity.

6993. Did he threaten to remove you from your holding?—Of course, I have been served with summonses of removal, as stated in my statement; with three summonses within the past twenty years.

6994. How long ago is the last summons?—I was served with the last on the 16th of April this year.

6995. But you had three summonses in former times?—Yes.

6996. How long ago?—About fifteen years ago I had one, and about seventeen years ago.

6997. Were those summonses in connection with any question of rent, or in connection with the opinions which you expressed?—I always left that to himself. I was paying my way at the time I was served with these summonses.

6998. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Are you afraid of being removed at this moment?—I am past that.

6999. The summons was too late for this year?—I cannot say.

7000. Did you defend it? Did you employ a lawyer to defend yourself?—No, there is no use of defending a person, because I have not got the money. There was no use going to defend it unless I got the means, so I kept my house instead of defending myself.

7001. You are the postmaster?—Yes.

7002. It would not do for you to refuse to open a registered letter?—Of course not.

7003. Some people do?—Of course they might. I have been serving others who called for their own.

7004. *The Chairman.*—When you received the last summons were you in arrears of rent?—Yes, in two years' arrears. On the 16th April last I opened the letter, but it seemed the letters had come to the post-office on the 14th, but I had not time to look into all my letters that day, there were so many of them.

7005. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—How many were there?—I never told any one.

7006. I suppose it is not a secret how many were taken?—I shall explain this to his Lordship afterwards in connection with the post-office.

PETER MACDONALD, Crofter, Holmasdale (54)—examined.

7007. *The Chairman.*—Have you been freely elected a delegate of Holmasdale?—Yes.

7008. About how many families are there in Holmasdale?—Twenty-one families and two cottars.

7009. When you were chosen, how many were present?—A good number of them; I cannot tell how many.

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GLENDALE.

Peter Macdonald.

7010. Have you a written statement to make to the Commissioner?—No.

7011. Then you will be so good as to make a verbal statement?—That we are packed so closely in the place, having so little land, and the land through constant cultivation refusing to yield crop, and that we would be better off if we had more of the land, so that we could leave some of it out, and so cultivate better; and that if we don't get extended holdings there will be no justice for us. Some of our people cannot come home to see their families through the poverty of the place, having to remain away in the south country, earning their subsistence; and when they do come home they cannot remain longer than about a month or six weeks, and they have to go. If we don't get more land we must needs remain in poverty.

7012. What is the summing of the croft at Holmasdale?—Two cows and a two-year-old. Eight sheep is the summing of sheep, but we keep ten; no horse.

7013. What is the rent?—From £2, 10s. to £3 and £5.

7014. What is your own rent?—£3, 15s. besides rates, and the increase of my cattle is only one stirk in the year.

7015. How long has the township been established?—About forty-three or forty-four years.

7016. Has the rent been increased since that time?—No, but the dues were increased. It was increased by the dues. We were not at first paying dues, but we are now.

7017. *Professor Mackinnon.*—You have a full croft yourself?—Yes.

7018. And there is no one upon the croft but yourself?—No.

7019. How many are there of you in the house?—Eight.

7020. And your rent is £3, 15s. or £3, 18s. and taxes?—It is £4, 6s. with the taxes.

7021. Then is it £3, 15s. exactly?—It is £3, 15s., the present rent. I cannot separate the dues from the rent at present.

7022. There will be probably 3s. 2d. for drainage money, and the rest for assessments?—There is no drainage money.

7023. Peat money?—There is peat money; 2s. 6d. of peat money.

7024. What is the number of acres on the croft?—I cannot tell.

7025. About two acres?—About three, I think.

7026. You say the summing was eight sheep, but that the crofters keep ten. Have you got ten sheep yourself?—I think I have ten.

7027. Have all the people in the place their full stock?—No, some of them are without stock at all.

7028. And you think that if they all had their full stock, the place would not keep it?—No, but very poorly.

7029. How much stock of sheep and cattle do you think the place would keep?—I cannot tell what stock it would do justice to.

7030. You wish to extend the holdings. Is there any place near about you to which you would send the people in order to extend the holdings at your place?—Yes, plenty land.

7031. Where?—Bracadale and Minginish, the place from which some of them came.

7032. You wish them sent back to their own place to leave room for you?—Yes, and some of our own people to accompany them.

7033. You have no horse in the whole place?—No, unless one may keep it for a year. They are not allowed to keep a horse.

7034. The people upon the other side of the glen have a horse. Do you borrow their horse to work your ploughing, or do you do it with the *cas-chrom*?—The most of our tillage is done with the *cas-chrom*. When we manage to hire a horse we use the plough.

7035. How much do you pay for the hire of a pair of horses and plough for a day when you get one?—From 8s. to 10s. a day.

7036. How many good crofts would Holmasdale make?—In my father's time eight had it.

7037. And you would give one horse to each?—Yes, that would do.

7038. And how many cows?—Six cows.

7039. Sheep?—About twenty.

7040. What rent would you be prepared to pay for that croft?—About £8.

7041. That would be just about its present rent. You complain, not so much of the high rent, as of the small holding?—Yes.

7042. *The Chairman.*—What was the price of a two-year-old forty-three or forty-four years ago?—I was but young at the time, and I cannot tell.

7043. What was the price of it at the earliest period you can recollect?—About £4, in my earliest recollection.

7044. And how much is it worth now?—£6; some years the prices may not be so good as that.

7045. And the rent has not been increased at all in the same period?—No.

7046. *Professor Mackinnon.*—We heard before about the yield—that the return of oats was about one and a half, and the return of potatoes was about seven or eight. Is that about the amount of return you get in your own township?—That is about the proportion of our yield.

7047. How many barrels of potatoes do you plant?—About five.

7048. And you get back, in an ordinary year—I don't mean last year, but in an ordinary year—between thirty and forty?—Yes, about forty barrels.

7049. When you have about forty barrels, how much meal do you require to buy in the year?—About ten bolls.

7050. During the year?—Yes.

7051. But I suppose you never make any meal off your croft?—Yes, a little.

7052. How much, taking one year with another?—About one boll and a half; but this year we made nothing.

7053. And you think that if the crofts were so large that only eight would occupy your township, there would not be much meal and potatoes required, beyond what you would grow upon the croft?—In my father's time, when the township was occupied by eight, they were buying neither meal nor potatoes.

7054. Would you be prepared to take such a croft yourself right away?—I could take it, but I am not sure if I could pay for it.

7055. But I want to know whether you would be able to pay for it?—If I got such a croft I should try to pay for it.

7056. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Has it been the custom for the factor to get the first offer of the cattle of the tenants to be sold?—No, I never gave him the offer; but if he happened to be in the place, he would just get the offer of it like anybody else.

7057. Did you ever hear of its being insisted on in that township or in any of the rest of Glendale?—I heard it was the custom in the place to give the first offer to the factor.

7058. Do you mean in Glendale generally?—Yes.

7059. Was that in the time of Tormore or before it?—It was not Tormore who was doing that. That was said to be the practice on Dr Martin's property.

7060. Are the Holmasdale people fishermen?—No, we are far from the sea-shore.

SKYE.

GLENDALE.

Peter Macdonald.

7061. Do you know of a notice having been put up here by the factor saying that there would be a rent of £2 additional put upon every one who opened a small shop?—I am not a scholar, and I could not read it if I saw it.

7062. But did you hear it?—I am not sure that I heard it at all.

7063. Would you have any objection to get some of Waterstein, if you do not get to Bracadale?—I would not mind where I would have to go to, if it was only better than where I am.

7064. But would the Waterstein pasture be suitable for you?—No, unless I would shift from where I am.

7065. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Was there always a township in Holmasdale? Were there always people in it?—Not until my forefathers went there forty-five years ago.

7066. And they were then eight?—No, but there were eighteen placed there. Nineteen lots or pieces were made of it.

7067. Was that place cut out of Lephin?—Yes, at that time.

7068. And did they get half of the hill of the Lephin people?—We got more than the half.

7069. Are the people in Lephin complaining that they have been curtailed and cramped, as the people of Holmasdale are?—Yes.

7070. Was this lot at Holmasdale not an injustice then to the two places?—Lephin was then under big sheep and a shepherd.

7071. Who was the tacksman of it?—Old Captain MacLeod of Orbost.

7072. Have you a regular peat moss, or do you just cut peats on the hill where you can find it convenient?—Each one cuts where it is most suitable for him—where he pleases.

7073. Is the effect of that not every year to reduce the quantity of their hill ground, which is already scarce enough according to your account?—Yes, and to-day it is not worth nearly as much as it was worth when we got it.

7074. In regard to easing you of the great numbers that are there, is there any land near to you or close to you upon which they could be accommodated?—Yes. There is land in Ramasaig and Lowergil, and Dibidale and Ollisdale, beside them.

7075. So that though you said some of them ought to go back to Bracadale and Minginish, there is enough land for them on Glendale estate, and not very far away?—There is plenty there for Holmasdale, but not for all the other townships.

7076. I am speaking of Holmasdale—there is plenty for them?—Yes.

7077. Are you aware of any reason why so much land there was taken off those places, beginning at Lowergill—which I think is the boundary with M'Leod? Are you aware of any reason why that is kept as a large farm?—It is kept for sheep.

7078. Not for men?—Not for men.

7079. Have you ever heard it talked about during your life, that there was a special reason why all those lands were kept up for sheep alone?—No, but they were thinking that sheep would pay better than the poor crofters.

7080. *Mr Cameron.*—Have you heard of the expression 'fixity of 'tenure,' and do you know what it means?—I don't know what the meaning of it is; but my meaning is, that should I improve my lot it would not be in the power of any one to take it from me and to give it to another, so long as I would pay for it.

7081. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—How long is it since you first began to demand fixity of tenure?—I never asked it until to-day.

7082. When did you first hear your neighbours asking for it?—I never heard them asking for it before until the Commissioners arrived.

7083. When did they begin to speak about it?—A year ago.

7084. Was anybody here from Ireland speaking about it?—I heard that there were such, but I never saw a man.

7085. But before he came, there was no talk about it?—Yes, before he came there was talk about it.

7086. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Are the people about here much in debt for meal?—Yes.

7087. Are many of them in debt to Tormore for meal got out of his store?—I am hearing that some are in his debt, but I cannot tell.

7088. Is that store kept open still?—No.

7089. When was it shut up?—More than a year ago.

7090. How long did Tormore keep it open?—I cannot tell; a great number of years.

7091. Where do you get your meal from now?—From every place—north and south, east and west.

7092. What do you pay for it?—From £1 to £1, 3s. a boll.

7093. At Poltiel?—At Colbost.

7094. Did Tormore charge anything above the ordinary price for it?—I don't think so; but his salesman was said to be charging 1s. a boll for his trouble.

7095. I suppose they got long credit?—Yes.

7096. *The Chairman.*—Did the people consider it a good thing or a bad thing that the factor kept the store? Was the store kept for the benefit of the people or the benefit of the factor?—It was very useful to the people, at all events.

JOHN MACKAY, Crofter, Colbost (69)—examined.

7097. *The Chairman.*—Were you freely elected a delegate?—Yes, and it was against my will too. John Mackay

7098. Were there a number of people present who elected you?—Yes; all the township.

7099. This is your statement which you present to us:—'*Colbost.* 'The grievances of the above township may be seen in the following state-'ment. The township of Colbost, the property of the late Sir John 'M'Leod in 1830 was occupied by seven crofters; they had a good number 'of cattle, sheep, and horses. They also derived a good living from their 'crofts, and were in comfortable circumstances. But on account of the 'proprietor being away in India for a long time, and the entire management 'entrusted to factors, the crofters suffered from their hands. About the 'year 1834, during Mr M'Kinnon Corry's factorship, the township was let 'with the crofters to a man of the name of John Tolmie on lease of fourteen 'years, who upon his entry as tenant immediately raised the rent to 'nearly double the former. The crofters therefore were forced to leave 'the place, as they refused to pay the increased rent. The township there-'fore being cleared, the said John Tolmie divided the land into small lots, 'and settled a large number of crofters thereon that were evicted from 'various townships in the parish for the purpose of making room for sheep, 'and he also charged them double the rent that the former crofters paid. 'He also deprived them of the hill pasture, except a very small piece on 'which they kept a few cattle. The crofters, being sorely oppressed and

SKYE.
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John Mackay.

'straitened, were reduced to great poverty. When Sir John returned 'from India, on being informed of the state of affairs on his estate, he 'immediately dismissed the said John Tolmie at the expiry of his lease. 'On account of the poverty which prevailed, caused by the failure of crops, 'which brought about the destitution of 1846, the proprietor sent to our 'relief a large quantity of oatmeal and seed, as a donation, and entrusted its 'distribution to Norman M'Raild, Colbost, afterwards factor for Colbost 'and Skiniden. Instead of giving the meal gratis, as was ordered by the 'proprietor we were charged the enormous price of £1, 16s. to £2 per boll 'of 140 lbs. On account of our poverty, we could not pay the said meal, 'and consequently our cattle were seized and taken from us at half their 'value, so that we were left without stock and pennyless, and a good 'number were reduced to pauperism. When the said Norman M'Raild 'became factor in 1848, the proprietor instructed him to make new settle- 'ments with us, granting the township at the old rent which the seven 'fore-mentioned crofters paid, with the old landmarks. This he actually 'told us, but on a second consideration he deprived us of a promontory 'piece of the township of the value of £16, charging the full rent, 'exclusive of the said piece. Into this piece he removed the most poor 'of the crofters, divided the arable part of it into small lots, and put rent 'on them payable to himself. All this was done quite unknown to the 'landlord, who resided in London, and never visited his property but once 'for the last fifty years. The cottars removed on account of their poverty 'were unable to pay rent for the said piece, and it was therefore taken 'from them; and we were compelled to take it with an additional 'rent of £15. We were also told by the factor, if we would not take it, 'that we would be evicted from our holdings at the first term. There 'was also a considerable sum of money expended on improving the land; 'drainage money was therefore laid on us, both capital and interest, for the 'last thirty-two years. We were told it would be paid up in twenty years, 'but we are still paying it. We are not allowed to keep a horse, but 'have to undergo all the slavish work ourselves, such as carrying manure 'and sea-ware on our backs in creels, dragging the harrow, &c. We also 'build our own houses, and we get no compensation from the proprietor, 'except for the roof at the time of leaving. The present number of 'crofters in the township is twenty-three. There are also fifteen cottars, 'which is a great burden to the crofters. The fourth part of the township 'is also in the possession of one man. Owing to the incessant tilling of 'the soil for the last seventy years, the land has become so poor and 'unproductive that it will not now yield half the crop it used to have 'given in by-gone years; that our holdings are quite inadequate to sup- 'port us; that we pay from £10 to £15 in meal every year, exclusive 'of other necessaries; that therefore the only remedy for the improving 'of our condition, is the extension of our holdings, a permanent security 'against capricious eviction and rackrenting, and compensation for any 'improvement made upon the croft in case of removal.'—Signed by seventeen. Have you any other statement to make to the Commission?—Not much. We are wanting the burden and the increase of rent that was laid upon us to be taken off. We wrote to the trustees explaining how we were, and we got no reply.

7100. What is the particular increase of rent that you allude to?—The piece of land that was put on us. We got the land at its old rent, and at the old boundaries, from Sir John, and when Norman M'Raild settled it on us he deprived us of the fifth part of it; and when Mr Harry Macdonald, Portree, became factor in succession to Norman, we got summonses of removal from this piece. We got it back with an increase of rent in

respect of it of £15, and besides that there is the increase that was laid upon us for the drainage. The old rent was £110 when it was occupied by the seven who had it, and it is now up to £140. We were for having our rents reduced to the old amount of £110; and as to the drainage that was made upon our lands, the people got but little for their work—6d. a rood.

7101. What is the summing of the full croft?—Two cows and a two-year-old.

7102. No horse?—No horse.

7103. How many sheep?—Six sheep, but we keep between eight and nine.

7104. And what is the rent?—£5, 0s. 6d. besides dues.

7105. How long is it since the rent was raised?—In 1848 was the first increase, and then the drainage money was laid on us about thirty years ago.

7106. The rent has not been increased for thirty years?—No.

7107. Was the land improved by the drainage?—No, it was the worse of it; because the work was done so very badly, owing to the small pay that was allowed for the work. The land is very much washed away with the heavy rains.

7108. Have you made any drains yourself since then?—No, not much.

7109. *Mr Cameron.*—Did the inspector come to look at the drains when they were made?—I don't remember. I think Mr M'Caskill, Talisker, went to look at them after they were finished.

7110. But if the drains were made by money borrowed from Government, don't you think they must have been inspected by some Government official?—We did not see. We only saw M'Caskill.

7111. Are you quite sure that M'Caskill was not a Government inspector?—I am not sure.

7112. You say in your statement that one man had one-fourth or one-fifth of the whole land. What do you mean by that?—I mean by that that the factor who was appointed by Sir John—Norman M'Raild,—when he made lots of the township, kept that much for himself.

7113. And the fourth of the township is in the possession of one man?—That is visible.

7114. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Have the small tenants—the crofters—any slated houses?—No, not one.

7115. Coming along the road to-day, I saw a nice slated house which I understood was upon Colbost?—It was the factor's house. It was Sir John who built it for M'Raild.

7116. Who has it now?—It is in the family. The M'Railds have it yet.

7117. I think there are more than one slated house in the place?—There are two store-houses slated.

7118. Has M'Raild any land except this one-fifth of your possession?—That is all he has.

7119. Is he a crofter?—Yes.

7120. With a good slated house and two store-houses?—Yes.

7121. Did he sign the paper?—No. We did not ask his signature.

7122. Why?—We did not think that he would be willing to do it.

7123. You spoke about the promise that Sir John Macpherson M'Leod gave after the famine of 1846, when they were to get the old bounds at the old rent. Was that a written or a verbal statement?—It was the factor—M'Raild—who informed us that Sir John was going to do this.

7124. But, afterwards, he did the very contrary?—Yes. He settled the fifth part of the township upon poor people who were not able to pay

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for it, and who portioned it out into small lots, and he himself laid the rent upon it.

7125. He has the fourth of Colbost. Does he pay a fourth of the rent?—I don't know how he is to-day.

7126. But is he not conjunct with them?—Yes, we are in the one township.

7127. Then don't you know what proportion of the rent M'Raild is paying?—I am not sure how much he pays.

7128. Has M'Raild got sheep?—Yes; but he has islands belonging to Skiniden which he took possession of at that time, and he is keeping his sheep there.

7129. But he has no sheep on the fourth part of Colbost?—No, but he keeps two horses. We have no horses at all.

7130. When they found that M'Raild was acting contrary to Sir John's orders, did they make any representation to Sir John as to the way in which they were treated?—I am not sure but we did, but even should we make such a representation we would not get a reply, as it would be sent back to M'Raild.

7131. Is this M'Raild in charge of the estate at this moment?—No, not since Tormore became factor. It was Tormore who was factor over us since Sir John purchased the property.

7132. Is there no such person as a ground officer on the estate?—Norman M'Raild's son is ground officer.

7133. What is the age of the son?—About forty-six or forty-seven.

7134. Does he live with his father at Colbost?—Yes.

7135. Is there any other ground officer on the estate?—No. There is another thing I have to bring forward. I had a daughter and others gathering whelks, and Norman M'Raild gave me a summons of removing, because of my daughter gathering a bushel of whelks, and when I went to pay the rent to Tormore he exacted from me a payment of 3s.

7136. What right had he to interfere about the gathering of the whelks?—I am not aware he had any authority other than his own assumption; and he used to be pouring out the whelks which the people gathered on the shore.

7137. Were these gathered opposite their own crofts or opposite his part?—M'Raild had a piece of the shore marked off for himself.

7138. I presume he marked it off for himself?—Yes, and it was the whelks that were gathered there that he poured out.

7139. Does that grievance still remain?—No, not now. He has now no authority over us of any consequence.

7140. And the present proprietors, I presume, never thought of interfering with you gathering these shell-fish?—No.

7141. Is the gathering of shell-fish a source of living to the people, and also of profit?—I never gathered shell-fish, but there are some people in our township who are gathering them to help them.

7142. There is a good landing place at Colbost. Is there a good place for a quay there?—Yes.

7143. Is there any fishing in the neighbourhood?—Not in these times, at any rate. Sometimes the fishing will be better than at other times.

7144. There are at this moment several boats drawn up on the shore, which we saw there. Is that not the case?—Yes.

7145. Who made those divisions, because each seems to have a little dock for itself? Was it the people who made them?—The owner of each boat cuts out a dock for his boat.

7146. Did they get any assistance from the superior?—No.

7147. Supposing the pier was improved or a new pier made there, would

it be advantageous to the people of Colbost and Skiniden?—Yes, especially when the steamers would come with goods.

7148. A steamer could come pretty close to it?—No.

7149. A good number of people would use that spot?—Yes; a quay would be very convenient—very suitable.

7150. Have you lived all your days in Colbost?—I came about forty-nine years ago.

7151. Where were you before—in this township?—I was sixteen years in this township of Lephin before that. It was when Tolmie got Colbost that we went there.

7152. *The Chairman.*—Is Colbost near Skiniden?—They march at this side.

7153. It was stated in the newspaper that a placard had been put up at Skiniden threatening vengeance upon any one who would pay his rent. Have you any knowledge of such a placard having been put up; have you ever heard of it?—I did not hear the like of that.

7154. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Do you hear it now for the first time?—I was hearing a little about that they were refusing to pay their rent until they would get what they were wanting, but I never heard there was such a paper as that.

7155. I presume you don't for one moment approve of the sentiment contained in such a paper?—No, I would not approve of such. I would not consent to deprive any one of his life for any reason. The lives of people are more valuable in my eyes than that; and I am very sorry for the state that they are in just now in every place—how we are oppressed by factors and ground officers, who have skinned us.

7156. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Is there a great trade in eggs in Colbost?—A little.

7157. Do they ship off a good many boxes by the steamboats?—Yes, they will be shipping off boxes, but it is poverty that will be causing them to do that.

7158. What do they get a dozen for them from the dealers?—At this time 5d. per dozen, and in winter 10d. when eggs are scarce.

7159. How many dozen would an ordinary crofter in Colbost be able to collect in the course of a month?—I cannot tell.

7160. Do you think he would be able to get as many as would pay his rent?—It would not keep them in tobacco.

7161. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Is it the wife or the man who gets payment for them?—The women get it; the men take nothing to do with the like of that.

7162. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—I suppose tea is got in exchange for it?—Yes, that is so? They cannot do otherwise. They cannot eat their bread dry. They must have something to wash it down, and they cannot get anything else.

7163. Do they ever give the eggs to the calves?—Yes.

7164. For want of anything else to give the calves?—Yes, they are young, and their mothers have no milk; the cows are so poor that they have no milk at all. Our cows are just like Pharaoh's lean kine, owing to the inferior nature of the pasture.

7165. Have you any complaint about the sea-ware at Colbost?—Not now, but when we were settled in Colbost we were promised a ton of sea-ware, but instead of that we were only getting bits that were opposite to our lots and we had to buy the rest.

JOHN M'SWAN, Crofter and Fisherman (52)—re-examined.

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7166. ***Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.***—You gave evidence at Dunvegan?—Yes, I was asked especially about the practice of the tenant paying the arrears due by his predecessor.

7167. *The Chairman.*—Who selected you to appear in place of Donald M'Lean?—I was co-delegate with Donald M'Lean.

7168. Have you any written statement from the people of Skiniden?—No.

7169. Would you make a verbal statement?—I have not much to say, and I am not going to say much. It is only eleven years since I went to Skiniden, and you know that each township has marches, and every lot is the same, and the fourth part was taken from the march at Skiniden by the factor who settled it. This factor was Norman M'Raild, and his father had it for £80, and the poor people are now paying £88 for it, while the fourth part of the land has been taken away from them.

7170. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Who has that fourth part?—M'Raild himself. Another thing is, that one of the crofters in the place had about half an acre of the best part of his lot taken by M'Raild, who added it to his own holding, while the man is paying still for it. The factor also took from the man the upper part of his lot and gave it to a herd, so that the man has only the middle of his lot, and he can neither go to the hill nor to the sea-shore from his lot without trespassing on somebody else, unless he goes over the rocks. Again, every crofter was promised a ton of sea-ware. They did not get the half of that, and they were under the necessity of buying sea-ware off M'Leod of M'Leod's property, but last year the sea-ware was allowed them by Tormore. There is no reason for my saying much. I have seen a great deal of the high-handedness of the landlords and the factors since I remember.

7171. I wish particularly to hear about the islands at Skiniden—two islands. Do you know about them? They were taken away?—Yes, they were taken away from the town.

7172. What evidence have you got that those two islands ever formed part, in old times, of the pasture ground of the town?—That they always formed part of the township till M'Raild deprived the township of them.

7173. What year was that?—I think it was thirty-four years ago.

7174. Is the very M'Raild that did it alive yet?—Yes.

7175. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Are these islands the fourth part you were talking about?—Yes, the fourth part of the grazing of the township.

7176. *The Chairman.*—You remember having seen these islands occupied by the people as their grazing ground in old times?—I saw them in the possession of Mr Tolmie.

7177. Is there anybody still alive whom you can point out who saw these islands in the possession of the township?—Yes, plenty.

7178. Is there anybody here in this room?—Yes.

[Examination Adjourned].

NORMAN M'LEOD (79)—examined.

Norman M'Leod.

7179. *The Chairman.*—Are you a crofter?—No, I have no land now; I live in a bothy.

7180. You may be called a cottar?—Yes.

7181. At Skiniden?—No, at Fasach.

7182. When you were a young man, did you live at Skiniden?—No, in Colbost.

7183. But were you acquainted in those days with Skiniden?—Yes, and I knew the people who occupied it.

7184. Do you remember of ever having seen the two islands of which we are speaking occupied by the people of Skiniden—that is, their pasture ground?—Yes; in possession of the crofters who were there when I myself was in Colbost.

7185. Did they look upon it as part of their own pasture?—Yes, ever since my recollection it was looked upon as part of the grazing belonging to the township as much as the hill pasture.

7186. There was no special separate rent paid for it?—I never heard that there was.

7187. When was it taken away from them?—Forty-nine years ago this Whitsunday, when I myself and six others were tenants of Colbost.

7188. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—That was when Mr Tolmie got the place?—When Mr Tolmie got the place he gave us summonses of removal; and if I had the opportunity of telling the way in which we were warned off and dealt with in regard to the hill pasture and our rent, I would tell.

JOHN M'SWAN—[Examination Resumed].

John M'Swan

7189. *The Chairman.*—Did you ever hear of a placard being put up at Skiniden, threatening people with vengeance if they paid their rent or were backsliding?—I am not a scholar, and I could not read a letter; but I saw a piece of paper on a board by the road side. I don't know but it was yourself who put it there for all I know, and it was by the way side, and there was something like that on it, but I don't know what was on it. I know the reporters came and took it with them, but I don't know what was in the paper.

7190. Did the reporters for the newspaper take it down and carry it away?—Yes, the reporters took it with them.

7191. Did you ever hear in this place of any one being injured in their property or in their employments on account of not joining the people, or on account of paying their rent?—I am not aware, nor did I hear of injury being done to any one for such a reason.

7192. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Do you believe that that statement represented the true feelings of the people of Colbost or Skiniden?—I don't think that that statement was the opinion or the mind of the people of Colbost or Skiniden. I rather believe it was somebody who did not belong to the place who put it up.

7193. Have you any idea how many sheep are upon those islands that have been referred to?—I cannot say. They would keep from 150 to 200 sheep without any other stock.

7194. Is there stock on them?—Yes, cattle and goats.

7195. Is the pasture good on these islands?—It is the best pasturage that belongs to Skiniden.

7196. And costs nothing in herding?—No.

7197. *The Chairman.*—Who is occupying the islands?—M'Raild.

7198. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Was there an understanding at Skiniden that they were not to pay their rent until they received redress for what

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they believed to be their wrongs?—They were for getting justice, but they never said they would not pay their rent.

7199. Did they pay any rent at last Martinmas?—One man paid, at all events. I do not know but more paid.

7200. At the time they complained that M'Raild took the land from them, was he drawing the rents?—Yes.

7201. And they had nobody else to complain to except M'Raild?—No.

7202. *Professor Mackinnon.*—You say these islands would keep 150 sheep, but that you don't know how many are upon them. Do you consider it would be a great mistake to have so few upon the islands as is said to be there?—Yes, it would be much under the stock that should be on them.

7203. You don't know whether there are about forty on them?—I don't know what are on them.

7204. How many cattle do you think are on them?—I cannot say.

7205. The return here gives only in Colbost and Skiniden two horses, eleven cows, seven stirks, and forty-three sheep, ashore as well as in the islands. Do you consider that a wrong return?—I cannot say anything about it.

JOHN CAMPBELL, Crofter, Hamara (64)—examined.

John Campbell.

7206. *The Chairman.*—Have you been freely elected a delegate?—Yes.

7207. How many people are there in Hamara?—Five families; five shares in the township.

7208. You produce a written statement to the Commission?—Yes. 'Hamaravirein, Glendale, May 1883. The following are the grievances 'of this township:—(1) That in 1852 Hugh M'Kay took possession of the 'third part of this township, and continued in possession of the same till '1864. About this date, the third crofter in the township emigrated to 'America, whereupon the factor, Donald Macdonald, Tormore, induced him 'to take half of the township, that is the half of the emigrant's croft along 'with his own croft. The factor also assured him that as long as he 'should remain factor on the estate, he would not be altered, removed, nor 'deprived of any of the land, provided the rent was paid. Mackay had 'now to leave his own houses without any compensation, and buy the 'emigrant's houses. The land at this date, *i.e.*, 1864, was uncultivated 'to a great extent on the emigrant's croft, and required many improve-'ments, as a great portion of it consisted of peat soil, which was also very 'soft. Mackay set about working the land, and improved it considerably. 'As soon as the factor noticed this it seems he could not think of a better 'plan than to take the third part from him, and give it to one of the 'tenants removed from Hamara Mhor. The rent was at this time paid. 'Upon Hugh Mackay's death his son occupied his place. The said cur-'tailing was not sufficient with the factor; but three years ago he deprived 'the son, the present occupier, of a third part of what his father left him. 'The factor gave this to one of the tenants of Borrodale. In consequence 'John Mackay, the present occupier, had now to sell his corn, having no 'stock to consume it. He asked the factor to buy it on private bargain. 'His answer was—"No, there are many in Glendale who are far more in 'need of that than you." "Then I shall make a public roup." "You are 'not allowed by the order of the proprietor to do so." Before the land was 'curtailed, Hugh Mackay was in good circumstances, but immediately 'afterwards gradually failed to meet ends, so that a brother of the present 'occupier had to assist him in paying his rent (being in circumstances

'able to do so). But in consequence of a remonstrance from this brother 'for curtailing the land, the factor ceased to send him receipts for the 'money paid by him for his brother. When the brother noticed the 'factor's intentions, he suspended payment. The share that Hugh Mackay 'held when he had half of the township is at present subdivided between 'three. Besides that, one of the tenants removed from Ramasaig has been 'put upon the township against their will. There are now five crofters in 'the township instead of three. (2) John Campbell paid rent on this 'estate for thirty-eight years; in this township he paid rent for thirty-six 'years. His holding is the third part of the township, the rent being '£9, 15s. 4d. excluding rates. His rent when paid last amounted to '£10, 10s. 10d. including rates. His croft is the nearest to Hamara 'Lodge. In 1849 Macleod of Macleod was proprietor; and in the said 'date the estate came under trustees, and Hamara Mhor was then 'tenanted by three crofters, viz., ground officer and manager for the late 'Captain Macleod of Orbost, and another subtenant. In the same year 'he was deprived of part of his croft, which was added to Hamara Mhor. 'In the following summer he mowed the grass on the part taken from him, 'but they took it from him. Hugh M'Caskill being then factor, he 'demanded justice of him, which was firmly refused. Harry Macdonald 'succeeded Mr M'Caskill, and all he desired was rent, failing to give so 'he would be removed. Harry Macdonald was succeeded by Donald 'Macdonald, Tormore. John Campbell took Donald Macdonald and the 'ground officer to look at what he had been deprived of, and he said that 'it was quite possible that it was his (the crofter's) right. Shortly after-'wards he spoke to him to restore him his land, but he replied he would 'not settle the matter more than the preceding factors. When he 'demanded justice of the ground officer, he was answered—"You may be 'thankful if left in possession of what you have." There is about thirteen 'or fourteen years since Tormore got Hamara Mhor into his possession, 'causing great annoyance to him for herding in winter, as Hamara is not 'fenced to keep sheep and cattle from crossing over. A herd is engaged 'to keep away neighhouring stock. His stock is generally maltreated by 'the herd and his dogs, owing to the reckless state of the fore-mentioned 'township. John keeps four cows, a horse, and twenty sheep; and he 'states his croft is inadequate to feed his stock. In winter, to give any-'thing like justice, half the stock would be sufficient for the croft. Our 'sole request is that the following be considered by the Royal Commis-'sioners:—(1) That we get our holdings extended; (2) That our rents 'be abated; (3) That inducements be given us to build good houses; (4) 'That compensation be granted for improvements; (5) That we desire 'permanent security against the oppression of landlords, and against evic-'tion; (6) That we may have a right to cut sea-ware for manure; (7) 'Power to buy our lands by paying them for twenty-five years, or what-'ever seems proper, by trustworthy persons.—Signed by JOHN M'KAY, 'JOHN M'LEAN, DONALD NICOLSON, JOHN CAMPBELL.'

7209. There is also a statement by John M'Lean of his particular grievance?—'*The Statement of John M'Lean*, crofter, Hamaravirein, evicted 'from Ramasaig two years ago.—I have been evicted from Ramasaig to 'make room for sheep. I was one year a cottar at Ramasaig after some of 'my fellow-crofters were removed, as there was no vacant place for me 'the first year. I then got the small plot on which I am settled at present, 'only a small plot from which an old widow was evicted, to make room 'for me. It was reluctantly I accepted the offer, as the place was far too 'small for any man who had seven of a family, but I had sweet promises and

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'of holding, and the privilege of some work about the Hamara farm, and 'herding the cattle. He would do many things for me before I came here, 'as I was an old man, too old for going to other countries to support my 'family; but I am still obliged to leave my home. Yet, old as I am, I had 'to carry the roof of the old house at Ramasaig the distance of four miles, 'consequently I lost the whole year's earning, besides my expenses building 'a new house. As long as I live I shall not get over the loss I sustained 'by evicting me from Ramasaig. I have spent all I had since I came here. 'My expenditure in meal, corn, and seed alone, not mentioning any other 'outlay, this same year amounts to £30, and no income since I came to 'Hamaravirein, but one stirk and one calf. I have to buy the seed to sow 'the ground, and I don't expect to get as much out of it as I have sown. 'If I had the value of £30 of land, or even the half of it, I could manage 'to keep my family and cattle without being in such a state of poverty. 'If we don't be relieved through the kindness and sympathy of our sove-'reign the Queen and Government, we shall all be objects of pity, and our 'children will leave us altogether, as this place is not fit to keep them any-'thing like human beings, unless the land is given to them to till and toil 'about it. The people do not expect land for nothing; they only wish to 'get as much of it as will support themselves and families at a reasonable 'rent. They would be quite content if they could stand credit, and give 'every man his due. The people know very well that their forefathers 'and themselves bought the land before this. We would all take land for 'nothing if we could get it, but still we don't expect it in that form. We 'want as much of the land as we can manage to pay, and work the same. 'When I was a cottar at Ramasaig I was compelled to sell my horse by 'Mr Macdonald's order. The time came that I had great need of the 'horse; when carrying the old house roof and other domestic utensils from 'Ramasaig, I had to get a neighbour's horse to help me. Tormore charged 'me £1 sterling for my neighhour's horse, though my neighbour had 'grazing of his own for the horse.—JOHN M'LEAN.'

7210. Have you any further statement to make on the part of the people of Hamaravirein?—I have not much more to say. I know that Tormore was displeased with me; and I heard it said, and I am not going to deny it, that I gave hospitality to two individuals who were going about among the people, and Tormore threatened that he would do for me because of that. I said to him that I never denied hospitality to any one so long as he would behave himself in my house. He told me I was only keeping a bad house, giving lodgment to Irishmen and to blackguards, and he ran down both myself and my house and my family. He said I would not give him hospitality, and I told him I would, and that I was kinder than that towards his business and his servants ever since he came into my neighbourhood. I concur with Mackay in everything he says; and Hamara, which was cleared by the factor, is a trouble to us. It would be better for Glendale that Hamara would be a lake of water than in its present condition.

7211. What is the present condition of Hamara?—The way our place is so much troubled by our stock wandering to it. There is no fence about it, and our stock is suffering on on every side of it through his servants keeping the place for himself.

7212. Whose servants?—Tormore's servants, while they were there, and none of them remained long in the place.

7213. You said you kept two strangers in your house? What were the names of the strangers?—M'Hugh, an Irishman, and Mr Murdoch was the other.

7214. Was Murdoch an Irishman or a Scotchman?—He was a Highlander; he was formerly editor of the *Highlander* newspaper.

7215. Did they both stay with you for some time?—Yes.

7216. How long did they stay?—They came on the Saturday to the Glen and reached Meiloveg, and they were late, and when they returned they came to my house, and they left on Monday.

7217. They only stayed from Saturday till Monday?—Yes.

7218. How did they employ the Sabbath?—Murdoch went to church. He came to hear the sermon here. The other man could not understand Gaelic, and did not go.

7219. What business brought M'Hugh here?—To enlighten the people on something, but I would not understand what he was saying.

7220. What language did he speak?—English.

7221. Did he hold a public meeting?—Not many gathered to hear him, at any rate.

7222. What did he tell the people?—He was telling the public to plead for good justice, and to get more land, and advising them that they were not to break the law in any way.

7223. And when he went away, where did he go to?—I think it was to Uist.

7224. He only remained here from Saturday till Monday?—Yes, that is all.

7225. Did he ever come back again?—Yes, and he gave me a call when he returned.

7226. How long did he stay the second time?—He came about six o'clock at night, and left in the morning.

7227. Were there ever any other Irish gentleman came here?—No, no other.

7228. Did he visit any other place about here?—I don't know what places the man visited.

7229. Do you know what part of Ireland he came from?—No, nothing about it.

7230. He could not speak Gaelic?—No.

7231. *Mr Cameron.*—Did he come from Glasgow?—He was saying it was from Glasgow he came to this place.

7232. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—One of the complaints in this petition is that the rent is too high. What is the rent?—£9, 15s. 4d. is my rent, exclusive of rates.

7233. *The Chairman.*—What is your summing?—Four cows, a horse, twenty sheep, and the place would not keep half of that.

7234. How many sheep have you got yourself at this moment?—I have the twenty.

7235. *Professor Mackinnon.*—How many stirks?—I have three stirks. The cows happened to have three calves last year.

7236. Was the summing of twenty sheep the proper summing of your croft before a place was taken off it to add to Hamara?—Yes.

7237. And what is the summing of it now since that piece was taken away?—They are striving to keep that stock which I have mentioned.

7238. I mean your own particular croft?—As I have mentioned, four cows, one horse, and twenty sheep.

7239. Are the three stirks part of the summing too?—I must put them off the ground now; they are not in the summing.

7240. But the twenty sheep are in the summing?—Yes.

7241. How many sheep have your neighbours got; what is the summing of John M'Lean, for example?—His summing ought to be the half of mine.

7242. *The Chairman.*—How many acres of arable?—Owing to the way in which I work my lot, which the factor and the ground officer know,

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the arable part of my lot is double what it was when I got it first, and I think I have now six acres of arable land.

7243. How long have you had a croft?—Thirty-four years.

7244. Has your rent ever been raised?—I could only say that the rise in the rent was very little.

7245. Are the stirks more valuable now than they were thirty-four years ago?—Yes.

7246. Are they twice as valuable?—No, and they would not be worth anything but for the way in which we feed them. The cows have no milk. I have to feed the stirks with meal which I buy.

7247. Do you mean that, although the stirks are now more valuable than they were thirty-four years ago, you have to spend more money in feeding them, and bringing them up for the market?—Yes, one of the stirks which I would be able to rear at that time on the grazing of the township would be worth the whole three that I have to-day reared with the milk of their mothers on the grazing of the township, and one cow at that time was better than three to-day.

7248. Why is that?—The land was strong at that time. It was not run-out at that time through incessant cultivation. It had been five years in grass when I got it, and now it is run-out, and become so poor that it will not yield either crop or grass to me.

7249. *Professor Mackinnon.*—There are three crofters besides yourself?—Yes.

7250. Do you know Mackenzie's rent?—A little more than £6.

7251. Nicolson's?—£4, 12s.

7252. M'Lean's?—About £5, 3s.

7253. That is about £16, and your rent is £9, 15s. 4d?—Yes. Another Borrodale man has a share of mine.

7254. I think you also told us that, though your summing was twenty sheep, the others could not keep the half of them?—No, not with justice.

7255. How many sheep has Mackenzie?—Seven or eight.

7256. And Nicolson?—Five or six.

7257. And M'Lean?—Five or six.

7258. They have between them twenty,—just as many as you have yourself?—I have not more than that.

7259. They are paying £16 of rent, and you are paying £9, 15s. Do you pay anything to them for the extra stock you have?—No; that was the summing of my lot.

7260. But you say the place does not keep half the summing?—Not to give them justice.

ALEXANDER MACKENZIE, Crofter and Fisherman, Boreraig (48)—examined.

Alexander Mackenzie.

7261. *The Chairman.*—Have you been freely elected a delegate?—Yes; but I wish to say, before making any statement, that I would wish to have the assurance that the landlord would not do any hurt to me in respect of anything I may say here to-day.

7262. The delegate who is now before us has stated his desire to have an assurance from Dr Martin that he will not be molested on account of anything he may state here to-day?—*Mr Nicol Martin*, nephew of Dr Martin. Nothing will be done to him for anything he states, so far as my uncle and myself are concerned.

7263. You produce a written statement of the grievances of the Bore-

raig crofters?—*Witness.*—Yes. '*The Grievances of the Boreraig Crofters, one township on Dr Martin's Estate.* To the Royal Commission of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland. We complain generally of the smallness of our crofts or lots—the want of hill pasture—that we can neither keep sheep nor horses, and that we are too highly rented. When the late Mr Malcolm Nicolson became proprietor of this estate, about fifty-nine or sixty years ago, there were only twelve crofters in Boreraig, and each tenant had then six cows, two horses, and thirty or forty sheep, and the rent for the whole township was only eighty guineas. Forty-five years ago our proprietor subdivided and cut up our twelve crofts into twenty-four different small lots, and raised the rent from £3, 10s. to £7, 10s. The rent for the whole township is now about £130. At the same time our proprietor also deprived us of our horses, and of all our sheep except six sheep for each crofter. And besides the stock of the Galtrigill township was by him placed upon the pasture of the Boreraig township. When the former crofts were cut up into small lots tenants were brought from Waternish and Bracadale for them, and all were crowded together in this little township. When the present proprietor, Dr Martin, became proprietor, he took from us the six sheep left us by Mr Nicolson, and now we have neither sheep nor horses, and in consequence have to do all the ploughing and harrowing and a vast amount of other brutalising horse work ourselves. We have to carry sea-ware in creels on our backs in some instances for a distance, of nearly half a mile up the face of rocks and steep braes, and we have to carry the peats in the same fashion for even a longer distance, while if we were allowed to keep horses, we would be relieved of all this slavish degradation and hardship. The summing of the lots is now only three cows, but the small patches we have now left us would be inadequate either to feed or fodder two cows, and would not keep the smallest family in the township in food for two months of the year. The land having been in perpetual cultivation for hundreds of years, is become so poor and so much reduced that it is incapable of yielding any crop except of the very poorest, and that by constant manuring. Each crofter on an average has to spend from £16 to £20 a year in meal, besides the produce of the farm, while in an exceptionally bad year like the present the outlay is much greater. The result is that we are for ever sunk in debt, and have to spend the greater part of the year away from home to earn money to buy food for our families, and to pay the rent for the landlords; while want of success at the fishing, or other work we go to, for even one year, means either ruin or starvation. If we had properly sized crofts at a reasonable rent and fully stocked, this alternative would never arise. Dr Martin has in his time removed four crofters from this township, and he made seven new parks from land belonging to the township, and which were within the old landmarks or boundaries of the township, and he added these parks to his own holdings. Moreover, we had to give ten days a year of free labour to Dr Martin, and to cut his corn for him with our own hooks; while a servant of Dr Martin—one William Campbell —who acted as stirk-drover, ploughman, and grieve—in performing this unlawful labour, used to make us work like slaves. The people were in perfect dread of him; and if they did not work as hard as he wished, or were absent for a day, he would threaten them with eviction. Further, though as we said our present small patches would not keep any of us in food for two months, there are twenty-six families of us crowded together in this small township, fully twice the number the place is capable of supporting, though we had it on the old boundary lines. We consider that if we had plenty of land to live upon, at a fair rent, we

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'would be able to live comfortably on our farm all the year round, and 'could stay at home to work the land and improve them, instead of as now 'we have to hunt after work wherever it is to be had in the south country, 'so that ourselves and our families can live. There is plenty of land in 'Skye for all the people in it, and that land which originally belonged to 'our own forefathers. We wish to get enough of land to enable us to 'keep sheep and horses, as both men and women have now to do the 'work of the horse, while our children and families are going naked for 'want of wool to make clothes, and we are too poor to buy both wool and 'meal for our families. We would be quite content if we had as much 'land as would keep us comfortably, and also that we had fixity of tenure 'or security against arbitrary removal; that we would get compensation for 'any improvement we make on houses or land. Signed as witnesses by 'ALEXANDER MACKENZIE, crofter, Boreraig; JOHN M'LEOD, junior, 'crofter, Boreraig; JOHN MATHESON, crofter, Boreraig; JOHN M'LEAN, 'crofter, Boreraig; MURDOCH M'LEOD, crofter, Boreraig; MURDOCH 'MATHESON, senior, crofter, Boreraig; MALCOLM M'LEAN, crofter, Bore-'raig; NEIL MACLEAN, crofter, Boreraig; KENNETH MATHESON, crofter, 'Boreraig; WILLIAM M'LEOD, crofter, Boreraig; MURDO MATHESON, 'junior, crofter, Boreraig; ALEXANDER MACKENZIE, junior, crofter, 'Boreraig; DONALD LAMONT, crofter, Boreraig; KENNETH MACKASKILL, 'crofter, Boreraig; JOHN CAMPBELL, crofter, Boreraig; JOHN M'LEOD, 'senior, crofter, Boreraig; JOHN M'KINNON, crofter, Boreraig.'

[*Dr Martin.*—I take the opportunity of saying, that no one will be molested in consequence of anything that is said to-day. I never moved a man from my estates if he paid his debts, and if he had not been complained of by his neighbours. I never issued a letter of removal for the last seven years.]

7264. Have you any further statement to make?—No.

7265. The paper you have given in states there were originally twelve crofts?—Yes.

7266. And that they were divided into twenty-four?—Yes; forty-five years ago I think.

7267. At the time they were divided into twenty-four—forty-five years ago—as I understand, they were deprived of horses and sheep?—Six sheep were left to us.

7268. Was the hill pasture taken away at that time?—No, but it was taken from the Galtrigill people, and the people of Galtrigill were crowded upon us.

7269. Then subsequently the sheep were taken away?—Six sheep were taken from us.

7270. After the first division into twenty-four shares, then the summing was three cows, no horses, and six sheep?—Yes.

7271. What was the rent then?—From £3, 10s. to £7, 10s.

7272. Why was there so great a difference? Was that owing to the different amount of arable ground on the different crofts?—The valuator of the land thought that some crofts were better than others.

7273. Then when the six sheep were taken away, by whom were they taken away? Were they taken away by the last proprietor or by the present proprietor?—By Dr Martin.

7274. When the six sheep were taken away was the rent reduced?—No.

7275. How long is it since Dr Martin became proprietor of the estate?—I am not sure, but I think it is up to forty years.

7276. During the last forty years, since Dr Martin became proprietor of the estate, has the rent been raised?—Eight years ago it was raised.

7277. How much was it raised?—My rent was raised £1 at all events, and I think the rent of most of us was raised to the same extent. But when I paid my rent at last Martinmas that £1 was taken off, but I am not sure if that reduction will continue.

7278. How many years was the additional £1 exacted?—About seven years.

7279. Since you remember, has anybody been evicted from the township?—I cannot say that I do remember any except the four of whom the paper speaks.

7280. Why were the four removed?—Their holdings were added to the park which Dr Martin has in his own hands.

7281. And what became of those four families?—Two of them went to Waternish, and I think the doctor himself gave a place to the other two.

7282. Was any compensation made to them in connection with their removal?—I cannot tell.

7283. But supposing the £1 additional rent to be reduced, as it has been this year, you sit at the same rent you did forty-five years ago?—Yes.

7284. Has the value of the croft diminished in the course of these forty-five years?—Yes. The croft is not to-day half what it was worth forty-five years ago.

7285. What is the reason of that?—Turning the ground so often. Forty-five years ago there was a good depth of soil on our ground, but now we have no more than from two inches to six inches in depth—the deepest is six inches.

7286. Have you any complaint about the peats or about the sea-ware?—We are complaining that the peats are far from us, but the landlord cannot help that; and as to sea-ware, we are bringing it across the loch, a distance of four or five miles.

7287. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Where from?—From Claggan.

7288. *The Chairman.*—Is there any charge made for that?—Yes, we pay for it.

7289. To whom do you pay for it?—To M'Leod of M'Leod.

7290. Have they any sea-ware upon their own lands?—Not enough.

7291. Have they any complaint to make now at all about labour or services which they are obliged to render to the landlord?—We cannot say that he demanded labour of us during the past year, unless we chose to give it.

7292. Does he oblige them to make any money payment instead of the labour that used to be exacted?—No, he did not ask any money off me the last time I paid my rent.

7293. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Was there any truth in the report that some years ago they were obliged to sell fish, or fish so many days for the proprietor?—We gave our fish to him, but the e was no obligation upon us as to the time we fished.

7294. And therefore you did not consider that a hardship?—No, but our cause of complaint was the smallness of the price we got for our fish. We were not getting the price for it.

7295. From the landlord?—Yes, it was the landlord who was taking it from us, but the landlord has ceased that now.

7296. Is there good fishing?—No, there is no fishing at all.

7297. Did there used to be fishing?—About forty years ago it was good fishing ground, but since then, except in occasional years, we could not make what would keep us in shoes, or in long lines.

7298. Have the people any other grievance than what is stated in the paper?—No, I don't think we have; but there is plenty there itself.

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7299. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Do they refuse to pay their rents now?—I paid my rent.

7300. But your neighbours?—I think every one in the township in which I am have paid their rents, but I am not sure.

7301. What are they claiming from Dr Martin just now?—They want more land. Our places are so small that we cannot live by them.

7302. Has he more land conveniently to give to them?—There is land no doubt, but I am not sure. The doctor has not on his property as much land as would do for all the people on his property.

7303. Then what would they expect him to do for them?—We are thinking there is plenty land in the island of Skye if we only got it.

7304. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—There used to be very good fishing at Boreraig and Galtrigill?—Yes, but that is gone.

7305. What is the reason of it?—Well, I have noticed that since the Barra herring fishing commenced we have had no fishing.

7306. But how has the Barra fishing affected the cod and ling fishing of Galtrigill?—The dead herring that fall out the nets of the fishermen at Barra are enticing the cod and ling to remain about these places.

7307. Did not they ask Dr Martin to open the fish house which he shut up in consequence of the badness of the fishing?—I don't know but that that was the case some years ago.

7308. But for some time he has not been taking the fish at all?—Not for a year or two.

7309. Is there anybody else about here that takes the fish from them?—Yes.

7310. Who?—The post-master at Dunvegan.

7311. What price do you get for the cod and ling?—In winter 5d. for the cod, and 8d. for the ling.

7312. Had you a complaint against the doctor for the price he was giving for the fish?—I believe we had.

7313. What was he giving?—4d. for the cod, and 6d. for the ling.

7314. And it seems it did not pay him notwithstanding?—I cannot say about that.

7315. At any rate he shut up the house?—Yes.

7316. Would you be the better of a good pier at Boreraig? Would it be worth while making one?—Not so far as concerns the fishing.

7317. Would it be any benefit in any other respect?—I don't know what convenience it would be unless it would be convenient for the people to land the sea-ware.

7318. Then you are contented so far as the sea is concerned?—Yes, so far is the fishing is concerned.

7319. Have you any complaint about the post-office there?—We would be the better of a post certainly, for the post does not come further than Husabost, and it goes there for the sake of the doctor.

7320. And where do you get your letters?—Our two townships pay a post-runner from Husabost to ourselves.

7321. With regard to the price of the fish, did not the doctor raise the price one year?—Yes, that was when the £1 was added to our rents. We got one penny of rise in the price of the fish when the £1 was laid upon our rents, but this increase in the price of the fish did not last for more than one winter, while the increase on the rents remained.

7322. *The Chairman.*—When the people were brought in from Galtrigill what was done with the land at Galtrigill which was cleared?—It is in the hands of the landlord for his sheep. Mr Nicolson, the present landlord's predecessor, had it under sheep.

7323. Is it still under sheep?—Yes.

7324. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—In regard to the fishing, you said that the Barra fishing, you thought, had a prejudicial effect. How old is the Barra fishing?—It is many a year—I am not sure.

7325. Has the Barra fishing anything to do with the scarcity of herring on the Skye coast?—Yes, and it has to do with the scarcity in the Lewis also. Before the Lewis fishing commenced there was plenty of herring to be got here.

7326. Do I understand that the fishing of the Lewis or in the outer islands is supposed to injure them before they come to the coast of Skye?—That is what we think.

7327. Is that a view generally entertained?—Yes, we could not account for the scarcity of fish here in any other way.

7328. Is this consideration a new thing, or is it a matter of years' standing?—It is a long time since we were thinking of it, after we could think of no other cause. In my father's time fish were very plentiful.

7329. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—There are two Alexander Mackenzies in the township? What is your rent?—About £6 of rent after this reduction of £1.

7330. What arable land have you got?—I think, if half of my arable land were laid upon the other half, it would make three acres.

7331. And what is the summing of your stock?—Three cows, but I cannot keep three cows on it.

7332. What have you actually got?—Two cows.

7333. How many year-olds?—I have one two-year-old and one stirk.

7334. Does your summing include any young beasts?—The summing is three cows.

7335. What do you get from your croft? Do you sow any bere?—No, barley would not grow upon it.

7336. How much oats do you sow?—About five bolls. The land which we have requires double the quantity of seed that other land requires.

7337. Five bolls. How many barrels of seed would that be?—I think it would make about six barrels of the sort of oats which we have ourselves.

7338. And what return do you have for that?—The best land that we have will yield about one bushel and a half, and other parts will not return what is sown.

7339. Do you thresh it?—Yes.

7340. Do you take any of it to the mill?—Very little.

7341. What meal will you make in an average year?—If I gave justice to my cattle, I could not make any meal.

7342. You give the most of it to the cattle?—Yes.

7343. How much potatoes do you plant?—Six barrels.

7344. What return do you get for that?—About thirty-two. That would be the best year.

7345. Does that include the seed and all? Is the seed to come out of that next year?—Yes.

7346. Then you will only get twenty-six barrels for use?—The best year.

7347. And what will you get on the average of years?—I have seen years quite as bad for potatoes as last year.

7348. What quantity of meal do you buy on an average?—Sixteen bolls a year. I will have to buy twenty-four bolls this year.

7349. Will that meal be consumed by the family this year?—Yes, and it is little enough.

7350. What is the size of your family?—Twelve individuals. But there are two of them not at home just now.

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7351. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Do you know Murdo M'Leod?—Yes.

7352. What is his summing?—Three cows.

7353. No young beasts?—No, three cows is the summing of every full croft in the township.

7354. Norman Macpherson the same?—Yes

7355. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Was your town famous of old as the seat of the pipers of Skye?—Yes, the M'Crimmons had the township as the hereditary pipers of the M'Leods.

7356. How long is it since the last of the M'Crimmons?—I cannot tell, but my grandfather came to the place when it was first settled, and that was eighty years ago.

7357. Are there upon the place any of the old people who have been settled there for a hundred years, or are they all strangers within the last hundred years?—I know of no representative of those in the place a hundred years ago, except myself—or those who were settled in the township after M'Crimmons left.

7358. Is there any music now among the people?—No.

7359. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Is there not one piper in all Duirinish?—No.

7360. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You have explained about the fishing in a very intelligible way. Will you give an explanation how the pipe music has so much gone out in Skye?—My opinion is that in those days of pipe music they were looking more to the Pope than they are to-day, and I believe it is the gospel that has done away with the pipe. It was death that did away with the M'Crimmons.

7361. Are you fond of music yourself?—I don't care should I not hear music any day of the year, if I was well off in other ways.

7362. If you were well off would not music and dancing come back again?—No doubt it would leave us happier, but I don't know whether it would set us to dance or no.

7363. Are there any M'Crimmons, people of that name, in the neighbourhood?—There is a grandson or a great-grandson of theirs staying in the place yet.

7364. Of the name of M'Crimmon?—Yes.

7365. What is his age?—I think he will be about forty years. He is just as ourselves, running north and south for subsistence for our families.

DONALD M'LEAN, Galtrigill (48)—examined.

Donald M'Lean.

7366. *The Chairman.*—Are you a crofter?—I am a crofter's son. I have been paying the rent with my father for the past ten years.

7367. Are you a fisherman too?—Yes, my father is Alexander M'Lean.

7368. Were you freely elected a delegate?—Yes.

7369. You have a statement to submit to the Commission?—Yes.

'*The Grievances of Galtrigill Crofters, one township of Dr Martin's Estate.* To the Royal Commissioners of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland.—When Malcolm Nicolson, Esq., the proprietor before the present one, got this estate, he raised our rents before he took the arable land and hill pasture from us. He cut the small patches left for us in crofts. Some of the people had to leave for the want of land. When the land was in the crofters' possession they had four milk cows, and three or four barren beasts on the hill, two horses, and from thirty to fifty sheep. When they were deprived of that by Mr Nicolson they were allowed to keep three cows and six sheep, each crofter on Borroraig

'hill pasture, as he put Galtrigill and Borroraig on one hill pasture. They 'were not allowed to keep horses any further. Our present proprietor, 'Dr Martin, allowed us to keep three cows, no sheep, no horses; and the 'six sheep allowed us by Mr Nicolson, we had to put them away three 'years after he got this estate. Up to forty years we had no sheep. He 'took from us three times part of the hill pasture left us by Mr Nicolson, 'and added to his own sheep farm. All the hill pasture left for Galtrigill 'crofters was 100 yards broad and one fourth of a mile in length. No 'reduction of rent has been given, but raised our rents. Some of the 'crofters, their rents were raised since fifteen years, some others their 'rents were raised since eight years. Also we were forced to work ten 'days a year—a man or woman from each croft—such as planting potatoes, 'shearing corn, drying and shipping fish, and landing salt, for nothing; 'and if we would not attend to all the aforesaid labours, we would be in 'danger of eviction. Also we had to buy hooks from him to shear his 'own corn, and pay for them; and if we would not attend this labour, 'we would be charged 2s. 6d. a day; and if we would get work from him 'for payment, it is 1s. and 1s. 6d. a day we would get. The produce of 'our holdings would not maintain our families one-third of the year. 'We are always under the necessity of buying. Our desire is plenty of 'land for a fair rent, or, in other words, what would make us comfortable; 'the summering of six cows, from thirty to fifty sheep, and one horse; 'compensation for improvement; fixity of tenure. Some of us have two 'cows, very few have three cows; and we are so deep in debt to our 'creditors that we cannot say that they are our own. Some of us will be 'upwards of £20 in meal yearly, some others a little less; also we have 'to buy wool for day clothing and night clothing, which will come to a 'number of pounds; and therefore our earnest desire is that our circum-'stances would be considered by the Government. Also there is twelve 'families on ten lots, of which three of them are subdivided. Our rent 'is from £4, 5s. to £8. Also there are other four crofters in Sheader in 'the vicinity of Galtrigill, on Dr Martin's estate. Their grievances are 'similar to ours. Their rent is from £3, 5s. to £5. The produce of their 'crofts will not maintain them the third part of the year. They are 'always under the necessity of buying. They will be upwards of £20 'yearly in meal. Their desire is plenty of land, six cows, from thirty to 'fifty sheep, one horse, compensation for improvement, fixity of tenure. 'All the aforementioned grievances are true, and will be signed by 'the crofters.—1. JOHN CAMPBELL, sen., crofter, Galtrigill; 2. JOHN 'CAMPBELL, jun., crofter, Galtrigill; 3. ALEXANDER CAMPBELL, crofter, 'Galtrigill; 4. MALCOLM CAMPBELL, crofter, Galtrigill; 5. JOHN M'LEAN, 'sen., crofter, Galtrigill; 6. JOHN M'LEAN, jun., crofter, Galtrigill; 7. 'KENNETH M'LEAN, crofter, Galtrigill; 8. CIRSTY M'LEAN, crofter, 'Galtrigill; 9. DONALD M'LEAN, crofter, Galtrigill; 10. CHARLES 'CAMPBELL, crofter, Galtrigill; 11. JOHN M'INNIS, crofter, Galtrigill; '12. DONALD M'LEAN, crofter, Galtrigill; 13. MALCOLM M'KENZIE, 'crofter, Sheader; 14. RODRICK M'KENZIE, crofter, Sheader; 15. JOHN 'M'KINNON, crofter, Sheader; 16. DONALD M'KINNON, crofter, Sheader.'

7370. Have you any further statement to make?—No.

7371. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—About the ten days' work. They were to give ten days' work of a man or woman at a small sum. Is that still exacted?—Since William Campbell, the factor that was, we have not been asked to perform that service.

7272. *The Chairman.*—How long ago is that?—A year or one and a half year ago.

7273. You complain of the hill pasture as being only 100 yards broad

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and one quarter of a mile in length. Have you any idea what extent of a hill it is in acres?—*Not more than seven or eight acres altogether.*

7374. What extent was taken from you?—All.

7375. What was the extent of what you originally had?—We had a great stretch—the whole side of the hill.

7376. As to the question about the hooks—buying hooks from Dr Martin for shearing his own corn—does that grievance still exist?—We didn't do any shearing for him during the past two or three years.

7377. And had you to pay any penalty for not doing so?—No.

7378. How many families are in Galtrigill and Sheader altogether?—Twelve in Galtrigill and four in Sheader.

7379. How many souls may there be in the two?—I don't know.

7380. Will there be nearly 100?—I think there are 100, at any rate.

7381. You speak of the large quantity of meal you have to buy in consequence of the scrimpness of your holdings. Are you all very poor?—We are poor, and will be poor unless we get land.

7382. Are you going back from year to year?—Yes, every one of them.

7383. Apart from the special year—last year, which was so very bad—are you going back from year to year?—Yes, but there were some years we were getting on better than others; the years of fishing on the east coast went well with us.

7384. If you got back that part of the hill which was originally yours, would that satisfy you?—No; out of what could we grow crops even should we get the hill?

7385. Were there people put in *Galtrigill* and Sheader within the last forty years from other places?—No; no family would go to Galtrigill unless they were transferred.

7386. At what period would you say that the people occupying Galtrigill and Sheader were in comfortable circumstances?—They were well enough off before the lots were cut out, when, at that time, there was only left to them about one-fourth of the township.

7387. Would they be as numerous then as they are now?—Yes.

7388. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Is Galtrigill near to Sheader?—Galtrigill marches with Borroraig. It is between the two townships.

7389. Has Sheader any pasture of its own?—I don't think it has.

7390. Are the cattle pastured on the Galtrigill hill?—No, they pasture on the Borroraig hill.

7391. I don't understand the conjunction of fixity of tenure and compensation for improvements. Do you want compensation for improvements without being turned out?—We do not want compensation for improvements unless we are removed.

7392. Would you be satisfied with *compensation for improvements* without fixity of tenure?—No, we won't be satisfied with compensation for improvements, unless we are sure we would never be removed.

7393. And if you were sure you would never be removed, under what circumstances would you get compensation for improvements?—If we would get the land, and money for working it, then we would pay the interest of it.

7394. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Tell me exactly what the summing of your croft is?—Three cows.

7395. Is Campbell beside you?—Yes.

7396. Is his summing the same?—Yes.

7397. And J. M'Lean?—The whole in the township are the same summing.

7398. No stirks or anything?—No stock would be allowed in the summing but the three cows.

7399. How many cows have you got?—Three.

7400. Any small beasts?—I have two small beasts.

7401. That is more than the summing?—Yes; we buy the grazing from those who have it, and who have no stock themselves.

7402. To whom are you paying for the grazing?—To my neighbour, John M'Innes, Galtrigill.

7403. *Mr Cameron.*—Would you like to have fixity of tenure on your present holding, supposing you got no more land?—We would wish to have a fixed holding in our present lots for a home. Our old people would wish that. A man who has been paying rent for fifty years would not like to leave the place in his old age.

7404. Have there been any evictions in your place lately?—No.

7405. Are you afraid of any eviction?—We are not afraid.

7406. Would you rather have a better croft on the present system of tenure, or your actual croft with fixity of tenure?—We would rather have plenty of land with the present law, for the croft which we have is no use to us.

7407. Is the general demand among the people not only in this township but throughout Skye rather to have more land than to have fixity of tenure in their present small holdings? Which of the two do you desire most?—That is a very hard question for me to answer.

7408. *The Chairman.*—How many years have you been paying rent along with your father?—Ever since I could work.

7409. How many years is that?—Thirty years.

7410. Has your rent been raised during that period?—Yes, it was raised about seven years ago.

7411. How much?—£1.

7412. Has that £1 been reduced again?—Not yet.

7413. Was it exacted in the last year?—No.

7414. Then your rent last year was the same that it was thirty years ago?—No, that £1 of rise in our rents we have been paying for the past seven years.

7415. Did you pay your rent last year?—No.

7416. Do you know of any one who paid his rent in your township?—No.

7417. Have you heard that other parties elsewhere have had that £1 reduced?—I heard it was taken off some of them in Borroraig.

7418. Do you remember in these thirty years any one who has been evicted on Dr Martin's estate who has paid his rent?—I don't know of any being removed except two who went to Waternish, and I don't know whether they were in arrear or not.

7419. Have you ever heard it reported here that any one has been molested or had his property or his implements injured in consequence of not taking the part of the people in the public agitation?—No, but that three or four *cas-chroms* were broken last spring.

7420. Have you ever molested anybody yourself on that account?—I don't think I have.

7421. Did you on any occasion stop a cart which belonged to Dr Martin and search his cart?—We stopped a cart, but did not search it.

7422. What was the object in stopping it?—There were a great number of us people on the public road at the time the warnings were coming. Dr Martin's carter was going to Galtrigil with meal for the shepherd, and we asked him to take it easy till he should get through the crowd, and when he heard that he stood up in the cart and took a bite of the reins, and commenced to lash the horse through the people; and when we saw that, and the women and the children in danger, we took hold of the

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horse's reins until the people got cleared off the road. That is all I saw done to any person.

7423. You did not injure anything?—No, we did not touch man or beast.

MAGNUS M'LEAN, Crofter, Husabost (50)—examined.

Magnus M'Lean.

7424. *The Chairman.*—Are you a fisherman too?—It is very seldom I fish.

7425. You produce a written statement to the Commissioners?—Yes. 'Husabost, 19*th May* 1883. The Royal Commissioners, Highlands and 'Islands. HONOURABLE GENTLEMEN,—The crofters in this township desire 'to make the following candid statements:—(1) That while the whole 'township was, during a period of years previous to 1838, held in common 'by eight tenants, paying a yearly rental of £8 each, and keeping a stock 'of seven cows, a horse, and seven sheep with their followers, the third 'and least productive part is presently overcrowded by twenty-six crofters, 'paying yearly rentals varying from £1 to £6 each; which in all amounts 'to about £100. When the township was divided into crofts or lots in '1838, there were thirty-one crofts in all, varying in yearly rentals from '£2, 10s. to £5 each. The crofters were at this date deprived of their 'horses, but were allowed to keep sheep till the present proprietor got the 'estate into his own hands about thirty-eight years ago. (2) That there 'are at present only nineteen crofts in our possession, each crofter having 'a summing equal to three cows. These cows are during the summer and 'harvest very poorly pastured, but to winter them is almost impossible. 'Should they get the whole produce of the croft it would barely supply 'them. (3) That at the time of the division into lots, the cultivated land 'on many of them was not more that what would produce four pecks of 'corn; so that what is presently cultivated is the result of our own labour. 'Owing to the incessant tilling of the soil and its thinness, we must sow 'twice as much seed as strong good land requires; we are of opinion that 'a great part of the seed does not take root at all. (4) That the twelve 'crofts deducted from the township are by far the best, and are presently 'utilised hy the proprietor. These twelve crofts are in the centre of the 'township, where the proprietor's house is also. In the time of the 'former proprietor he had only a piece of land beside the house. He 'did not evict any one from the township. (5) That there are nine crofts 'marching on the north side with the proprietor's share, and with the 'exception of two have been curtailed by the present proprietor, specially 'the three crofts marching with Bororraig. (6) That £1, 9s. is exacted 'from eight of those nine crofts, to keep park dykes in repair for the pro-'prietor, to protect his own crops. (7) That there are two cottars and 'four paupers in the township. The crofters have been hitherto com-'pelled by the proprietor to keep the paupers' houses in repair, at our own 'expense; failing to obey orders we would be threatened with a warning 'of removal, notwithstanding how great our own abodes stood in need of 'repair. (8) That ten days' work was claimed by the proprietor from each 'crofter, at spring and harvest labour. All their thanks and wages at 'sunset from the manager was a lot of abusive language. Failing to per-'form eight days specially, 2s. 6d. had to be paid for any of or all those 'days, or if missed through any cause whatever, and threats of warning 'for omitting the other two days. In fact, we had to reply whenever 'called to any sort of work, which was not seldom. The labour was that

'severe that it required the strongest in the family to perform it. And in cases of labourers under wages, it varied from 6d. to 1s. 6d. per day. 'Each man had to buy a hook to do the harvest work for the proprietor. 'We can give an instance of a crofter in this township having paid '17s. 6d. for omitting seven of the eight days' work claimed; and that 'through ill-health. Is it not a disgrace to British legislation that any 'human being in the realm should be compelled, in the present age, to 'perform horse work without either thanks or wages. (9) That we have 'to bring our sea-ware for four miles across Dunvegan Loch. (10) That the 'average yearly expenditure in meal is about £14 per crofter. (11) That 'some time ago the proprietor prohibited lobster fishing on his own fore-'shores, and various other grievances of which we are ashamed to make 'mention. We do therefore beg to state the desires of the township:— '(1) That our holdings be enlarged; (2) That Government would grant 'money to improve our lands and houses; (3) That permanent security be 'given us against proprietors' oppression and eviction; (4) That a reason-'able rent be fixed on our holdings. Names of delegates—MAGNUS 'MACLEAN, crofter; DONALD CAMERON, crofter. Signed by Widow 'MACSWAN, crofter; DONALD × LAMONT, crofter; JOHN × MACDIARMID, 'crofter; JOHN M'KINNON, crofter; MALCOLM × SWAN, crofter; DONALD × 'M'LEOD, crofter; JOHN MORRISON, crofter; DONALD CAMPBELL, crofter; 'JOHN × LAMONT, crofter; ALEXANDER × MACKINNON, crofter; DONALD × 'MORRISON, crofter; DONALD × MACNALE, crofter; MALCOLM × M'CRIMMON, 'crofter; MYLES × MACLEOD.—*P.S.* With regard to paragraph (5) we 'desire to state that at the time the township was divided into lots, the 'three said crofts were left undivided in the possession of three at a yearly 'rental of £15. As there was not enough of land on the Husabost side of 'the old march separating it from Borroraig, those crofts were extended 'over the march, so that it would come to the value of £15. There are 'now nine families instead of three, paying an aggregate rental of £24, '10s.'

7426. Have you any verbal statement to make?—No, not much.

7427. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Is it true that the summing is only three cows?—Yes, nothing but the three cows.

7428. If you kept four, would anybody say anything to you?—Yes, we would need to buy grass for the fourth.

7429. *The Chairman.*—I wish to speak about the ten days' work which was exected from the crofters. In whose time were these ten days first exacted? Was it in Dr Martin's time, or previously?—Some days' work was exacted from us in Mr Nicolson's time, but more work is now exacted from us.

7430. Was it the old custom of the country on the tacksman's land or on the proprietor's land to take part of the rent in labour?—This service was not for payment of rent. We were giving our work for nothing.

7431. But you said there was always some service exacted—in Mr Nicolson's time and in earlier times perhaps?—I never heard about that.

7432. Have you not often heard that it used to be the custom in the time of your forefathers?—I did not hear that; I never heard about it.

7433. Is it not the case that labour is often given by crofters living upon tacksman's land?—Yes.

7434. When was this labour last exacted by the proprietor? When was it last given by the tenants?—A year ago, and the service would still be exacted from us were it not that we have rebelled against it.

7435. Would the proprietor exact the services when it was inconvenient

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to the tenant to give it?—It doesn't matter, we would be made to pay. We were bound to render the service any time it was wanted.

7436. Suppose the tenants were doing their own harvest work, would the proprietor take them away from their own harvest and make them work on his harvest?—Should there he only at home my wife, and my corn going with the wind, she must needs attend to the landlord's work when required; and I remember coming home from the fishing—I was four months away—and I found my wife reaping my landlord's corn; and she asked as a favour of the factor, the manager, to be allowed to go home to prepare food for me, and she would not get leave.

7437. Were you allowed to find a substitute for the work—to get another man to do it instead of yourself?—Yes, if I would pay for a substitute.

7438. And if you found another man how much did you pay?—2s. 6d has been paid. They are here present who have paid 2s. 6d.; at least if the man who paid the money is not here, his son is.

7439. You state here that they met with abusive language?—Yes, from the manager; bad language which I would be ashamed to repeat in the presence of gentlemen.

7440. Were any allowances made in money or in food by the proprietor to those who were engaged in this work?—We were getting food—sort of food—no wages.

7441. What kind of food?—Porridge and milk in the morning, and potatoes and herring for dinner. Sometimes we would get some treacle and water, and a bit of bread afterwards, and sometimes we would be getting meal with the bread also.

7442. Was the food brought out to you in the field?—Yes.

7443. Then you did get some kind of wages—remuneration in the shape of food?—Oh, well it may be called sort of wages, but we would need to get the food at any rate. If we did not get it from him we would need to go home every day, and I know some who went to their own homes and took their own food.

7444. How far from your own homes was this labour exacted from you?—Some quarter of a mile; I cannot tell the distance exactly.

7445. Do you think that the rent was made any lower than others pay for the same advantages, on account of the labour that was exacted from them?—No, we don't think the rent was less.

7446. Did the proprietor show them any favour or kindness generally at the time they were doing this sort of work?—I don't know what that means.

7447. Did he do anything for them because they did this for him?—Yes, he was giving us his skill and his medicines sometimes—every time we went to him; we must speak the truth.

7448. And for their wives and children?—Any one who was sick in the family.

7449. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—You speak about porridge and potatoes and herring as being a kind of food. Don't you think it is a good kind of food?—Yes, it was good food.

7450. Then why do you call it 'a sort of food' contemptuously?—There is many a sort of food.

7451. What better food have you in your own houses?—I have cheese and butter in my own house.

7452. Then you are not so badly off?—No, but I would get it to buy.

7453. Do you think that any man is badly used who gets porridge and milk to his breakfast and potatoes and herring to his dinner?—I think that potatoes and herring is no food for a man who is working as hard as

a horse, and I never considered porridge and milk food to keep a man in strength when I had hard work. I know it is healthy enough food for any person.

7454. Have not porridge and milk and potatoes and fish—especially herring—been the principal food of the people of Skye for several generations?—It was part of their food. They were using plenty fish, and they would have flesh in the days gone by, and they cannot get it now.

7455. Was it a common thing for them to have meat?—Yes.

7456. When?—In former times.

7457. When?—In Mr Nicolson's time.

7458. Were you alive then yourself—were you not a baby then?—Yes, and I was employed by old Mr Nicolson planting his potatoes; and I knew Sheriff Nicolson at that time.

7459. And did you use to get roast beef to dinner at that time, or anything of the sort?—I never got food from him; I was only there one day, and I was but a small boy.

7460. *Mr Cameron.*—What to you mean by 1s. 6d. to 1s. a day wages? Was that given beside the day's labour?—That was the wages which we would get.

7461. But the ten days you had to give without any wages?—Yes.

7462. How long ago was it that they got this 1s. 6d. and 1s. a day?—It is going on yet.

7463. What are the ordinary wages in the district?—I know no person who employs labour except the landlord.

7364. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—With reference to the £1, 9s. exacted from three of the crofters for putting up a dyke—is that exacted up to this date?—It is still going on.

7465. Is it a special burden upon those three, or is it a burden upon the whole township?—It is a burden upon the entire township. It is on the township altogether.

7466. You say there are four paupers in the township, and that the crofters have hitherto been compelled to keep the paupers' houses in repair. When you speak of paupers do you mean people who are on the poors roll?—Yes.

7467. Are you aware that the parochial board is bound to keep paupers' houses up?—That is what I was thinking.

7468. Then, that being the case, why did you do it?—We would require to do it, or if we refused we would be told we would be warned out of our lands, and besides that we had to take our own fodder to use for thatch.

7469. Not only your labour, but your material?—The fodder off our own crofts.

7470. Is that going on until this day?—I have not done it for the past two or three years.

JOHN M'KINNON, Crofter, Ferrinvicquarrie (58)—examined.

7471. *The Chairman.*—You have a statement to make to the Commissioners?—Yes. '*From the Tenants of Ferrinvicquarrie.* 1. In the year '1836, Ferrinvicquarrie was occupied by twelve crofters. At present it 'is occupied by twenty-five. Six of these have been removed from the 'neighbouring township of Scorr—the whole number then occupying it. 'Others came from Husabost. The township of Scorr was depopulated 'by Dr Martin's predecessor, viz., Mr Nicolson. 2. At the above

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'mentioned date each crofter was allowed to keep seven cows, two horses, 'and as many sheep as he could manage. Now we can keep only two 'cows, one stirk, no sheep, no horse. 3. We now pay double the rent 'we then did. 4. The land, by reason of its being cropped and recropped 'for the last forty-seven years, became annually less and less productive, 'so that now it very often does not sow itself. 5. Mr Nicolson imposed 'upon us four days' free labour each year, in addition to our rent. Dr 'Martin, our present proprietor, increased the number by six—in all, ten 'days. Over and above this, we had to dry his fish and embark it, and 'disembark his salt—to do all this, and nothing found. 6. In lieu of the 'day's work we had to pay 2s. 6d. In lieu of the whole number of days 'we had to pay an additional £1 at the rent day. 7. Should a crofter 'happen to break a hook in cutting down Dr Martin's corn, on one of 'these days of free labour, he had to pay 1s. 6d. for it. 8. Some of our 'crofters have been deprived of their only cow for arrears; and they were 'without any for three years. 9. We have been deprived of most of our 'hill pasture; partly by Mr Nicolson, partly by Dr Martin. 10. We use 'heather for bedding for our cows in summer. Such heather can only 'be had on the hill taken from us. But the shepherd had orders not to 'allow us to pull any there. 11. Our proprietor, Dr Martin, as a crofter, 'has three crofts in Ferrinvicquarrie; yet he does not pay his share of the 'expenses of the herd, or of the expense of keeping a bull. 12. Within 'the last eight years the rental of Ferrinvicquarrie has been increased by '£21. 13. We are not allowed to sell any of our cattle to any buyer but 'himself. Notices to this effect are just now posted up in public places 'throughout the glen. 14. Some of our crofters, having large families, 'buy thirty bolls of meal a year. The average of our whole township is 'about sixteen bolls. What we desire is—(*a*) The abolition of the ten 'days' free labour; (*b*) Increased holdings; (*c*) Fair rent.'

7472. Have you any other statement to make?—I don't think I have anything further to say.

7473. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Are all these exactions you have referred to going on at this moment?—Yes, but we have not performed any of the services for the past year.

7474. Did you agree among yourselves to decline doing it?—We refused.

7475. Did you get any letter or threat from the proprietor about it?—Not much threatening for the past year.

7476. One of your grievances is that you pay double the rent you then did. What is the rent you pay?—£9; but £7, 10s. was the rent before, when Mr Nicolson settled the land.

7477. How long was Dr Martin in possession before he raised the rent?—A long time, I believe.

7478. And he raised it from £7, 10s. to £9?—Yes; he raised it £2 about eight years ago.

7479. How many crofters are there in Ferrinvicquarrie?—Twenty-one whole crofts, but the most of them are subdivided into two halves.

7480. How many heads of families will there be?—There is a family in every half lot.

7481. But how many families are there on either croft or half croft? It is marked on the paper here twenty-five. Is that so?—I believe it will be the number.

7482. And how many will there be altogether?—I don't know.

7483. Will there be one hundred?—There are more than one hundred souls.

7484. In regard to the fishing, we heard from a former witness that,

formerly, of their own accord, they were willing to sell their fish to the proprietor, and now there is a charge here for carriage and for drying the fish. Will you explain what that means?—We were doing that.

7485. What does it consist of? Had you to gut them?—Yes.

7486. Explain all you had to do?—We had to split them, and to clean and wash them.

7487. Did you salt them?—We were not salting them. The doctor himself had a salter.

7488. You state that you had to do this without anything being paid?—Yes.

7489. You had to do this for the cod and ling, for which you got so much per head?—Yes, and we were doing the work.

7490. Did that occupy you some time?—Yes. It kept us a good while, and every day on which we brought fish we would have to perform this service.

7491. You went out and fished, and you sold the fish to the proprietor for a certain sum per head. Now, what time would you have on shore before you gutted, cleaned, and put the fish to dry?—We would not take much time even should we have to bone fifty fish. We would like better the day on which we had most to do of that work.

7492. I understand now the grievance is not at the time of landing them, but spreading them out to dry after they had been in the store?—Yes, that is what we complain of.

7493. And would that occupy you some time?—Doubtless it would, sometimes.

7494. And had you to put them back into the store after taking them out?—We were not returning them to the store at all. We were just clumping them on the billock on which they were dried.

7495. In No. 11 of the paper it says that the doctor, as a crofter, has three crofts in Ferrinvicquarrie, but does not pay his share of the expenses of the herd, or of the expense of keeping a bull. What reason does he allege for not paying his share of the expenses?—The meaning we were taking out of it was that he was a landlord, and, as the word is, 'might' was 'right' with him.

7496. Did you ever protest against it, or just put up with it?—That is what I cannot tell,—that we ever took it to the doctor himself, though perhaps it might be only once a year that I saw the doctor, unless the sickness of my family would bring him; but I think I was seeing something harder on me than the doctor; I was seeing the factor, and he was worse for me than the doctor.

7497. Was that Campbell?—Yes.

7498. How long is it since he left?—About two years ago.

7499. Is there anybody in his place?—I don't think there is any one doing his work at any rate; and I feel that there is not a person in this place.

7500. Now you say again, 'We are not allowed to sell any of our own 'cattle to any buyer but himself. Notices to this effect are now posted 'up in public places in the glen.' Does that mean that the landlord fixed his own price?—No, not at present, at any rate. I did not hear the doctor putting a price on a beast since Campbell left.

8501. Then, taking it in Campbell's time—what used to be done in Campbell's time when there were any beasts to sell?—When the tenants would be selling the beast to any person that would be coming the way to buy them, the threatenings of Campbell would be coming upon those who would do so, whether this was with the authority of the doctor or not.

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7502. Then tell me what Campbell used to do? Did he go with the beast to the market or not?—Campbell used to come through the place to buy the beasts.

7503. How did he fix the price?—Just as he himself thought proper.

7504. Was he in the habit of leaving the animals after buying them for some little time upon the crofts?—No, a very short time. His own place was near, and there was no reason for him to leave them with us.

7505. Was it a benefit to the tenants or a benefit to himself, or a benefit to the person who sent him there, that he took those steps?—I don't know. It was that the beast would be better with him than with us. He was sending it to better pasture.

7506. But was it for the benefit of the tenants, or himself, or the proprietor, that he came and took the beast away?—I do not know what great profit he was allowing the crofter at all.

7507. Would you have much preferred that he should not have interfered with you?—I believe that we would prefer that he should not interfere with our beasts. Sometimes it would be better he should not.

7508. Was it always the best beasts he took?—Often. Those who were in debt to him he would insist on getting the beast that he chose himself.

7509. And they never knew what he really got for them at the markets?—No, indeed they did not.

7510. Did it not give a great advantage to this person Campbell, or to anybody who followed that rule of going round and picking the best of the cattle they could get from the crofters, thus making up a choice herd of cattle, and thereby, when they went to the market, perhaps not having a single bad beast amongst the lot. Did it not give the seller of this choice lot a great advantage in the market over other people?—There was no person getting the choice of the beasts as he was getting.

7511. And the same would apply to any person who acted similarly in other parts of Skye?—Yes. I believe his position as factor gave him an advantage in dealing with us, in making up a choice drove.

7512. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Did he give you a less price than you would have got from the drovers?—They would be laying that to his charge, at any rate.

7513. What sort of difference did they think they could get from the drovers?—I cannot very well say.

7514. You say you sometimes did sell to the drovers, and were threatened in consequence, what followed such threats?—Sometimes nothing much more than threatenings followed.

7515. And at other times?—I may say that the way in which he was driving ourselves was the hardest treatment we were getting from him.

7516. I have seen the notice you have referred to on the door of the post-office here. Is that put up because the tenants have not been paying their rents?—I don't know; I did not see the notice.

7517. But you refer to it in your paper?—I can neither read nor write. I believe that such notices were posted up.

7518. I suppose the notice on the post-office door now is the notice you refer to?—I believe it is.

7519. Has that been posted up because you have not been paying your rents?—I believe that that was his reason for putting up these notices, so far as regards the cattle that have been sold.

7520. *The Chairman.*—When the factor used to buy those cattle from them, did he buy them for himself, or did he buy them for Dr Martin?—I don't know.

7521. When they were bought were they taken into the ground

occupied by the factor, or were they taken into Dr Martin's fields?—I believe he was buying some for himself also. We were not looking where he was bringing them to—whether to his own ground or to his master's.

7522. Did you ever see them in Dr Martin's ground?—Yes, but we never knew whether they belonged to his master or to himself.

7523. *Professor Mackinnon*—What is your own rent?—£9, 10s. I pay £13, including taxes.

7524. Surely the taxes don't put it up to £13?—I did not appear at the rent collection time at Martinmas last, but some who were at the rent collection were saying that these pounds were taken off them—that the increase which was laid upon them eight years ago was taken off. I have two lots.

7525. What has been your own rent for the last seven years, actually?—Up to £13, including everything. I was paying for the doctor.

7526. What was your summing?—Two cows and a stirk on each croft.

7527. That is five cows really?—Four cows and a three-year-old.

7528. What stock have you actually?—I have two stirks besides that.

7529. Are there others who have less than their stock?—Yes, plenty.

7530. *Mr Cameron.*—About the twenty-one crofts you mentioned, you stated they were subdivided into halves. How did that subdivision take place?—When the people became so poor that they could not keep them.

7531. And what happened?—That they are constantly getting poorer.

7532. How did the twenty-one become divided into half crofts?—By the natural increase of the families.

NICOL MARTIN, M.D., of Husabost (83)—examined.

Nicol Martin.

7533. *The Chairman.*—Were you born in this country?—I was born in Skye.

7534. You belong to an old family long settled in this country?—Yes.

7535. And you have personal recollection of the country and its condition all your life?—Yes, and I know a good deal about the country.

7536. Where were you resident before you came to Husabost?—On the east side of Trotternish, on Lord Macdonald's property.

7537. Do you remember something of the country before many of the changes took place of which we heard? Do you remember the country when the crofters possessed larger crofts before many of the clearances were effected?—I remember that there were few crofters in Skye. They were generally cottars on gentlemen's farms—tacksmen's—and they worked the lands of the gentlemen, and they had as much as the grass of two cows and some sheep, but their names never appeared in the rental until lately.

7538. But do you remember the time in which some of the land was held on the runrig system?—Yes.

7539. Then, as to those who held their lands on the runrig system, were they not crofters? Did they not appear on the rental book?—The large farmers employed these people to work their farms, and gave them so much land themselves for their work, and so much of what they called half-foot,—that is, whatever they turned besides the land that was laid out for themselves; they cut half the corn and the other half belonged to the tenant, and the tenant gave one-half of the seed and the crofter gave the other half. They dried the corn and carried it home, something like the serfs in Russia, in my first recollection.

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7540. Then in your first recollection the crofters were tenants of the gentlemen tacksmen?—Yes.

7541. They were not tenants of the proprietor of the land?—No.

7542. But they held their portions of land from the tacksmen; now were those portions of land more spacious and convenient? Had they larger summings of stock on them than they now possess?—Yes, they had so many head of cattle and sheep, and they were better off than the lotters in the present day.

7543. You think they had larger amounts of stock, and were more comfortable in that respect?—No, I don't think they had a larger amount of stock, but they had sheep, the small sheep of the country. They used to go with these sheep in summer when they were nearly starving, and they used to milk them and come home with the milk. Then they had a great deal of shell-fish in summer.

7544. Then, when the gentlemen tacksmen disappeared, and when the sheep farmers came into the country, many of the crofters who paid their rent to the tacksman removed to other places?—A good many went to America—Prince Edward's Island. The Earl of Selkirk sent a great many to Prince Edward's Island. I believe he had a grant of the land there.

7545. But, besides that, were not a great number removed from different tacks and settled on smaller crofts?—The proprietor, when he wanted to raise a regiment, enlisted the sons of the lotters on condition that they would get crofts—and then he divided some of these farms into crofts, and gave them to the parents of those people who enlisted. I believe that was the origin. Then, there were a good many crofts made at the time when kelp was selling at a large price, in order to make the kelp principally for the tacksmen and partly for the proprietor. That was the origin, I believe, of the small crofts.

7546. First in connection with recruiting, and then in connection with kelp manufacture?—Yes. And then afterwards these lots—the crofts which are on my place—I believe, were first settled by Mr Macdonald of Vallay, North Uist, in order to enable the people to live a good deal by fishing.

7547. You have stated three causes for the formation of the crofts—enlistment, the kelp manufacture, and improved fishing?—Yes.

7548. Do you consider that the formation of the sheep farms was a fourth cause?—Well, for very large tacks a proprietor such as M'Leod of M'Leod or Lord Macdonald got high rents—much higher rents, and regularly paid—whereas the crofters' pay was very precarious.

7549. You have heard what has been said by some of the delegates with reference to the customs which are alleged to have been enforced upon your estate; one of these was the exaction of labour from the tenantry, another was the exaction of the sale of fish. Would you give us some explanation of these customs upon your property? For instance, when you first acquired the property, did you find the practice existing of so many days' labour?—I believe so; I am not very sure. As for their labour, I did not care a straw for it. The small tenants on Meiloveg and the other neighbouring properties offered me when the people on my own place refused. I supplied them with medicine and medical advice so long as I was able to visit their sick, and I visited their houses, but I have been afflicted with gout, and I cannot do it now; but I still continue to give medicine and advice to all and sundry—every one who comes. I keep a stock of medicine, and they all come to me for medicine and advice.

7550. With reference to the practice which they attribute to a former

manager of yours, of going round and buying the choicest cattle, what can you tell us about that? Are you aware such a practice existed?—Well, I don't believe it; I don't know, though. My manager might do some things of which I was unaware, but I know this that he used to buy a six months' stot—calves I may call them—at Martinmas for wintering. The prices then were very low. When I came here first he used to buy them for 16s., 17s., and 20s. Well, some of them came to me, and complained to me that the price was too small. I told them to sell them to any person that would give them more,—only give me the money the grieve offered. Well, some of them went to the market. There was always a market at Martinmas, but they could not get a penny more than my grieve offered, and then they came back and gave them to him again.

7551. And with reference to the custom of purchasing the fish, to which allusion has been made, was it a rule on the estate?—That was a rule before I had anything to do with it. I built two curing houses and two salt cellars—one at Glendale and one at Galtrigill. They are quite close to the sea. They had only to take the fish into the house. I had a curer, and they had nothing to do with curing. In spring, perhaps, they would send children to spread the fish over the shore to dry, and in the evening for perhaps an hour to gather fish up after being dried. That would go on for perhaps three or four days if the weather was good.

7552. That was the custom of the estate when you came to the place?—That was always the custom. Then I gave up taking any fish at all.

7553. What was the price with reference to the catching?—The price, when I came here, was 3d. for a cod and 4d. for a ling; but the prices were very bad in the south. Then, when the prices got a little better, I raised them to 4d. for the cod and 5d. for the ling, and one year I gave 5d. for the cod and 7d. for the ling, but the quantity was so small—giving £10 to the fish curer—that last year I took the fish I had, less than three tons, and I gave £10 to the fish curer, and there was the freight by the steamer, which was about £1, and the salt, so you can see what profit I got out of it.

7554. What was the price of cattle when you first recollect?—A good stirk would bring 20s.

7555. In the market?—A very good stirk at Martinmas.

7556. What would the same description of animal sell for last year?—Last year there were queys on my place sold for £8, 10s.; and they did not get more than £3, and a good one would only get £3 when I came here first.

7557. The animal which was sold for £3 when you came here would now sell for £8?—Yes, a quey.

7558. But is the animal now a better one than it was then?—Yes, because the first thing I did was to buy three bulls from Mr Macdonald, Monkstadt, and the people saw the advantage which they derived from having good bulls, and after that they began to buy bulls from Captain Macdonald, Waternish, and other people, paying as much as £20.

7559. Since you came here have you ever evicted any families except for failure to pay rent?—I never evicted one. I never evicted a tenant who paid his rent.

7560. And since you came here have you raised the rent generally?—Yes, I believe, several years ago, there was £1 put on; but I took that off last year, if they would pay their rents. In the case of the Ferrinvicquarrie people—you saw one of them here—I told them I would take £2 of a deduction off some lots—I think the lots of people that went to Australia, if they would pay their rent—but they would not pay, and they never paid a farthing. Now, three years ago, John Mackinnon and almost

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every one of the tenants sold three rents of potatoes. The year before last they had plenty of potatoes. They could get nobody to buy them, for potatoes were plentiful all over the country. They came from Ayrshire and Ireland. They were getting 6s. and 8s. a barrel for potatoes.

7561. What is your recollection of early times? Do you think the people are now better fed and clothed than they were in those days, or do you think they are not so well clothed?—I don't know as to their feeding. Perhaps it is mere extravagance, but decidedly they are better clad. You will see the women now with boas and bonnets and feathers.

7562. But are they as substantially dressed or are they as usefully dressed as they used to be?—Well, I don't know. They go to the Lothians to work in summer and spring, and they buy some dresses of no great value.

7563. But you have been a physician for very many years, and you must be a very good judge of the state of the people. Do you think that the children are as well fed and dressed and as strong now as they were many years ago? Do you think there is a deterioration or an improvement?—I don't think the children are nearly so well fed. Formerly they used to have a great many eggs, and they gave them to the children. Now they sell all their eggs for tea and sugar and tobacco, and the children get none of them. The consequence is that the children are weakly, scrofulous, and very much deteriorated.

7564. Do you think the children get as much milk now as they used to do?—I don't think they ever got meat, except fowls and eggs.

7565. I said milk; do they get as much milk as they used to do?—Yes, I think they do. They get as much as they used to do when I came here. But no doubt the crofts are deteriorated from constant cropping, and not large enough to leave any out of crop. In my own time the people had what they called tithing folds—that is, folds outside in the grazing where they kept their cattle at night, and the cattle manured these folds, and they got an excellent crop from these folds manured by cattle. There is nothing of that kind now.

7566. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—That is because of the introduction of sheep farming, I suppose. The sheep now occupy the ground where those folds were?—No, the township had a good deal of that.

7567. And why have they given up that practice?—I don't know. Their crofts were measured and put out to them—by whom I don't know—but formerly there were no crofts. They made crofts wherever they could, and they had a summing of cattle, and a few had sheep; but then, latterly, those who had sheep never attended to them. The sheep got the scab. They never smeared them, or kept them out of their own corn.

7568. Then, how would you propose to improve the lands now-a-days that have got so deteriorated?—I don't see how the land can be improved. The only remedy, I think, for them is to go where they can get land—that is, America. Go to Manitoba and various parts of America and Canada, and you can get lands there very cheap; but they cling to the soil, and it is very difficult. A good many of the people since I came here went to Canada and Prince Edward's Island.

7569. I daresay you know they talk as if they would prefer to go to Bracadale instead of going to America? Would they give the rents the tacksmen are giving for Bracadale now?—They could not. Do you suppose M'Leod of M'Leod could divide his lands among the people perhaps who would never pay his rent? M'Leod has one tenant in Bracadale and Minginish who pays £1900 a year; another pays £1500. Do you suppose M'Leod would take small crofters, for they never would pay that rent—one-half of it, one-third of it even, if they got it.

7570. You think they could not pay the rent?—I know they could not do it, and they would not do it. They are getting indolent and lazy besides. Look at this winter; they did nothing but go about with fires on every hill, and playing sentinels to watch for fear of sheriff's officers coming with warnings to take their cattle for rent. They went about with pitch-forks and scythes and poles pointed with iron or steel, and it was a mercy no one would serve the processes upon them, or they would have murdered him sure enough. You cannot get a sheriff's officer now to serve a process on any tenant in Skye.

7571. There is a specific allegation that you removed four crofters from Galtrigill and added their crofts to your own parks. Had they not paid their rents?—Not one that I ever removed paid rent. There was one, not at Galtrigill, but at Ferrinvicquarrie, and there were two who went to Lowergil. M'Leod of M'Leod had that land then, and he wanted to establish a fishery, and he got some people from my place and gave them lots at Meiloveg.

7572. Did you hear Donald M'Lean from Galtrigill giving an account of stopping a cart of yours? Was that quite correct?—Quite correct, so my servant told me. A number of women and men met the cart on the road. The cart was going with meal to my shepherd, and they wanted to know, at least the man said they wanted to know, what was in the cart, and he said it was none of their business, and then they jumped to take hold of the horse's reins, and both horse and cart went off the road.

7573. But did they do any hurt to the cart?—They did no harm fortunately, because at that part of the road there was no drain near the place.

7574. This is what I refer to. The tenants of Borroraig say—'Dr 'Martin has in his time removed four crofters from this township, and 'he made seven new parks from lands belonging to the township, which 'were within the old landmarks or boundaries of the township, and he 'added these parks to his own holdings'?—That is quite true.

7575. When we asked the witness about it he said that two of those men had gone to Waternish, and two you provided for elsewhere?—Well, some went to Glendale, to M'Leod's lands, and some went to Waternish, and some to Sheader, and some to Skiniden.

7576. But these were not paying rent?—No, they went of their own accord. I never turned them off. As for M'Lean, he has no lands at all. The man M'Lean who gave evidence is £17 in arrear. He came from Mr Macdonald of Lyndale's property, and I believe he left that property without paying his rent too.

7577. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You said, in answer to Sir Kenneth Mackenzie, that it would be quite absurd in M'Leod to cut up the large farms, one of which pays £1900, and another pays £1500, because the crofters could not pay those rents. Now, are you aware that in proportion to the extent of their holdings the crofters of Skye are paying much higher rents than the large tacksmen?—Well, I am not sure of that.

7578. You are not aware of it?—I am not aware of it.

7579. And you don't believe it is a fact?—And I don't believe it is a fact. I would give £500 to-day if all the crofters on my place went away. I would keep the paupers. I would not ask the paupers to go away.

7580. *The Chairman.*—Do you mean you would give £500 in order to facilitate their establishment in America or elsewhere?—Elsewhere, if they leave my place; but not partially leave it, because I would be just as bad then as I am now, because if only a few went away all these crofts would be vacant, and I would get nothing for them, but if all went away I would give £500. During the three years of destitution we had here, these

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were Government officers who came to superintend the distribution of large sums of money collected everywhere for the people. Well, the allowance given to the people was 1 lb. of meal a day for a day's work—just 1 lb. Well, when I saw that, I commenced draining bogs myself—bogs that were 15 or 16 feet deep, that no beast could get through,—and I was paying the people according to the work they did. I spent upwards of £10,000 of my own money during that destitution. Well, I am no worse than any man living, I believe.

7581. You say you believe you spent £10,000 in providing work?—In providing work for the people.

7582. For the destitute people?—For the destitute people.

7583. Have you received any benefit or interest upon that outlay?—Hardly any. That land was in my own possession—no person's possession I may say—for even the sheep could not get through it.

7584. But is it more valuable now that it is drained?—Oh, it will graze some beasts now.

7585. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—How were these £10,000 expended?—In giving work to these people.

7586. What kind of work?—Draining and trenching—not their own lots—but lots that were vacant. People went to Australia and other places.

7587. Was any part of it expended on works for their own benefit?—None, because they would not do it, you know. They would not take it to be expended as my grieve would approve of.

7588. I observed in reading not long ago the last Destitution Committee report by Mr Skene in 1852, that an offer was made to the various proprietors in Skye of a sum of money to be expended by them for certain objects and under certain conditions, and you undertook to execute certain works?—That was the last year of the destitution.

7589. Among other things you undertook to establish a fishing colony at Boreraig, and that phrase struck me because there were always fishers there?—There was always a fishing colony there; and some persons to-day said I prevented them from fishing.

7590. But in that report a letter of yours is printed stating that you were going to establish a fishing colony at Boreraig?—That must be a mistake. I built a salt cellar and a curing house at Boreraig, and one at Glendale, which cost me £800, and they are not worth anything to me.

7591. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You said it would be well worth your while to pay down £500 in order to get rid of the crofters altogether in a body. I want to follow that up with the question, Would it be wise for Lord Macdonald, and M'Leod, and the other big proprietors to pay down a much larger sum than the £500 for the very same purpose?—Well, I should think it would.

7592. *The Chairman.*—That is, you mean to emigrate them?—Or migrate them; go where they like. I don't see who would take them; I don't think M'Leod would take them.

7593. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Would you leave any people in the island at all?—I would not give the sum I mentioned for a partial emigration.

7594. And would you then have no people on the island at all?—That I don't know. I am only speaking about my own place.

7595. *The Chairman.*—Have you any further statement?—No.

RODERICK CAMPBELL, Crofter, Borrodale (42)—examined.

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7596. *The Chairman.*—Are you employed by the trustees upon the Glendale estate?—No, I am in my own employment.

7597. Were you formerly employed by the trustees, or Mr Robertson?—Yes.

7598. What were you employed to do?—Employed to plough the park of Waterstein.

7599. How long ago is that?—Last week.

7600. Did anybody interfere with your work?—Part of my plough was taken away at night.

7601. Did you leave the plough in the field?—Yes.

7602. And when you came in the morning what had happened to it?—The coulter was taken out, the muzzles were taken away, and the swingle-tree.

7603. Did you cease to be employed after that by the trustees?—Yes.

7604. Why did they cease to employ you?—They did not ask me to do any more.

7605. Do you think that if you had gone back to the plough again you would have been prevented from doing your work?—I don't know.

7606. Why do you think the trustees ceased to employ you?—I don't know; I cannot say.

7607. Do you think it was on account of your plough having been stolen?—I cannot say what was in their minds regarding it.

7608. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Are you afraid of anybody?—No.

7909. Do you know of anything else the people have done to injure the property of the trustees, or any of those whom they accuse of not having sympathised with themselves?—I don't know of anything.

ALEXANDER M'LEAN, Crofter, Lower Meiloveg (50)—examined.

Alexander M'Lean.

7610. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—How many crofts do you hold?—One.

7611. You held at one time two crofts?—Yes.

7612. How long is it since then?—About nine years ago.

7613. How long did you hold these two crofts?—About twenty years.

7614. It is said you paid £20 for entrance to a croft; is that true?—Yes; and I had to pay it at once.

7615. Was that for one of these two crofts you speak of?—Yes, one which a widow had.

7616. Did you retain it for twenty years after getting possession of it?—No; the croft was taken from me in a year or two afterwards.

7617. Then had you at one time three crofts?—No.

7618. When did you pay this £20?—About ten years ago.

7619. Had you two crofts before then?—No. The crofts had been set about forty-five years ago, and my father had these two crofts. A sister of mine married, and she had no place to go to, and my brother gave her one of the lots. Her husband died of fever in Greenock, and left four orphans, and the orphans got on the poors' roll for a year or two. The widow married then, and her husband was not wanting to have anything to do with the orphans. Her children were left with me, and the poor relief was taken from them. Arrears accumulated on the widow during the time she occupied the lot, and it was a lot which was lotted out for the fish-curer originally. It was not safe for any one to get this lot, for

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the landlord could take it from them at any time; and when Tormore came to be factor he asked me to pay the arrears which had accumulated on the widow. I said there would be no use in my doing so, and I would not do so, for whenever I commenced to take the fish the lot would be taken from me. He said if I would pay the arrears the land would be mine, and it would not be taken from me. I accordingly paid £20.

7620. How long ago was that?—About ten years ago. The next year he served me with a summons of removal from that lot. I got a summons to remove twice before I let it go, and when I saw he was following me with these summonses of removal, I thought it was as well to let the croft go, and I did so. I spoke to him when he was last at Hamara about it, and asked him for the £20 back. He said it was not into his pocket the £20 went, and I said it did not matter to me into whose pocket it went—it was to him I gave it.

7621. Was the name of your brother-in-law ever put into the rent book?—It was he who was paying it to the landlord, but it was my father's name which was in the lot.

7622. And it was against your father and against you that the arrears stood in the book?—Yes, they had no business with me; but they knew they could not get the money from my father, and therefore they fixed upon me for it.

7623. *The Chairman.*—Is it the custom for incoming tenants in this country to pay arrears of out-going tenants?—It was the practice, unless it is now given up.

[ADJOURNED.]

RAASAY.
TORRAN.

TORRAN, RAASAY, TUESDAY, MAY 22, 1883.

(*See Appendix A, XVIII.*)

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 James Ross*, factor on the Raasay estate.—Mr Wood desires that delegates who have been appointed here should state everything they know, without reserve. He has no wish that anything should be concealed, and he also wishes me to tell you that you can do so with the most perfect immunity, without the slighest fear of consequences, so far as he is concerned.]

CHARLES M'LEOD, Crofter and Fisherman, Arnish, Raasay (60)—examined.

Charles M'Leod.

7624. *The Chairman.*—Have you been freely elected a delegate of this place?—Yes.

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Charles M'Leod.

7625. Have you got a statement to make on the part of the people whom you represent?—Yes. It is with the view of getting deliverance from bondage into liberty, that we have come out here to-day. We would take the example from those who were in bondage, and who were sighing in their bondage, and wishing for liberty. The Israelites before were in bondage, but there was One above who heard the sighing of those in bondage, and fixed the time for coming for their deliverance. We are oppressed with cultivating bad land, which yields no crop, which does not return to us the value of our work. There are many reasons for that, the way the island is circumstanced. In days gone by this island was called the island of the big men—the island of strong men, and it deserved that name. From the days of John M'Gillicallum of Raasay, it was rearing able men, until within the last few generations. They would defend their islands and the islands about. They were raising fighting men in this island to defend their own homestead and the kingdom. And now, what has caused the people of this island to come down to their present condition? I remember from the time of my father, they were rearing their families. My father reared five sons, and now the land which my father had is occupied by three families; two of them are occupying the land which my father had, and each of their families is as heavy as my father's family was. They have no more arable land than my father had. The rent of the township was £18, 10s., and it is now two townships.

7626. Was that the rent of the township, or the rent of your father's croft?—The £18, 10s. was the rent of the township, and my father had one-fourth of it.

7627. How many families were in it when the rent was £18, 10s.?—Four.

7628. How many are there in it now?—There are now seven lots in the township.

7629. But how many families?—The township is now divided into seven lots, and each of these seven lots is rented at £5 of bare rent, besides rates. Now, how are seven families to be in comfort upon what only supported four families in the days gone by?

7630. You say there are seven lots at £5 each. Are there seven families on these seven lots?—Has each family a whole lot?—When the township was made into seven lots, one man had three of the lots on one side, and there are four lots on the other side, on each of which there is a family.

7631. Then, there are five families altogether?—Yes.

7632. Leaving out the man who has three lots, and taking the families each of which has one lot, what is the summing of each lot?—Two cows to each, with their calves. We have no summing.

7633. Have you any sheep?—We have a few sheep.

7634. About how many on each lot?—I could not exactly say, and I will tell you the reason of that. The hill pasture, which was for the summering of the sheep, is on the side of the man who has the three lots.

7635. About how many sheep are there to any lot? Eight or nine, or how many?—I don't think that each has more than six.

7636. How many have you got yourself?—Eight, and another man may have only four.

7637. No horse?—No horse.

7638. What is the rent of a lot for two cows, the follower, and seven sheep?—£5.

7639. And the one who has three lots has three times as much?—The one with the three lots pays three times as much rent as the single lots do.

7640. Has he three times as much stock?—I cannot be sure.

RAASAY. — TORRAN. — Charles M'Leod.

7641. About how much arable ground has each lot?—I cannot say what the acreage would be. I can tell how much crop I put in of potatoes and oats. The way the ground is—in spots here and there—it could not very well be measured.

7642. How long ago is it since it was divided into seven lots?—More than three years ago. It was in Mr Mackay's time, the former proprietor, and it was Mr Mackay who raised the rents in the island.

7643. Was the rent fixed at £5 in Mr Mackay's time?—Yes; it was Mr Mackay who raised it to £5.

7644. Has it been raised since?—No.

7645. Has anybody been evicted since you recollect?—No, I don't recollect a case of eviction in our township.

7646. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Have you and your fathers before you been long in the island? Have they been there from time immemorial?—All our forefathers have been on this island from time immemorial.

7647. In regard to the depopulation of the island in former times, was not Raasay at one time full of people?—Yes.

7648. When did the people first begin to be put out of the island?—It is forty years since the first removings.

7649. Who was the proprietor then?—M'Leod of Raasay.

7650. How many people, roughly speaking, were removed at that time?—I cannot be sure.

7651. Was it a whole ship-load?—Yes.

7652. More than one?—Not at the first removing. These all went to America.

7653. A ship-load at least went to America the first time?—To the best of my recollection.

7654. How long ago is it since the second?—Thirty years ago.

7655. When did your present proprietor come?—About six years ago.

7656. Have you, or the people of your township, made any complaint to him or remonstrance against the amount of the rent you are complaining of to-day?—Yes.

7657. What answer did you get?—When the township was settled a family came from *Eilean Tighe*, and there was no place open for that man, and he was settled in our place for a year.

7658. But have you made any remonstrance to Mr Wood, the present proprietor, against the amount of your rent?—Yes. This man from island Tighe was settled for a year in our midst, as there was no other place for him, and £5 additional was laid upon us, and we were wanting Mr Wood to take off this additional £5. Mr Wood promised to do this, and when the fence was put up between us and the man who has got the three lots, the £5 was left as a set-off against the interest of the fence.

7659. You complain you have not enough land to work?—Yes.

7660. Where could you or your co-crofters get land?—On the property of the island.

7661. Where?—In the townships which are waste.

7662. In whose possession are they?—Under sheep belonging to the proprietor.

7663. Is there any big tenant? There was a farmer named Mackenzie there a few years ago. Who has got that farm now?—The proprietor has got it.

7664. Has he a great deal in his own hands under sheep?—Yes.

7665. Has he all that Mackenzie had?—Yes.

7666. And more?—I am not aware he has more.

7667. Is there land in the proprietors' hands convenient for them without necessitating the removal of some of them from their houses?—There

is the hill pasture, which we might get plenty of. There is no arable land near us, which could be added to our lots where we are, but there is plenty of hill pasture.

7668. Would you be satisfied if you got more hill pasture?—We would try to put up with it. Our lots are spoiled with game, pheasants, and rabbits, so much so that it is not worth our while sowing our ground at all.

7669. Have you remonstrated against that to Mr Wood?—Yes.

7670. What relief has he given you?—We got no relief, and the feeding boxes for the pheasants are placed at the end of our arable ground.

7671. Have you liberty to kill rabbits or to trap them?—No.

7672. *Mr Cameron.*—How many barrels of oats do you sow on your arable ground?—Three and a half barrels of seed oats.

7673. And how much potatoes?—Between four and five barrels of splits. We are putting down as much seed as would serve our families if the ground were at all good.

7674. Do the people get much work from the proprietor?—Yes, those who can work got work. So far as I am concerned I have to attend to the tillage of my lot with my only son. The ground will not yield oats after potatoes unless it is freshly manured.

7675. But the people, as a rule, get plenty work?—Yes.

7676. Do they get more work than they did in the time of the former proprietors?—They were getting work in the time of the former proprietors, but matters are heavier upon us now than then.

7677. In what way are they heavier?—It is worse with us, the more we have to work our lands without getting a return; and in former days, we were not losing our crops with game as we are at present.

7678. Would you rather go back to the times of the former proprietor, without the game, or be under Mr Wood, and get the work, with the rabbits?—Mr Wood is a kind landlord to us,—in fact, kinder than any man we have seen here—and he is showing kindness to us in many ways; more than we have experienced from his predecessors. He is sending us a doctor.

7679. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—There are five people in your township. Did they all gather to send you here, or was the man who had three shares not one of them?—Yes.

7680. Were they all five gathered to send you here?—Only the four sent me here. The man with the three lots was at first delegated to come and speak for the township.

7681. Why did they change their first arrangement?—It was changed outside to shorten the list of delegates.

7682. They appointed two to begin with?—Yes.

7683. You mentioned something about a deer fence. Is there a deer fence cutting you off from the proprietor's lands?—Yes.

7684. Is that a matter of complaint that that fence should be there?—It is a cause of complaint, for our cattle cannot get to our own pasturage, owing to the roughness of the ground leading to it, and the fence is in the way. They are shut in in their own hill pasture by this fence.

7685. Have they their own hill pasture behind this fence?—No.

7686. You would like to cross part of the proprietor's land to get to a remote part of your own pasture?—The fence was fixed so close to rocky ground that our cows cannot get between these rocks and their own ground to their pasturage.

7687. *The Chairman.*—If the line of fence was altered, would that satisfy you?—That is what we were wishing to be done—to have it put back for a few yards. We were wanting this when the fence was being put up. There is no port for hauling up our boats on our ground.

RAASAY.

TORRAN.

Murdo Nicolson.

MURDO NICOLSON, Crofter and Fisherman, Torran (48)—examined.

7688. *The Chairman.*—Have you been freely elected a delegate?—Yes.

7689. Have you a statement to make on the part of those who elected you?—Yes; we are complaining of the bad land we have, and we have to say that the land does not yield crop. We cannot get more out of the ground than we put into it. Is is ten years since I came to this township, and I may say I have not been able to make a boll of meal out of my oat crop since then, neither have I been able to sell any of my own crop.

7690. How many lots are there in the township?—Three crofts.

7691. How many families?—Three.

7692. Each family has got a whole croft?—Yes.

7693. What is the summing? How many cows?—Two cows and a stirk.

7694. Any sheep?—Four or five sheep.

7695. What is the rent?—£5, which is very dear for the bits of ground which we have.

7696. Do the people of Torran support themselves chiefly by fishing?—They do their utmost at the fishing, but it will give them enough to do to support themselves by fishing.

7697. Do they get work from the landlord?—Yes, the man who can work gets it.

7698. What is the day's wages or week's wages from the landlord for common work?—13s. or 14s. a week, I think. Our township was formerly rented at £10 only, and it is now £15; but it was not Mr Wood who raised the rent—it was Mr Mackay.

7699. Do they suffer from game?—The game are spoiling us very much.

7700. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—This is Torran where we are now sitting?—Yes. There is such an amount of scrub bush growing on our crofts, and we are not allowed to cut it, and we are prevented by it from cultivating our crofts.

7701. Would you like to see all this pretty wood here about cut down?—The wood is not so pretty as that.

7702. Is it not useful sometimes for different purposes to have a little bit of wood?—No, it is a source of loss to us every day of the year. The game shelter in the wood and spoil our crop, and we get nothing for it.

7703. *Mr Cameron.*—Is your land good enough to grow heavy crops if there were no game?—There is no doubt it would be considerably better were it not for the game. It is only bad ground at all events. I believe it is as bad as is to be found between the two ends of Raasay.

7704. How many acres have you?—It is only in bits, but you can guess by the land I sow—I sow four barrels of oats.

7705. I suppose the game don't do any harm to the potatoes?—The pheasants and rabbits spoil the potatoes on us.

7706. Do rabbits eat potatoes?—Yes, they do that indeed.

7707. Have you ever estimated the amount of damage done by the game in the year?—No, I have never estimated it.

7708. What do you think it might come to?—I cannot guess, but I am not taking so much oats out of the ground as I sow.

7709. Does Mr Wood, the proprietor, ever make it up to the people in any way, either by employment or any other way?—No doubt, so far as concerns those who are working for him, so much of the damage is made up to them.

7710. Do the people of Torran not get a share of the work that is

going?—Yes, if they go to it; but I go to the fishing, and I make more at the fishing than I do at Mr Wood's work.

7711. How far are you from the work?—Twelve miles.

7712. And how far from Mr Wood's farm?—About two miles.

7713. *The Chairman.*—Have the crofters ever asked Mr Wood for leave to kill the rabbits on their own crofts?—He gives us leave to kill the rabbits, but we cannot kill them as the ground is so bad.

7714. Do you ever kill any rabbits?—Very few.

7715. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—How many barrels of potatoes do you plant?—About five barrels.

7716. What return do you get for that?—I may take twenty barrels out of that, if it grows well.

7717. Is that besides the seed or including the seed?—Including the seed altogether.

7718. Is that in a good year or a bad year, or an average year?—In a good year.

7719. And you have no return of oats, you say?—No return of oats.

7720. Ten years ago, when you came to Torran, where did you come from?—From Fladda island.

7721. Why did you remove from Fladda?—Because I had no land there.

7722. You were glad to get a place here?—Yes, I was glad to get any place rather than be without a place at all.

7723. I suppose your father had land in Fladda?—Yes, ever since I remember.

7724. Besides the game, what is your other complaint at present?—The badness of the ground, that we cannot get crop out of it, and that we have to be out of so much money in buying food for ourselves.

7725. But you took it of your own free will ten years ago?—Yes.

7726. What would you wish now?—I wish I would get a better place.

7727. How much meal do you buy in the course of the year?—Not less than twenty bolls.

7728. Do you go to the east coast fishing?—Yes.

7729. Have you any fishing at home here besides?—A little in the winter time.

7730. What sized boat have you got?—Fifteen feet.

7731. What kind of fishing do you use that for?—Herring fishing.

7732. Do you get the cod and ling fishing in the spring?—We cannot go out in spring to fish at all, with our spring work.

7733. But the cod and ling fishing comes before the spring work?—Not this way.

7734. Do you catch any lobsters through the winter?—Yes.

7735. What, in an average year, will you make from the lobster fishing?—When many of us are working at it, about £4 or £5 each.

7736. Do you make anything by the home herring fishing beyond supplying your family?—No.

7737. What wages do you ordinarily get at the east coast fishing?—Between £6 and £7, and 1s. per cran.

7738. How many crans do you make in an ordinary season?—Some years not more than thirty.

7739. And in other years?—In other years more than that perhaps.

7740. Did you ever make 300 crans?—No, never.

7741. Did you ever make 200?—A year or two, I made 200 crans.

7742. One year with another, will you make one hundred and fifty crans?—No.

7743. Will you make one hundred?—Not more than forty crans on the average.

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7744. Have they a good landing place for their boats here?—Yes, for small boats, where we draw them up.

7745. And they have no occasion for larger boats?—If we could get bigger boats we would get a better place to secure them in the island of Fladda.

7746. Have you any occasion for bigger boats?—We would use the larger boats if we possessed them.

7747. What would you use them for?—Fishing.

7748. But you told us there is no fishing at home here?—No, but there is fishing elsewhere.

7749. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Are there any banks not very far from this where they can get cod and ling?—No, it is not good. It is down at Gairloch.

7750. They could easily go to Gairloch if they had big boats?—Yes.

7751. Where could a pier or harbour be made here for them, if they had big boats?—In Island Fladda there is a very good place for a pier.

7752. But the Torran and other people here would need to be ferried from Fladda?—Fladda would not be far for them getting their boats. It is only about a mile from here.

7753. What is the width of the channel between Fladda and this?—It ebbs.

7754. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You stated that you wanted to get a better place. Would you be willing to pay a rent for that?—Yes, if there was good land that I could get a value out of it.

7755. Would you be prepared to stock and work a better and a bigger place if you got it?—If I would get money, paying interest until I should be able to pay the principal, the land would then pay itself, when I would get it stocked.

JOHN GILLIES, Crofter and Fisherman, Umachan (63)—examined.

John Gillies.

7756. *The Chairman.*—Have you been freely elected a delegate?—Yes.

7757. Will you make a statement on the part of the people of Umachan?—I have not much to say but what others have complained about, the land. We have but bad land, and there are many of us upon it. We are two families on each lot.

7758. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—How many are there?—There are six families, and two of them upon each lot; and there are two families who have no lot at all.

7759. Then there are only three lots?—Yes.

7760. What stock do you keep?—Three cows and a stirk; but when the six are upon the lots, they have not got that.

7761. What has each one got now?—One cow and a young beast, and seven or eight sheep each.

7762. How many have you got yourself?—I have seven or eight ewes with lambs.

7763. How many cows have you?—Two cows and two stirks.

7764. But the others have not got so much as you have?—No.

7765. We have you marked down in the return sent to us and as having five cows?—I have not five cows? I have two cows and two stirks.

7766. And no more?—Two cows and two stirks.

7767. Have you a right to keep any more if you had them?—No.

7768. Would you have to pay for extra grass if you had another cow?—Yes.

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7769. How many barrels of oats and of potatoes are you sowing?—A little more than four barrels of oats and between five and six barrels of potatoes.

7770. And what is your return from this sowing?—I cannot very well know that.

7771. Do you ever take any corn to the mill?—Some years. In good years I might be able to make a boll or two of meal.

7772. Do you know how many barrels of potatoes you have in a good year?—I believe I have near twenty barrels of potatoes in a good year. I had that amount in some years.

7773. What rent do you pay?—£5. Our lot is £5, but it was £12, 6s. before, for the whole township, until Mr Mackay's time.

7774. How long have you been at Umachan?—Nearly forty years.

7775. How many people were living there forty years ago?—Three families.

7776. Where have these families come from that are there now?—Some of them were evicted from other townships.

7777. Can you mention where they came from? There are eight families now?—Two families from Hallaig. They came to the one croft.

7778. Who had that croft before?—It was in possession of some who had it, and went to another place.

7779. Where did the others come from?—They were in the township itself. These two families who came from Hallaig would not go to Australia, and they were placed among us.

7780. In place of another man who went to Australia?—Yes.

7781. That makes four people, but there are six crofters and two cottars. Where did the others come from?—There was another family came from Hallaig. The man came from Hallaig as a boy, and married in our township.

7782. There are still some to account for?—The natural increase of the township itself.

JOHN GILLIES, *Crofter and Fisherman, Fladda (50)—examined.*

John Gillies.

7783. *The Chairman.*—Have you been freely elected by the people of that island of Fladda?—Yes.

7784. Have you a statement to make on their part?—They are complaining, as others are, about the hardness of the land, and the dearness of it. It is dear, it is bad, and there is little of it. They are also wanting to speak about the channel between them and the island. They come from the island to the school here, and the channel is not wider than thirty yards at high tide. Sometimes the children are starving waiting for the tide, when they cannot get over—when the men are away from home.

7785. You mean coming back from school?—Yes; but many days they cannot go to school at all.

7786. How wide is the channel at high water?—Thirty yards, and it is dry at half tide.

7787. *What remedy do you suggest for this?*—*Either to* bridge the channel, or else to give us another place to live in, from which our children could go to school in safety.

7788. Would it be easy to bridge the channel?—It would not be difficult at all. There are plenty of materials—plenty of stones thereabout.

7789. Would you propose to bridge the channel with a light iron suspension bridge, or do you think of building a regular stone bridge?—I think

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a suspension bridge would be easier made, with plenty of stones at each end.

7790. Are the sides of the land on each side steep and high, or is it low and flat?—It is steep on the Raasay side, but it is a gradual slope on the island side.

7791. Would a causeway of stone between the two islands not do?—Yes, but I think it would cost more than the bridge I allude to.

7792. *Mr Cameron.*—Do many vessels pass through that channel?—Boats pass through at high tide.

7793. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—How many souls are in the island?—About fifty altogether.

7794. How many children?—I have eight myself. I don't know how many the others have.

7795. Have you as many as all the others put together?—Another man has got quite as many as I have.

7796. Did you ask the proprietor to do anything for you about the bridge?—No, we did not give him a trial at all. Though the rent is high, Mr Wood is not blamed for that; it was Mr Mackay, and Mr Wood simply left us as he found us in regard to the rent.

7797. *Professor Mackinnon.*—How many are there paying rent?—Six.

7798. What is the rent each pays?—The island altogether pays £30, and before Mr Mackay's time it was £22.

7799. What stock are you allowed to keep?—Two cows and two young beasts—a stirk and a two-year-old.

7800. Sheep?—I am not sure how many sheep the others have, but I have five. I don't think any one of us has more than seven.

7801. You are allowed to keep six?—Yes.

7802. Do you fish?—We work at every work that comes in the way.

7803. What fishing do you get off the island?—The only fish we get about our own shores are eels.

7804. You don't fish for cod and ling?—Yes, but it is not good fishing ground for ling. The ground is too foul, too deep. If we get anything at that depth it is skate.

7805. Where do you go for the fishing? Is it to the east coast?—I was not there for the past three years. I was staying at home working for Mr Wood, but I have been eighteen seasons at the east coast fishing.

7806. Are there many of the people from your place working with Mr Wood as well as yourself?—No, they work a little about this time of the year, just to get sufficient money to take them away to the fishing.

7807. Then is it your complaint that the crofts are too highly rented?—Yes.

7808. The old rent was not too high, was it?—It was high enough. It is too high now, but we never complained to Mr Wood about it. We don't know what he might do if we complained to him. He is a kind man. If all the island landlords were like him, a man might have remained at home.

7809. I suppose in a bad year, with a good excuse, he would not be hard on you with the rent?—No; I sowed last year four barrels of oats, and I did not reap as much as would sow it back.

7810. That was a bad year. Do you ever change the seed?—Yes.

7811. Where do you get the change of seed from?—From Mr Wood's manager I got it last.

7812. How many returns of oats and potatoes do you get in a fair year?—I might get three returns.

7813. Is that all you get in a good year?—In a good year I might get three. Our ground is peat altogether.

7814. Then if you got the bridge you want, and the old rent, would that exhaust all your complaints?—I think it would. It would take away a good share of our complaints, at any rate.

7815. Do you get steady work?—Yes, and 13s. a week of wages.

7816. Would the other men who go to make money at the fishing get steady work if they remained?—Yes, but they expect to make three times as much as that per week at the fishing. Some nights I made £8, and other nights I made nothing at all, at the east coast fishing.

7817. But you think, upon the whole, that 13s. a week and steady work is better?—No, I think the fishing is better. When I pay 2s. for lodgings off that 13s. and also my personal expenses for the week, my family would be starving at home.

7818. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—What is the nearest place to the people of Torran here where they could get work?—Twelve miles from here.

7819. And there is no place nearer?—No.

7820. The previous witness stated that there is a farm steading about two miles from here belonging to the proprietor. What place is that?—A few of those living near the square may get work there—the Ballahouran people; but it is up at Mr Wood's own house that the most of the work is to be got.

7821. *Mr Cameron.*—Is the pasture upon the island good or bad?—It is bad. You would not think it would keep four sheep altogether.

7822. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Are there any shell-fish on any of the beaches round Fladda?—No, nothing but limpets and a few whelks.

7823. Do you make a trade of the whelks?—Yes, some women work at them.

7824. What do you get per bushel for them?—Sometimes 1s. 6d. and sometimes 2s. 6d. a bushel; sometimes 20d.

7825. How long does it take to collect a bushel?—Two days a bushel, at any rate, and sometimes three.

7826. *The Chairman.*—How are you off for sea-ware on this shore?—Our sea-ware is out on rocks about our own shores. We have a pretty sufficient quantity of peat, but we have to take it ashore with boats, and then carry it on our backs to the ground.

7827. Do you pay anything for it?—No, we don't pay for it.

7828. Are there any horses?—No horses; they would be drowned.

DONALD M'LEOD, Crofter, formerly Fisherman, Kyle-Rona (78)—examined.

7829. *The Chairman.*—Have you been freely elected?—Yes.

7830. How many elected you? How many heads of families took part in the election?—Nine, and I am the tenth myself.

7831. Will you make a statement to the Commission?—I have only to say what the rest have said, that it is poverty sent me here—that I am situated on bad ground, and little of it, and too dear, and that for a long time. In my own memory, it was five families who were in the township numbering twenty-nine individuals, and to-day there are ten families and eight individuals.

7832. What was the rent of the whole township when there were five families and twenty-one souls?—£25.

7833. What is the rent now?—£30.

7834. How did the population increase? Was it by natural increase, or by people being brought in from outside?—There were not many taken

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in from other townships; it was the natural increase of the place. They were dividing the lots to their sons.

7835. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Was any ground that these five original families had, taken away from them?—No.

7836. Have you lived all your days in Kyle Rona?—Yes, all my days.

7837. We want to find out if you know about the evictions in former times. The first one began in the time of M'Leod himself about forty years ago. Do you recollect that?—I don't remember the first removing, but I remember Mr Rainy about thirty years ago clearing fourteen townships, and he made them into a sheep farm which he had in his own hands.

7838. What became of the people?—They went to other kingdoms—some to America, some to Australia, and other places that they could think of. Mr Rainy enacted a rule that no one should marry in the island. There was one man there who married in spite of him, and because he did so, he put him out of his father's house, and that man went to a bothy—to a sheep cot. Mr Rainy then came and demolished the sheep cot upon him, and extinguished his fire, and neither friend nor any one else dared give him a night's shelter. He was not allowed entrance into any house.

7839. What was his name?—John M'Leod.

7840. What is the name of the town were his father was?—Arnish.

7841. Will you give us a rough estimate of the population of the fourteen townships?—I cannot; there were a great number of people.

7842. Were they hundreds?—Yes, hundreds, young and old. I am sure there were about one hundred in each of two townships.

7843. Will you name the towns?—Castle, Screpidale, two Hallaigs, Ceancnock, Leachd, two Fearns, Eyre, Suisinish, Doirredomhain, Mainish.

7844. Was there a good deal of arable land upon these townships?—They were altogether arable land capable of being ploughed.

7845. Are these now altogether in the proprietor's hands?—Yes, indeed. The only occupants of that land to-day are rabbits and deer and sheep.

7846. Was this done by Mr Rainy at one time—all these clearings of the fourteen?—No, not in one year.

7847. How long was it going on?—I don't well remember.

7848. Was he long in possession of the property before it commenced?—I don't remember very well, but I know it was he who evicted the last batch. I am not sure how long he was in possession of the estate before he commenced.

7849. Do you recollect quite well when Raasay belonged to M'Leod?—Yes.

7850. Were people put out in his time?—No, not many.

7851. But there were some?—Yes.

7852. What became of them?—They went away abroad, as the rest did.

7853. Do you know whether these people went of their own accord?—I don't know whether these went of their own accord, but I think that it was not with their own accord.

7854. Do you recollect when the laird of Raasay had some land on the mainland of Skye?—I don't remember.

7855. Was it sold before your time?—It was sold before my time.

7856. Did Rainy come in after the M'Leods?—Yes; he succeeded M'Leod.

7857. Have any people been evicted at any time from Rona?—No. The people were not living in Rona at first at all. They were sent to Rona.

7858. Did the people out of these fourteen townships that Rainy

cleared go of their own accord?—No, not at all. The people were very sorry to leave at that time. They were weeping and wailing and lamenting. They were taking handfuls of grass that was growing over the graves of their families in the churchyard, as remembrances of their kindred.

7859. *Mr Cameron.*—Might that not occur even though the people left of their own free-will, if they were much attached to their kindred?—No, they were sent away against their will, in spite of them.

7860. How did the ten families come to the place where you resided, whereas there were only formerly five with twenty-one souls?—When the son would come to maturity, the father would divide the lot with him.

7861. And the result of that is that the people are now overcrowded?—Yes. The townships were bad before, but this is spoiling them.

7862. And this was the system Mr Rainy wished to stop by preventing two families living on one croft?—There were two families on single crofts before Mr Rainy commenced.

7863. Did not Mr Rainy wish to put a stop to that system?—He was desirous to prevent them from marrying.

7864. But don't you think it would be for the eventual good of the people if, when a man married he left the croft, and went elsewhere, rather than settle on the spot and render each croft too small to yield a living?—It would do good to the people if the man who married got land from the landlord, and left his father's holding.

7865. How many families are living on your croft?—Two families.

7866. What is the second one?—My own son.

7867. In the same house?—Yes.

7868. Have you ever given any encouragement to your son to go abroad, and seek his fortune in the world?—No, I never did.

7869. Is it a convenient thing for two families to live in one small house?—No, it is not.

7870. Then why don't you try to persuade your son to go?—He prefers to remain on the land where he was born.

7871. Are you past work, or are you working?—I would do a little herding—nothing else.

7872. Does your son help you to maintain the croft?—Yes, it is my son who is working the croft and paying for it.

7873. Has your son got a separate croft?—Yes.

7874. And lives with his father?—Yes.

7875. Have you ever heard from any of the people who were formerly in the island and who went to America or Australia?—Yes.

7876. How are they getting on there?—Some are getting on, and some are not.

7877. Was the report you got generally encouraging to other people to go there?—It was not encouraging. They would be making mention of the colonies, and the climate, and the troubles that were meeting them.

7878. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Then your complaint is that the crofts are too small, and the rents too large?—Yes, and the crofts bad too—small patches of ground between rocks. If you could see it, you would not believe that a man could live upon them.

7879. How do you propose to remedy that state of matters?—My remedy would be to leave the township in the possession of the number of the families who had it originally, and settle the rest in other townships.

7880. Are there other townships near hand where the rest could settle?—No, the townships that are near hand and that are neighbouring with us are overcrowded. There are plenty of vacant townships which I have mentioned that have been cleared.

RAASAY. 7881. I suppose the people would not object to remove there?—No, they would not object to that.

TORRAN. 7882. Are there four or five people in Kyle-Rona just now who could take the whole place between them?—Yes.

Donald M'Leod. 7883. Could you take a fourth part of it yourself?—Yes. There are a few of them who could not do that.

7884. Have you more sons than this one that is in the croft at home with you?—I have another son who is not married. We are sowing, and we are not reaping. I have not been at the mill for the past two years.

7885. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—If you are so badly off as that how could five of you take the place among you?—Would not the money pay for it which we are spending in buying food supplies?

7886. But where is the money to pay for the stock that would need to be put on it?—If we had the land we would get the stock to put on.

7887. How could you stock it?—I would stock it. We would get hoggs cheap to start with.

7888. Is there much difference between the life when you were young and the life now at Kyle-Rona?—Yes, there is.

7889. Is it better now or worse?—It is worse to-day.

7890. Is your food worse?—Yes, our food at present is scantier and worse than it used to be.

7891. What is your principal food just now?—Meal and fish.

7892. I suppose you seldom get meat?—Very seldom.

7893. Was it more plentiful in former times?—Yes When there are many people in the place you must know that the food is scantier.

7894. Have you always plenty of milk for the children?—No, our calves are dying for want of milk, and the hares and rabbits eat the grass. There is nothing left for the cows on which to produce milk.

7895. Are there no wire fences put round your crofts to protect them from the rabbits?—No, they are free throughout the township I have seen them on our corn land when the braird was up so thick that you could not count them.

7896. Why don't you get meat out of them by killing them?—We cannot catch them.

7897. But you should get traps?—I cannot get traps either.

7898. *Mr Cameron.*—Would you like to eat rabbits?—I never was accustomed to it.

7899. Do you know what a rabbit is worth in the south?—No, I don't know.

7900. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Had you better clothes in your youth than they have now?—Yes, and plenty.

7901. Did they not make all their own clothes? They had sheep?—Yes.

7902. Do you make any of your own clothes still?—No; we cannot make clothes, we have no sheep.

7903. Do you buy your cloth?—Yes.

7904. I think I see some men here to-day who have home-made stuff. Are there not some men here who have stuff made by their wives?—Yes.

7905. Is it better or worse than the Lowland cloth?—It is very good for us in this place.

7906. *The Chairman.*—When the people went away, that you spoke of from all those townships, were they taken away in ships that came here, or did they go from Glasgow or some other place to America?—They went by steamer to Glasgow.

7907. Did the landlord pay their passage?—I don't know but he did. He was giving money to some to induce them to go.

7908. Did he provide them with clothes and provisions for the voyage,

or anything of that sort?—No. He may have been giving a little clothes, but it was not in his mind to do them much good at all. He did not care where they went to, so long as they left his estate.

7909. I have seen in an old book that there was once a large place in the middle of the island here which was free to anybody to take their cattle to in summer,—a kind of wild place, for the summer sheilings. Did you ever hear of that?—I believe the hill pasture is there yet. That was the case. If the hill pasture was there it is not there now for the people.

ALEXANDER M'LENNAN, Crofter, Eilean Fladda (74)—examined.

Alexander M'Lellan.

7910. *The Chairman.*—Have you any information to give us about the evictions which formerly took place in Raasay?—I was born in the south of Raasay. I was acquainted with the two last lairds, M'Leod of Raasay. When the first laird got into difficulties, Mr M'Kinnon, Corrie, was factor, and the sheep began to come to this place. The place was getting into debt ever since then. When Mackenzie took the place from Mr Rainy, there was in his lease power to clear any township that he pleased, and every township was cleared accordingly, except those which were not favourable for sheep. The place was spoiled before Mr Wood got it, and I have to say for myself and for us all three things that I wish to speak to. We got boats when the storm broke; we got a reduction of one-third of this year's rent, because of the badness of the year; and we got seed potatoes. We have now to say of Mr Wood that he is a good landlord.

7911. You have heard what the previous witness said about fourteen townships being cleared at one time, and of their going away. Do you confirm the truth of what he stated?—Yes, I concur with what the previous delegate said, and I have one word to say for myself. I was at the quay when the people were sent off, and they were like lambs separated from their mothers. There was one old man there who said, 'Should I go ' to Australia I may die on my arrival, I should prefer remaining in Raasay, ' but I must go.'

7912. So far as you are aware, until the time of M'Leod who got into difficulties, were the lairds of Raasay minding their people, and were the people fairly comfortable?—Yes, they had the hill from the upper part of Raasay to Scribidale, except the square.

7913. Are you aware that any people were sent away to America in the time of the M'Leods before Corrie became factor?—No, that was the first break that was made in the population of Raasay when Corrie became factor, and when M'Leod left Raasay the place was getting into debt.

7914. Before the M'Leods finally lost the property, were there any people sent away by ship-loads?—I cannot remember. The place began to suffer disadvantage ever since Corrie came to be factor.

7915. How long is it since Corrie became factor?—I cannot say.

7916. Is it forty years ago?—It is more than forty.

7917. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Who was the factor at the time Mr Rainy sent the people away?—Mr Harry Macdonald, the father of Mr Alexander Macdonald, Portree; and if any one of us happened to be 10s. in arrears, we would be served with a summons of removal, and would have to pay 10s. for the summons.

7918. Is Mackenzie, the tacksman who had the right to remove the people, alive now?—No, he is dead long ago.

7919. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Is everybody who was connected with these removals, from the landlord down to the lawyer and ground officer, all dead?—They are all dead, down to the ground officer.

RAASAY. JOHN M'LEAN, Crofter and Fisherman, Oscaig (38)—examined.

TORRAN.

John M'Lean.

7920. *The Chairman.*—You were freely elected a delegate?—Yes.

7921. Have you got a statement to make on the part of the people?—All I have to say is that our land is small and dear, and the rent too high.

7922. *Mr Cameron.*—What rent do you pay?—£14.

7923. What is your summing?—One cow and a stirk.

7924. Why do you pay so high a rent?—Well, we have good comfortable cottages that Mr Wood has built for us there, and we are charged mostly for the houses; but then we have only a very small patch of land connected with these houses.

7925. Do you know what the houses cost?—No, I am not entitled to know what the houses cost, but I know what I paid for them.

7926. What interest do you pay on the money?—I cannot exactly tell that either. Mr Wood built them the first year he came.

7927. What was the rent before the houses were built?—I had in my memory two tenants or crofters keeping the whole place I am in at the present time between the two. They had the common as well as the rest of the crofters that were on the land. They had liberty to have fifty to sixty sheep, and a pair of horses each, and they were keeping a summing of eight milk cows coming into their byres; and they had some yeld cattle on the hill.

7928. But what was the rent of your particular croft for which you now pay £14? What did you pay for that before the house was built?—I did not enter into the croft until such time as the house was built. The houses are new and the crofts are new at the present time. But I remember when the whole place was occupied by two crofters; and there is one park now, which measures about nineteen acres, taken off the others, and occupied by Mr Wood himself.

7929. *Professor Mackinnon.*—You remember when the hill of Oscaig was in the hands of two people, with a park of nineteen acres more than there is among you six now?—Yes.

7930. And the total rent was what?—£20.

7931. And now it has been relotted into six, and the total rent is £60?—Yes.

7932. The rent being charged chiefly because of the cottages, not because of the land?—Yes.

7933. *Mr Cameron.*—Do you get regular work from Mr Wood?—Yes, I have no cause of complaint. We get regular work and wages; but, at the same time, we complain of the smallness of the wages as much as of the smallness of the land, because people depend merely on the day's wages, and we suppose 13s. a week is hardly able to keep a family, or a family of five such as I have. I have four and my wife and myself—it is six—and I consider 13s. a week is barely enough to support me in meat and clothes, and to pay the rent.

7934. Would you rather have a worse house and pay less rent?—Well, most decidedly, if I was as comfortably off otherwise. I daresay I could live as my forefathers did live in the worst houses, and they lived as old as I will do; and my father died last year, eighty years of age, and I do not know if I will live that long.

7935. Do you think the test of happiness is to live as long as possible?—No.

7936. Would you rather have a less rent and a worse house?—I complain of the house even as it is. I would take the house.

7937. But you cannot live in the house without paying a fair rent upon

what it costs to build. You cannot live in a good house, and pay the rent of a bad one?—I think there are houses that will do the like of a man of my income, and be less rented, for the income can never pay the outlay.

7938. You complain of that, and you complain that the wages are too low?—We have to pay the expense that has to come out of them.

7939. *Professor Mackinnon.*—I see your croft is £14. There is Donald Gillies, £14, and the other crofters are £8?—Yes.

7940. Are *all* the houses the same?—Yes.

7941. That is, the houses of John Gillies and Murdo M'Leod are as good as yours?—Yes, but these only hold one or two apartments—only half the house. They have a whole croft, but only the half of the house.

7942. So the houses have been subdivided as well as the crofts?—Donald Gillies and I have a whole house.

7943. Donald Gillies and you are allowed to keep a horse?—Yes; but I daresay, if you put the whole six of us together, the whole produce of the land would not keep a horse.

7944. How does Gillies, too, keep a horse?—Because he has the roads, and he cannot work the roads very well without a horse.

7945. Do the six of you get steady work at 13s. a week?—Yes, and I don't know of any man who has been refused work by the proprietor since he came.

7946. And your house and Donald Gillies' are double the size of the others; that is to say the others are half. Can you let any part of your house?—I believe Mr Wood would not object to us doing it.

7947. But you don't make any money by letting it?—No.

7948. You are not in the habit of letting it?—Well, I am not supposed to do it.

7949. Do you take any lodgers?—Sometimes I take in lodgers.

7950. For payment?—At 2s. per week, which is the regular rule of charge for lodgers, but it is very seldom I take them.

7951. The complaint is that the houses are rented too high?—Yes, and the crofts too; because we are compelled to pay the extra sum of money for the croft, which is a very small portion. I don't believe it is much more than one and a quarter acres of arable land.

7952. *The Chairman.*—What sort of house is it you have? Is it stone, lime, and slate?—Yes.

7953. How many stories high?—Only one.

7954. How many rooms are there in it?—Two rooms and two bed-closets; a closet entering from each room.

7955. There is a kitchen?—Yes.

7956. And a bed-room?—Yes.

7957. And two bed-closets?—There is a kitchen and a closet off the kitchen, and at the other end of the house they are the same—a room and a closet off the room.

7958. Is there anything upstairs in the loft?—There is no stair at all; no ladder.

7959. Is there any milk house or place outside behind?—We are provided with a byre and barn for the benefit of the croft.

7960. Is there any washing house?—No.

7961. Or any apartment outside at all?—No.

7962. How large are these closets attached to the two rooms?—About eight feet square.

7963. Is there a bed in each?—You can put a bed in them.

7964. Is there a fire-place in the closets?—No.

7965. But a fire-place in each of the other rooms?—Yes.

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7966. How much do you suppose such a house would cost to build?—I heard they cost about £200.

7967. I speak of the house you inhabit, should you think it cost about £200?—Yes.

7968. Including the barn and the byre?—I am not sure whether that is taken in or not.

7969. Perhaps it would cost £250 with the barn and byre?—I don't know.

7970. Now, have you got a garden near the house for vegetables?—We have part of our own croft. Each end has got a croft—a strip opposite itself—and then there is a piece taken off from every croft, and fenced.

7971. Within the potato ground?—Yes.

7972. How much will the land keep, one cow or two cows?—It is just one cow we are allowed to keep—the grazing of one cow.

7973. Any sheep?—We are not allowed to keep sheep, but some have kept two or three sheep, mostly for petting.

7974. How do you provide the provender for the cow in winter?—Just in the bit of land we have.

7975. Do you get enough to support her in winter?—Scarcely.

7976. But nearly?—Yes, but there are few of us who have not to buy something.

7977. Then you have a good cottage and a little garden, and a cow's grass, and enough land to produce food for the cow in winter, and you pay £14?—Yes.

7978. If you ceased to work for day's wages to the landlord would the landlord remove you?—No, I don't think it. We don't blame the landlord in the least, because I think the landlord is very kind to us, and very good to the people.

7979. Does your garden grow good vegetables? Could you grow, carrots and peas?—I daresay we could grow carrots, but I don't see much good it would do us.

7980. Is there anybody about who is cultivating finer vegetables, such as carrots and peas, or do they grow nothing but cabbages and potatoes?—Well, I don't know of any garden into which they have either put carrots or peas, except one, and I daresay that is more for curiosity than for the good of it, because carrots and these vegetables do no good to a workman when he has no meat to go with them.

7981. Don't they make broth sometimes?—They can do that with meat.

RODERICK MACKAY, Crofter and Fisherman, Dryharbour, Rona (56) —examined.

Roderick Mackay.

7982. *The Chairman.*—Have you been freely elected?—Yes.

7983. Will you make your statement?—In the first place, the same as others said, the dearness of the soil; and in the next place, how we are crowded upon each other, so that we cannot take a living out of it. There are some in our township who remember when there were only seven families in the township, and there are now fifteen families. Should they get the place for nothing, they would not make a living out of it. They would need to get another place. I am now going to tell the rise that took place in our rents. Our township was formerly rented at £50 in all, and it is now £80. When there were seven families in the township it was £50, and now it is £80.

7984. Is the land the same, or has any land been taken away?—The land is the same. There has been no land taken from us. I remember one of the families in a township in which there was a considerable number —numbering eight children. Half of their land was taken away from them, and another family was placed along with them upon the remainder.

7985. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Where from?—From Fearn, when the people were sent away. Then the ground is so soft that it will not yield crop. We are making ditches in part of our arable land, and while we are making these ditches we require to have planks under our feet, and if a man misses that plank another one will need to help him out of the bog. The people will never be right there, and they can never be but poor if they will not get another place. They need many things. They cannot cut a peat for fuel.

7986. Do you mean there are no peats in Rona?—There are peats in Rona yet, but the peat will not last long, owing to the number of families who use it.

7987. *Mr Cameron.*—What rent do you pay yourself?—£5, 12s. 6d., besides road money and poor rates.

7988. Did you get any abatement this year?—Yes, we got one-third abated to us.

7989. What did you pay this year?—I don't remember the exact penny.

7990. What is your summing?—Two cows and a two-year-old and two sheep.

7991. Is that the summing, or is it what you have?—We were keeping three cows upon the croft, but it would not be justice to two. Though I have the two cows that are named npon me, they don't belong to me. They belong to merchants in Portree and Glasgow. It is they who are keeping me in meal.

7992. How many sheep have you?—Nine or ten.

7993. Why are you short of sheep?—Poverty, that I cannot procure the stock. I am rearing a family on poverty.

7994. Do you do any work?—I go to the fishing every year. I have gone for the past twenty-eight years.

7995. Do you go to the east coast fishing?—Yes, Peterhead and Fraserburgh.

7996. Would you like to have a sufficiently large croft to enable you to dispense with going to the fishing?—Yes, that is what would do good to us, but I am getting old.

7997. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—You are only fifty-six?—Yes.

7998. *Mr Cameron.*—Don't the people make a better living by having these small crofts, and going to the fishing, than by having large crofts and staying at home all the year round?—They would be better than in the place in which they are, wherever they would go. The land is in spots here and there. Our arable land is so far from us that should I leave at six o'clock in the morning, I could not get home before eight or nine oclock at night—the land is so far away from us.

7999. Then would you have, in any case, to depend upon the fishing for your subsistence?—Yes, no other means of subsistence except my earnings.

8000. I mean even though you had not a croft?—I don't know as to that, if the land would yield a good crop—if there were a place in which a man could have stock. Our place will never be right so long as it is so densely peopled.

8001. How many people will require to leave the place in order to leave

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the rest as much land as you wish?—I should only apportion the township to five families to keep them comfortable.

8002. How did the fifteen families get to the place?—Some of them were families who were taken from townships that were cleared.

8003. How many were taken from townships that were cleared?—There are two families of these.

8004. Where did the rest come from?—The natural increase of the place.

8005. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Have you any goats?—No.

8006. Are you not accustomed to keep goats in Rona?—No; goats would suit better.

8007. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—How did your place get the name of Dryharbour?—For generations; I cannot tell.

8008. What is it in Gaelic?—A dry anchorage.

8009. Is there no other name upon your township?—No.

8010. Or upon the other one called Big Harbour?—That is the only name.

8011. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Do you wish to be removed from Rona?—Yes.

8012. Where would you wish to go to?—Any of the places that are waste in the island.

8013. Is it the general wish of the people to leave Rona?—Yes, they most desire that.

8014. But they would not wish to go beyond this property?—I did not hear anything of that sort from any of them.

8015. Was the population of Rona at one time larger than it is now?—No.

8016. Never so high?—No. If Rona would carry sheep as well as the rest of Raasay, it would have been cleared the same as the other townships of Raasay.

8017. You heard what the other delegates said about the evictions. Have you anything new to add?—Did you witness them?—Yes, I remember the work going on.

8018. What has become of the M'Leods of Raasay?—I don't know. I don't think any of the family are alive to-day.

8019. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Are you all fishermen at Rona?—Yes, we live by the sea.

8020. Have you good boats?—No, we have but small boats.

8021. Did you get your boats destroyed in the storm the year before last?—Some.

8022. And got new ones instead of them?—Yes.

8023. Better than the old ones?—Some were, and some were not.

8024. Where do you fish round about the shores here?—On each side of Rona itself.

8025. Do you fish with long lines?—Yes.

8026. Where are the best banks for fishing?—The east side is better for fishing, but some years it is not so good.

8527. Do you cure any of the fish yourselves, or does anybody take them from you and sell them?—We cure most. We are not conveniently situated for the market.

8028. You have a pretty good harbour at Rona, have you not?—Yes, some parts of it.

8029. Would a pier be an advantage to you?—Yes.

8030. It could easily be made of the stones of the shore?—Yes.

8031. Have they a school there?—Yes.

8032. Is it convenient to all the children of the island?—It is too far away from those who are on the south end of the island.

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8033. How far?—Two miles.

8034. Do the children attend well?—Yes, but they cannot go in bad weather. They have no road.

8035. Have you had any schoolmaster who could speak Gaelic since the new Act came into operation?—No.

8036. Do you consider that any disadvantage to the children?—Yes, a schoolmaster who could speak Gaelic would be able to bring on the children the better.

8037. Have you a compulsory officer?—Yes.

8038. I suppose none of you were ever brought before the sheriff?—No.

8039. Do the children get pieces to take to school with them?—Yes, those who are far from their homes, and cannot go home at playtime.

8040. Where is the nearest doctor to you?—Portree.

8041. Is that a great inconvenience to you at any time?—Yes, it is.

8042. There is no doctor in Raasay?—No.

8043. You have no church in Rona?—Yes, we have a meeting house.

8044. How often does the minister come there?—He does not come regularly.

8045. I suppose you mostly belong to the Free Church?—Yes, every man of us.

8046. Is there a catechist or missionary staying there?—Yes.

8047. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—In regard to the peats, is it the case that the regular peat mosses are exhausted, and that you are cutting up pasture?—The peat moss is getting exhausted, and it is so far away from our houses.

8048. Will it come to this that bye-and-by the supply of peats will become exhausted?—Yes.

8049. It is coming to that?—Yes, in our township.

8050. We understood there is a general wish that the people, or a considerable number of them, should be removed to the mainland?—Yes.

8051. Do you know anything about the mainland part of Skye that belonged to the M'Leods of Raasay?—No.

JOHN NICOLSON, Crofter and Fisherman, Doirre-na-Guille, Rona (36)—examined.

John Nicolson.

8052. *The Chairman.*—Were you freely elected a delegate?—Yes.

8053. Have you got a statement to make on the part of the people who elected you?—I have not much to say but the truth. I make it out that should I be here from sunrise to sunset I could not fully disclose the poverty of Rona. It is a place in which no man need expect to make his living. We are working on sea and land, both summer, and winter, and spring—every quarter of the year—and after that we have only poverty. I cannot say but that Mr Wood is a kind man ever since we saw him—kind to the poor, and helpful to the widows; but we will ever be poor as long as we are kept crowded in a place of which we cannot make use. I can say with truth that my skiff is my cart, and that the wives and the children are the horses, and there is truth in that, because it is the work of the horses which they perform. The creel is on their back continually, and after being worked so hard as that, they cannot make a living out of it. I myself remember the township in which I am being in possession of one man. Then four had it. Now eight have it—I mean eight families—and I make out there are fifty souls in the township. That one man was paying £17, 19s. of rent, and now the rent is £25; but it is Mr

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John Nicolson.

Mackay who raised the rent, Mr Wood has left it as he found it. All the new houses which have been built have been built by Mr Wood.

8054. Who built the houses in Mr Mackay's time?—There were no new houses built until Mr Wood became the proprietor.

8055. Where did the eight families come from?—Two came from Kyle-Rona, and the rest was their own increase. They were getting no other place in which to live. I don't think any one could make a living in Rona as long as they live crowded upon each other as at present.

8056. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Did you build your own house?—I never built a new house. I would get the house built for me; but I was not seeing it worth my while building a house for the plot of land I had.

8057. Where was your father staying?—In the same township.

8058. Was it he who built the house?—It was Mr Wood who gave him the timber.

8059. Is there wood enough growing in Raasay to supply roofs to the houses?—Yes.

8060. They supply some, I believe, to people on the mainland of Skye?—Yes, he is very good for giving timber to people.

8061. Is your house a slated one?—No, it is the old block house I have.

8062. But the one Mr Wood built?—There are no slated houses in our township.

8063. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Do you concur with the preceding witness as to the necessity for several of them being removed to the mainland?—I believe that they will never be well off till that is done.

8064. Are you yourself willing to go?—Yes, I have been long willing. That is the reason why I don't want to build a house.

8065. Have the Rona people asked Mr Wood to do something for them in that direction?—I cannot say that they did.

8066. Why did not they do so, if he is a kind landlord, and a good man?—I am told there are some who asked to get land, and they told me so, but they did not get the land yet, and I did not hear what the reply was. I was speaking once or twice about a place to the manager, and the reason for not granting the request was that there was no vacant place for me.

8067. If you got the offer yourself to be carried to some good place in America or Australia, with your family, would you go?—There are more of my friends in America and Australia than there are in Raasay, and I have not seen or heard that my father or mother got a paper or a letter asking them to go out there, and I am not aware that a £1 note or a 1s. ever came to them to help them, to show that that land was better than the place they had left.

8068. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—But don't you think that people who go to these far away places are apt to neglect their friends, not because they are not successful, but just because they become forgetful of friends? I believe there are plenty letters coming from others, but I never heard of them asking people to go out there.

8069. And therefore, you don't feel encouraged to go to any of these places?—No, I would like to have a place in the land of my birth.

8070. But is it not a fact that there are men who went from Skye without a penny, who are now members of parliament and rich men in Canada and Australia?—I cannot know about that, but I have no mind to go abroad.

8071. You would rather stay in Rona, bad as it is, than try your chance in these places?—It is likely. I am there for some time past at any rate, and I am trying sea and land, and every one in the place is in the same

way. We have gone to the east coast fishing with our bags to sell ourselves there to the highest bidder, and after all I have known many coming home, and the masters could not, after the fishing was over, give them one shilling of their own earnings to bring them home. The fishing is only a lottery. One year it may be successful, and another time the contrary; and that happened to me often.

8072. If you had one or two good big boats like those on the east coast given to you at Rona, could you work them?—We would know how to work them, but we have another thing against that. I think, when a man is dealing with a croft, it is enough for him to attend to the croft itself, and the one thing is only spoiling the other.

8073. If you could get a good big boat, would it not be better to be a fisherman altogether, with just a little bit of ground for potatoes?—If I was to be a fisherman I would be a fisherman; if I was to be a crofter I would be a crofter; and I think, if that would not be the case, it would simply be spoiling both.

8074. Then, would it not be better to be entirely fishermen, and not dependent upon that miserable rocky ground, which is wearying yourselves and your wives and children?—I have said already the fishing is only a lottery, and we are not in a good fishing place at all unless we are to go to other places.

8075. Then why should not you go to fish all round Scotland, as the east coast fishermen do?—I can only give my own opinion, but I myself have been going to sea ever since I could. I tried the fishing, and it defied me. I am thinking now that if a man could get in a good place a bit of ground, and if he should happen to get stock upon it at one time, and to get the land at a reasonable rent, it would be better for him than any fishing I have ever seen.

8076. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—You said you remembered a time when there was only one family in the township, and when the township was rented at £17, 19s.?—Yes.

8077. When did *these other families come in*?—*I cannot tell.*

8878. Who gave it to the four?—Mr Rainnie.

8079. And who gave it to the eight?—Some were in Mackay's time, and others have had their names entered for lots in the township in Mr Wood's time.

8080. Those were sub-tenants—cottars in the township?—Yes, cottars.

8081. When was the rent raised from £17, 19s. to £25?—In Mackay's time.

8082. The whole of it?—Yes.

8083. Are you paying anything for the new houses that have been built for you?—No.

8084. Did Mr Wood pay for the building of the houses as well as give the wood?—He paid for all but one of the houses, so far as I understand.

8085. And you were not asked for any increase of rent in consequence?—No, the rent is as Mr Mackay left it. Mr Wood has made no change.

8086. *The Chairman.*—Has Mr Wood made any other improvements in the way of draining and fencing?—Nothing beyond the houses.

8087. Would draining do any good?—Is there no land in Rona that would be improved by draining?—No, not much. There are some places you could drain, but before the water could be got to run, the rocks would need to be blasted. It is bad ground—peaty soil.

8088. So you don't think any expenditure of money could do any material good in Rona?—I cannot understand what expense would accomplish.

8089. Did the people assist in collecting the stones, or carrying materials

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to build the new houses, or was all the work done by Mr Wood?—They were quarrying the stones, and they were getting so much for their labour in doing this, and Mr Wood was giving timber for internal fittings.

8090. Are these houses as little better than the old fashioned block houses?—Yes.

8091. What are they covered with?—Thatch. Some years, I may say with truth, that what I get from the oats will not sow the ground next year.

NEIL M'LEOD, Crofter and Fisherman, Braig (35)—examined.

Neil M'Leod.

8092. *The Chairman.*—Have you been freely elected by the people of Braig?—Yes.

8093. How many families are there in Braig?—Three.

8094. Will you make a statement?—I wish to state simply what others have said—heavy rent. We were put in Braig ten years ago, and where we were before we could keep four cows. We have only two now. I think they died because of the scantiness of the grazing on our crofts.

8095. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Do you mean you took four there, and two of them died?—Yes, two died.

8096. How many families are there on the crofts?—There is a family on each croft.

8097. What is the summing?—Four cows, but three were quite enough to get justice.

8098. Any sheep?—Five ewes.

8099. No horses?—No, but there is one ass next to the lighthouse.

8100. Any stirks?—One stirk.

8101. Four cows, one stirk, and five sheep?—Yes.

8102. What is the rent?—£10.

8103. How many animals have you got on your own croft?—Two cows, one stirk, and five sheep.

8104. Has the rent been raised in your recollection?—Yes, it was Mackay who raised it. He shifted us from Dryharbour to the place where we are now, near the lighthouse, that he might get additional rent of the place, and he laid £20 upon the three of us.

8105. Has the present proprietor done anything to improve your houses or your holdings?—No, nothing. We ourselves built our houses in Mackay's time.

8106. Do you live chiefly by fishing?—I am one of the hands of the lighthouse packet.

8107. What would you propose to do in order to improve your position?—I think, if the people were thinned, that those who remained would get proper pieces of land.

8108. How would you thin the people?—They would be shifted up to the townships which are waste in Raasay.

8109. Suppose that the proprietors showed a disposition to shift some of the people on to the vacant land, would others of them be, in that case, more inclined to emigrate if Government gave them encouragement?—I have not ascertained that they would be willing to emigrate. They think that they would make a living in this place itself if it was left to a few.

8110. Do you know any people in this country who have emigrated to Australia or to America?—To New Zealand.

8111. Do you know whether they are paying rent there, or whether they are settled on land belonging to themselves?—I don't know.

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8112. Do you know, whether generally in Canada or Australia, when people go there, they remain in the position of tenants, or get land of their own?—I think that they get land until they pay for it.

8113. What do you mean? That they get the land on credit?—Yes, until they pay for it.

8114. Does it take them long to pay for it generally?—Some of them I understand get twenty years or thereby to pay it.

8115. You agree generally with what you have heard the others say?—Yes.

JOHN MUNRO, Missionary, West Coast Mission (68)—examined.

John Munro.

8116. *The Chairman.*—Is your mission connected with the Free Church?—It is unsectarian.

8117. Are you a native of this part of the country?—A native of Skye.

8118. What has your employment been during your life?—I was for thirty-two years in Glasgow. It is six years since I came to Raasay. I was working at different employments in Glasgow.

8119. Were you employed in connection with persons of your own country—with Highlanders?—A great deal.

8120. So if you were a long time in Glasgow, you had experience of your own countrymen?—Very much. I held a piece of land before I went to Glasgow, in the parish of Snizort.

8121. Were you a teacher in Glasgow?—No.

8122. Were you engaged in any trade, or always connected with religion?—Not entirely. I was for some time an agent selling fish, eggs, and all these things, that were sent from the Highlands to Glasgow.

8123. You have heard to-day, in the course of their examination, the people express a great reluctance in regard to emigration?—I did.

8124. We know there have been times when the people in Skye and elsewhere were willing to go away, and we know there are many parts of Scotland from which the people desire to emigrate, and do emigrate with advantage. To what do you attribute this great reluctance the people express here?—There may be several causes, but I find in many instances that they are inclined to remain in the country of their birth. I find that, I believe it is natural to the brute beast.

8125. Shall we say, natural to man?—Natural to man, but I won't say that is in all cases a reason for a man to stay where he cannot support himself.

8126. Do you think that if there was some encouragement given to the people to get better holdings here, and to make their life easier, that would incline others to emigrate? Is it a sort of stubbornness and discontent that makes them refuse to entertain the idea of emigrating?—I don't believe that that is the case with many of them. At least, in this place where I am at present, they have this disadvantage, they have had no education, and uneducated people never read nor learn for themselves the advantages that might accrue from emigrating.

8127. But don't they sometimes hear? Don't they have letters from relatives in the colonies, or letters from other Scotsmen who have gone there?—In many cases they are not very encouraging. I have had two brothers in Australia. One of them wrote me three or four times, and the other never wrote me. The first one went when I was in Glasgow. He reared a family of nine. He is now dead and gone; and I believe he was

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a very industrious good man when he lived, and he died by an accident, and his family are left quite poor. The other one is going about working the best way he can, but he never got a right settlement. Well, these brothers never could send me very encouraging letters to induce me to go. Others may be quite the same, though I have known many who have made what people term a fortune. I have known them.

8128. They generally acquire land of their own?—Generally. Well, in that case I don't wonder so much that poor people, and especially, as I have said, uneducated people, don't see the general run of things in the colonies.

8129. They all express a desire to have more land in a better position in this island. Do you think that, if the proprietor was inclined to make some new crofter settlements upon his sheep farms, of the proper size, the people would go there and build their houses, and be capable of stocking the crofts, and living better than they do now, and pay rent?—I don't believe there are any in Rona at present—at least, I don't know any—there may be one who would be able to stock a farm which would be likely to support a family. They are reduced into poverty, and I don't wonder at it. Since I came to Rona I never saw a place like it. They toil away all spring—men, women, and children—and sometimes I am grieved to see the women, and perhaps I should not speak about some things I took notice of here in public. It might be very unsatisfactory to some minds to see in the public prints that a woman carrying sea-ware might be working at that to-day, and in child-hed to-morrow.

8130. Do you think that the women suffer in their health, and contract maladies in consequence of their severe physical labour?—I have no doubt of it. I have no doubt in some cases they do.

8131. Lose their health altogether?—Lose their health, with the disadvantage (as was brought out to-day) of the doctor being so far away. I have noticed several things in connection with that which were very disagreeable. I believe in Rona even, though the people there would get the whole of Rona gratis, they could not support their families. They would be almost as bad as they are.

8132. If you say the people of Rona cannot make a living in that island, and if you say they are not capable of stocking a croft on the mainland, and if you say they will not emigrate, what can they do?—I don't know, unless Government looks after them. They have been reduced to poverty by the laws that made the people so long grind them down, and I think the Government should help them out of their difficulties, and they would work like other men. They are willing to work, and if they got the chance, I think they would do it. The people are a good people, willing to pay everybody their own.

8133. If every one of them had a good croft, and got a stock put on that croft for them, would they certainly pay the interest of that money? Have you any knowledge that in any country even the most benevolent Government has ever advanced money to purchase live stock for the people?—I am not aware. I know some proprietors in Skye have advanced money on stock, and they did well.

8134. But you are speaking of the Government?—I am not aware what Government did. I don't know what they did with the Irish people last year—whether they gave them money in advance or not—but I think they did.

8135. They have given them money to pay arrears of rent, but I don't know that they have ever given money for the purchase of live stock?—Perhaps not.

8136. Have you anything else to state in the way of suggestion besides

help from Government and the proprietor to stock the lands?—I have no suggestion to make but what has been already stated, that there are too many people in Rona, and the land is poor, and they say themselves that it is dear.

8137. If the proprietor was, for instance, to give them land—new crofts—at what we call an improving rent—at a very small rent at first, increasing gradually—do you think the people would be able gradually to acquire stock?—I believe that would be a very good plan.

8138. Is there any doctor in Raasay?—No.

8139. Have you ever heard it was the intention of the proprietor to settle a doctor here for the benefit of the islands?—He has been doing a great deal in that way. He has been keeping doctors in the mansion-house, for years, and these doctors were very useful to the Rona and Raasay people.

8140. Did you hear them say there might be a bridge between Raasay and Fladda?—Yes.

8141. Do you think that should be done?—Oh, it could be done. It needs it very much. But there may be a difficulty in the case. There must be a passage left, for it is a channel for boats.

8142. But it is not necessary for ships with high masts?—No, just small boats.

8143. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—You have been only six years here?—Yes.

8144. Where were you before?—I came from Glasgow.

8145. Then you have not much knowledge of the former state of the Rona people?—No.

8146. You say they have been very ill-educated?—Certainly.

8147. But they have had a school in Rona for a long time?—There was not a regular school at Rona; there was a schoolmaster coming now and again.

8148. Are there many of the adults that cannot read and write?—A good many.

8149. I suppose none of them speak English except those who have been for some time in the south?—Very few.

8150. Do you think they are desirous to get their children educated?—Very much so.

8151. Do they speak of the school rates as being any grievous burden?—No, I never heard. The only grievance is the want of roads from the south end to the schoolhouse.

8152. There is no road except a track among the rocks and bogs?—No road.

8153. Are your avocations confined to Rona?—And Kyle-Rona.

8154. I suppose the inhabitants are quiet, well-behaved people?—A quiet, well-behaved people; very industrious.

8155. Is there a policeman at Raasay?—None.

8156. And never was?—Not that I know of.

8157. They have never had any occasion for one to come here?—Well, there has never been any occasion for one since I came here at least.

8158. Has there been any crime of any seriousness?—No, none.

8159. Neither in Raasay nor in Rona?—Not that I am aware of, and now they have mostly given up strong drink, and that is a very great deal.

8160. Are they regular teetotalers, or have they just ceased from drink? Some of them are, but most of them gave up drink voluntarily.

8161. They used to smuggle in this quarter?—So I believe.

8162. They had great conveniences in the way of caves?—They were showing me some of their stills.

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John Munro.

8163. After your long residence in Glasgow, and coming back to Snizort, and Skye generally, did you find much change in the state of things and in the life and manners of the people?—Not much.

8164. Did you think they were better or worse?—In one respect their condition was worse, especially with respect to their poverty.

8165. There is some improvement in their houses?—In Rona there is a very great improvement.

8166. I suppose they are very attentive to religious duties?—Very attentive indeed.

8167. We have heard, in one or two other places, something as to the entire cessation from the ancient custom they had of singing songs and playing pipes. Do you know anything about the present as compared with the past in the island?—There is far less of that than has been.

8168. I suppose they very seldom have any singing of songs?—Very seldom indeed.

8169. They used to meet in the evenings, what was called a *céilidh*, and tell stories and sing songs?—I recollect that.

8170. Was it not a pleasant way of spending the evening?—It was pleasant to those who liked it, but there was a great deal of nonsense.

8171. But that is very much given up?—Very much given up.

8172. Then piping also has been very much given up in this quarter as elsewhere?—Oh, yes. We seldom hear a pipe at all.

8173. Is there a piper in Raasay?—There may be, but I do not know any.

8174. People allege that the Free Church ministers have exercised a depressing influence upon the people in that respect. Is there any truth in it?—Perhaps there may be. It was leading to folly.

8175. Do you think the food of the people is worse than it used to be?—I cannot say that. I cannot say it is. I know this, that they have less milk than they used to have, and we feel that loss.

8176. Have you sometimes difficulty in getting milk?—Very much. In other respects the people are poor, and have vast difficulty in getting meal for their families. Still they live on meal mostly—at least, this whole year we have had so few potatoes, that I have heard some of them stating that they just had meal and fish. Now that is not so wholesome as potatoes and fish.

8177. How have they been off for herrings this winter?—The herrings were very scarce.

8178. I suppose they would not think themselves badly off if they had porridge and milk for breakfast and potatoes and herring for dinner?—They would not; but, as I say, potatoes are scarce, and there is very little milk to get.

8179. As to their clothes, do you think their clothing is better or worse than it used to be?—It is not better in one respect. The Rona and Raasay people, when I recollect them first, used to be clothed all in home-made clothing, but now you seldom see any with home-made clothing. The home-made clothing was substantial.

8180. They made their own blankets in those days?—They did, and I believe some of them do yet—most of them.

8181. Are there any native weavers in Rona and Raasay?—There are. I think there is one in Rona.

8182. A woman, I suppose?—Yes.

8183. Does she get regular employment?—Well, she would get more than she was able to do. She was not constant at it, not being very healthy.

8184. As to their shoes, are they better shod or worse than they used to be?—They are just much about it.

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8185. Do any of them make their own shoes, as they did formerly?—None.

8186. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You said, in answer to Lord Napier, that very few, perhaps only one, of the people of Rona, could stock the new lands that were proposed, without assistance. Suppose they got help from friends or outsiders, and if they knew they would not be disturbed in their new holdings, would they soon put themselves in a good position?—I am perfectly sure that they would.

8187. Now, they may not have much capital; but if I look around this room, I see a great number of strong men, and are not their hands a great deal of capital?—A very great deal, if they just got proper encouragement and employment.

8188. Do you suppose, now, that some of those men going and re-occupying some of the crofts which Rainy cleared, would have to labour a bit harder than if they went to Australia or Canada?—I believe they would labour harder.

8189. I mean, would it be necessary for them to labour harder than if they went abroad?—It might, and I believe they would be more willing to do it.

8190. I don't think you take up my question. My question is, would it be necessary for these men to work harder on these lands here than it would be necessary to do if they went abroad?—I do not see it would. There would not be any necessity for working harder, and I believe they would work willingly here. I have known several people who went to New Zealand and Australia. One that had been with me in Glasgow went there, and he was complaining very much of the hard labour he had to undergo abroad. Now, I do not see that they would have to labour anything harder here than they would in Australia or New Zealand.

8191. From the great anxiety you have seen displayed this day by the delegates and others about being sent to those places, don't you think that that would nerve and encourage them to work even more than might be necessary, for the purpose of repaying any advances that might be made to them at the outset?—I believe it would nerve them.

NORMAN M'LEAN, Crofter, Balchuirn, Raasay (40)—examined.

Norman M'Lean.

8192. *The Chairman.*—Have you been freely elected a delegate by the people of Balchuirn?—Yes.

8193. Will you make a statement on the part of the people of Balchuirn?—As has been already heard here, we have too little land, and that is too dear and bad. It is very much spoiled with game, and especially with rabbits. The rabbits alone would keep down our crop without any other game.

8194. Are there not wire fences—rabbit fences—put round your crops?—Every man's arable land is cut out for him, and as lots varied in the quality of the soil, so the rents varied, and the stock they had was in common. They had the hill pasture in common. A good part of the ground was taken from them.

8195. Do you mean the hill pasture or the arable?—The hill pasture, and this necessitated the taking off from the stock one cow and one horse and about forty sheep, each lot.

8196. What is the summing now?—We are trying to keep four cows, but they do not get justice.

8197. How many sheep?—None at all.

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Norman M'Lean.

8198. Any stirks?—None at all.

8199. How much arable ground have you?—I think it would be altogether three acres.

8200. What is your rent?—£5, 17s. exclusive of rates.

8201. Are you near the sea-shore?—No, we are about a mile from the sea-shore.

8202. Do you get any sea-weed?—Yes, plenty. Some of it we have to take three or four miles by sea.

8203. Do you pay for it?—No. It was not Mr Wood who deprived us of the hill pasture or raised our rents.

8204. It was Mackay?—It was Mr Rainy who took the hill pasture from us. He took part of the ground from us, and Mr Mackay took the rest; and then Mr Armitage raised our rents. When we were having our lots relotted in Mr Armitage's time, our lots were raised £6 over the whole township.

8205. Has the rent been raised since then?—No. That rise took place the year before Mr Wood became proprietor about seven years ago.

8206. Then do you agree generally with what has been said before by the other delegates?—Yes. As to the houses in this island, every man at first built his own house, and it belonged to himself; and if he happened to leave the lot, his successor in the lot took over his house at a valuation. It was at that time I got my lot, and it was a bad house that was on it, not fit for human habitation. I was asking, as it was in that condition, and I would have to rebuild it, to break it down and value it as a broken house, and I got a letter from the factor that I was not to be allowed to rob my predecessor, and if I would not take the house at a valuation, he would find a man who would do so. I then got the house at the valuation that was made.

8207. How much?—It was £4 when it was valued, and I rebuilt the house at my own expense; and if I would get so much land along with it at a fair value—that is as much as I could cultivate and stock—the house would do.

8208. How much could you stock?—I would stock the township as it was before, should I get the ground that was along with it.

8209. If you got pasture enough for twenty sheep, could you stock it with twenty sheep?—Yes.

8210. *Professor Mackinnon.*—How many pay rent in the town?—Six.

8211. And their grievance is that the rent is too high?—Yes.

8212. That the place is too small?—Yes.

8213. And infested with rabbits?—Yes.

8214. Why don't you trap the rabbits?—We have no traps.

8215. Why don't you buy a trap?—I believe we are not allowed to keep dog or gun or trap, or anything in that way.

8216. Did you ask permission to trap?—No, but I know we have no liberty to keep dogs.

8217. Are there any other game that injure the crofters?—Yes, but they are the worst.

8218. How many would you say that this place, where there are six now, should hold?—Well, there were six in it before.

8219. Do you think it would keep six families if the hill pasture were given back?—Yes, the same as before, along with their town earnings.

8220. What was the rent of the township before the hill pasture was taken away?—£33 now, and I think it was £35 before.

8221. There was only £2 taken off when the pasture was taken away?—When Mr Rainy took it from them, he gave them £9 down.

8222. And you think the hill pasture was worth at least £9?—Yes, and more.

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8223. How many sheep could you keep when you had the hill pasture?—Forty, and a horse and a cow.

8224. For each of six families?—Yes.

8225. Would your neighbours be able to stock that place as well as you?—Well, I think the most of them would.

8226. And you think, if you got that hill pasture back again, you would be quite comfortable?—Yes.

8227. Did you ever ask it back?—No.

8228. Why not?—I am not sure.

8229. You know the place well enough—is there a fence upon it now?—There is a fence from the place where we have the houses, but the rest of our cultivated ground is not fenced, and, even if that were fenced, we would be little better off than we are. We would require to have something to winter our cows.

8230. Would it cost much to add that hill pasture back to your township again?—Yes; of course, I don't think it did any good to the sheep farm, but still it was standing in the way, and it would require to be fenced in all along.

8231. If the proprietor were disposed to give the hill pasture back to you again, could that be done without much expense?—No, there is not much of the landlord's stock coming on that hill, neither is the hill very enticing to our stock, and the stock might be looked after by a herd.

8232. Are there many of the young people going to the south to work?—Oh, there are not very many young people there. They belong to this end of the land.

8233. Are there many people from Rona and Raasay who work in the south, apart from fishing—young men and women?—Not many who work ashore. They go to the fishing mostly.

8234. Do the young women all remain at home?—No.

8235. Where do they go?—Out to the towns.

8236. And do they all come back again?—Sometimes they come to see their friends for a fortnight or three weeks.

8237. And some do not come back at all?—That is the way. Mr Wood is very kind to us, but Mr Wood will not last always; and we may be deprived of the benefits of his kindness at any time.

ALEXANDER M'LEOD, Crofter, North Arnish (75)—examined.

Alexander M'Leod

8238. *The Chairman.*—What have you to state to us?—I am not wanting more land than I have. It will serve me my lifetime. But the land is dear, and is spoiled by game, the same as others have said, so that it is scarcely worth while to sow my land. It is a very difficult thing for a man to go and complain to his landlord, even if it was the case that his crop was spoiled. Our landlord is kind, and honourable, and condescending to us in every way; but, after all, that loss is upon us. We must try to stand it, when that heavy rent is upon us. I have, however, to say concerning myself that if the rent was lower than what it was in my father's time, we would not be saying much about it.

8239. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Are the rabbits not fenced off?—No, and they are quite thick in our arable ground. I have nothing further to say.

RAASAY.

TORRAN.

James Ross.

JAMES ROSS, Solicitor, Inverness (44)—examined.

8240. *The Chairman.*—You are factor on the estate of Raasay?—Yes.

8241. Will you kindly make any statement you desire to make?—The entire population of the three islands would, when Mr Wood acquired them at Whitsunday 1876, be about 650. As taken by the census in 1881 it was about 710, and it is now estimated at 730, showing an increase of about eighty, or 12½ per cent. This increase has arisen mainly, it is believed, from two causes, namely—(1) the introduction of managers and farm servants with tradesmen, and (2) the natural increase of the families of the resident crofter population. During these seven years very few of the people had left the island permanently. With reference to the pauperism, the numbers on the poor roll at present are sixteen, being a ratio of 2 per cent. on the average population of Raasay—say 700—while the other portion of the parish of Portree has a ratio of 2½ per cent. on a population of 2491. Raasay in this respect will bear a favourable comparison with any of the best-conditioned parishes in the Highlands, and even with the best-conditional rural parishes in agricultural districts of the Lowlands of Scotland. The number of acres in Raasay, Rona, and Fladda is roughly estimated at about 29,000, whereof there is supposed to be in proprietor's hands as farms, woods, and policies about 18,000 acres, are the remainder of 11,000 is held by the crofters, lotters, and cottagers. Of the 18,000 acres in the proprietor's hands about 220 are now under cultivation in gardens and nurseries, in policies, in woods and plantations, and in sheep and pasture lands connected with his sheep and arable farmers and of the 11,000 acres occupied by the crofters and other small tenants about 200 are cultivated, and the remaining 10,800 acres are occupied by them as pasture. The whole extent capable of profitable improvements including the portions already under cultivation, is estimated at about, 1800 acres. There were on the rent-roll at last audit day (Martinmas, 1882) six tenants paying under £2 of rent; under £5, 33; under £10. 33; at £10, 2; at £14, 2; at £15, 4; at £18, 1,—in all, 81 crofters, The average rental for the last six years has been £374, 13s. 10d., and the average rent per tenant of the same period £4, 17s. Eleven lotters have gardens or potato plots under half an acre. Sixty-seven crofters have three to four and a half acres of cultivated ground, judged from the quantity of seed sown, together with their share of the hill ground or commonty, and the remaining three tenants are not connected with the tenantry grounds. On crofts under £5 there will be generally about four cattle of all ages, and on crofts above £5, about eight; and the crofters mostly all keep sheep numbering from 20 to 100, according to their circumstances. No removals have taken place at the instance of the proprietor since he acqnired the estate, but he has planted nine new tenants on a portion of the sheep farm, and these enjoy privileges like the others, and for them he has built good slated cottages, and done other things to promote their comfort. They have already improved in all about eighteen acres. Fully nine-tenths of the whole tenantry have other occupations than that of applying themselves exclusively to the working of their land, and add considerably to their means of living by either themselves or members of their families employing themselves at the several estate works, and at the salmon, white, lobster, and herring fishing, as well as at other industries, both at home and beyond the islands; but their chief employment since the entry of Mr Wood has been at the various improvements carried on by him in buildings, improvements on land, trenching, draining, planting, road-making, &c., the aggregate amount of which has been very large. Since his entry

the proprietor has encouraged his tenantry by building six new crofters' houses, all slated, at an expense of £1200, three lodges for cottars at £450, four cottagers' houses at £165, and rebuilding six cottar houses at £265, —in all, £2080. Then, thirteen crofters have been each allowed £10 to build better houses, £130; and there has been expended in wood for doors and windows, roofing and inside fittings, and ironmongery to a large number of crofters for the six years for the same purpose, £137, 18s. This gives a total of £2353, 18s. When Mr Wood first took possession of the estate of Raasay he felt disposed to erect houses for his tenants. Experience, however, showed that such a system would be both expensive and unsatisfactory. He consequently came to the resolution that it would be much more advisable to furnish the tenants with wood and slate, and make a certain allowance of money for building purposes, leaving it to themselves to do the work. This course was carried into effect with considerable success, and will no doubt eventually tend to the clearance of the present houses. Mr Wood offered to lay concrete floors for the tenants, if they would provide gravel and sand. He has also paid £92 for bulls for improving their stock, and has given in loan for purchasing stock in necessitous cases £35; for replacing herring boats and nets destroyed by storms, £235; and for replacing tenants' boats destroyed by high tides and gales in November 1881, £37, 5s. 8d. Again, during Mr Wood's possession, there has been expended by him in work to inhabitants of the island up to May 1877, £1736, 10s. 8d.; 1878, £2800; 1879, £3528, 2s. 6d.; 1880, £4209, 19s 3d.; 1881, £4155, 4s; and 1882, £3668, 3s. 2d.—in all, £20,098, 14s. 2d., exclusive of main building connected with the mansion-house. The number of people permanently employed immediately before the acquisition of the estate by Mr Wood was about twenty-four, but the number may be now stated at ninety-four, or nearly a fourfold increase, and mostly all connected with works which require a permanent staff. The average yearly amount expended among the people resident in the island over the six years is £3349, 9s., being equal to £4, 16s. 3d. for each one of 697 inhabitants, or £28, 17s. 6d. for each, family of six members, and is about equal to nine rents of the crofters average rental of £374, 13s. 10d.; and it is believed that fully more than one-half of this annual outlay passed directly into the hands of the crofters, or into those who were members of their families; and over and above these, considerable amounts came into the crofter population from these contractors and others who were temporarily resident on the island during the execution of the several undertakings. A considerable part of the expenditure of course fell into low-country tradesmen's hands. The proprietor has, during the six years, expended £32,492, 5s. 4d. on the various improvements, and other outlays on the estate over and above all receipts that he has got therefrom. During that period he has remitted rents to tenants to the extent of £48, 15s. 4d., has given gratuities of meal and coals to people to the value of £42, 14s. 3d., and has granted, free of rent, houses to five widows, equal to £60, making £151, 9s. 7d. To meet disasters of seasons 1881 and 1882, he has paid two-thirds of the price for replacing tenantry's boats destroyed by high tide and gale in November 1881, amounting to £74, 11s. 4d.; 63 tons of seed in the spring of 1883, which had been given free of charge to tenants in quantities from ¼ to 2½ bolls, £360; and abatement of one-third of the year's rent due at Martinmas 1882, £135, 10s. 5d.; while labour at good wages and at convenient places has been offered to all his people who are disposed to accept it. The position of the people now, as compared with their state in 1876, is one of great improvement. Better dwelling-houses have been provided where necessary, work is provided for all who may require it, at wages from 10s.

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to 15s. a week, and no well-conducted person has been refused employment who has asked for it. Crofts have been improved by the erection of substantial fences between the arable and pasture lands, but most of the crofts are capable of much further improvement, such as the clearing out of open drains between the plots of arable land, cutting or cleaning out of drains around their dwelling-houses, and the observing of a proper system of rotation of crops and the sowing of grass seeds, instead of allowing to lie for a time out of cultivation, and thus giving room for the growth of coarse plants or weeds to shed their seeds. The breed of cattle has been greatly improved, as the tenants have had the use of well-bred bulls from the proprietor. The improvement in this respect is becoming more apparent every year, and the value of the stock will doubtless go on in an increasing ratio, as the younger cattle, as breeding stock, take the place of the older, and with more attention to the feeding and general comfort of the stock, would greatly enhance their market value. The opening up of some of the roughest parts of the estate by new roads has also been of great benefit to the people. The road from Torran to Kyle-Rona, 3¾ miles, 6 feet wide, cost £395. There are three board schools—at Clachan, Torran, and Dryharbour. The proprietor has been at an expense of £411, 19s. 11d. in erecting and fitting up two suitable meeting-houses, in connection with the Free Church, at Rona and Torran, for the people of those districts, which has contributed greatly to their convenience and comfort. It has been already stated that the annual value of the gross raw produce from arable and pasture lands is estimated at £4047, and that the proprietor's average annual outlay passing into the hands of the resident population for wages has been £3349, 9s. Further, the privileges of free peat, fuel, and sea-weed are afforded them, the value of which, added to the above-noted labour fund, would amount to a sum nearly equal to the also above-noted amount of £4047 for the whole production from arable and pasture lands. This is considered a very important and, as regards the Highlands, a very exceptional fact. As perhaps four-fifths of the population of Raasay belong to the crofter class, and it is conceived not unreasonable to infer that more than one-half of the labour fund above alluded to passed into their hands, which would be about equal in amount to the whole annual value of raw produce from their arable and pasture lands; or, in other words, doubling their annual domestic earnings. In its effects upon the condition of the people, a result like this greatly more than realises the design of Sir John Sinclair, who, when he laid down his scheme for putting the population of the Highlands on small lots, made it part of his plan that each tenant should have provided for him in addition to his lot, two hundred days a year of extra work—a provision which, unfortunately, was not carried out, but which, if it had, would, it is believed, have obviated the necessity for all claims for aid for the people from without, and would have kept them from want during any and all of the periods of destitution that have occurred since the system was first introduced into the northern Highlands. It appears, also, that the fact of so much money being spent annually for labour by the proprietor of Raasay among his people has this additional importance attached to it, that, as it is mainly all connected with undertakings having permanent annual requirements, the amount, so long as these works are carried on, can scarce ever suffer a very material reduction. Since Mr Wood purchased the estate of Raasay, he has made it the home of himself and his family, making the condition of his population a matter of personal interest and care. There are no leases on the property, the tenants holding simply from year to year. It is to be regretted that the Education Act,—so far as the parish of Portree is concerned,—is not vigorously

enforced. If report speaks truly, and there is no reason to doubt the accuracy of it, there is a large proportion of the children of the parish attending no school, a matter of deep regret. If properly administered, an educational system would, in all probability, do more for the Highlands of Scotland than almost any scheme which can be suggested. With regard to Fladda, Mr Wood thought, at one time, with some degree of reason, that possibly a slate quarry might be opened there, and he took every means to ascertain the way it could be opened, first with a view of getting slates, and secondly, with a view of providing labour, but scientific people reported it would not work. With regard to the Oscaig cottages, there was a man here who said he paid £14, which was quite true. The original intention of these was not with a view to crofters at all. When Mr Wood took possession of the estate, he was of opinion it would be a good thing if he could induce such men as tailors and shoemakers to come, and encourage them to work, and these cottages were originally built for those men as trade cottages; and they cost more than they would have done for other purposes. But then that would not suit, so he added small crofts to them. As to the game, Mr Wood has reduced the stock of sheep fully two-eighths from what it was during the time of Mr Mackay. Originally the stock had been about 15,000, and they are down to 3000. The difference between 3000 and 5000 goes to provide for the game.

8242. Let us put a proper name upon it. It goes to form a deer forest, and to pasture deer?—Yes.

8243. Will you explain whether there is any part of the area pastured by deer entirely cleared of sheep or whether the sheep, and deer go together?—I think there is a portion of it, but I don't know how much it is.

8244. *Mr Cameron.*—Is that also for the sake of the rabbits?—Yes.

8245. That he might feed his rabbits on his own ground?—Yes, and keep them away from his tenants, and so far as Raasay is concerned, every part of the crofters' crops is separated from the shootings by ordinary fences and rabbit-net wire—all except a very small portion which they are just completing. Then there was a statement made about a fence—that the deer fence came too close to the hill land, and they could not drive the cows up to the hill ground without trouble. The facts are these, that Mr Wood is very anxious there should be no disturbance, and he asked the township to appoint a man to lay out the route of the fence. The oldest man was appointed, and he went to the place, and the fence was put in the exact place that man suggested.

8246. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—With regard to the rabbits outside the netting, are people allowed to kill rabbits as they like?—I don't know what Mr Wood's instructions are. He stays here eight or nine months in the year, and keeps almost all these things in his own hands. For instance, he calculates what damage is done by game, and he pays that in money. I know, in several cases, he has paid in money the full amount of damage that they had sustained.

8247. *The Chairman.*—One of the crofters stated to us, and another stated hesitatingly, that they would not be allowed to kill the rabbits?—I am informed by the manager that Mr Wood has not given authority or refused authority to kill rabbits. Nothing has been done, in fact.

8248. So far as a man killed rabbits on his own croft, would he be scolded or molested?—That is a hard question. He might get scolded.

8249. The subject of pheasants was incidentally mentioned. Is there a large stock of pheasants?—Yes, there is a pretty large stock.

8250. And where there is a large stock of pheasants on small patches of corn there may be damage done. Do you know any cases of compensa-

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tion being paid for damage done by pheasants?—I suppose the damages are for both pheasants and other game altogether. We feed them very highly, and don't let them fly upon the crofts if we can help it.

8251. There has been no difficulty about poaching?—No difficulty whatever.

8252. With regard to the area actually fenced for the deer run, about what area is there, do you think?—*Mr Alexander Stewart*, local manager (38). Deer and sheep are all together.

8253. There is no part exclusively cleared for deer?—Not exclusively for deer.

8254. Are there any complaints about deer getting on to the crofters' patches?—There were some complaints before this fence was put from sea to sea.

8255. What is the height of the fence?—A six feet wire fence.

8256. And they are quite satisfied?—There has been no complaint made since.

8257. You, Mr Ross, have probably heard, from the evidence given before us, that the main ground of complaint really is that the crofters have multiplied upon their small areas of ground, and with this multiplication there has been probably some exhaustion of the soil, and that they are ill off. There is a general expression of a desire to obtain the restoration of some portion of the hill farms to the small tenants in the form of crofts. I would like you to state your candid opinion as to whether that might not be done in moderation, with advantage to the tenantry; and without prejudice to the landlord?—*Mr Ross.* As to whether it can be done with advantage to the tenant, I think it follows that if you could give him more land, and a better bit of it, he would be better off. I think there can be no possible doubt about that position. With regard to the second question, as to whether Mr Wood would cut off the upper part of the island—whether it would be a benefit to him—that is another question. For instance, a tenant has to build a house; he has to drain; he has to get stock. I don't see where the money is to come from. I am sorry to say I am informed there is on this estate a considerable amount of debt already due to merchants and people of that sort, so I don't see, even if they got facilities to go to the upper part of the island, how they could possibly do it. As your Lordship has put it, I am not aware of Government ever giving money to buy stock.

8258. No, but though the poor have not got stock, if ground is given to them, they do manage sometimes, with industry, to procure a stock by multiplication, or by gift, or by loan, or in some method or other. I don't think it impossible. They might manage, perhaps, to stock a little hill pasture. Do you think, without speaking of additional arable ground, that hill pasture could be advantageously added to the present crofts, here and there, without great prejudice to the landlord?—That is a difficult question. I really would not like to answer that, because I am not sufficiently acquainted with the little bits and corners about the estate, but I have no doubt Mr Stewart, the manager, who lives in the island, will be able to give an opinion.—*Mr Stewart.* Where the present tenants pasture is held, and where Mr Wood's pasture comes up alongside of it, the tenants upon his borders might be benefited, but unless the tenants were altogether removed from one district and planted on his land, I don't see that additional pasture to the tenants would be advantageous.

8259. I mean whether, in some cases, or in several cases, additional pieces of hill pasture could be advantageously given to the present crofters in their present places?—In their present places they hold all the hill pasture. It is all held by the tenants in common. Mr Wood's

sheep farm is all to one side, and there is a small narrow neck of land where this fence crosses, dividing Mr Wood's sheep farm from the tenant's pasture.

8260. Suppose the fence were removed a little further?—It could only be done that way by shifting the fence more into the sheep farm. It would only give the Arnish tenants, who lie alongside the sheep farm, advantage, not any of the others.

8261. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Don't some of the deer occasionally get outside the fence by the sea-shore?—*Mr Ross.* I have no doubt they do now and again. The gate-keepers are not so careful as they should be.

8262. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—They sometimes swim over to Skye?—Yes.

8263. *The Chairman.*—What is the area retained in the hands of Mr Wood?—19,000 acres, so far as I can see, assuming the whole area to be 29,000 acres.

8264. You admit that portions of that might possibly be colonised by new crofters with advantage to the crofters, but you don't see how the crofters would be enabled to undertake the necessary labour and the stocking of the lands?—Yes, and there is this further question, so far as Mr Wood is concerned. I doubt whether it would suit his views, because we know he bought Raasay more as a sporting estate than anything else; and if this were carried out, it is questionable whether it would suit his views to continue on his estate.

8265. You must have heard of the very great indifference, not to say repugnance, expressed by the witnesses to emigration, even under favourable circumstances. To what do you attribute that? Do you think it is natural to them, or do you think they have been inspired in some degree by others as a matter of policy?—I think it is natural to them to love their country. I also think they have been inspired by people with ideas that they should stick to their land, and get their own terms. I believe both elements have been at work. We know quite well that the Highlander does like his country, and does not like to leave it; but, at the same time, like every one else, if you show him good cause he will probably go. There have been people going about showing them why they should not go, and that is probably one of the causes. But my opinion is that emigration is the only cure.

8266. But you don't think that this objection to emigration would, at other times, be an unconquerable objection?—I think not, if conducted with fairness and well managed. They must go with their own conviction, and not forced, if possible.

8267. *Professor Mackinnon.*—I have been looking into the schedules, and I find discrepancies in regard to the stock?—You will observe these schedules are very voluminous, and the information cannot be got by the proprietor unless he goes about and asks people, and I quite understand there may be discrepancies.

8268. You state that the number of sheep ranges from two to one hundred. There is only one case where it is one hundred?—That is what I mean. It goes from two to one hundred.

8269. You spoke of compensation. None of the people spoke of money compensation here?—Yes, I am surprised at it. I am perfectly certain that Mr Wood, when settling the compensation, used to pay it directly. When he paid money he seldom took a receipt, because he went over the damaged ground himself, and fixed the amount; but, in many cases, I think he gave more than the amount.

8270. *The Chairman.*—With reference to fishing, is there anything you could suggest that Government could do materially to help the fishing?—I can suggest nothing just now.

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8271. *Professor Mackinnon.*—There was one man who stated that the boxes for feeding the pheasants were just at the fence?—I have inquired about that, and I am told by the keeper who was in charge that he never knew of any such thing. The statement was perfectly new to him.

8272. You have heard the complaint about the teachers—that they and the children cannot understand each other?—Yes. The teacher who is here is a young lady from Aberdeenshire, but I may explain that the teacher who has the permanent appointment here is an inhabitant of the asylum at Inverness. This is only a *locum tenens*, and she may or may not remain.

8273. And for this whole matter of the crofters, you consider emigration the only cure?—Yes, the only cure if fairly carried out.

8274. That the people should leave the place altogether?—No, I won't go that length. My view is that not less than 50 per cent. would meet the requirements of the case. I would not take isolated cases, but by townships, and therefore not injure the natural feelings that exist between them. If you take whole townships, and provide for them when they go out, the natural feeling against emigration would not be so great.

8275. Would it not be easier to send them up to the other end of Raasay?—I bow to that at once. It would be easier to send them to the upper end of Raasay.

8276. I see that an extraordinary amount of money has been expended by the landlord. Was that upon his own holdings or upon the crofts?—For instance, he set to work up about Portree, to take in about 150 or 200 acres from the hill side, and employed people to do it.

8277. That is in his own possession?—Yes.

8278. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Can you name any person who received money for damage done by game?—*Mr Stewart.* All the tenants at Balchuirn. The tenants of Braig also received compensation.

8279. *The Chairman.*—You speak of emigration being conducted by townships. Suppose that, with the consent of the people, a township were removed, what would you contemplate doing with the land?—I would divide the land among the neighbouring townships to increase the holdings.

8280. Then you don't think that both systems could be worked together—that some enlargement of boundary could be made here, and some encouragement given to emigration?—My difficulty is this, that the Highlander has a very proper and natural liking for his own country, and if you give him an opening of comparative comfort in his native place, rather than go to another place, where he will have some hardships to start with, naturally he will elect to remain at home. I don't think he will select emigration. I think you must decide upon one or other, whatever it is.

8281. Do you think 700 people a great population for 29,000 acres?—No, I don't say it is.

[ADJOURNED.]

PORTREE, SKYE, WEDNESDAY, MAY 23, 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.

ALEXANDER MACDONALD, Factor, Solicitor, and Bank Agent in Portree, and Proprietor of Treaslane (42)—examined.

Alexander Macdonald.

8282. *The Chairman.*—You desire to make a statement to the Commission?—I have prepared a statement, which I hope you will allow me to read, and in doing so I claim the same freedom of thought and expression which the crofters have done,—to express my thoughts and opinions just as freely as they did. I hope they will take well anything I have to say on the subject, because I have a great deal to do with them. I have the greatest interest in the crofters, and I personally have a great regard for them as my fellow-countrymen, and, on the whole, a good moral people. On the part of the various proprietors in Skye whom I have the honour to represent, I propose, in the first place, to make a few observations upon the complaints which may be said to be common to all the crofters who have appeared before the Royal Commission, and thereafter to refer to certain special statements made by some of their number. Before proceeding to make any observations on these complaints I think it is proper that there should appear on the records of the Commission a fact which has already become notorious through the public press, which is, that the inhabitants of every district in Skye were tutored and schooled before the arrival of the Commissioners by one or more persons acting under the instructions of Societies throughout Scotland, designating themselves under different appellations, as Societies for the Reformation of the Laws relating to the Tenure of Land in Scotland. As one who has been resident in Skye from the beginning to the end of the agitation which resulted in the appointment of the Royal Commission now sitting here, I can state with the utmost confidence that the ideas and sentiments of the people of Skye have to a very great extent been stirred up, influenced, and shaped by the action of these agitators. Although it must be admitted that, before the operations of these agitators commenced, there was a certain amount of discontent as to some matters, still it is an undoubted fact, as I have already stated, and one which is well known to people living in Skye, that since the action of the agitators commenced, the complaints and discontent have increased tenfold, and many matters which were formerly viewed with perfect placidity, if not with indifference, have now come to be viewed as serious grievances requiring legislative interference. I am credibly informed that at various meetings held in Skye at no distant date, the inhabitants were specially schooled into stating before the Commission, that what they wanted were larger holdings at fair rents, with fixity of tenure. I wish it specially to be understood by the Commission and by the gentlemen who held these meetings, that I do not for a moment mean to dispute their perfect right to hold them, but I do respectfully ask the Commission to bear in mind

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as an undoubted fact, that these meetings preceded the Commission, and that they must undoubtedly have to a very great extent influenced the minds of the people in giving evidence. Had the evidence of the people been perfectly spontaneous, I respectfully submit that it ought to have been credited with much greater weight than it can now receive. With regard to the first subject of complaint, which is to the effect that the lands are held by the crofters too highly rented, I have to state as a matter of fact, that the lands held by the crofters on the Macdonald estates, in the Isle of Skye, were about 20 per cent. at least higher in the year 1825 than they are at present. In the year 1830, the crofters' rents were reduced by about 25 per cent., and since then they have not on an average been raised more than from 4 to 5 per cent. In some of the townships held by crofters, there have been changes of boundaries, &c.; but with the view of instituting a comparison of rents, I have selected the following townships in which no changes as to boundaries have, so far as I am aware or can trace, taken place, with the view of showing the former and the present rents:—

COMPARATIVE STATEMENT of RENTS of the following Townships held by Crofters on the Macdonald Estates, in the Isle of Skye, in 1825, 1830, and 1883.

Townships.	Rent in 1825.	Rent in 1830.	Rent in 1883.
Parish of Sleat.			
Achnacloich,	£79 13 9	£61 5 0	£66 8 0
Calligarry,	105 0 0	82 10 0	89 16 0
Drumfearn,	101 17 10	80 10 0	91 4 0
Tarskevaig,	144 8 2	100 0 0	117 0 10
Toekvaig,	50 1 1	40 0 0	46 4 0
Parish of Strath.			
Breakish, Arable,	£161 10 0	£143 0 0	£170 8 0
Heaste,	159 13 5	120 0 0	137 9 0
Torrin,	221 10 0	188 10 0	204 18 0
Harrapool,	80 9 10	65 10 0	...
Parish of Portree.			
Balmeanach,	£05 0 0	£ 75 0 0	£78 19 0
Achnahanaid,	52 0 0	34 0 0	47 16 0
Collimore,	106 0 0	86 0 0	100 1 0
Gedentailer,	72 0 0	50 0 0	54 1 0
Glenmore,	130 4 10	95 0 0	106 4 0
Mugary,	95 2 0	70 0 0	79 10 0
Nether Ollach,	32 0 0	22 0 0	25 17 0
Upper Ollach,	30 0 0	20 0 0	21 15 0
Peinchorran,	102 0 0	69 0 0	70 2 0
Conardan,	32 0 0	21 0 0	23 5 0
Parish of Snizort.			
Kestle,	£55 0 0	£36 0 0	£46 14 0
Raintra,	65 2 7	60 0 0	61 6 0

I have taken these as examples of the townships held by crofters, on which I may mention there is an increase of about 7 or 8 per cent., only since 1830.

8283. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Do I understand from you that there has been no change in the bounds or marches?—Yes; I have selected these townships specially on that account, but I believe it applies to the whole

estate, because there were deductions given where there were changes of boundary, in proportion to the old rents. But I have selected these, so far as my knowledge goes, as being townships in which there was no change whatever. Then we come to the larger farms on the Macdonald estate :—

COMPARATIVE STATEMENT of RENTS of larger Tenants on the Macdonald Estates in 1830 and 1883.

Townships.	Rent in 1830.	Rent in 1883.
Parish of Sleat.		
Tormore,	£397 10 0	£550 0 0
Parish of Strath.		
Kyle, &c.,	£180 0 0	£520 0 0
Suishnish and Borroraig,	160 0 0	235 0 0
Kilbride and Kilchrist,	105 0 0	130 0 0
Corry, &c., including Pabbay,	411 10 0	630 0 0
Scalpay,	210 0 0	260 0 0
Parish of Portree.		
Glenvarigill,	£105 0 0	£160 0 0
Portree Home Farm,	95 0 0	156 0 0
Scorrybreck,	620 0 0	1250 0 0
Parish of Snizort.		
Glenhaltin,	£50 0 0	£105 0 0
Kingsburgh,	330 0 0	625 0 0
Skirinish,	257 10 0	474 11 0

It therefore appears that the rents of the larger tenants increased in some cases from 50 to 60 per cent. in the same period, and in other cases 100 per cent. and even more. From a comparison of these statements as to the relative increase in the value of the lands held by the small tenants and by the larger tenants on the Macdonald estates, it will be seen that the rents of the small tenants' holdings are considerably lower than they were in 1825; and if we compare the rents of 1830 (between which period and 1825 an abatement was granted) with those of 1883, we shall find an increase of only about 4 or 5 per cent. The rents of the other townships held by the crofters on the Macdonald estates are proportionately low, and in cases where the boundaries were changed, the deductions granted were in proportion to the old rent. On the other hand, the rents of the lands occupied by the larger tenants have increased since 1830 at the rate of from 50 to 100 per cent. In the case of the larger farms, most of them came to be advertised at different times, and offered for competition in the usual manner. The crofters' lands, on the other hand, were not offered for competition, it being a principle in the management of crofters' lands throughout Skye that they were not to be offered for competition, but continued at the same rents. In the case of the Macdonald estates they were lowered. As the crofters now complain so much of the present value of their lands, and if the value of anything be what it will fetch in open market, it may be a matter for consideration hereafter, whether crofter lands ought not to be offered for competition, like other lands, as no crofter can well complain of his own offer being accepted. While suggesting this for consideration, I cannot say, however, that I am personally

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inclined to adopt the principle. With regard to the Macleod estates and the estate of Strathaird, for both of which I act as factor, the rents of crofters' lands have been similarly stationary. On the Macleod estate I cannot exactly trace when the present rents were fixed, but it was, so far as I can ascertain, fully fifty or sixty years ago, if not more. They have not since been raised. On the other hand, the rents of the larger farms on the estate of Macleod have within the same period increased fully 50 or 60 per cent., and in some cases much more. On the estate of Kilmuir, as the Commission has been informed by the crofters, their rents were raised in the year 1877; and on this subject I shall hand in a statement by Major Fraser, if he cannot attend personally, as also some notes on Kilmuir dated 1882, giving statistics as to rental and other matters, and likewise a report by Mr Malcolm, farmer, Nairn, who valued the Kilmuir estate in 1876. Generally, I may mention that Major Fraser has expended large sums on the Kilmuir estate since he purchased it. In particular, he has done so on the roads of the estate, and likewise on drains and fences and other improvements, thus giving employment to a good number of his people. Major Fraser established likewise a post-office at Uig, and subsidised it for several years. The Kilmuir tenants say that their rents were raised three times since Major Fraser took possession. It should be explained, however, that one of the rises referred to consisted of a sum of 5s. imposed on each tenant on the estate to provide payment for a medical man for Kilmuir. With regard to the value per acre of the lands on the estate held by crofters (which are about the same extent as those held by the larger tenants on the estate), I have to observe that, in consequence of the abatement allowed by Major Fraser for the last two years, the rate per acre paid by the crofters, including both arable and pasture land, is 2s. per acre only. Mr Mackay of Glen Gloy, in his last work on the land laws, says that one acre of moor in the Highlands is worth 2s. 6d. The quality of the land on the Kilmuir estate is thus under the usual estimate, although it is proverbially fertile and good, Kilmuir and Waternish being well known the best land in Skye. The rent actually paid by crofters in Kilmuir for pasture land, exclusive of arable, is not above 1s. per acre, which for such land is considered very moderate. While, from what has been stated, it appears quite clearly that the rents of the small tenants in Skye have not increased in anything like the proportion in which the rents of the larger class of tenants (which were offered for competition) have increased, I beg to draw attention to the following points as showing that the proprietors were actually entitled to a rise of rent between the year 1830 and 1883. In proof of this, no evidence can be stronger than the fact of the great increase on the rents of the farms which were offered for competition already mentioned; but besides this, it may be useful to give a few figures showing the prices of the produce of land at different periods. I find that Dr Johnson, in his *Journey to Scotland* in 1773, says that 'the prices regularly expected for cattle in 'Skye are from £2 to £3 a head. There was once one sold for £5.' In his report on the Agriculture of the Hebrides in 1811, Mr James Macdonald says, at page 423 of his work—'For the last ten years the 'people of the islands of Skye and Mull have sold their cattle at an 'average of £6.' In the Inverness papers of 1830, when the rents on the Macdonald estates were fixed, the following are the prices quoted for the Wool Market of July 1830:—Cheviot wedders, 13s. to 21s.; Cheviot hoggs, 8s. to 11s.; Cheviot lambs, 6s. to 6s. 9d.; cross wedders, 5s. to 6s.; blackfaced wedders, 9s. 6d. to 13s.; blackfaced hoggs, 5s. to 8s. 6d.; blackfaced ewes, 4s. to 6s. 6d.; blackfaced lambs, 4s. 6d. to 6s. The Inverness papers of October 1830, also show the following as the prices

of West Highland cattle at Falkirk Tryst:—West Highland heifers, £6, 9s; West Highland good three-year-old stots, about £7; West Highland good two-year-old stots, £6. The prices of younger cattle are not given, but I have ascertained from private sources of information, that stirks were sold at from £2 to £2, 10s. In the *Edinburgh Evening Courant* of 23rd August 1830, I find that in a report of the Muir of Ord market the prices of sheep were quoted as follows, viz.:—'Good many sheep in the market. Wedders, 10s. to 12s.; ewes, 7s. to 9s. 6d.; lambs, 2s. to 4s. 6d.' From the *Transactions of the Highland Society*, vol. viii. p. 159, I find that the prices of West Highland cattle in 1849 were as follows, viz.:—'Stirks, £3 to £3, 10s.; two-year-olds, £7 to £8; and three and 'four-year-olds, £9 to £10, 10s.' If the prices of the present day be compared with these prices, they will be found to be very much higher; and I may quote the following as the price of cattle and sheep during the past season:—*Sheep:* Cheviot ewes, each £1, 12s.; Cheviot lambs, 18s.; Cheviot wedders, £2, 13s.; blackfaced ewes, £1, 5s.; blackfaced lambs, 16s.; blackfaced wedders, £2. *Cattle:* West Highland stirks, each £6 to £9; West Highland two-year-old cattle, £7 to £10; West Highland three-year-old heifers, £9 to £14; West Highland three-year-old stots, £12 to £16. Price of oatmeal, per boll, 20s.; per load, 39s. I would respectfully ask the Commissioners farther to keep in view the rate of wages in the Western Isles about the time when the present rents were fixed. I have not been able to discover the rate of wages about the year 1830, but I find in the Statistical Account of Scotland in the year 1840 for the parish of Duirinish, that it is stated that the common wages of labourers are—In summer 1s. per day, and in winter 9d. In my own recollection, the wages of a man in Portree about the year 1848 or 1850, were 1s. per day. The wages of labourers in the present day throughout Skye are from 2s. to 3s. per day. On the other hand, I find that in 1811, the price of oatmeal per boll of 16 pecks or 160 lbs. was 28s. In 1840 the price of oatmeal per sack of 280 lbs. was £2. I beg leave further to mention, as an important circumstance affecting the rents of the present day as compared with those of former times, the following facts, viz., (1) That the change in the value of gold has of itself altered the rents much in favor of the tenants, without any labour on his part; (2) That improved means of communication with the south markets and commercial centres should also favourably affect the circumstances of the tenant, and enable him to pay a better rent. In the year 1830 there were no means of communication between Skye and the south except by sailing ships of a very inferior and slow-sailing description. All cattle and sheep had to be sent by road. We have now several steamers a week, besides communication by rail. On the subject of rents a good deal more might be said, but I refrain from entering farther into the subject, it being abundantly plain from the facts stated, that if the produce of land has anything to do with its value or rent, the crofters of Skye now have their lands at a very much lower rate than that at which they were held by their brave ancestors, who contributed such a large number of distinguished soldiers and officers for the service of their country, in times of imminent national peril. Before leaving this subject, I beg to refer to the rents of the townships of Peinchorran, Gedentailer, and Balmeanach, which recently attracted a good deal of public attention. I find, on referring to the rentals of the Macdonald estates in the year 1825, that he rents of these townships stood as follows, viz.:—Peinchorran, £103, 0s. 0¾d.; Balmeanach, £105, 0s. 1¾d.; Gedentailer, £71, 19s. 11¾d.; total, £280, 0s. 2¼d. In 1830 the rents of these townships, like other townships on the estate, were reduced, and their present aggregate

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rental, exclusive of Ben Lee, is as follows, viz.:—Peinchorran, £70, 2s.; Balmeanach, £78, 19s.; Gedentailer, £53, 11s.; total, £202, 12s. At Martinmas last, the tenants of these townships, by agreement with Lord Macdonald, entered into possession of Ben Lee at a rent of £74, 15s. (although he has been formerly receiving £128 of rent for it), in addition to the crofts and pastures formerly held by them. Their rent in future, including the rent of Ben Lee, will thus be £277, 7s., which is a less rent than these townships paid in 1825, although it is a fact which many witnesses in the neighbouring townships of Cainesstionobaig, Penefiler, &c. can, if required, bear testimony to, that these last mentioned townships and others had possession of a great part of Ben Lee, or had rights of pasturage on it, besides the rights which Lord Macdonald's tenants in Uist and Skye had of using it for pasturage at the time of markets, &c. The hill of Lee, it may be mentioned, will carry from eight hundred to a thousand blackfaced wedders, besides some cattle, and the rent of £94, 15s. charged for it is, as any judge of such matters can testify, extremely moderate. If I mistake not, one of the tenants of Balmeanach mentioned, in giving evidence, that Balmeanach had a tenant placed on it over and above the original number of crofts intended to be there. Now, as a matter of fact, Balmeanach, now contains eight crofts, while according to the plan or the estate it contains twelve crofts. When the tenants of Peinchorran, Balmeanach, and Gedentailer were prohibited from sending their stock to Ben Lee, they were duly and legally summoned to remove from it, and their crofts were reset to the tenants on their present footing as to rents, and these rents were regularly paid by the tenants until the time when the present land agitation commenced. In answering remarks by certain crofters when examined before the Commission, I shall require to make a few further observations on the subjects of the Braes crofters and Ben Lee. I shall now briefly advert to the other chief points of complaint made by the crofters examined before the Commission. In the first place, I shall take up the complaint as to the smallness of the crofts. In the course of their examination it is generally admitted by the crofters themselves, that if the crofts were of the same size as they originally were, they would probably be large enough to meet their requirements. Now, although it is probably true that in some cases the factors on various estates in Skye arbitrarily divided some of the crofts and put in strangers with the former tenants, yet it is an undoubted fact, which can be demonstrated by overwhelming evidence, that the main cause of the division of the crofts has been the desire of the crofters themselves to have their families settled about them, both from natural affection towards them and from a desire to have the benefit of their assistance in paying their rents and working their crofts, when they themselves were getting old. It has been the invariable rule with every estate in Skye with which I am connected, that the subdivision of lands held by crofters is rigorously prohibited. During my time as factor, about ten years, a very small amount of subdivision has taken place and I am aware that during a period of ten or twelve years before then, during which period I assisted the late Mr Harry Macdonald, my father, in managing all the estates with which I am now connected (except the Macdonald estates), very few lots were subdivided. Notwithstanding our utmost endeavours to the contrary, however, a few subdivisions did take place. Some of these took place entirely against our will, and lots were divided and houses built without our knowledge or consent. In such cases, although the tenants were originally warned to remove on account of their conduct, evictions were not carried out, simply out of feelings of *kindness towards the tenants.* In other cases, but they were very few

indeed, a very reluctant consent was given to subdivision, in order to meet the family exigencies of the tenants. It is somewhat disappointing to find now, however, that the whole blame of subdivision is thrown upon factors and landlords. I do not wish these statements to rest upon my own authority and in support of what I state, I may refer to the Statistical Account of 1841, in which the Rev. Coll Macdonald, in commenting on the state of matters in the parish of Portree, says, with regard to the crofters' lands—'All the farms in possession of small tenants were cut into 'lots or crofts, and each was let to a family. In the course of a few 'years, a tenant on a lot had a son, who, in opposition to any advice that 'could be given him, by parents, relations, and friends, would, whether 'right or wrong, be married. To provide for this son, his wife and his 'family, there was no other alternative than to give him a share of the 'lot. The same individual lotter has a daughter, to whom some young 'man becomes attached; marriage is proposed and agreed upon; but in 'the matrimonial contract, it is expressly stipulated that this new ally of 'the family shall have an establishment on the lot. Thus, on one portion 'of land, too small for the support of the original crofter, there are now 'three families. It is easily seen that the situation of these must be poor 'in the extreme. The proprietors show every kindness and indulgence. 'Their rents are not rigidly exacted at a term. There are instances of 'tenants being allowed to remain in arrear, some two, some three, and some 'even four years.' The other clergymen, who wrote statistical accounts of parishes in Skye, remarked in almost similar terms upon the system of subdivision going on among the crofters to meet their own family requirements. Under these circumstances, it is scarcely fair or just that the whole blame of subdivision should be laid upon landlords and factors. My own experience of the strong temptations to subdivide existing among crofters in Skye leads me firmly to believe that it is impossible for any landlord or factor wholly to prevent it; and further, I would go the length of saying that there should be a law against it as a matter of public policy, making subdivision punishable as a crime or misdemeanour, as leading to poverty and pauperism. Taking matters as they actually are at present, it must be admitted, generally speaking, that most crofts are too small; and if it were possible to make a re-distribution, I think that there ought to be two classes of crofts, viz., one of a very small class near the sea for fishermen, who would rely on fishing alone for their subsistence, and another class, ranging in value from £12 to £15 and up to £30, for crofters, who would with their families rely solely on the farming of their crofts and on the produce of their flocks, for maintenance of themselves and their families. At the same time, I cannot see how that is to be done without the consent of the proprietors. Even if it were done, there would be great danger of the old system of subdivision again commencing, and the evils now complained of again occurring. A great difficulty in the way of giving new lands to crofters is, that it has been found by experience that crofters cannot pay the same rent for the same lands as tacksmen for any length of time, and hold their ground. The complaints which have been made to the Commission as to the rents show this to some extent, as it is the fact that no crofters in Skye now pay the same rent proportionally as tacksmen. Further, tacksmen object to crofters being in their neighbourhood, chiefly for the following reasons, viz.—(1) That their sheep and cattle are not properly herded or attended to, and that in consequence their sheep become diseased, and infect the tacksmen's sheep with scab, &c. This might, however, be obviated if the crofters had club stocks. (2) On account of trespassing, and loss of stock, and other causes. Fencing would also be a remedy to some extent for those evils.

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It is an undoubted fact, however, that lands given to crofters at present yield a considerably lower rental than those held by tacksmen, and also that tacks in the neighbourhood of crofters fall in value from that very cause. It is therefore manifest that to insist, if that be conceived possible, by legislative enactment, on lands held by tacksmen being converted into crofters' lands, without compensation to the proprietor for loss of value, would be doing a great wrong, and depriving proprietors of rights which they relied on being secured to them when the purchasers come into possession of their respective properties. Not only are these difficulties in the way of enlarging crofts, but there is also a serious one, —that without extraneous aid the crofters themselves confess they could not stock a greater extent of land than they at present hold. As a practical illustration of this difficulty, I may mention the present condition of the tenants of Peinchorran, Gedentailer, and Balmeanach. These tenants have, in the returns which they have given in to the Royal Commission (exclusive of three tenants who gave no returns), stated their total stocks to be as follows, viz., 13 horses, 93 cows, and 317 sheep. On the lands which they already hold, exclusive of Ben Lee, they are entitled, and have for years been entitled, to graze 24 horses, 146 cattle, and 460 sheep. It will thus be seen that, although these tenants have taken additional lands, those which they now hold are not, if the returns be correct, anything like sufficiently stocked. All I can say is, that I most sincerely trust that the tenants of these townships who have taken Ben Lee, will be able shortly to stock it fully, and that any misgivings which I entertain on the subject will not be realised. The next complaint made by the crofters is that their tenure is uncertain, and that they now should have fixity of tenure. In answer to this complaint, I may remark that tenants already practically have fixity of tenure in Skye. One tenant, who gave evidence before the Commission, stated that his family had been in possession of the lands which they now hold for 500 years. Other tenants have also given evidence of lengthened possession on the part of their families, though they have qualified the statement by complaining of their possession being curtailed by subdivision. To give fixity of tennre without duly compensating the proprietor for his loss, would not only imply a grave constitutional change, but the opinion is also entertained by many that to give fixity of tenure would imply a cessation from labour or improvement. I am well aware that the contrary has been argued, but, notwithstanding what the actual result of so damaging an experiment would be, is by many competent judges considered extremely doubtful. Throughout the rest of Scotland, under the well-known contract or lease, those lands which once were barren marshes, bogs, and forests, have obtained the character of being among the most fertile and best cultivatod lands in Europe. If small tenants enter into leases with proprietors, containing obligations on them to make certain improvements, with rights of compensation at the termination of the lease, as may be justly due, it would, in my humble opinion, be much more likely to produce beneficial results than granting a fixity of tenure, which, in many cases, would lead simply to their again resting upon their oars. The granting of leases by the landlord is a tried and constitutional means of effectually improving lands and the condition of tenants, while the other method proposed is not only untried, unconstitutional, and of doubtful efficacy, but it also implies the infliction of a positive wrong upon the proprietor, by depriving him of a valuable legal right, that is if it be granted the proprietors are entitled to justice at all. Subsidiarily it may be mentioned, that if hodies of small tenants had fixity of tenure, it would be impossible to guide and direct them for their own benefit in the settlement of disputes between themselves. By any one

experienced in the management of small tenants in the north, the weight of this objection can be well understood and estimated. The next complaint made by the Skye tenants generally, and the last upon which I intend to make any remark, is that relating to evictions. In one word, I have to say on this subject that all the evictions of any extent, referred to by the crofters, are of old date, and no evictions of any extent in recent times have been referred to. By way of explanation of the causes of these evictions—which I do not, however, mean to justify—I may state that when the old common hill pasture in the north became valuable, in consequence of the rise in the value of sheep, the crofters were unable to stock them or to pay anything like the rent offered for them by others. The operation of this cause, combined with the fact that many crofters who were evicted were deprived of their holdings on account of non-payment of their rents, were the chief causes of most of the notorious evictions in the Highlands. It is frequently said that, in consequence of evictions, the population of the Isle of Skye is much less than it was in former days. I find, however, that this is not the case, as the following figures will show:—From an enumeration made by one of Lord Macdonald's ancestors in 1745, it appears that the population of Skye then was 10,134. From the Church records it was, in 1750, 10,671. According to Dr Webster, it was, in 1755, 11,420. In 1771 Mr Walker made it 13,552. In 1801, according to the Government enumeration, it was 15,788. In 1871 it rose to 17,330; and in 1881 it was 16,889—thus having, at the last census, fallen off a little, but not more than other rural districts in the north. It will be seen, however, that notwithstanding the great cry about evictions and depopulation, that the population of Skye is greater by about 6700 than it was in the days when Culloden was fought, at which time, no doubt, our glens and straths were inhabited by crofters. Adverting generally to the causes of the present agitation, I may mention, briefly, that I consider them to be, among other causes—1st, The poverty and depression consequent on the recent very bad seasons experienced by us in the west. 2nd. The increase in the expenditure of the inhabitants in such luxuries as tea, sugar, whisky, fine clothing, &c., and the general tendency towards extravagant habits. 3rd, The deplorably bad agriculture of the Western Isles. It is easily shown, by referring to various eminent authorities and reports by skilled men, that so far back as 1811 the present results in the yield of the land were clearly foreseen and foretold. I may add to this the subdivision of the lands, chiefly by the crofters themselves. 4th, The fact of the inhabitants not being engaged in steady daily labour throughout a large part of the year. 5th, and last, but not least, The non-vindication of the law throughout Skye for the last two or three years, amounting practically to a direct encouragement to lawlessness, disorder, and agitation. I shall now, as proposed, proceed to give answers and make observations upon certain special statements made by individual crofters in the course of their examinations before the Commission. The first delegate, Angus Stewart, who be it observed is not himself a crofter, but the son of a crofter, makes the statement, that one of the causes of the poverty of the people is that the best part of the land in Skye is devoted to deer forests and large farms. Now, while it is an indisputable fact that there are many large farms in Skye with excellent land, still it is equally true that many townships of crofters in Skye (as for example various townships in Kilmuir, Strath and Sleat, and other parishes in Skye) who hold just as good land, although not to the same extent as is held by tacksmen, while the latter have a very much larger proportion of bad and sterile land. With regard to deer forests, this witness makes it appear as if he and other Braes crofters suffered from them. Now the

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fact is, that there is only one deer forest in Skye, viz., the Macdonald deer forest, by which the Braes and other townships in the parish of Portree are in no way injured or inconvenienced, they being separated from it by an arm of the sea, viz., Loch Sligachan, and have not at any time been subject to incursions of deer. With regard to the statement made by this delegate to the effect that there were formerly only five tenants on Peinchorran, where there are now twenty-six or twenty-seven, I have to state that I find no evidence whatever of that statement; and at the same time, I beg to explain that before the year 1811 almost all the crofters' land in Skye were held in common. In 1811 Peinchorran was divided into thirteen crofts, and there are now only thirteen crofts, although these have since been to some extent subdivided. I cannot tell the particular circumstances attending each subdivision. As I have already stated, I know that subdivision took place almost in every case, in consequence of the family arrangements of the crofters themselves, much against the will of the proprietor and his factor, who really have been hitherto unable to prevent subdivision in all cases where they would wish to do so. They have been successful in preventing it in only a few out of many cases. This delegate complains that he was prevented from stealing rushes in the deer forest to thatch his house. Now, while I think that this witness may be thankful for having got off so easily when found in the act of stealing the rushes, as acknowledged by himself, I have to add that I and my predecessors as factor, have frequently given permission to crofters in Braes or elsewhere to pull thatch in certain parts of the forest at certain times of the year. The terms on which this permission was granted were not, however, adhered to in many cases, which is probably the cause of the difficulty in which Mr Stewart found himself when he consented to give up the half of his spoil to the gamekeeper. This delegate complains, in common with other tenants from Braes, that although the hill of Ben Lee was taken from them seventeen or eighteen years ago, no abatement was made on their rents. As the dispute relating to Ben Lee lately attracted considerable public attention, it may be proper to give some information on the subject to the Commission. At the ontset, I have to state that I cannot admit as correct the account of matters given by the crofters of Peinchorran, Balmeanach, and Gedentailer. They have frequently stated to the public, and they have now made statements before the Commission, to the effect that they had the exclusive right to the grazings of Ben Lee. Now, with the exception of the Braes crofters themselves, who are most immediately interested in the matter, I believe it is perfectly well known that these townships never held exclusive right to the hill in question. From time immemorial the hill, or at any rate a very considerable part of it, was kept as a common pasture for Lord Macdonald's tenants. In not very remote times, Lord Macdonald was proprietor of the island of North Uist, and I have frequently heard that, for the sake of these tenants, and also for his tenants in the Isle of Skye, Ben Lee was set aside as a kind of common pasture ground for the tenants at the time of the annual market held until recently at Sligachan, in the neighbourhood of Ben Lee. Not only was the Hill subject to pasturage from Lord Macdonald's tenants in Uist and Skye, especially at the time of the markets, but it is also an undoubted fact, of which the strongest evidence can if necessary be adduced, that the tenants of other neighbouring townships had rights of pasturage on the hill of Lee, just as strong and effectual as the tenants of Balmeanach, Peinchorran, and Gedentailer, who quite recently claimed sole right to it. It is well known to the tenants now resident at Camustianaveg and to the tenants who were formerly at Scorr, as likewise the tenants of Pieni-

fieler and other parts of Braes, that they had rights of pasturage on the hill of Lee, and I have not the slightest doubt that the tenants of these townships will, if asked by the Commission to give evidence on that point, bear the fullest and amplest testimony on the subject. Some of them have told me that they had hesitation in coming forward, as threats were used against them at the time when the recent agitation was going on, for simply stating that they had the right mentioned. It is quite true that the tenants of Peinchorran, Balmeanach, and Gedentailer had right to keep a certain number of cattle, horses, and sheep, and no more. In the course of my negotiations with the tenants mentioned, I offered to them, for a settlement of the dispute, such a portion of the hill as, with the pasture they already possessed, would keep their summing; but this was refused, the tenants preferriug to take the whole hill as they now possess it, and pay the rent of £74, 15s., which was agreed to. I may likewise mention that before this agreement was made, I offered to the tenants alteruatively that their lands and Ben Lee should be valued together by two arbiters, and an oversman mutually chosen, to value the whole subjects together. This was declined, and the tenants preferred to pay the £74, 15s. already mentioned. It is somewhat unsatisfactory now to hear from some of the delegates that the tenants are still dissatisfied. I cannot say, however, that I am surprised. I produce a copy of a letter which I addressed to the tenants of Braes relative to the question which was between them and the proprietor shortly after the disputes arose. The witness states, as an evidence of the tenants having sole right to Ben Lee, that £3 were received of rent for a piece of arable ground at the base of Ben Lee from Lord Macdonald's gamekeeper. Even if this were proved to be true, it would not show that the tenants had right to the whole of Ben Lee, which is a piece of ground about two miles broad by two miles long, although it might show their right to that piece of ground itself. It is a piece of arable ground at the head of Loch Sligachan. I can find no trace of the rent having been received, although I think it a matter of little consequence whether it was ever received or not. After investigating the matter fully, what I have learned is that the £3 were paid to the tenants, not by Lord Macdonald but by Lord Middleton, a shooting tenant of Lord Macdonald. This witness states that on his father's croft there is not an acre worth putting seed in. Now I find from the plan of the estate that the croft coutains about five acres of ground, and is of the same general quality as other lands in Braes; and further, it has been reported to me as being well worth the rent which the tenant pays for it, if not considerably more, particularly if in the hauds of a person better able to cultivate it. The summing of the lot is four cows and twelve sheep, with a proportion of seven horses for the township. I may mention that the rent of this lot in the year 1825 was £7, 14s. 8½d. The delegate, Samuel Nicolson, crofter, Peinchorran, states that he believes that there were twenty families put into the township during the last thirty or forty years. This is not correct. It is perfectly correct that the crofters themselves have to a considerable extent subdivided their own lands on account of marriages, &c., and it is also true that the proprietor did not take harsh measures for preventing this subdivision; but the statement that the twenty families from other parts of Skye, as might be understood from the delegate's statements, were forced upon the three townships in question, is quite unfounded. This delegate appears to insinuate that the twenty families, which he says were forced upon the townships in question, pay rent to the landlord in addition to the original rents. If this be understood from the delegate's statement, it is perfectly false. The total rental of the three townships in question in 1829, was £280, 0s. 2¼d., and it is now only £200, 17s., there

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having been a reduction of rent over the whole estate in 1830. In consequence of subdivision, the lands were divided but not raised in rent. What this witness means by saying that Balmeannach had originally only eight families, and that this number was increased to twenty-three by others coming from different places, including Nairn, I cannot understand. There are now only seventeen families paying rent to Lord Macdonald, and in 1829 there were ten or eleven. The increase has taken place simply from subdivision since 1829. The rental from 1830 up to this date is identically the same. Although the tenants of Braes mention Tormichaig as having been cleared, they had nothing whatever to do with it, as it was in the Macdonald deer forest, which is separated from them, as already mentioned, by an arm of the sea. In the whole of the three townships in question there are only two or three cottars against whom a nominal rent of 5s. per annum is charged for the sites of their houses. With regard to the statements about drains, I have been able to find no trace of drainage interest being charged against the crofters in Braes, but if it was, the value of their land must have been permanently increased by the drainage. The delegate, Donald Buchanan, crofter, Ollach, states that there are no meal mills going on Lord Macdonald's property at the present day. I can scarcely fancy that this witness was ignorant of the fact that there is an excellent meal mill now in going order no further from him than Portree. There is another excellent meal mill in going order at Romisdale, six or seven miles beyond Portree. There is another mill at Tote, about five miles beyond Portree, also in going order. There is likewise a mill on the estate of Raasay. It is difficult to understand how this delegate can allege ignorance of these notorious facts. This delegate farther says the subdivision of lands could not have taken place without the will of the factor. This statement is very far from correct, as every factor who has ever acted in the north can testify. It is well known that, in consequence of changes in families by marriage and other causes, the subdivision of crofts and building of houses takes place in spite of the utmost efforts of both factor and proprietor. In consequence of the complaints of the people, and if subdivision is to be prevented, much stronger measures than any used heretofore will have to be resorted to. From my experience, I think that a special legislative enactment upon the subject will be necessary. With regard to the statement by John Macleod, Camustionaveg, that there were twenty-six families removed from the deer forest, I find, on referring to the rental of the Macdonald estate in 1830, that the townships which were removed were the following, viz.: —Moll containing four tenants, Kinchraggan containing two tenants, and Tormichaig containing twelve tenants. I never heard that any tenants or townships were, within the memory of man, removed for the sake of the Macdonald deer forest; and the tenants of these townships which were removed were, I understand, in almost every case supplied with lands, although removings were in those days much more common and less thought of than in the present time. John Nicolson, crofter, Sconser, states that the four nearest townships to Sconser were evicted thirty years ago for the purpose of forming a deer forest, and that they were placed among the tenants of Colliemore. I find that Colliemore was, about the year 1811, divided into thirty-six allotments, and there were then thirty-four tenants occupying the lands. I find that in the present day there are twenty-five principal crofts and eight small crofts, besides the missionary's croft, and seven cottars, so that the statement of Mr John Nicolson appears, to say the least of it, somewhat exaggerated. This delegate also makes a statement apparently to the effect that Lord Macdonald put some sheep on the forest, which he blames for grazing on his croft. This statement is

perfectly erroneous, if meant as it appears to be, as Lord Macdonald never had a single sheep upon the forest. The statement that Mackenzie, the gamekeeper, brought a cow and a horse to the township, and left it with about £3000, is one for which the witness is indebted to his imagination. I may mention that I have recently had the whole arable land of Colliemore fenced with a good wire fence. The tenants pay no part of the expense of putting it up or keeping it up. This tenant also complains that he is not allowed to keep a dog. It is perfectly true that as a general rule it is one of the conditions of set on the Macdonald estate that each tenant is not to keep a dog. The rule is that as many dogs are allowed for a township as are necessary for protecting their crops,—generally a dog at each end and one in the middle being allowed. The reason is, that dogs are most destructive, not only to the tenant's own stock, but also to game. On account of the recent change in the law relating to dog licences, I have this year had a number of complaints from crofters in various parts of Skye to the effect that dogs are alarmingly increasing, and doing an immense deal of damage, and that they ought to be put down. I have had very strong complaints on this subject. It frequently happens that one dog will kill, in a single night, from twenty to thirty lambs, and when there are a number of dogs the damage is frequently very great. I have not the slightest doubt that it would be for the advantage of the small crofters that the present law allowing each tenant with a few sheep to keep a dog would, with great benefit to the crofters themselves, be made stricter. The witness John Nicolson, crofter, Tote, states that when Dr Martin came to Unakill in 1839, the cheapest rent on the Tote crofts was £4, 10s. and the highest £6. At this present time the cheapest are £7, 8s. and the highest £10, 18s. I regret very much for his own sake that this witness should have omitted to mention that the chief cause of the rise in rent was that the tenants had a large piece of hill pasture recently added to their crofts. The delegate Norman Mackenzie, Uigshadder, states that not a tenth part of the crofters' stock belongs to themselves. I consider this statement, speaking moderately, to be very much exaggerated. I know the circumstances of the crofters throughout Skye very well indeed, and I feel quite confident that the majority of them are quite solvent, and able to pay their debts. There are some among them, however, as there are in every community, who are much involved, and this has very much been increased by the recent severe seasons. The delegate Neil Shaw, Eyre, states that the hill pasture of Eyre is only half a mile broad. It would be interesting to know whether this delegate measured the ground at the broadest or at the narrowest part, or where he measured it, as the average width will turn out to be considerably greater than is stated. This delegate only recently came from another estate, viz., Glendale, to the Macdonald estate, and if he thought the rent too high he should not have taken the croft. Referring to the statement made by Neil Nicolson, crofter, Torren, in which he says he was removed from that and sent to Strath. This is a case in which it is clear that the crofter was removed from a moderately good into a very good place. He was, in fact, apparently kicked up stairs. He now occupies a holding where the proceeds of the club stock pay, or very nearly pay, his whole rent. For his five or six cows, his house, his fuel, and his horses he pays nothing whatever, and he has practically fixity of tenure. In fact, I can imagine no crofter in a better position. It has, in fact, been a matter of astonishment to me how this crofter and many others on the Macdonald estates, whom I know to be equally well off, have come forward to make any complaint to the Commission. Indeed, I can account for it only on the supposition that these crofters thought that if there was any old pieces of land, grazings, or any other good things going

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at the disposal of the Commission, they might as well get a share as others. Referring to statements made by delegates on the Kilmuir estate, I may briefly observe as follows, viz. :—The delegate John Gillies states that he got no compensation for a house which he says cost him £15, from which he was removed. I never heard this before, and no complaint was made to the other subject. I am well aware that every case of removal on the estate of Kilmuir, Major Fraser fully compensated the tenants not only for their houses, but also paid them sums to cover the expense of removal. Gillies was allowed to remain in his house for a year or two after he should have removed and after Mr Urquhart came into possession of his farm. Peter Macdonald, Glen Hinnisdale, while complaining of the condition of the tenants in Glen Hinnisdale, says with reference to the breaking up of the proposal made by the tenants to Major Fraser, that they should give up their land conditionally, that he is of opinion that the withdrawal of the tenants from their proposed offer to remove arose from bribery in the part of the proprietor. It is scarcely necessary for me to say that this strong false statement and calumny took me by surprise, and were it not for its absurdity would have filled me with indignation. Suffice it to say, that the statement is perfectly false and unfounded. Throughout the whole negotiations with the tenants as to this proposal, I may mention that I told them, on behalf of Major Fraser, that he did not wish them to remove ; but that if they resolved to do so, he would grant them, speaking generally, two years of the increased rent as a present, besides taking all their effects at valuation. As the circumstances are fully detailed in Major Fraser's statement, I need say nothing further on the subject, beyond strong regret that the delegate should have committed himself to so false and calumnious an allegation. As to rates, there is no doubt that tenants have good reason to complain grievously of the school rates recently imposed, which are a grievous burden. The provisions of the Education Act as to punishing defaulters are, owing to the expense attending them, on account of great distances having to be travelled, &c., practically unworkable. If boards themselves were granted the power of inflicting small fines on defaulting parents, the Act would work much better, and the education be more efficient. It might be possible, if any such provision were made, to give parents the power of appealing to the sheriff in the event of their being dissatisfied with the decision of the school board on a case to be stated for them by the school board. Malcolm Nicolson, crofter, Sheader, says that the factor told the tenants of Sheader that they would have to remove if they did not pay the increase of rent recently imposed. This is not quite correct, as what I said was, that the tenants having agreed to pay the rent, would of course have to pay it as stipulated, and that tenants not paying the rents agreed on would have to give up their holdings. I may mention that when the last rise of rent on the Kilmuir estate took place, the tenant in question, and all other tenants, had the offer of taking two years of the increased rent as a present, and giving up their holdings if they preferred ; but this offer was accepted by not a single tenant. The delegate, Norman Stewart, says that the best part of the hill pasture was taken from the tenants of Valtos. Now, I am not aware that the tenants of Valtos lost any hill pasture whatever since Major Fraser become proprietor of Kilmuir. The tenants of all the east side of the Kilmuir estate are now as formerly in possession of their full grazing rights, except these townships, viz., Deig, Glasphen, and Brogaig. These three townships had grazing rights in the Kilmuir common, of which they were deprived, and there a piece of the common was cut off, for which they got a reduction of rent, but the grazings on the other township on the east side were in no way interfered with by that operation.

Although this tenant complains so much of poverty, he last Whitsunday took the neighbouring lot which was formerly occupied by his brother, and he is in very fair circumstances. I know that as a matter of fact he has not to go south, as he states, in quest of labour. He almost never leaves home. A crofter named Archibald Macdonald states that his brother was warned for an expression of opinion connected with a school board election. Now I cannot understand what this witness means. In the first place, there never was any such expression as the delegate states of the expression of public opinion. No doubt, rate payers have frequently met and endeavoured to avoid polls by compromise, but this is common everywhere, and no subject of complaint, but rather the contrary. The statements of this delegate as to oppression by landlord and factor are all quite unfounded and untrue. In the next place the delegate's brother could never, as alleged, have been deprived of his holding for the causes stated, or for any other cause, as he never at any time was a tenant upon the estate, or had any holding from Major Fraser. This delegate should also have stated the following facts, viz., that his brother John Macdonald is still a crofter on the estate of Major Fraser, and is in possession of the very holding of which he says his deceased brother was deprived. He should also have stated, that last year he himself applied for two crofts of Major Fraser's at Garrafad, and that Major Fraser accepted him as tenant; and further, that he this year wished to give up one of the crofts and that it has not as yet been taken off his hands, with a view to preventing the increase of small holdings. The delegate Donald Mathieson states that he was promised a croft which he did not get, being now in possession of only one half of it. The truth is that this tenant was promised the whole croft as soon as room could be made for the tenant leaving it. This crofter called upon me a few days before the meeting of the Commission, and stated that he insisted upon the present occupant of the other half of the croft being turned out, and his getting the whole of it. This I declined to do until another place would be got for the other man. Referring to the statements made by the tenants of Elgol generally, I have to explain that in no part of Skye have I experienced greater difficulty in preventing the subdivision of land than in Elgol. The tenants should have mentioned, that I said to them at the last rent collection, on their complaining of being crowded, &c., that I could see my way to recommending the proprietor to let them have the neighbouring township of Glasnakill if they could pay the stocks, and if the present tenant would voluntarily give it up. If he would not do so, I said that if I was factor at the time, and there was no essential change of circumstances, I believed I could recommend their getting it at the termination of the present tenant's lease, although I could not absolutely bind myself or my successor. I may mention I actually did apply to Mr Bower, the tenant of Glasnakill, asking whether he could see his way to give up Glasnakill, so as to give more room to the Strathaird tenants, whose condition I wished to improve, but he said he could not do it at present, and of course we could not force him to do it, because he has a regular lease. With regard to statements made by crofters on the Macleod estate, the first delegate examined was Malcolm M'Caskill, Dunvegan. This delegate's statement was a written one, and therefore the less excusable for its inaccuracy. It is throughout of a highly sensational character. He states that there is no doctor in the parish. Now, besides the ordinary parochial doctor, Dr Campbell, there are two other medical men in the parish, viz., Dr Fraser, Edinbane, and Dr M'Lean, Orbost, and I may add Dr Nicol Martin of Glendale, all of whom are in the habit of giving advice and medicine, in most cases gratuitously. With regard to the assessment on his holding com-

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plained of by the delegate, he should appeal to the county valuation court if he feels aggrieved. With regard to the charge made against the returning officer in the late school board election, it is utterly without foundation. The delegate was a candidate for election, but was unsuccessful, and no doubt feels much chagrined at having received only a very few votes, instead of the large number which he expected. He complains of candidates having been admitted into the polling booth,—his own ignorance alone can account for this charge, as the delegate would not have made it had he been aware that candidates had a right, under certain conditions, to be present within the polling booth. It is not the rule on the Macleod estate, as stated by the delegate, that incoming tenants pay the arrears due by the outgoing ones. I have to explain, however, that where the outgoing tenant leaves arrears, the factor generally tries to make a bargain with the incoming tenant to pay as much as he can get for the houses and other effects left by the outgoing tenant, and this he places to the credit of the arrears of rent. This is of course to the advantage of the outgoing tenant, as it saves him from being prosecuted for the balance of arrears left by him. I may mention that though sometimes the factor succeeds in making such a bargain, very frequently he does not succeed,—that is to say, where the outgoing tenant leaves nothing of any value. With reference to the statements made by tenants at Bracadale, on the Macleod estate, as to the proceedings taken by tacksmen against their sub-tenants at Ferrinlea and Carbost, I have simply to state that the proceedings complained of were adopted to compel the sub-tenants in question to fulfil their obligations which they had undertaken. It is very well known in Skye that Mr Cameron, Tallisker, and Mr Scott, Drynoch, are both men of high character, and most kind and considerate to their sub-tenants. It is not easy to see upon what principle the sub-tenants can be relieved of the obligations which they have voluntarily undertaken. At the same time, in most cases it would be advisable that the persons presently occupying the position of sub-tenants should if possible hold direct from the landlord. Being on the spot when Alexander Cameron, Cuilore, made a strong statement about something he alleged I had said about the Cuilore tenants, I then took the opportunity of contradicting, on the part of Macleod of Macleod and myself, the statement made. I observe that the Rev. Mr M'Lean, minister of Bracadale, mentioned that Macleod of Macleod and his factor were very indifferent about the tenants. I am very sorry that Mr M'Lean should entertain this opinion. We did not know that he entertained it. Even if we entertained the same opinion of him, we would not as a matter of Christian charity have mentioned it publicly to a Royal Commission. As matter of fact, I may say that both Macleod of Macleod and my humble self are very far from indifferent to the condition of the tenants on the Macleod estate. On recent occasions we have shown this, in supplying them with potatoes and oats when they fell into poverty. Of course these are to be paid for, but still we had to make the advance. I myself exerted myself on behalf of the people throughout Skye, I may say—though I say it with reluctance and solely in consequence of this charge—when they lost their potatoes; having spent a great part of my time, I am glad to say successfully, in collecting funds for their assistance. I have not been able to go over the whole evidence of the crofters, but I hope to do so yet. I have not specially touched upon the story of the 'brave old man,' about which I shall simply state a few particulars. This man was a tenant of Totescore, on the Kilmuir estate. He was formerly at Uig, and was removed from Uig to Totescore, with the view of bettering his condition. Immediately upon his entry to Totescore, the tenants there said he behaved very badly indeed to the outgoing tenant, as may be borne out by their

testimony if necessary. He afterwards became a very disagreeable neighbour, keeping more horses than he was entitled to keep, and making new regulations about the horses and also about the cattle. He allowed his horses to go about the farm untended, and in particular he allowed them to trespass upon the neighbouring farm of Monkstadt, and likewise his cattle to trespass upon the neighbouring farm of Scudaburgh. When they were pinfolded he would give no satisfaction. He would come forward and tender 7½d. or 6d. or something like that for his cattle and horses being upon the township and doing an immense deal of damage. On the farm of Monkstadt, I may state, he allowed his horse once to trespass and graze for a long time on the ground occupied by the milk cows, and after it was there for two or three days he came forward and offered 7½d., I think. The tenant would not accept this, and the consequence was that Mr Nicolson left his horse for five or six weeks on the farm till the tenant was sick tired of it, and would have given him any money to take it away, or if something would happen to the horse. Well, the tenant was about to take proceedings for the sale of these horses, according to law, and one night, I understand, they were taken away in some strange manner from Monkstadt and disappeared. I had repeatedly remonstrated with this man in the presence of the whole tenants, on account of his conduct, for two or three years before that. He was charged with misbehaviour as a neighbour before all the tenants, and was very severely reprimanded by me at the rent collections. In 1875 he was warned to quit on account of his conduct; but thinking that this would frighten him and that he would improve, he was left as he was, with a warning, however, that he would be put out if he did not mend his ways, and look after his stock of sheep and cattle, and herd them properly. In 1877 the thing became utterly unbearable, and he was warned again. Then it was determined he should be removed; but the proprietor had it in view, I believe, privately, to give him another place, though he did not mention that to him. There was a decree of removal obtained against him before the sheriff. Upon that decree he was charged to remove in June, I think, and in July he was turned out. Before he was turned out I wrote to the man telling him not to occasion himself any expense—that if he resisted, considerable expense would fall upon him, which he would have to pay. He paid very little attention to this. In fact, he thought he could remain in spite of us, and on the 13th July I wrote to his brother-in-law, a ground officer at Kilmuir, to see Nicolson and try every means in his power to get him to remove quietly, and to tell him that great expense would fall upon him if he refused. He paid no attention to this, and maintained he would not go. He was then turned out. After being turned out he came back again, and I personally wrote to him warning him of the expense he was incurring. He employed an agent, and the agent also advised him not to be putting himself to expense. But all that would not do, and then, after he had gone in a second time, a petition for warrant of ejection, and also for interdict, was taken out against him. This was in August. There were conclusions against him for payment of damages for entering the farm after he had been legally warned. On this summons a decree was obtained, which I now hold in my hand; and there was decree pronounced against him by the sheriff for £55, 3s. 2d., including damages and expenses. The man went to Inverness, thinking he was getting neither law nor justice in Portree, I believe, and consulted another agent there, who also pointed out his folly, and told him it was better for him to go quietly. He then yielded, and came to a settlement in December; and out of pity for the man, and knowing that he was headstrong through ignorance, I voluntarily struck off £25 from the sums decerned for against him by the sheriff, and

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that left due by him a sum of £30, 2s. 8d. I gave him credit for the value of his houses and other effects which he left, amounting to about £16, and he had to pay only the remainder. Of that remainder I believe the law expenses in all those proceedings, so far as I was personally concerned, were about £10 or £11. I think that was what I got. The rest was paid to sheriff officers who were employed in ejecting him; and the remainder was credited.

8284. I thought the sum payable by him was reduced to £9?—£30. The amount the sheriff found him liable in was £55, 3s. 2d., and I struck off £25. I credited him in the value of his house, £16, and that left about £14. I believe it was about £9 that I got. The rest was paid to sheriff officers, and the remainder was credited to the incoming tenant. Neither the proprietor nor I pocketed it. The man was got out in December, and the incoming tenant was claiming damages for not getting possession at Whitsunday, and he got that money, as he was entitled to it. He had been keeping his stock at expense elsewhere, and he was entitled to the money.

8285. You are in possession of a statement from Major Fraser, of Kilmuir?—Yes.

8286. Then it would be convenient if you would read it.—'*Statement as to Kilmuir, by Major Fraser.*—Some comments having passed at Uig and Staffia in reference to the administration of above estate, Major Fraser offers the following remarks:—Whilst Major Fraser cannot follow all the little stories which have been recounted, some of which he never heard of before, whilst others seem trimmed up for the occasion, he just refers to the two or three that seem to him most noticeable. First as to Glenhinistle, in the spring of 1882, a proposal was made to him by the tenantry of that glen, that if he would allow them a sum equal to two years' rent of their possession, and take their cattle at valuation, that they would be willing to leave the glen in peace at first term of Whitsunday; the proprietor, whilst replying that he had no desire that they should leave except of their own will, agreed to relieve them of their lands on the proposed terms, agreeing at the same time also to take their sheep at valuation, the only condition being that all should keep by the arrangement. Shortly after this, the tenants sent in a fresh notification that they would also like their crops taken at valuation; this the proprietor also then agreed to. Shortly after that a farther note was sent in, that the tenants would like the roofs of their houses taken at valuation; this being also agreed to, it was thought that matters were now indeed finally adjusted; but no, for just a little before the term a further condition was sent in that the tenants would like their farm implements and household effects taken at valuation. Major Fraser seeing some little difficulty as to this, declined the proposal, but proposed instead to allow each tenant three pounds in lieu thereof, with permission to the tenant to dispose of such otherwise for his own behoof as he might think proper; this was gratefully acceded to, and the arrangements seemed now complete. The term was now approaching, when within a few days of it, the factor was informed that the tenants expected the various allowances would be paid on the term day; response was made that all such would be paid on terms being implemented; the term then arrived, and nobody left. It has now been stated by the delegate from Glenhinistle, in rather objectionable terms, that he understands several of the tenants were induced to remain by the proprietor, as he did not think he could let the glen for as much as payable by the present tenants. Major Fraser thinks this statement bears absurdity on its face; but if this is not so, and unless the tenants now think that the Government is now to hand them over the glen,

'Major Fraser will be happy to carry out the same arrangement with them 'at Whitsunday 1883 as was proposed for Whitsunday 1882. Owing to 'the near approach of the term, a little further delay beyond it might be 'required for necessary arrangements, but that, if desired, could easily be 'met. As to the story of a tenant who was removed from Tottescore, his 'memory seems to have failed so far, that he omitted to state that his 'removal arose from the fact of his being a very troublesome neighbour; 'and such complaints were made to the proprietor in reference to his 'stock trespassing over the neighbouring farms, and of a dog of his disturb-'ing the sheep, and of his refusing to come to terms in any way, that after 'much trouble it was resolved to remove him, which was done. The 'removal was one simply in the interest of discipline, for as to the pro-'prietor, nothing of an unpleasant nature had occurred as betwixt him and 'the tenant, and he had no interest of his own to remove him. The tenant, 'or rather the late tenant, came to see him some time ago at Nairn, and so 'far as he (the proprietor) was concerned, he would have been quite pleased 'to have given him another suitable lot had such been available at the 'time. Major Fraser has not noted any other things that he thinks worth 'referring to as to removals, unless that he sees Bornaskitag was cleared, 'but this must of course be a mistake, as there are still fifty tenants there; 'no doubt, some other place must have been meant. A Norman Stewart 'at Valtos makes great complaints; all Major Fraser can say as to such is, 'that in 1881 he (Stewart) signed along with other tenants a loyal letter, 'which was sent to Major Fraser, in which the tenants subscribed them-'selves his grateful tenants; as to what he says about roads, he must 'know what Major Fraser has done in that way up to the march of 'Valtos. As to Archibald Macdonald, Garrafadd, he complains of high 'rents, &c.; why then did he apply so earnestly for land in Garrafadd, and 'go to it all the way from Kilmuir? He knew the rent and boundaries, 'neither of which have been altered since he went there about two years 'ago. Major Fraser is at last glad to be able to agree with some one, and 'so he agrees with a John Mackenzie at Maligar, that the news from Ire-'land had a good deal of effect in Skye. Now as to rents, it is correct no 'doubt what Stewart at Valtos says that the rents were raised there three 'times, the first time about twenty-six years ago, the valuation being then 'made by a competent agriculturist. A good many years afterwards, a rise of '5s. was made, to provide them with medical attendance; whilst about seven 'years ago, being nineteen after the first valuation, the lands were again 'valued by a practical farmer; in the interval the proprietor having much 'enhanced the value of his estate by good roads from Uig to the march of 'Valtos, and all round by Kilmaluack and Kilmuir. He had also largely 'subscribed to the Skye railway, which he considers has much added to 'the value of his estate. It may also be mentioned that in 1876, when 'the rents were altered, the whole four hundred tenants agreed without 'exception to take on their lands, although they were each offered a sum 'equal to two years' rent, if they preferred leaving; they however preferred 'remaining on, and paid their rents well, for Major Fraser sees by an 'arrear list in his possession of 11th June 1880, being the year previous 'to that in which the Irish Land Act was passed, that his Martinmas 'arrears then amounted to just £63, 3s. 7½d., of which only one item of '£2, 12s. was considered irrecoverable. As to the question of rents, hav-'ing purchased his estate under the laws of the country, he considered he 'had a perfect right to lay it out and improve it as he thought fit, though 'whilst doing so, he thinks he showed some consideration to his small 'tenants (now called crofters), inasmuch as he never advertised any of their 'lots, or put such to competition in any way, but for which (under the

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'action of the present agitation) he does not appear to receive much 'thanks; were they, however, now to be offered for competition, he is 'inclined to think that the introduction of some skilled agricul- 'turists from other parts would have a good effect in the district, whilst 'the rental would probably be thus considerably increased, and no doubt 'ultimately very much so. As to what is averred by some, that the 'increase of rents has been too much felt, Major Fraser doubts if the 'lowering of the rents would lead to any material improvement, if any, in 'the position of the people; he goes so far as to think that in many 'instances, if even the small tenants got their lands rent free, their com- 'fort would not be substantially increased, for if industry disappeared with 'rent, the tenants might not be much the gainers. Major Fraser may 'further observe that, as to the four hundred small tenants on his Skye 'estate, he has allowed them an abatement of 25 per cent. for last two 'years off their rents, which for that time has cut off any return from the 'townships affected on Major Fraser's outlays, whilst on the sum total it 'has about brought back the rents to what they were previously. On an 'average then, the tenants for the last two years could hardly have suffered 'much from increase of rents; whilst during the previous four years, things 'seemed to have gone on much as usual, besides Major Fraser also sub- 'mits as his opinion that the question (if any) should be not so much 'what amount the rents were generally raised some years ago, but what 'is the present value of the holdings; and he further submits that if care- 'fully compared with rents generally over the Highlands, they will be found 'very moderate, some might say very low. In the opinion of the writer, 'the excessive development of the crofter system, aggravated by the past 'two bad seasons, is the cause of most of the poverty in Skye; to this must, 'no doubt, be added the effects of agitation. From his own experience in 'other countries and his knowledge otherwise, he has no doubt that a cer- 'tain amount of emigration properly arranged to suitable countries would 'be the best remedy, mainly for the benefit of those leaving, but also for 'that of those left behind. In support of this view, he may refer to the 'Statistical Account of the parish of Kilmuir, drawn up in 1840 by the 'late Rev. Alexander MacGregor, a well-known and much respected 'minister. The following is a quotation:—"The primary cause of the late '"destitution was a redundancy of population, occasioned by an injudicious '"system of management. The error of the system of management lay in '"the frequency of early and improvident marriages, encouraged by the '"introduction of the lotting system, which in its turn gave rise to bad '"husbandry." The writer then refers to the various causes which after- 'wards aggravated their poverty, and afterwards remarks—"The only pre- '"ventive remedy is to reduce the population by a Government system of '"emigration." In the accounts of various other Skye parishes the same 'remedy is suggested. If the Government should think proper to advance 'money for land improvements, of course so much the better for Skye. As 'to the idea that destitution may, in future, be averted by spreading the 'crofter system over Skye, the writer does not agree with it. In the first 'place, even if the proprietor could be induced to exchange a certain rent, 'payable by one tenant, for a less rent payable by a number of tenants, 'how as a rule are the tenants to provide the necessary stock? Secondly, 'should they manage such, the relief would just be of a temporary char- 'acter, for the system would carry its results with it, until ultimately all 'Skye in crofterland would find itself as it is now seen in the townships. 'Major Fraser believes the disturbed state of things in Skye very much 'due to agitation in consequence of late events in Ireland, non-vindication 'of the law in certain parts of Skye, and bad seasons, whilst lately their

'hopes have been much raised by expectations of certain changes. Major 'Fraser regrets very much having had to write at all on the subject, as 'he would much rather have avoided all public controversy on it, having 'a personal liking for his tenantry, none of whom he has known to speak 'of him hitherto as one or two appear to have done lately. However, as 'his property in common with others has been so much touched on, he 'has endeavoured to reply in a quiet way, and he hopes accurately.—19*th* '*May* 1883.' I have also a statement by the valuator, which I may read, —the man who was employed to value the lands at Kilmuir. '*Statement* '*by William Malcolm, Farmer, Crook, in the County of Nairn.*—At the 'request of Major Fraser, I examined in 1876 the smaller holdings on his 'estate of Kilmuir, Skye, with a view of readjusting rents. In doing so, 'I consulted parties resident in Skye, and competent to judge the values 'of such subjects, and I found that on inspection these values bore no com- 'parison with those of such subjects in the part of the country where I 'reside. The miserable system of cultivation, and the great loss and waste 'of land, struck me very forcibly at the time; and I considered that, 'even in these circumstances, the respective holdings were well worth 'the rents put upon them. The soil in Kilmuir is good, in many 'places exceptionally rich, and well worth cultivation. I have no doubt 'it is capable of growing the best of crops, and more especially oats, 'the crop most needed in the district. I consider the great drawback 'in the crofter system (as regards Kilmuir, with which part of Skye 'alone I am well acquainted) is the poor way in which the land is 'farmed. It is impossible that the land can make any profitable 'return with the present system of cultivation, and I am sure that one 'acre properly cultivated would be of more advantage to the crofter than 'several acres worked as at present. I have heard many complaints made 'of the climate there, but on my first visit I saw splendid crops of oats at 'Uig, growing on land which some time previously had been improved and 'manured well, and wrought after a five-course shift by the proprietor, and 'these crops were as near maturity as any in the county of Nairn were 'at that time. The crops of clover, hay, and turnips were also excellent. 'I have no doubt the climate would be improved by draining, liming, and 'proper cultivation; at all events, crops would ripen much earlier, and the 'straw would be strengthened and hardened, instead of being, as at present 'it is, weak and soft and incapable of resisting wet, and the return would 'be more than doubled. I have read the newspaper reports of the evi- 'dence hitherto given before the Commission, and it seems to me that a 'great deal of it goes to show that the land is exhausted by repeated 'cropping. I am very sure, that if it was only farmed as it ought to be, 'it would not only be much improved, but it would also be susceptible of 'continuous cropping by proper rotation. I cannot help thinking that it 'would be a good thing if the present holdings were either incresaed or 'lessened. If made larger, the holders should have land sufficient to enable 'them to keep a pair of horses to do their work, and the holders should 'be bound to farm after some approved system of cropping; or if lessened, 'the holders should be located near the sea, and if provided with proper 'boats and materials, and land sufficient to grow potatoes and vegetables, 'and keep, say for a cow or a few pigs (thus making the sea their principal 'stay), I am sure they would in the end be more comfortable and 'prosperous. I would farther add, that whatever amount of land any one 'has should be all cultivated yearly, and instead of what is called the 'lazy-bed system, that on part of it clover and grass seeds should be regu- 'larly sown and turnips grown, which would not only improve the con- 'dition of the land, but be of great service (in feeding in the winter

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'season) the stock summered on their grazings, and on which at present 'they seem so much to depend. The style of cropping now carried on I 'consider a loss to all concerned; but I have no doubt that if the estate 'were cultivated fairly well, it would grow corn for sale after supplying its 'own population. The present holders, with whom I sympathise, and 'whose best interests I have in view in these statements, are very far 'behind so far as farming is concerned, and with their present appliances 'and knowledge of farming are, many of them, after a great amount of labour 'to themselves, scarcely above want. They would require therefore to be 'assisted and taught to till their lands properly, which would put them in 'a better position, than if they held the land for nothing, working it as 'they now do. This would be the means of growing a greatly increased 'amount of food for home consumption, and in my opinion be the first 'thing to bring about plenty and contentment amongst the people.— 'WILLIAM MALCOLM. *Nairn, 19th May* 1883.'

8287. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Was this the person who made both valuations?—No; it was not he who valued in 1856; it was Mr Munro.

8288. *The Chairman.*—Was this the second valuation?—Yes.

8289. On which the last increase of rent was founded?—Yes. The first was in 1856, and I think the second was in 1876.

8290. And then there was a small increase?—Of 5s., to provide partly for the doctor, the proprietor himself paying the remainder. I beg also to submit the following Notes on Kilmuir, 1882:—'As showing how little 'the parish of Kilmuir has progressed in point of rental from early times 'to this date, as compared with the county of Inverness at large, and thus 'indicating what scope there may be yet in store for its future develop- 'ment, the following comparison is given. It appears that the valuation 'roll of the whole county in the year 1644, exclusive of the burgh of 'Inverness, amounted in pounds Scots to £132,225, 17s. 8d., the rental in '1881, in pounds sterling, and exclusive of railways and canals, amount- 'ing to £322,873, 17s. 9d.; increase from pounds Scots to pounds sterling 'from 1644 to 1881 being about 144 per cent. Now in 1644 the valua- 'tion roll of the parish of Kilmuir amounted in pounds Scots to just '£3866, 13s. 4d., whilst in 1881 it amounts in pounds sterling to '£5827, 10s. 6d., being an increase from pounds Scots to pounds sterling of 'only 50 per cent., as against 144 on the part of the whole county. 'For further information on the subject, *vide* an interesting little work on 'the Land Statistics of Inverness, Ross, and Cromarty, by Hugh C. Fraser, 'Inverness, from which the above information as to the valuation of 1644 'is taken. It may be mentioned that Skye, until railway communication 'was opened up a few years ago to Strome Ferry, was, as compared with 'many parts of Inverness-shire, very remote; whilst farm husbandry in the 'island has to a great extent gone on much in the old way, which applies 'very much to Kilmuir, that parish having only recently been opened up by 'good roads. It may be also added that in the olden time Kilmuir parish 'formed a much more important district than of late. Duntulm Castle, 'known as the ancient seat of the Lords of the Isles, occupied its position 'in the northern extremity of the parish, whilst a noted monastery, dedi- 'cated to St Columba, stood on an island on Loch Columkill, not far from 'the present residence of Monkstadt, which became the mansion of the 'Macdonald estates on Duntulm Castle being disused. These great 'places had their smaller surroundings, and it was probably in part owing 'to all such, in conjunction with the fact of there being such a great 'extent of good land throughout the parish, that much attention was at 'one time drawn to it, whilst the decrease of the importance of the neigh- 'bourhood has for a time, perhaps, caused the district to be now compara-

'tively less known and inquired after, unless by those interested in the noted sheep and cattle of the district, and by travellers visiting Quiraing and other spots of interest in that picturesque neighbourhood. It was thus that, owing to its early fame, an attempt was made in 1598 to improve the lands of Kilmuir by letting such to an influential Lowland Company, and which transaction might have been attended with good results, were it not that succeeding feuds betwixt the clans of Macdonald and Macleod desolated the district, and in time put an end to the arrangement. Such, indeed, was the character of Kilmuir as an arable district, that it was formerly known as the "Granary of Skye." It is so referred to by Pennant, who travelled through it in the year 1772, and it was on his way there that, passing through Uig, he noticed the heavy crops waving with the breeze, and thus described that place as "laughing with corn." As to Loch Columkill, it is now drained, its former bed forming an expanse of rich alluvial soil, annually yielding great crops of hay. The lake extended to nearly 300 acres; the work of draining it became a heavy one during the years it occupied, the outlet from what was lake to the sea being nearly a mile in length, whilst part of it is 35 feet deep, and 114 feet wide at the top, gradually sloping in to 9 feet wide at the bottom. Dean Munro, in his work of 1594, refers to the "fertile land "in Skye excelling aney uther ground for grassing and pastoures;" whilst Martin, who writes in 1716, in remarking on the arable land in parts of Skye, speaks of the soil "as very grateful to the husbandman," and mentions the great returns of oats and barley that he heard of in certain places. He also speaks of "Lochuge as a proper place for settling "a magazine or colony," being one of the places most abounding with fish. MacCulloch, in his instructive work of 1824, also refers to the "Plain of Kilmuir, emphatically called the Granary of Skye." Perhaps the most exhaustive work on the agriculture of the Hebrides yet published is that drawn up under the direction of the Board of Agriculture in the year 1811. The following is an extract from it:—"In parish of "Kilmuir, in the the district of Totternish, there are 4000 acres of as "fine loam and clay upon a gravelly bottom as are to be found in Scot"land. With good management, that land would, in Skye, be worth "three guineas per acre, in East Lothian five. Some fields have been "under crops of barley and oats without any rest for twenty years, and "with scarcely any manure. The whole district is admirably calculated "for turnip husbandry, and for the established rotations of crops on the "best of soils." It may be added, that the system of farming generally pursued continues much the same as it was in 1811, and consequently portions of the land have since been almost continuously kept under grain crops, still producing very much better returns than could possibly be expected under such a mode of agriculture. Also, owing to circumstances, the lands generally are not at present laid out to best advantage, but when this is remedied, and a general system of improvement is entered upon, much may be hoped for under it, and the present revenues of the district will then prove no criterion of what they may be brought to, whilst the agricultural and fishing populations may expect to reap as much benefit from the works to be carried out, as may accrue to the employers from their labour. Should any of the minerals prove workable, or should any works be started,—such as the manufacture of Roman cement, as has been already proposed, or of porcelain,—such of course would form invaluable sources of industry in the district. As to harbours, that of Uig, by the erection of suitable quays, might be converted into an excellent one for general purposes; that of Duntulm, overlooked by the ruins of the old castle, is also available, as well as that of

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'Cuidrach, the present residence being on its north side; whilst Castle 'Uistean lies to the south of it, not far from the ruin of Peinduin, also on 'the same farm, and once the residence of "Flora Macdonald." The 'following is a state of the acreage of the farms and townships and average 'rents per acre, payable by the tenants "in cumulo" on the estate of 'Kilmuir, which includes the parish of Kilmuir and a division of the 'parish of Snizort, also the average rents per acre of the large tenants, or 'tenants of farms, and the average rents per acre of the small tenants, or 'tenants of townships:—

	A.	R.	P.			
'Farms Arable, &c. . . .	4,561	2	33			
' „ Pasture, &c. . . .	17,882	2	26			
				22,444	1	19
'Townships Arable, &c. . .	4,149	1	0			
' „ Pasture, &c. . .	18,402	3	11			
				22,552	0	11
				44,996	1	30

'Practically, then, the estate consists of say 45,000 acres, of which say 'one-half or 22,500 acres, are possessed as farms, and other 22,500 acres 'as townships. The rental of 22,500 acres of farms, as from Whitsunday '1881 to Whitsunday 1882, is £4071 15 0
'and rental of 22,500 acres of townships is 3000 6 6
' £7072 1 6

'Thus the whole estate pays per acre rather under . . £0 3 1¾
'The farms pay rather under 0 3 7½
'The township pay exactly 0 2 8

'About one-fifth of the land of the farms is arable, whilst the proportion 'of the arable land of the townships is rather less, being betwixt a fifth 'and a sixth; but nevertheless much more land is tilled by the small 'tenants than by the large ones, so much of the arable land on the large 'farms being kept under grass.'

8291. Will you have the kindness to state the names of those for whom you are factor at the present moment?—I act for Lord Macdonald, M'Leod of M'Leod, Major Fraser of Kilmuir, Mr Macdonald of Skeabost, Mr Macalister of Strathaird.

8292. Are the system of management and the scale of rental upon these various estates homogeneous and similar, or do they vary a good deal?—On the estate of Kilmuir of course the rents have been raised, on the others I may say they are similar.

8293. You think there is no essential difference in the scale of rental between the Macdonald and the M'Leod estates and the other two you have mentioned?—I don't think it; nothing essential.

8294. And with reference to evictions and changes, you think the practice of these estates are nearly identical?—Yes.

8295. You state that a reduction of rental on the Macdonald estates was effected in the year 1830 to the extent of 25 per cent.; what was the cause of the reduction at that time?—I believe that before then the prices of cattle were higher.

8296. You think that the reduction at that time had reference to a change in the value of produce?—Of cattle; in fact, I know it was so.

8297. Then subsequent to that there was a slight rise of 4 or 5 per

cent.?—Yes; that was the rise made by Macdonald, Tormore, which has been so much spoken of.

8298. What was the cause that prompted that small addition to the rental?—I have no doubt that Mr Macdonald, Tormore, thought that when other proprietors throughout the country were getting very much larger rises, surely Lord Macdonald was entitled to 4 or 5 per cent. He was a good practical judge of land too, and believed the lands to be worth it.

8299. You have stated, therefore, that in the year 1830 there was a great diminution of rent, and that there has been subsequently a small augmentation of rent. In the course of our inquiry, certainly with reference to the Macdonald estates, the question of rent was not voluntarily or prominently brought forward by the delegates whom we examined; but what was commonly alleged was this, that, though the rent had not been raised, there had been a gradual deterioration in the quality of the soil, in the productive power of the soil. If that was the case, what was a reasonable or low rental formerly, might now be a high rental. Do you think there has been practically a considerable deterioration in the productive power of the soil in the smaller crofts?—I think so.

8300. Very great?—Very considerable, on account of bad farming.

8301. But is it also not in some degree owing to the smallness of the arable part of the croft, which does not enable the crofter to allow the soil to rest?—Probably that cause effects it too, but I understand that in other parts of the country, where the crofts are fully as small, a system of rotation of cropping regularly goes on—in other parts of the north.

8302. But still you think there has been a deterioration of the soil?—Yes, from excessive cropping.

8303. You attribute the smallness of the crofts to two causes—partly to the introduction at a remote period of additional tenants upon the crofting area, but chiefly to the subdivision in consequence of the multiplication of families?—Yes.

8304. Whatever the source is, there has been an increase of population upon the area?—Yes.

8305. And your cure for that is emigration?—I leave that to the Commission.

8306. But the remedy which you principally recommend is emigration?—I can see my way to no other.

8307. Now, with reference to the size of crofts, a very frequent complaint to us has been not only the small size of crofts—the small area of the arable—but the insufficient amount of common pasture, and the withdrawal at various periods of common pasture from the township. Do you think that there has been in past times an inconsiderate withdrawal of the common pasture from the townships in many cases?—I do not think it was inconsiderate, because the tenants could not at the time stock it. They were poor, and when sheep became valuable they were not able to compete with other persons who wanted the land, and on that account the tenants were not able to take up the pasture lands and to stock them.

8308. But I am not speaking of pasture lands which were unstocked. I am speaking of lands which were actually the common pasture of the township at the time they were withdrawn. Do you think that in those times the common pasture was withdrawn, or diminished, really because there was not a proper stock upon it, or do you think it was for the benefit of the large farms, and for a better rent?—I think a better rent than the small tenants could give for it was to be obtained from the large tenants, and that consequently the small tenants lost it. I think that is the real reason; and they could not stock it at that time.

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8309. They could not stock it in the superior manner in which the large farmer could?—No. They were very poor at that time generally—the small tenants throughout Skye. I may say I am only talking from hearsay—what I have read and what I have heard from others. Of course, I have no personal knowledge of this, but what I have stated is what I have been told.

8310. But we wish to benefit by your general opinion, and it is to elicit your general impression that I am speaking. At any rate, in many cases the common pasture has been diminished or withdrawn, and the township has proportionally suffered. Without contemplating at present the substitution of small farming for large farming altogether, do you think it possible or not that in many cases the hill pasture of the township might be increased again—might be expanded by the addition of a portion of a farm, for instance, at the conclusion of a lease, without any great sacrifice to the proprietor, and without the destruction of the sheep farm itself?—I believe it could not be done without sacrifice to the proprietor. I believe that thoroughly. At the same time, I know that many proprietors in Skye are ready to make a sacrifice.

8311. Then you think that at a proper period, on proper occasions, portions of the large farms might still be withdrawn and restored to the township with such a sacrifice to the proprietor as a benevolent man would be willing to undergo?—I believe so—that they will be restored—the only condition being that the tenants can show that they are able to stock it.

8312. And that is the course of policy which in proper cases you as an experienced factor would be inclined to advise?—It is, but it is for individual proprietors to determine whether they are going to make a loss or not. I know some proprietors would be ready to make the loss, because they can afford it. I know that other proprietors cannot afford it, and would not be so ready, though equally benevolent.

8313. But, Mr Macdonald, you yourself are a proprietor, and you have the sympathies and the feelings of that class. I understand your own feeling would be rather in favour of it?—Yes, I would like to do it.

8314. With reference to fixity of tenure, that term has been used by the delegates examined before us, and we think that various meanings are attached to the term, and sometimes with a very indistinct understanding of what it really means. We have not found that they all think that the land is to be given to them for ever, or for an indeterminate number of years. One delegate was so moderate as to say that he thought a fifteen years' lease would satisfy him. Others have spoken of a longer term. Do you think it would be possible—a certain portion of land being restored to the townships—to offer the townships and the individual crofters those lands under certain stipulations on long leases?—I believe it would be quite possible.

8315. Do you think, for instance, if security of tenure to the extent of twenty-one or thirty years' lease were granted to those people, with stipulations for improvement, that they would enter upon this duty with a desire and resolution to perform their part?—I am rather doubtful of that in many cases. I know the experiment was tried before on the Macdonald estates. Leases were granted, containing these stipulations about improvement, about fifty years ago, and some of the leases are now lying in my office, but I am aware the stipulations were never carried out. However, there has been such an advance in public opinion and intelligence on the part of the tenants that I think it ought now to be tried again, and though it did not succeed before, I think it might succeed now, and it ought to be tried.

8316. Then you would advise not only an attempt to restore a portion of the common hill pasture, but you would advise a restoration of certain portions of arable ground, with stipulations for improvement and a lease?—Well, there has not been much arable ground taken from them. I do not think they complain of that. It is the hill pasture they complain of, and I would certainly wish to see in some cases where the proprietor consents to it, and could do it—I would like personally to see the tenants getting the hill pasture, and entering on leases with these stipulations.

8317. Then the improvements to be made under the stipulations you refer to would have to be made upon the old arable of the croft, or would you allow them to break up a new portion?—I would allow them to break up as much as might be fixed by the lease; and I think it ought to be extended, as it certainly might be in many parts of Skye, so as to give more room.

8318. With reference to evictions, will you have the kindness to state whether under your own administration there have been any evictions except for non-payment of rent upon those particular estates which you manage?—I have only seen two or three evictions forcibly carried out by the officers of the law for the last twenty years, so far as I can remember, and these were for misbehaviour, and the parties becoming a nuisance to their neighbours, and being complained of.

8319. Do you, in your own personal recollection, remember any evictions from crofters' ground, for the purpose of adding that ground to a tack?—Well, I have seen the tenants of Glen Uig voluntarily going at the request of the proprietor, but they were not turned out by officers, nor was any force used. I have seen them removed to other parts of the estate, but, except these, I am not aware I have seen any.

8320. But without going so far as legal proceedings, I presume that those persons who were removed from their crofts went under some measure of constraint?—Well, I have no doubt they did, but they agreed to go, and they went quietly. I have not the least doubt they were unwilling to go; but they agreed to go, and they went.

8321. Were they provided for by being placed in other townships, involving a subdivision of ground, or were they placed upon new lands?—I don't think they were placed upon new lands. I was not the factor then, but my recollection is that some of them got vacant lots on other parts of the estate. My recollection is—and I don't think I am wrong—that there was an emigration at that time, and that there were some vacant lots. I know that in other cases lots were subdivided. I believe they were, but I don't remember very accurately about it, though I know very generally that there were not any new lands placed under crofters at that time.

8322. You have spoken under a very strong sense of the dangers and evils of subdivision. Have you ever known cases in which small crofts became vacant by natural causes, and in which those small crofts were consolidated with other crofts so as to make them larger?—I have known a few, but it is very difficult, because the tenants press us so much that we sometimes yield and just allow them to have them as they were before. We wish as a general rule estates to increase the holdings, and to add a vacant lot to the next lot if possible, but we found great difficulty about doing so.

8323. You state that in your opinion subdivision should be prevented or prohibited by positive enactment. Would you extend that principle so far as to provide that in any case of evacuation of very small crofts, these should be added to other crofts so as to make them of good size?—No, I don't think so

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8324. You would not go so far as that?—No, I don't think so.

8325. You would only prevent further subdivision?—Yes, I would allow increase, but not lessening.

8326. Do you not think it might be desirable sometimes, in case of a small croft becoming vacant, that it should be obligatory to add that to another small one so as to make a good croft?—I think that would be an excellent thing, but I am so much impressed with the difficulty of preventing subdivision, that I should like to see a very strict enactment on the subject. It would, no doubt, lead to harshness, but really no man, unless he is a man of iron altogether, can prevent subdivision among Highland crofters.

8327. You have no desire at all, I see, that the class of the crofting population should be abolished from the country?—Certainly not. I should be the last to see my fellow-countrymen ill-used in any way.

8328. You wish for various reasons of public policy and kindness, to see the class retained and improved?—I should like to see their condition improved and retained. Personally, I do wish that.

8329. And you think it might be improved perhaps in some degree by those tentative measures to which you have alluded?—I think so.

8330. But do you think that those tentative measures of internal improvement could only be efficacious if supported by a good system of emigration?—I think so. I know that those who are better off in the country—such a class of Skyemen as I belong to myself—always go abroad, and they generally succeed abroad, and I do not see why the crofters, who are much poorer, do not try the same thing on a much larger scale than they do at present.

8331. We have been very much struck by the unanimity of feeling against emigration. We have never found, I think, almost in a single case, any witness or delegate admit that it is a desirable thing or an alternative that he would select. We are aware that in Skye there have been many emigrations, and that in many parts of Scotland the people have no disinclination to emigrate. Do you think the reluctance to contemplate emigration at this moment is natural to the people, or do you think it has been insinuated into their minds with the view of obtaining greater concessions in their own country?—I think it is to a great extent natural. I think that the natural desire to remain in Skye has been increased by agitators and others, but I know it is very natural to the people of Skye to wish to remain in Skye, and not to emigrate.

8332. We have very frequently heard the delegates say that for many years past no corn has been carried from the crofts to their mills. One croftor said that on the Macdonald estate there was not a single mill going. But you have brought forward many examples of mills which you state to be in going order. Are they actually going?—Well, when the harvest is reaped, they will be going. They are in working order.

8333. You mean they are ready to be worked?—They actually do grind corn, but of course the past season was a bad one, and there was little ground. They are really *bona fide* going mills, as *bona fide* as any other mills.

8334. Might it not be that the cessation of grinding corn in the country is partly owing to the fact that the description of corn which they grow may be more profitably employed in feeding stock, or for some other purpose?—I believe so to a great extent, and partly owing to the bad seasons, when there was less corn actually to grind or in existence for any purpose. Your Lordship was perfectly right in saying that the tenants find it pays better to give the sheaves, just as they stand, to the cattle, and to buy meal rather than to grind the corn.

8335. Are the mills of which you spoke generally associated with crofts? Has the miller got a croft, or does he stand on his business as a miller?—He generally has a croft.

8336. Does he pay a distinct rent for his mill and water privilege?—Yes, as a rule.

8337. What sort of rent does an ordinary country miller pay?—From £10 to £20 sometimes.

8338. Irrespective of his croft?—No, including the croft.

8339. What do you think the miller's rent is for the building, machinery, and so on?—It is extremely small. In some cases, I think the croft is worth the rent, and in other cases I think the mill rent alone may be about £10, but there are millers present here who can tell.

8340. We have heard a great deal about quarrels between the crofters and the tacksmen, with reference to trespasses of their respective stocks. Do you think that the tacksman trespasses more on the crofters, or that the crofters trespass more on the tacksman, or does it depend on the lie of the ground?—It depends on the lie of the ground.

8341. In particular cases?—In particular cases, but they both complain.

8342. We have had a great number of complaints from the crofters as to their cattle or sheep being impounded, and the expense they have been put to. Now, on the whole, with a view to the balance of advantages and disadvantages, do you think that the crofters would prefer to have a fence put round their hill pasture in most cases, or do you think they would rather run the chance of gaining a little pasture?—It depends entirely on circumstances. I know that in some cases the crofters have positively objected to put up a fence, and would not allow it. In other cases, I know the crofters and tacksmen are both anxious for a fence. I can specify instances of both sides of the matter.

8343. Have you in the course of your administration put up in various cases march fences between the crofters' grazing and the tacksman?—I do not remember at present of having done so; but there is one on Major Fraser's estate that is about to go on, and there are various others in contemplation to which I, as factor, am distinctly favourable, as I think there ought always to be a fence between crofters' lands and tacksmen's lands.

8344. And that you think, on the whole, should be a wire fence?—A wire fence. I think it would be a distinct advantage, and would prevent a great deal of bad feeling or trouble.

8345. Would you go so far as to say that it would be desirable to give the township, acting as a whole, a right at law to claim the erection of a fence as against the tacksman or proprietor, the township contributing to the cost of putting it up?—I think, if there was any such right it should be a mutual right.

8346. A right on the part of the tacksman as against the crofter, and on the part of the crofter as against the tacksman or proprietor?—Yes, I think that might do good.

8347. With reference to the deer forest of Sconser, we had complaints that the deer infested the crofters' arable ground and inflicted losses upon them. It was not stated before us on that occasion that there was a deer fence round the crofters' land?—I erected a fence last year round the Sconser arable lands, which I certainly understood was quite sufficient to keep out the deer, and I understood the tenants themselves were of that opinion too. There has been a fence actually erected round there, and I am now in the course of erecting a fence to keep out the deer round the township of Torrin, in Strath, who also complain of the deer visiting them occasionally.

8348. But speaking after experience on the subject, is the Sconser fence

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sufficient to keep the deer out or not?—I believe it is. I never heard it was not; but if we find it is not sufficient we must improve it, because we really do wish honestly and efficiently that those tenants should not be troubled by deer at Sconser.

8349. How long has the deer forest been in existence?—There has been a forest there from time immemorial.

8350. But it was enlarged and improved, I think you said, about 1830?—No, that was the time I got the tenants' names in the books. I think these three townships were removed on account of the forest later than that, but I do not know the exact time.

8351. Not much later?—Not much later; perhaps up to 1840.

8352. Then the forest has remained unfenced for about forty years?—Yes, it was never fenced.

8353. Have there been frequent complaints made during those forty years?—Not very frequent; an occasional complaint. I know that Lord Macdonald has been very anxious for a long time that the tenants should not be disturbed by the deer, and that he occasionally gave sums voluntarily to people on the estate who complained of trespass.

8354. At any rate, whether the fence at this moment is efficient or not, you say that it is the desire of the landlord and of yourself that the tenants should be freed from all subject of complaint on this score?—Yes; that is to say, the tenants of Colliemore and Torrin, who are the tenants most exposed.

8355. You spoke of a fence round the inner boundary or arable. Don't you think that in the case of a deer forest, it would be desirable to give the crofters the right of claiming a fence for the outer verge of their common pasture too?—That would be an enormous expense, and I do not know that the advantages would compensate for it, because deer fences are very expensive indeed.

8356. We have heard it stated that the crofters are sometimes prohibited from going upon the common pasture at particular seasons of the year, for fear of disturbing the deer in some measnre?—Very often, when we let our lands to English sportsmen, they come down and they say all sorts of things which we don't sanction or approve of, but which we cannot prevent them saying; but we proprietors do not wish or authorise any such statements to be made to our tenants, and they are very seldom made, and the tenants have other advantages which far more than counterbalance a few words said occasionally on the hill-side.

8357. Well, we may be ready to admit that in some degree, but if you state that the deer forest is let to English tenants, or tenants from outside whom you are not always able to control, would that not be a reason for giving the township the right of insisting upon a fence round the hill pasture? That would surely remove all complaints?—The deer sometimes come upon the hill pasture of the tenants themselves, and the sportsmen have the right to follow them there as well as on the forest.

8358. Have the sportsmen under their tacks a right to follow the deer upon the common pasture of the township?—I know that they generally do it. As to the legal right of the matter I am not quite certain, but I never heard any question or difficulty arising from that.

8359. You have said that it would be a just and useful thing to give the township a right of insisting on a march fence being put up as against the sheep of the tacksmen?—Yes.

8360. Don't you think it would also be an equitable thing to allow the township to claim a fence as against the shooting tenant and the deer?—Well, I have had experience of evils arising from the one thing, but I have had no experience of evils arising from the other, so I am not prepared to

give a distinct answer upon the point, but my impression is rather that the expense of deer fences would be so enormous, for all the advantage to be gained, that it might scarcely be worth while. However, I have had no complaints arising from deer trespassing except upon arable ground, and I think that ought to be fenced against deer.

8361. In the statement which you made, you spoke with some warmth of what was said by the minister of Bracadale as to the want of active interest in the people on the part of proprietor and factor?—He said we were indifferent.

8362. I think it right to remind you that that statement was made in answer to a direct personal question put to the minister by me, and the minister was bound to answer upon his conscience?—I said I was sorry the minister was of that opinion.

8363. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You said a little more?—I know exactly what I said.

8364. *The Chairman.*—I meant merely to remind you that it was the duty of the minister to answer according to his conscience?—The minister and I are very good friends, and I don't think that anything he has said will interfere with our friendship in the least, though I was a little annoyed with it at the time.

8365. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—We have heard a great deal throughout Skye of the increasing poverty of the crofting population. You said to-day that you believed the majority of the crofters were able to pay their debts. Have you good grounds for that belief?—Yes. I believe there are a great many poor crofters, but I think the majority of them are quite solvent.

8366. Do you think that many crofters in Skye have deposits in the savings bank or investments in other ways?—I cannot answer that. I am a banker, and I consider my lips closed on that point. Unless I am ordered and compelled to give information, I must respectfully decline to do so, on the score of duty.

8367. Then do you think that the crofters are in a better position than they used to be?—I think they are a great deal better fed and better clothed than they were in my earliest recollection. That is my opinion. They used to feed on potatoes, and now they feed mostly on oatmeal, and I have heard many say that the people look much healthier and stronger now than they used to do. I have heard that frequently remarked.

8368. As a banker, you are not allowed to refer to the matter of deposits, but perhaps you, as a member of the public, can tell us whether the people are much indebted to the shopkeepers?—I believe that among the crofters there are a number of people in debt, the same as there are amongst any other class in the United Kingdom.

8369. But it is said that their indebtedness is very much on the increase?—I don't see any increase in the number of prosecutions before the Sheriff Court, or anything of that sort. In fact, I think the prosecutions are decreasing. I believe at the same time there are a great many crofters in debt to the merchants, but there are a great many who are not, and who are quite able to stand their ground like men if put to it.

8370. Do you think that they have better stocks, or has their stock of cattle and sheep diminished of late years?—If the whole of Skye is taken, I don't think so. I daresay the last bad year or two might have had some effect in making people sell animals which they would not otherwise have sold, but otherwise I would rather say that the stocks of crofters are increasing, or why are they wanting more land? In fact, in my experence the desire for more land has generally arisen out of increasing stocks—not always, but very often.

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8371. You mentioned it was a principle that the rents of crofting lands should not be increased on the Macdonald property. What do you mean by a principle?—That they were not offered to competition, and that we did not wish the crofters to be set one against the other to raise the value of the lands, as big farmers are doing.

8372. You mean that it was the practice on the property not to offer the crofts to competition?—Yes, on the principle that we wish them to be in good circumstances, and that we thought it was a good thing.

8373. On principle, you thought it right that they should be lower rented than the big farmers are?—I think no crofters can pay the same rent which large farmers pay; in fact, I am perfectly positive that no crofters can succeed if they pay the tacksmen's rents. It will ruin them.

8374. Even if their crofts were enlarged to the extent that would employ their whole energies?—I am speaking not from theory, but from what I have seen and know, and I believe they cannot pay. I don't believe that a body of them paying £12 each of rent could afford to pay the same rent that the proprietors get from tacksmen.

8375. You mentioned that certain agitators had been about the island lately, but, previous to their coming, there was a certain amount of discontent existing in the island. With reference to what did that discontent exist?—I have never seen a tenant in my life who would confess that his rent was low; I have never met him yet. Even in cases where I have known tenants to make large fortunes, they complain of their rents, and I have all my life heard tenants complaining of their rents, and that is what I chiefly refer to.

8376. Does that discontent exist among large farmers as well as among small ones?—All classes of agriculturists complain of that.

8377. Do you think that was the principal cause of discontent previous to the arrival of those agents of low-country societies?—Yes, and I have heard the crofters say that they wished they had more ground in some cases. But the other was the real substantial complaint.

8378. With reference to their demand for more space, were they not under the impression that they had been crowded together in consequence of the eviction of the crofting population in other parts of the country, or is that an impression that has been forced upon them from the south?—I never heard much of that stated. In fact, I never heard so much of it stated as I have heard since the Commission sat, though I have heard of holdings being reduced by subdivision. I never heard so much of tenants being put in as I have heard within the last fortnight.

8379. How far back does your memory extend as a factor or assistant factor?—I have been a factor myself since 1872, and I think I can remember about ten years before that, but I was not regularly in my father's office during all that time.

8380. You have no personal recollection of the great emigration that took place after the destitution of 1848?—Yes, I remember it distinctly as a boy.

8381. Was that the emigration from Bracadale?—No, I think it was from other parts.

8382. Was it from Raasay?—I really cannot tell, but I remember the people being here and going away; that is all.

8383. You are not able to speak on the subject?—No, though I remember seeing the people in Portree.

8384. Do you know if that was a voluntary or a forced emigration?—I think Mr Rainy forced his tenants away, but I am not quite sure. On the Macleod estate there were very few forced evictions.

8385. If my recollection serves me aright, there was a large emigration

from Bracadale in 1851 or 1852?—No, I thiuk that is a mistake, but I am subject to correction.

8386. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You seem to put a great deal of weight upon the action of outside agitators, but is it not the fact that there has been a considerable agitation and disturbance in Skye for the last three years?—Yes, but I think it is largely due to the action of agitators.

8387. As far back as three years?—Yes.

8388. How long is it since the Valtos matter first became prominent, because I think that was the beginning of it?—I think it was about three years ago.

8389. Have you yourself uot expressed more than once verbally, and in writing, the importance of an inquiry being made into the grievances or alleged grievances of the people in Skye?—I am not aware.

8390. Did you or did you not write to Macleod of Macleod that it was highly important that an investigation and inquiry should he made more than twelve months ago?—I really do not remember. I never thought of a Royal Commission.

8391. I said iuquiry?—I don't remember anything about it, but I may have thought that the proprietors themselves ought to inquire.

8392. You have made a long and a very interesting statement, and made it in a very moderate and temperate way, but I find it necessary to put a few questions to you with the view of eliciting the full facts of the case. The population of Skye, I understand, is from 16,000 to 17,000?—Yes.

8393. You hold a great number of offices yourself?—Yes, I do.

8394. Am I wrong in saying that of that population of 17,000, more than 15,000 are under you in one form or other?—My experience has been that they are above me.

8395. You have detailed the different estates upon which you are factor. Will you mention the names of those in Skye for which you are not factor or agent?—I am not factor for Glendale, Waternish, Raasay, Lyndale, Grishornish, Orbost, Edinbane, and Husabost.

8396. Will you be kind enough to mention the offices you hold in Skye, in Portree in the first place, and then over the parishes?—I hold a number of offices.

8397. Will you state them?—I am a bank agent and solicitor, and I was elected clerk of the Portree school board. I am also distributor of stamps and collector of taxes. I think that is all in Portree, so far as I remember.

8398. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—And captain of volnnteers?—I am captain of volunteers, and I hold a number of minor offices.

8399. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—I speak of offices of remuneration. Of how many school boards in Skye are you a member?—I have been freely elected a member of the Stenscholl school board, the Kilmuir school board, the Duirinish school board, the Strath school board, and the Bracadale school board.

8400. Are you clerk to any of those boards also?—Yes, I am clerk and treasurer, but I get no pay. I get pay where I am not a member of the board. I am paid in Snizort, and I am paid in Portree; and the parish of Bracadale gives me a small sum for my outlays, but nothing for my trouble. In the other parishes I discharge the duties without fee or reward, and they are very troublesome and very responsible.

8401. With regard to roads, are you clerk to any of the district roads?—No, I am not clerk.

8402. Have yon anything to do with the roads?—I am collector. I was elected by the road trustees as collector.

8403. You are paid for that?—Yes; I get £15 a year for that.

8404. What staff have you got to help you?—I have six or seven clerks.

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8405. How many hours a day do you attend at your office?—Well, I am at my work generally from ten in the morning till one next morning and sometimes two. I think I have worked as hard as any working man in the north of Scotland. I work very hard.

8406. Do you think you are capable of doing justice to all those estates and to all those thousands under you?—As I have explained, those thousands are above me, but I don't think the tenants themselves have complained very much of me on the whole; and my constituents, so far as I know, are satisfied with my endeavours.

8407. Are you pleased yourself?—I daresay, if I were asked, I am not a bit more pleased than the crofters are.

8408. There is an estate from which no delegates have appeared, the estate of Treaslan. That is the only case from which we have received no delegates?—Yes, and I am very proud of my tenants, and very much obliged to them.

8409. With regard to the estate of Strathaird, you stated that you were very anxious to improve the position of the people of Elgol?—Yes; they are very nice people, and I should like to see them have more land.

8410. Are you not aware they are uncomfortably crowded for the extent of land?—Yes, I am quite of opinion that they should have more ground, and I should be very glad to see them have Glas-nakill, if they could stock it.

8411. But the present tenant has declined to do it in the meantime?—I wrote to him twice, and he is sometimes very stiff about answering letters. I don't think he has ever said no, but he has never said yes.

8412. You are aware that the Elgol people are very anxious to get more land?—Yes.

8413. Now, I come to the estate of Kilmuir, of which we have heard a good deal. It has been commonly reported that when the rents were raised in 1877, you personally were not in favour of that rise. May I ask if that is true?—I don't think anybody ever heard me say that. I don't know that I should be asked that in my official capacity.

8414. You are not asked in your official capacity. You are here as a native of Skye, and you can answer or decline, as you like?—Well, at the time Major Fraser resolved on having the property revalued by Mr Malcolm, I had some doubt about whether it was expedient or not, and I think I mentioned that to Major Fraser. Then I had the matter fully explained to me—that is to say, about the system of valuation, and I actually saw the basis of valuation. The basis was the old summing—Lord Macdonald's old summing before Major Fraser bought the estate. Mr Malcolm explained to me, and showed me figures, and so did Major Fraser, to the effect that every cow on the estate on an average was valued at about 17s. or 18s., the lowest being 15s., and the highest 22s., but that 22s. was only on a few of the best in the township, and I should say that the average was 17s. or 18s. Every sheep was valued at 2s., and every horse at £1. The arable was valued at from 5s. to 7s. per acre; in some few cases I think it was 10s., but the average would be 7s. These were all added together, and that made the rent, and nothing but that. When that was explained to me, I thought it was not at all dear, and that there was nothing excessive in it—in fact, that there were other rents in Skye quite as high, and that it was a fair rent—so any doubts I had about the matter were removed. There was a further test, viz., that the tenants were offered, if they were dissatisfied that Major Fraser would make any one of them, who thought it was too high, a present of two years of the increased rent if he wished to remove. Whatever doubt I had before was removed when I saw all this, and I thought that the rents were not excessive.

8415. Are you aware that the rental of Kilmuir was raised very considerably since the time Major Fraser acquired it?—Of course it was, but it was the best land in Skye.

8416. Will you mention how much it rose from the time he got it until now? Was it £3000 a year?—I would be very glad to mention the sum, but I don't remember.

8417. Am I wrong in stating that it was £3000 a year?—I really would prefer to be accurate, and to hand in a slip about it.

8418. Can you specify anything he did that tended to the permanent improvement of the crofters except making some drains, fences, and roads?—I know that this year there has been a very large expenditure there—several hundred pounds. Some crofters said there was scarcely anything spent at all. Every year there is a very considerable expenditure on the estate.

8419. That is all very well in the matter of wages. That is a temporary advantage; but I am speaking of permanent advantage to the people in regard to their crofts. Can you specify anything to any extent that was done to benefit them permanently?—I should like to have a little time to consider that question, because I cannot answer it all at once. I know he did a good deal in the way of water-courses and bridges, and so on, and as I mentioned, he took a very large interest in the Skye railway, which was for the benefit of his tenants. It was entirely for that that he took it, and not for profit.

8420. I daresay the people who took shares in that railway did it for the benefit of their country, for they never got a dividend?—No.

8421. It has been held up as a sign that Kilmuir was not over-rented, that the rents were regularly paid at a certain date, and that there were no arrears. We have also heard an explanation of that, namely, that no payment to account of rent would be taken. Was that true or was it not?—That was the rule of the estate, and I think it is a very excellent rule in dealing with crofters—not to be rigidly adhered to, but an excellent rule for the sake of the crofters themselves—because if some of them are allowed they will fall into arrear, and have ultimately to be evicted, and I have found that the best thing for the tenants, if they are at all able, is to make them pay the rent every year as it goes.

8422. Was it you who established that rule, or was it made before your time?—Before I became factor it was a rule, and I think it is a very excellent rule, and it is one that I would always follow, although not rigidly.

8423. It was not a rule upon Kilmuir when Kilmuir belonged to the Macdonalds?—I don't know, but I don't think so, because I see Mr Coll Macdonald says that the administration of the Macdonald estates has been extremely mild, and the utmost kindliness shown to the tenants, though we have not heard anything of it from the tenants during the sitting of this Commission, or almost anything.

8424. I daresay it is a good rule though it may work hardly, and apparently it did work hardly, because we have been told that in order to meet the rent on the rent day the crofters were obliged to discount bills at the bank, and not only to pay the rate of discount at the time, but also to pay people who became security so much in the pound for becoming security. I suppose you knew nothing of that at the time?—I was hearing it.

8425. When did you hear it for the first time?—I have always heard there were bill discounters in the country, but the same thing occurs—perhaps not so much—upon all estates, whether they have to pay the year's rent or not, though not to the same extent.

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8426. Were you aware that the crofters had to pay something to the guarantor who signed the bill along with them?—Yes, but I have frequently heard the people who signed the bills deny that they ever got a farthing. As a general rule they said they did not, and the crofters said they did.

8427. You quoted very considerably the prices about the years 1773 and 1811, and so on, in regard to the value of stock, and how stock has risen; don't those prices really apply to what you may call first class cattle, the cattle of the big tacksmen, and not to those of the crofters, which, we understand, are worth very little?—They get excellent prices for them.

8428. But don't the statistical accounts which you refer to apply to the tacksmen's cattle?—I don't think so. They are the average prices of cattle, and the cattle held in those days were very inferior and much lower in value as compared with the class of cattle now held generally by crofters, especially on the estate of Kilmuir, where the crofters' cattle are particularly good.

8429. You gave a quotation from Mr Coll Macdonald's account; did you know anything about Mr Macdonald?—I knew him well.

8430. Was he himself a large tacksman?—No. I think he had the farm of Toteashaig, a small farm. He was a man respected in the parish in his own day, and he was highly respected by the crofters.

8431. You also quoted from the minister of Duirinish as to the rate of wages; are you aware that the minister of Duirinish denounced in the most distinct manner the creation of those large farms?—I did not read that; I was only looking to the rate of wages, and I only referred to him incidentally. I myself remember a shilling a day being given.

8432. The gentleman whom I refer to says that the two great grievances were the creating of large sheep farms and the erection of a distillery?—Well, I did not read that.

8433. You stated with regard to evictions that in your time very few changes had been carried out, and I think that is the case. But is it not a very common thing, and has it not been a very common thing in your time, for people who were in arrears of rent to get summonses of removal?—Well, when a man falls into arrear he is sometimes warned to remove and sometimes not. In fact, the tenants expect warning themselves if they do not pay, because they know that the condition of their holding the land is that they pay the rent.

8434. Have you not in your own day issued a very considerable number of those summonses of removal, though perhaps you did not carry them out?—No, I did not. A certain gentleman told me that he was going to challenge me before the Commission about the amount of money I made off removals on the different estates with which I was connected in Skye during a period of years. I accordingly took the trouble to look up the old removings which had taken place for the last ten years on the Kilmuir estate, and I find that the average of the whole ten years did not come to £5 a year, and you know that represents a very small amount of removals.

8435. What did you generally let them off for?—8s. or 9s. A good deal depends on the distances; but I know that what was charged did not pay the expenses, and I, like other agents, always lost a good deal of money by it. The people came and made a story, and one generally was a little softened by it, and would let them off.

8436. How many law agents are there in Skye?—There are only two at present, and I don't think I make what would keep me in tea by law. I have always discouraged law, and so did my father before me.

8437. Don't you think that in a large population of this kind matters should be a little more distributed?—I have not the slightest objection to

another agent coming here, and if he makes enough to keep him in tea I will be very much surprised.

8438. Were there more agents in Portree at one time than there are now?—I don't think so; not for a very long time. The law business here is really *nil*—next to nothing. I make a very small sum by it altogether.

8439. The law business has fallen off?—Very much indeed.

8440. Is that because, as I think Dr Martin told us, there is no law in Skye?—I think it is by the discouragement which the agents here, Mr M'Lennan and myself, give to poor people. They are apt to be litigious, which we discourage very much.

8441. Is it competent for persons in Skye to take their cases to Inverness?—It is competent in one way, but they are generally remitted back.

8442. If there is no special cause are they generally remitted back?—Yes.

8443. So, in point of fact, the people must come to this court?—For sheriff court cases—small cases.

8444. You mentioned about the crofters that you were very positive they could not pay the same rent as the large farmers?—I am very strongly of that opinion—very strongly indeed.

8445. We are told that a man who pays £4 or £5 of rent is obliged to buy 15 bolls of meal. Is that man not paying a great deal more as rent in that way than the big tacksman pays, if he pays £4 for his croft and £15 for meal?—I don't think it is safe to judge such matters by arithmetical calculation. I know as a positive fact that crofters cannot pay it, and no amount of arithmetical calculation will make me change my opinion. I believe my opinion will be supported by all who know anything about the matter.

8446. You mentioned also that tacks are of less value when they happen to bound or march with crofters?—I know that tacksmen always complain, and put some value on the trouble and bother they have.

8447. Is that the secret why so many of the crofters have been driven away here and there from pillar to post?—Well, I have mentioned the causes which have led to the people being removed and evicted, and perhaps that may be one of them, but I know that in my time it has never been done from that cause. We rather protect the crofters than otherwise.

8448. Suppose an estate were advertised, and it was said that there was a numerous contended and happy peasantry upon it, don't you think that would be an inducement to a purchaser?—Yes, but if they were crofters I would be doubtful whether it was true.

8449. Have not crofters often been obliged to give way to sheep in Skye?—There is no doubt that the great rise in the value of sheep has probably been the real cause of many evictions.

8450. People are rather in the way of sheep, are they not?—Yes, that is one way of putting it, but another and a practical way of putting it is that the crofters could not pay the rent that the tacksmen pay. The one is the practical and the other the sentimental way of putting it.

8451. Would you approve of such an advertisement as this which, appeared in an Inverness paper as an inducement—'No crofters on this or 'the adjoining estate'? Would you approve of the sentiment that dictated that?—So far as sentiment goes, I am a Highlander myself as much as any man, and I entertain a good deal of all these sentiments like my neighbours, and I don't like these things more than anybody else.

8452. Would you like to put your name to such an advertisement?—Well, I don't think I would. I am just as sentimental and strong on the

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Highland question as any body else, though I happen to be a factor, and I am as fond of my countrymen and country as anybody else.

8453. You gave us an account of the reasons why there was considerable poverty, and you began with bad seasons, increased expenditure among the people, subdivision, no steady labour; and among the expenditure you spoke about the great increase in the consumption of tea. We have heard from some of the delegates in answer to our inquiries that the real reason for the use of tea was the scarcity of milk?—I know I can get as much milk myself as I like, and for all that I take a great deal more tea than milk. I know people prefer tea to milk.

8454. But I am now speaking more about children than men. What about the children?—Well, I have no doubt there is in the country sometimes a scarcity of milk for children, as there is in towns and everywhere else.

8455. We have been told by some of the delegates that their cows are so poor that they will not calve perhaps once in the three years?—I have no doubt that the crofters' cows sometimes don't have calves. Tacksmen's cows also very often don't have calves.

8456. But such a thing would be a greater misfortune to a crofter as compared to a big tacksman?—Decidedly it is a great misfortune to a poor man for his cow not to have a calf.

8457. You spoke about having plans of the Macdonald estate, how long is it since these were prepared?—I think about 1810 or 1811.

8458. Do these show all the arable land which is under cultivation?—I don't think so. They show the lots.

8459. And they have a table of contents?—Yes, they show arable, pasture, and so forth.

8460. Could you upon the Macdonald estates show us how much arable land is held by the crofters in Skye now?—It would entail a very large amount of labour, but if the Commission would wish me to do it, I will be very glad to do what I can.

8461. Could you give us the extent of their pasture?—No. I could not do that, because the hill pasture has been so far interfered with. I could do it in some cases. I don't know that the plans would show it sufficiently to enable me to give it correctly, but they show the arable ground quite easily.

8462. I want to find out if I can—and it is a matter of essential importance to the inquiry—how much arable land is held by crofters at this moment, and how much arable land, partly in actual cultivation and partly out, is in the hands of the big tacksmen?—I don't think the maps will show that, but I will be glad to do anything I can to further the objects of the Commission.

8463. Do the crofters not pay more in proportion to the extent of their lands than the big tacksmen do?—Oh no.

8464. Of that you are positive?—Perfectly positive.

8465. How can you say that when you don't know the extent of the ground?—It is a very easy thing to say although you cannot tell the exact number of acres. I cannot tell the exact number of inches between me and the wall, but I know it is not a thousand yards, and though I cannot tell the exact number of acres which the crofters have and the tacksmen have, I know as matter of fact that the one is much more highly rented than the other. If the crofters could pay the same rent as the large tacksmen why should they not get the ground?

8466. I echo the question, why should they not?—They can't. They think they could pay, but they are entirely mistaken. It is nonsense. They would go to ruin in a few years if they paid the tacksmen's rents. I don't state that for any object, but as a fact.

8467. Have you any idea of the acreage of Skye altogether, roughly speaking?—I suppose about 300,000 or 400,000 acres.

8468. And the total rental?—From £40,000 to £50,000. I should not like to make any mistake upon that point, because the figures are capable of being accurately stated.

8469. Putting it hypothetically that the rent is £50,000, what would that be per acre?—I may be entirely wrong.

8470. I am putting it hypothetically?—But is it of any advantage?

8471. I want to follow it up by another question?—But if you follow it out upon a wrong basis, where are you?

8472. I may be wrong, but you are not committed. On that hypothesis, what is the value per acre?—I don't believe the value in Skye is 2s. per acre, but I don't know. I am not prepared for those questions.

8473. I want to put another question to you, because you think the crofters are paying so little. At a place called Cuillore in Bracadale, I understand that for about 30 acres of very poor, rocky land, which I saw with my own eyes, the crofters are paying £60?—That is not to Macleod.

8474. But they are paying it to the tacksmen?—Well, we have nothing to do with that. I cannot tell what these tacksmen's sub-tenants are paying.

8475. I think you stated that, in point of fact, all that should be done away with?—I said that I personally think it would be for the advantage of the crofters that the tenant should hold direct from the landlord.

8476. I think, upon all the estates, that is coming to be more and more the case?—Distinctly. We are this year giving a large slice—and I don't think it was mentioned before the Commission—indeed very few things except hardships were mentioned—we are giving a large slice of the fine green land of Uhnish to the crofters in Struan, on the Macleod estate. Perhaps it was mentioned, but I did not observe it.

8477. Well that certainly was land worth getting?—It is,—fine land.

8478. With regard to mills, are the mill dues which are charged fixed by the landlord?—I believe they are just the old dues that had been handed down for a very long time.

8479. Are they not heavy?—I never heard complaints about them.

8480. We have also heard a good deal of complaints about sea-ware, and things of that kind; have the Macdonald estates got right to the foreshore?—I believe so. They are barony lands, and we have had possession from time immemorial.

8481. Does the proprietor uplift anything for sea-ware?—It is not specially mentioned in the rental. I fancy there is 1s. or 2s. or 3s. included in the rent, but it is not mentioned in the rental, and has not been for a long time.

8482. You made use of the expression in regard to evictions or removals that they were less thought of at one time than now; what do you mean by that?—I mean this, that public opinion has changed very much upon that point, and that people in former times did not consider it a very serious matter to remove some tenants, but now no proprietor would evict a body of tenants, or even one tenant.

8483. And is that to a great extent due to public sentiment?—Not entirely, because the proprietors' own sentiments and feelings on the subject have probably changed just as much as the sentiments of the public.

8484. Do you know what the only proprietor whom we have yet examined said upon the subject?—I don't know. I am a proprietor myself, and I know what I have said.

8485. I am going to read it to you. I asked Dr Martin, at Glen de, —'Are you aware that in proportion to the extent of their holdings the

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'crofters of Skye are paying much higher rents than the large tacksmen? '—(*A.*) Well, I am not sure of that. (*Q.*) You are not aware of it?— '(*A.*) I am not aware of it. (*Q.*) And you do not believe it is the fact? '—(*A.*) I do not believe it is the fact. I would give £500 to-day if all 'the crofters on my place went away. I would keep the paupers. I 'would not ask the paupers to go away.—*The Chairman.* Do you mean 'you would give £500 in order to facilitate their establishment in America 'or elsewhere?—(*A.*) Elsewhere, if they leave my place, but not partially, 'because I would be just as bad then as I am now, because if only a few 'went away all these crofts would be vacant, and I would get nothing for 'them, but if all went away I would give £500.' Do you approve of such a sentiment as that?—Well, if my tenants, or any person's tenants, would not pay their rents for two or three years, I doubt very much what effect it would have upon the most humane man who ever lived, or what his sentiments would be—if his tenants kept him out of his rents for two or three years, and would not pay, and subjected him to a great deal of annoyance besides. There are some things beyond human endurance, and I think that verges very much upon it.

8486. The non-payment of rent?—For three or four years, and annoyance besides. I know Dr Martin was subjected to that, and I know Dr Martin to be a very kind man.

8487. Well, I put a further question to him, and I asked him, 'Would 'it be wise for Lord Macdonald and Macleod and the other big proprietors 'to pay down a much larger sum than £500 for the very same purpose?' and his reply was, 'Well, I should think it would.'—I believe that Dr Martin would not remove a single tenant on his estate though he said that. I believe he would be as reluctant as any one to remove any tenant on his estate if the rent were paid. I believe that Lord Macdonald or Macleod would not remove their small tenants for the value of their estates, and I don't believe that Dr Martin would either, though he was led into saying that.

8488. You spoke about a gamekeeper who after being a short time on the Macdonald deer forest made £3000; what was it you said in regard to that?—I said the man was indebted to his imagination for that statement.

8489. You think it is not true?—I don't believe a single word of it.

8490. Do you know that this man and his son have been going about and thinking of offering for a big farm?—I do know that, but I know more than that—namely, that another gentleman was to provide the money for taking it and not himself, so far as I know about it.

8491. How long was the man a gamekeeper?—He was not gamekeeper for Lord Macdonald, but was gamekeeper for Mr Wolstenholme, the tenant, and I think he was gamekeeper for ten or twelve years.

8492. Is that all you have to say about it?—I have nothing to say except that.

8493. Do you think it is not true that in that time the man made £2000 or £3000?—I don't believe he made that.

8494. Or any sum?—I don't know, but I don't believe he made that.

8495. But he or some member of his family has been speaking to you for a large farm?—Yes, but I understood he was supported by another gentleman.

8496. Do you think he would tell you as factor if he had the money? —Well, I took him to be an honest man, and that he would not deceive me.

8497. I want to ask you one or two questions about the Macleod estates. You said something about the doctor there, and you explained that Dr

Martin gives advice when asked, and that there is a doctor at Orbost?—Dr Martin is now a very old man, and does not do much. Dr Fraser, Edinbane, gives advice, and Dr M'Lean is a most skilful man.

8498. Are you aware that Miss Macleod is dissatisfied with the state of matters in regard to the doctor?—I don't know that I should mention any private matter, but I believe she is not satisfied with Dr Campbell being the parochial doctor.

8499. Is Miss Macleod a lady of whom it may be said in every way that her life is devoted to good works?—Most distinctly. I know of no one of whom that may be said with more truth.

8500. And she represents the family, though they are not resident there?—She does in many ways—in their kindness and goodness to the tenants.

8501. With regard to the large farms, it is commonly reported all through the Highlands that in course of time the pasture on those farms gets deteriorated and becomes of less value. Is that your own observation, and do you concur in it?—I concur in it. The value of the sheep lands in Skye has fallen a good deal in my time.

8502. I understood you to say, in answer to Lord Napier, that you would like to see the smaller people's position very much benefited, and I want to ask you about the present large farms. Is it not a very serious matter to the proprietor when one of those big farmers gives up his farm, and no person is ready to take it?—It is a very serious matter, but I should mention that this year I had the farms of Suishnish and Borroraig, the rental of which is £235, advertised for nearly a year with the view of trying how small tenants would do upon them—tenants of about £30—who, I thought, would be a good class of tenants to have. I advertised asking offers, saying that I would divide it amongst six tenants if I could get suitable offerers. Not a single tenant of that class ever came near me at all.

8503. What is the probable rent you expect?—Well, the present rent is £235; but I would be quite prepared to recommend its being lowered to about £200.

8504. At £30 each?—Yes. I was anxious that that should be tried, and I wrote to tenants who I thought would take it, but they did not seem to see the advantage of it at all.

8505. What was the length of lease that you proposed?—That was a thing to be arranged with the tenants.

8506. Would you give fifteen years?—I would give fifteen years at once, if the people could stock it. I was prepared to recommend that to Lord Macdonald if we got six tenants, but not a single creature came forward.

8507. Was the offer made public?—I wrote out circulars about it, and advertised it on the inn at Broadford, and all through the property, and there were not six to come forward, though we had been hearing of this cry.

8508. You say with regard to crofters increasing their holdings, that some of them if they got land would be able to stock their holdings?—A few.

8509. Don't you think, if a beginning was made with a few of those better-class ones, that their fellow crofters would be moved by a spirit of emulation to go on and do the same in time?—I should like very much to see that. We have tried Ben Lee, and we shall see how the Braes crofters get on there.

8510. Are you not aware that a landlord may do a very great deal for his people, and they will not pay attention, but if they see one of their

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fellows going a head they will not be left behind?—Well, I should like very much to see the people rising and improving in their condition, but I don't think they will do it by agitation, but by hard work and labour.

8511. We have not heard from any single delegate, however wide some of their ideas may be, that they were not ready to pay for everything they got. No one stated that they wanted anything for nothing?—I heard one tenant at Bracadale saying he had paid plenty rent, and that it was time for him to take it easy.

8512. Are the big farmers as a rule making money? Do you find the farms go from one generation to another, or are those farmers shifting constantly, even within your own memory, which goes back now thirty years?—Well, some who began in a very small way are now in a very large way.

8513. The Macleods, for instance?—I think Mr Macleod, Monkstadt, is a man who has shown crofters and others what they could do if they put their shoulders to the wheel, and were clever and active.

8514. And Mr Macleod, Scudaburgh?—He is a very clever man too.

8415. He is a man who has risen?—Yes.

8516. Can you mention any others?—There is Mr Macdonald, Skerrinish, who has made a good deal of money, and I believe many tacksmen have made a good deal of money.

8517. Is there any case at this moment in Skye, except the Scotts of Drynoch, where the father and grandfather have been tacksmen?—Yes.

8518. I don't mean such men as Mr Macdonald, Tormore, or Mr Macdonald, Ord, but Lowland sheep farmers, who hold ground which their fathers and grandfathers held?—Of course those who came from the Lowlands are not descendants of Highland people.

8519. Can you name any Lowlander, apart from Mr Scott of Drynoch, who is now possession of his father's farm?—I don't remember any lowlander, because we generally hold our own with them here, and they stay for a while and then they go. Generally speaking, I think I know that several have gone, because they were non-resident, and we prefer local men to non-resident Lowlanders.

8520. Are you making that a condition now?—Distinctly. We are discouraging non-resident local tenants, which may account for their not being able to hold their own here.

8521. *Mr Cameron.*—I want to ask you a very few questions, because the answers you gave to the Chairman have mostly anticipated the questions I wished to put. You mentioned something about subdividing, and you said you thought a law might judiciously be made to render subdividing illegal?—Yes.

8522. I think you also stated that you are in favour of leases being granted to the crofters. Now do you think the landlords in Skye would object to having leases made obligatory, provided subdivision was made illegal?—Well, there are so many different characters amongst the crofters that it might be injudicious to grant a lease to every crofter. There are some men who are known to be extremely litigious and others extremely troublesome to their neighbours, so that to grant leases indiscriminately would be very much objected to, and found impracticable and bad in working amongst the crofters themselves.

8523. You think then the question of granting leases should be left optional?—Yes, but I believe every proprietor in Skye would at once grant leases to crofters. I have myself frequently offered leases to crofters, but they seemed to be quite secure of their places in Skye, and not to care much about them.

8524. But I suppose in any case you would confine leases to crofts above a certain size?—I think so.

8525. You say you have frequently offered leases to crofters?—I have, and there are a great many crofters, men of most excellent character, to whom no proprietor need have the slightest hesitation in granting leases, and there are only a few to whom I think it would not be judicious to grant leases.

8526. Have these crofters to whom you offered leases accepted your offer?—They never took any notice of it.

8527. Can you tell us why so few crofters sow grass seeds on their crofts?—I think the crofters of Skye nnderstand agriculture very badly, and they don't see the advantage of it.

8528. Do you think it might be carried out on an average sized croft in Skye?—I am told that in Ayrshire it is carried out in crofts of two or three acres, and I don't see why, with a moderate amonnt of fencing, it should not be carried out in Skye. Crofts of three or four acres could easily be made into shifts.

8529. It has been stated, and I think truly, that the crofters have suffered a good deal in times past from not having sufficient milk for their children. Has it not been the case on the Macleod estates that of late years in several townships, where formerly the crofters had no cow's grass, they have lately been given land on which to graze a cow?—They have been given land at a considerable loss to the proprietor, Macleod of Macleod, and from the disposition which Macleod entertains towards his tenants I believe that more will follow of the same kind.

8530. Now, do you think, with regard to all the large tacks, that land might be taken from those farms to be given to crofters to divide into moderate sized holdings, without greatly deteriorating from the value of the large holdings?—I think the proprietor would lose considerably by anything of that sort—by giving the tack land to crofters; but, as I said before, I believe that most proprietors are quite willing, from regard to the people, to make certain losses.

8531. Would there not be some difficulty in letting the higher portions of a sheep farm if a great deal of the lower land were taken for crofters?—Most distinctly. Everybody knows that who knows anything about sheep-farming.

8532. I want to know whether some arrangement or system might not be introduced by which, where the crofters got some of the low land from the large sheep farmers, the sheep farmers might obtain the right of wintering their sheep over those crofts, and so not altogether lose the valuable land which they would otherwise lose?—Perhaps that could he done, but really I don't know.

8533. Are you aware that on many estates on the mainland the crofters have got wintering for which the tacksman of the adjoining farm, or any farm, pays a certain price to the crofters, and the crofters derive great benefit from the sums so obtained?—That has not come under my notice, but I think it is a very good thing.

8534. Do you think in that way the difficulty of dividing the low ground on large tacks amongst small crofters might to a certain extent be obviated?—Well, it is possible, but I have not considered the subject in that light. It is a new light to me on the subject entirely.

8535. You were asked by the Chairman about enclosing the deer forest of Sconser with a wire fence, not only as regards the arable land, but also as regards the pasture occupied by adjoining townships. If the crofters had the power to demand a wire fence outside their pasture land, would it not be equally fair to any tenant, who was contiguous to the deer forest,

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also to demand a wire fence as against the deer forest?—Yes, most decidedly.

8536. And if that were done would it not be almost impracticable to surround the deer forest with a fence?—Yes, the expense of such a fence would be enormous.

8537. And I suppose deer within such a fence would cease to be wild animals. They would be like deer in a private park?—Yes.

8538. Then with regard to the tenants falling into arrears; I presume it is not the case only upon the estates with which you are connected that they should receive notice, but that on all estates in the Highlands, where tenants fall considerably into arrear, they receive notice, and some times that notice is taken advantage of, and they are removed, and at other times it is not enforced against them?—Distinctly.

8539. I mean, that practice is not confined to estates in Skye?—No; everybody wishes to get payment of his debts as well as proprietors do.

8540. You stated that you consider the produce of the soil had been considerably diminished of late years. I wish to ask you whether you think that the diminution in the productive power of the soil has been at all commensurate with the rise in the prices of stock to which you have alluded?—I do not think so—nothing like it—because the arable is a very small proportion of the gains of the crofter.

8541. You think he has gained far more by the rise in stock than he has lost by the deterioration of the soil?—Distinctly, and also the change in the value of money, and all the other circumstances connected with them. On most estates in Skye, rents have not been raised for the last sixty or seventy years.

8542. Have the millers, in consequence of the diminished demand for grinding corn, never asked for any reduction of rent of their mills?—Major Fraser voluntarily granted a reduction of 25 per cent. to the miller on his estate. I don't know of any other case.

8543. But you attribute the want of employment on the part of the millers to the badness of the last few seasons?—Yes, if we had a few good years it would change the views of the crofters immensely.

8544. And they would then be in a position to send more of their corn to be ground?—I must admit that the land will not yield, on account of bad agriculture, so much as it used to yield, but they could send a great deal more than they can send now, on account of the bad seasons. I should say that the small tenants have lost in Skye, for the last two or three years, not entirely by the deficient yield of the land, but also probably to fully as great an extent by their crops being swept off the ground by dreadful storms after the corn had been cut. For two or three years the crop was swept into the sea in a great many places. I know that as a positive fact, and the crofters themselves will say so.

8545. Do you think the crofters sow too much of the seed of the potatoes which they grow themselves, and neglect to provide themselves with fresh seed, and if so, is that not partly a cause of the potato failure?—Most certainly. The potato is well known to deteriorate by the same seed being constantly sown; but this year the proprietors have provided the tenants with great quantities of champion potatoes, which ought to produce a very considerable change for the better for the next few years.

8546. What is the general practice among the crofters? Do they generally change their seed or not?—Not to a great extent. They generally just sow the seed they raise themselves.

9547. They might change the seed more with advantage?—Distinctly.

8548. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—It is only within the last three or four years

that any of the tenantry of Skye have lifted up their voice in a decided manner claiming any redress of alleged grievances?—Yes.

8549. It began at Kilmuir?—It began at Kilmuir with the township of Valtos; and I should state with reference to that township, that it arose in consequence of an allegation made by the tenants that the ground officer upon the estate gave in for the summing of the township two cows more than the real number. When Major Fraser was satisfied about the correctness of that, he at once agreed to reduce the rent; but that was the beginning of it.

8550. And the feeling which then arose has been gradually spreading all round Skye?—Very much.

8551. But do you think it began then for the first time, and that they had no such grievances before as those which they are now expressing?—Well, there was always a certain amount of complaint about the rents, but there is that everywhere; and, as I have said, tenants who have made large fortunes to my knowledge, and bought estates, have said to me that the rents were too high.

8552. But the crofters were never in the habit before of holding meetings and putting their heads together?—There was no combination till after the Irish affair.

8553. Do you consider that an improper or wrong thing for them to do—to combine together in order to obtain redress of any grievances which they believe they are labouring under?—It depends on the manner in which it is carried out.

8554. But so long as it is carried out within legal limits, is not agitation necessary to produce any reform?—Within legal limits, and provided it is carried out legally, and that the law is not infringed, but I cannot say that about Skye.

8555. There has been no infringement on Major Fraser's estate?—Well I know that the officers of the law at the time of the Valtos agitation were afraid to go there, and would not go on account of threats used against them. At the same time, I must say that the tenants on Major Fraser's estate are a most respectable and excellent body of men.

8556. There have been no outrages there to furnish paragraphs to the newspapers?—Well, I don't think there was any deforcement there, so far as I am aware.

8557. Do you think that the expression of their feelings and the statement of their case which they have given to us are not entirely to be relied upon, in consequence of influence which has been used by persons who have been assisting them in preparing the statements of their views?—I do not go that length. I say that I think these outside influences stirred up a great many things, and made grievances of things which would otherwise be viewed with perfect equanimity, and made the people discontented.

8558. You said, and said truly I believe, that it has been a principle in the management of crofters' lands in Skye, by landlords and factors, not to raise the rent?—I have frequently refused increased offers of rent for lands.

8559. Is there not at least one exception to that?—Well, every rule has an exception, but I don't remember any.

8560. Is Kilmuir not an exception?—Most distinctly it is not.

8561. Can you state what was the rent of Kilmuir when Major Fraser became laird of it?—I misunderstood you; what I mean to say is that the crofts are not put up to competition.

8562. Has not the rental of Major Fraser's estate been doubled since he got possession of it?—I know it has been greatly raised. I don't want to

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conceal anything in the slightest degree, and I think it has been very nearly doubled. I can put in the exact figures.

8563. Then that has been the only estate in Skye on which the rent has been nearly doubled within such a short period?—Yes; but that is not to say that Major Fraser is asking a farthing more than the value of the lands. It may be that the other proprietors have not asked the value of their lands. I know they have not done so for the last sixty years.

8564. And I think it was an exceptional matter with him, of which he was quite entitled to boast, that there were no arrears on his estate—that there were only two irrecoverable pounds on his estate the year before last. Was there anything in his management of the estate that enabled him to be in that position more than any other landlords in Skye?—I do not think so.

8565. Did he not take stricter measures for securing payment of the rent, the whole rent, and nothing but the rent?—I do not think so. I have always made it a rule, in dealing with the small tenants, if at all possible, to exact the whole rent, because they fall into arrear very frequently if you do not do so, and the consequence is that they themselves get into difficulties. It is the best thing for the small tenants to exact the whole rent—not rigidly but with discretion.

8566. He has been so good to them that he did not offer their crofts to competition, but gave themselves the chance of paying double rent. If the crofts had been offered to competition, do you think there would have been many competitors for them on these terms?—I thoroughly believe there would, because the crofters I believe would offer enormous rents for the lands; whether they could continue to pay these rents, is another question.

8567. When Major Fraser had the valuation of the lands made, it was made by a very able and excellent man—Mr Malcolm from Nairn; but do not you think that a man acquainted with the land in Skye would have been a more suitable valuator than a man accustomed to the good land on the east coast?—I cautioned Mr Malcolm frequently to remember that he was not on the east coast.

6568. At what time of the year did he make the valuation?—I think it would be in harvest.

8569. And the country would be looking beautiful then, and there would be the appearance of crops. Was it not the same in the Braes also last year?—I believe that the Braes, with Ben Lee added to them now, at the present rent, are excellent value. I believe that honestly, and entirely irrespective of my situation as factor.

8870. But that valuation also was made by a gentleman from a distance not particularly acquainted with Skye or Skye soil?—Well, he is acquainted with crofters in other parts. I must observe that it is extremely difficult to get any person in Skye to value crofters' lands, because if a person in Skye values crofters' lands, and raises the rents, the whole body of the crofters are down upon him, and abuse him for ever afterwards; so people in Skye are very reluctant to do anything of that sort.

8571. Then, as to the expenditure by Major Fraser upon roads, which I believe was considerable, did it all come out of his own pocket?—Well, proprietors very often have to borrow money. I don't know whether Major Fraser borrowed the money or not. I am not aware that it came out of any other pocket.

8572. Are not the assessments for that district of roads handed over to him?—No, they are not; and these improvements were effected long before the passing of the present Road Act.

8573. Yes, I know that.—Well, I think there was an arrangement by

which he got £40 or £20, but I believe he spent a good many thousands.

8574. How much do you think he has spent?—That was only for the maintenance of the roads—not the construction. He spent many thousands on the construction, and I may add further that the sum he got towards the maintenance did not half pay the maintenance. He lost by that arrangement.

8575. So it appears, as regards part of the road at any rate. How much has been expeuded within the last five or six years on the road from Stenscholl to Valtos?—The road under the trustees only goes as far as a place called Loch Mealt. Up to that place the road trustees are responsible. The people of the east side are now appealing to the road trustees for assistance to extend the road as far as Valtos. I am very much in favour of the trustees extending the roads to these townships all through the island.

8576. Of course, you must be aware that it is a real grievance to the people beyond Loch Mealt that they have to carry everything on their backs or on ponies' backs for miles?—Yes, but we have to get the road trustees to see that.

8577. Can you give us any idea in figures of the amount expended by Major Fraser upon roads and other improvements?—A very large sum. If I had been told beforehand I would have been ready with it, but I am quite sure I am within the mark when I say that £20,000 or £30,000 has been expended there.

8578. But we expect exact figures?—I can get that.

8579. How much of the money you have mentioned has been expended for the benefit of the crofters?—I would rather give in the figures.

8580. Has any of it been spent in trenching for the benefit of crofters?—I do not think so, because the crofters would not like to pay the interest upon the trenching money.

8581. Has it not been chiefly expended on the big farms and the grounds round about Uig where the major resided?—Yes, a good deal has been spent ou buildings and so forth.

8582. For the proprietor himself and for his big farms?—Yes, and on roads—probably more than for the crofters.

8583. We were told at Stenscholl that the mill was iu bad repair?—I know that it requires a couple of new stones. I have been trying to get them.

8584. Is that likely to be done soon?—I believe they will be put in before the present crop is ripened.

8585. To go back to the Braes; you of course were not factor when Ben Lee was taken from the people seventeen years ago?—No.

8586. Can you say whether, in point of fact, there were any other people served with summonses except those on the three farms of Beinn-a-chorrain, Gedentailer, and Balmeanach?—Well, I cannot speak with certainty. I would rather not say, because I am not sure, but I know the other townships claimed rights as well as them, and they will come forward and state that to the Commission if necessary. I am perfectly satisfied that those three townships never at any period had exclusive right to the hill, and I am more satisfied of that now than ever I was.

8587. When did the people of Camustionavaig and Penifeiler cease to exercise their rights?—Well, they got other places.

8588. How long ago?—A little later I think, or about the same time; but I think some have been cited to appear before the Commission from those townships.

8589. They have never claimed the hill since that time?—They got other places instead.

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8590. At the time it was a common, you say it was common to all Lord Macdonald's tenants both in Skye and Uist. Was it common to them all the year round, or only when there were markets at Sligachan?—I state what I know about that as a Skyeman, and what I was told when very young,—that any of Lord Macdonald's tenants might put their cattle there.

8591. But not to keep them the whole year round?—Well, the people of Strath have told me frequently that they often used to send their cattle there to be wintered.

8592. On Ben Lee?—Yes.

8593. And did not the Ben Lee people take money from them?—I am only stating what the Strath people say; I cannot tell whether, as matter of fact, it is true or not.

8594. I may refer to the evidence of John M'Leod, Camustionavaig, who says, 'I do not say that we had right to Ben Lee, but our stock had liberty 'to graze there.' Was there any fence to prevent them from going there?—No.

8595. You said that the first witness from the Braes, Angus Stewart, spoke wrongly about the old tenants there. He said there were five?—I said I could not see anything of that in our books. If that was the case, it must have referred to a much more early period than I have a record of.

8596. His mother, aged eighty-one, told me last year that her father was one of the five tenants in her youth?—Yes; that may be true.

8597. How far does your evidence go back?—1810.

8598. It was before that?—It may be perfectly true, but I cannot say anything about it. I am satisfied those three townships are in a complete mistake as to having sole right to Ben Lee.

8599. Now, with regard to the trespassing in the deer forest, I think you said there was no prohibition upon people against trespassing on the forest?—No, I did not go that length; I said we frequently give permission to them to cut thatch in certain parts of the forest at certain times of the year.

8600. But are the public generally prohibited from wandering over the hills of the deer forest?—There is no occasion to prohibit them. They are allowed on the Macleod estate to go to Coruisk.

8601. But on the other side?—There is nothing to be seen.

8602. There are some fine hills. Is there not a threatening notice in the hotel at Sligachan to the effect that trespassers will be prosecuted with the utmost rigour of the law?—It is very probable, and that notice may be very necessary; but I do not believe it is intended to be carried out in its full sense. I am sure that, if you choose to go up on the hills, we will not object to it.

8603. I beg your pardon. I and two friends were subjected to the indignity of being assailed by a gillie on these hills?—I am sorry to hear it.

8604. And what is worse, we were called 'Glasgow tailors' in a letter addressed by the lessee of these shootings, Mr Wolstenholme, to Mr Butters, the landlord, complaining of the intolerable trespass upon our native hills?—But he was a Sassenach, and did not know better.

8605. You spoke of land that has been given by Macleod, at great loss to himself, for the benefit of crofters. Where is that land?—At Ulinish.

8606. How much loss will it be to him?—I think it will be a loss to Macleod of probably £50 a year.

8607. Might he not have given it to them forty years ago, when the people were removed from Ulinish, and the place was given to Mr Gibbons?—Perhaps he might, but I don't know.

8608. And they have been all these forty years without milk for their children?—Mr Gibbons was the factor then, and I do not know that Macleod knew very much about it personally.

8609. He handed the place and the people over into Mr Gibbons' hands to do with them what he liked. It was afterwards let to Mr Robert Macdonald, that fine young man who died last year. Might there not have been a portion then given, as Mr Macdonald was quite willing that the people should have a cow's grass?—Yes, but it should be understood that in those days the crofters really asked very little, and that this demand for more land on the part of the crofters has really to a great extent come as a surprise upon the landlords.

8610. It has awakened them up a little to a sense of their duty in some respects?—Well, the crofters did not use to ask for it, and the landlords thought they did not want it. Now they ask for it, and the landlords ought to try and meet them as far as they can half way.

8611. Did they not lift up their voices when they were being removed against their will?—I have no doubt they did in those days.

8612. And the landlords must have known it?—The tenants in Minginish were not removed. If you refer to Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, you will find that the Macleods of these days were entirely against emigration, and did all they could to prevent it. There were leases granted, I think, of very long endurance to some tenants in Minginish, and it is said that those tenants, or tacksmen as they were called in those days, were the cause,—I don't wish to mention any names—but it is said, whether truly or not I cannot tell.

8613. Don't you think it is a great disadvantage to a property and to the people living upon it when the laird himself does not reside upon it for a considerable part of the year?—I think it is; but in the case of Macleod of Macleod he had to go away and leave his estate, and work harder than any of his crofters; and he did so.

8614. Why was he obliged to go?—He thought he could improve his property immensely by spending money in draining, trenching, fencing, and enclosing, and I believe that the real cause of his difficulties was that that was overdone. He got practical agriculturists from the south, who advised him to do a number of things for the improvement of his estate, and he spent too much money on the estate. Consequently he fell into difficulties, and then he went to London, and worked very hard for a number of years, till at last he rose to the head of his own department, and he has now retired.

8615. There are several other proprietors who are non-resident; Major Fraser, unfortunately, is non-resident?—Well, he comes down frequently to Skye. You know that his house was carried away by a flood.

8616. He has a very good house still?—It is a shooting lodge. I have no doubt, if he had a house, he would reside here.

8617. Don't you think if he were constantly resident, the relations between him and his tenants would be much more satisfactory?—Well, I know him to be a very kindly man, and I believe if he were living here the relations between him and his tenants would improve—that they would know each other, and like each other.

8618. You have a form of lease for crofters?—Yes, a very old form, about the year 1830.

8619. Will you give us a copy of it?—I shall be very glad to do so.

8620. Would it be suitable for the present time?—It was prepared by my late grandfather when he was factor for Lord Macdonald, and I believe it may be suitable with some modifications.

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8621. There are fixed regulations for the management of the Macdonald estate?—Yes.

8622. Have you got them in print?—I have not any of the new copies.

8623. There are similar regulations on the other estates of which you are factor?—Yes.

8624. Will you give us copies?—Yes, I think the proprietors will allow me to give them; I have none myself.

8625. In the report of Sir John M'Neill of 1852 on the Highland Destitution, Mr M'Kinnon, Corry, gave evidence, and among other things he spoke of having established an officer—I suppose a ground officer—who went regularly round among the people to see that they carried on their cultivation as it should be done, and to see that they improved their houses and the surroundings of their houses. Is anything of the sort done now?—No.

8626. Don't you think that it might be done advantageously, and tend to a little improvement in the houses?—It is extremely difficult to get the tenants to change their habits, but it might be tried.

8627. To take an example, the houses at Sconser, which are the first thing in the shape of crofters' houses that any stranger sees in going from Broadford to Sligachan, are they not about the worst habitations in the Isle of Skye?—Yes.

8628. Would it not be possible, through the exercise of your influence, to induce the people to make some improvement, and could a little help not be given to them?—I think it would be better for the Sconser people if they could get a better place than that altogether.

8629. *Professor Mackinnon.*—You stated there was a very large reduction of rent made in 1830 upon the crofts. Was the same reduction made upon the large tacks at that date?—I believe it was.

8630. So it was the reduced rent of a large tack in 1830 that you quoted?—I quoted the same rent.

8631. But you are not sure whether it was lower than it was five years before?—I do not understand. I quoted for the very same rental and year the rent of the small tenants, and the rent of the tacksmen.

8632. In the case of the crofter, you prefaced that by the statement that five years before the rent was 25 per cent. higher?—Yes; I had not the big tenants' rent for 1825, but I had it for 1830.

8633. You are not sure, then, whether the rent of the big tenant was reduced by 25 per cent. between 1825 and 1830?—I believe it was.

8634. So it would have been the reduced rent that you quoted?—It was the rental of 1830 that I quoted in both cases.

8635. Reduced by 25 per cent.?—In both cases, distinctly; the quotation was perfectly uniform.

8636. You stated that the marches of the townships were as you find them now?—I selected the townships specially for that purpose.

8637. Are you able to say with the same absolute accuracy that the marches of the large farms you quoted were the same then as now?—Yes. I selected them for that. I put in only those that I knew and could speak about.

8638. The march of Scorrybreck, for example?—I looked very particularly about that.

8639. It has not been changed since 1830?—I am not aware. It is possible I may be wrong, but if I am wrong I shall be very glad to be put right and to correct my statement; but I think it embraces every township, unless there may be very trifling exceptions. I know of none.

8640. Of course it is merely for comparison?—Well, I looked as minutely as possible, and I think the statement is correct.

8641. Since 1811, I see the population has increased very much, though

it has diminished for the last twenty years. I suppose it may be held as proved now that the crofters' area is considerably diminished since that date?—I think it has.

8642. That of course would account a good deal for the subdivision of crofts, because the population has increased very considerably since that date?—But a number emigrated.

8643. Still the population has largely increased since that date, and the crofters' area has diminished?—But there is a considerable increase in the towns and villages besides.

8644. You said that when the crofters' area was given to the large farms, the chief if not the sole reason was that the people could not put a proper stock on the place?—That is what I have been told and read.

8645. Do you know if they got the chance?—I have stated all I know about it. It was not in my time. I know they could not at the present day take all the big farms. I should like very much if the people would show that they could take them and stock them, as then there would be a great deal of our difficulty removed.

8646. You spoke of a positive enactment to prevent subdivision; would you make that enactment binding upon the landlord?—I should think the public prosecutor ought to take it up, because the landlord or the factor, unless he is a man of iron, could not prevent subdivision.

8647. But you would make it binding upon the landlord as well as upon the tenant?—I think the fiscal should have it in charge—it is so difficult to prevent it.

8648. So that, if the landlord or the factor should afterwards subdivide a croft, the fiscal should take him up?—Most distinctly; I do not think that any subdivision should be allowed at all. I know I never could prevent it entirely.

8649. It has been stated to us several times, in the course of this inquiry, that three crofts were worth three rents more than one croft was worth anything at all; and I think Mr Malcolm's views, in the paper which you read, are very much to the same effect—that a large croft is worth very much more per acre than a small croft is?—Distinctly.

8650. Then you yourself wish that the crofts should become £12 to £30 crofts, but you do not believe that the crofters could pay the same rent that the large tenants pay?—No, but I should be very glad to see facts that would change my opinion.

8651. And your experience was the proof you gave for that statement. Will you give us your experience of crofts from £12 to £30?—I mention the township of Glenhinnisdale, where the rents are from £12 to £30 just now. I know we could get more rent for Glenhinnisdale than we are getting just now from those tenants if it were let. We do not want the tenants to remove, if they just continue to stock the place and pay their rents; I know that for a fact.

8652. So that even, with the enlarged crofts of from £12 to £30 you think the large farmer could give a bigger rent?—I honestly think so, from my experience; and if the reverse could be proved, I think at once there would be a great revolution in the north.

8653. How many crofts are there at £30?—Not many. There are some at £27, 10s. and £50. I daresay there are some at £30 too, but very few indeed.

8654. So that it is rather difficult to get experience here?—I have found in Glenhinnisdale very great complaints. I have no doubt, if it comes to be found that the crofters can pay as good rents as the tacksmen, it will make a great change in the opinions of proprietors.

8655. Is it the case that for the last two or three years there has been

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far less demand for the very large farms than for the very small ones?—Farms from £150 to £210 let better than any other farms.

8656. And crofts from £30 to £50?—Well, I told you of my experience about Suishnish; I had not a single offer from all Skye to come forward and take those crofts at £30 each.

8657. What was the rent you asked?—£200.

8658. You would not have taken one man for one sixth part of that?—No, unless I got the whole, because the rest would be all in our own hands. I think it reasonable to expect that in all Skye, with a population of 17,000, there would be six men to take that farm.

8659. But supposing you tried the same thing with a £600 farm you surely would not expect six men to come forward and take the farm jointly?—I would sooner let a £600 place at £100 each than I would let a £200 place at £30 each.

8660. But would it be more difficult to get six men to join for the £200 place or the £600 place?—I did not want them to join if they had just come forward about the same time. Taking Suishnish and Borroraig, which were divided into six lots, if six men came forward and said they would take it, and could pay for the stock, I would recommend Lord Macdonald to let them have a trial of it.

8661. What arrangement would he made with regard to houses and fences?—We would do something in that way as an experiment to see whether it would suit.

8662. Is there one house just now?—No. We were to build the house for one tenant if he would come forward.

8663. But you would not let the sixth of it separately?—We would not do so, and retain the remaining five sixths. I would like to do that but if the £30 crofting system would do at that, surely there are six men in Skye who would take it.

8664. One man, before he could take up a share, would require to get other five men to come along with him to make an offer?—Yes, out of the 17,000 there are in Skye.

8665. I think you said, as to the deer forest, that the shooting tenant was entitled to follow his deer on the crofter's hill pasture. Is the crofter entitled to follow his sheep into the deer forest?—Whether he is entitled to do it or not, he generally does it.

8666. Does he?—Yes.

8667. And of course the shooting tenant has a lease?—Sometimes he has a lease, and sometimes only one year of it.

8668. But the others have no lease?—No, but we will be very glad to give them leases if they want them, and undertake to improve their crofts. I believe I am right in saying that the proprietor would do that.

8669. They come to us complaining that on their own hill pasture they were not entitled to walk at a certain period of the year?—That is ridiculous.

8670. In another case, they said they were afraid of accidents, because guns were going off to right and left of them?—I think those statements are to be taken *cum grano*.

8671. But there is no fence?—No fence.

8672. And the shooting tenant is entitled to go upon the ground?—To follow the deer, but not to shoot the tenants.

8673. I think we have had an example of his exercising the right of shooting a dog?—We cannot be responsible for all that English sportsmen coming up here do, or Highland sportsmen either. I suppose people very often do a great deal more than they are entitled to do.

8674. But my point is this, that the crofters have no lease, they have

only a yearly tenure, would you be prepared, as factor on the estate, to back them up in upholding their rights, so that the shooting tenant will not be entitled to shoot their dogs or trespass upon their land?—I would never consent to the shooting tenant having leave to shoot the tenant's dogs. Before we shoot their dogs we ask their leave. I never had a dog shot in my life without asking the owner's leave and consent. They generally will not consent. I have known crofters shoot each others dogs, however, without leave.

8675. So that if the shooting tenant were to follow his deer upon the hill pasture of the crofter, you would uphold the crofter as against the shooting tenant?—No, I do not say that. I think there is a legal right on the part of the tenant to follow the deer on to the crofter's ground. I believe that is quite the law. It is no hardship at all, not the slightest. If the deer runs, what is the harm of the sportsmen going after it?

8676. But the crofters object to the deer going among their corn?—No true sportsman would ever dream of shooting a deer standing in the corn. I would no more do that than I would shoot at a sitting grouse.

8677. It came before us in evidence?—There may be occasional cases of that sort, but he is a very poor sportsman who would shoot deer in the corn. It is only on the hillside that the deer are shot.

8678. One of the men stated in evidence that it was done before his eyes?—It may have been done, but it was utterly unsportsman-like and unusual, and a thing I never saw or heard of.

8679. In that case, would you back up the crofter as against the shooting tenant?—Distinctly, if the shooting tenant was doing any harm. Most certainly we would protect our small tenants against anything that is done wrong to them.

8680. As regards voluntary emigration, you mentioned that the emigration should be conducted for the benefit of those who go away and for the benefit of those who remain. I suppose you mean by that to enlarge the holdings of those who remain?—I think that wherever a lot has been divided, if possible it should be brought back to its original condition.

8681. Was it not rather the opposite policy that was pursued in the past?—Yes, by the crofters.

8682. And by the factors too?—Well, the factors did not wish to be hard on the tenants, and did not evict them. I can conceive that factors in the old times were not so strict, but subdivision goes on in such a way that it is difficult to prevent it.

8683. I think you stated there were eighteen removals from this deer forest, and that the people were provided for on other parts of the estate?—I believe so.

8684. Was that upon new land, or by subdividing old crofts?—I think the tenant from Braes stated—I never heard of it before—thata crofter was to be put on his lot for the sake of a man at Tormichaig, but that he resisted it, and that another person had been turned out, that is all I know about it; but I understood, in a general way, that they were provided for in some way.

8685. You are not aware that there was any new land given to them?—Not so far as I know.

8686. Well, it must have been by subdividing crofts?—They may have emigrated.

8687. But you said that the eighteen were provided for on the rest of the estate?—So far as I know. It was long before my time. Some of them may have emigrated.

8688. I do not exactly understand how you say that the change in the value of money benefited the crofters. Will you explain that?—Because,

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though there is a change in the value of gold, the rent continues the same. He will earn £2 instead of £1, but his rent is the same.

8689. You mean the change in the value of labour?—Money and labour.

8690. Is not the expenditure almost keeping pace with the increased value of labour?—I understood from the accounts I had of the crofters in my early days, that they lived in a different and much more frugal way than they live now-a-days. But it is not confined to the crofters, because all classes live in a more luxurious way than they used to do.

8691. You said that they are better fed and better clothed than they used to be. Do you mean they are more comfortably clothed now-a-days, or only more expensively?—I believe they are better clothed.

8692. More comfortably?—Yes, and better fed. I believe they themselves think otherwise, because any class of people in looking back upon old times praise the old times,—from the days of Homer downwards,—instead of the present time; but all the histories we have show that the crofters live much better now than they did in older times, because they used to bleed their cattle to keep them through the year Martin says so in his *History of the Western Islands.*

8693. I am confining it to your own experience?—I have been told by those who lived immediately before me that the crofters look better and live better and are much stronger than when they lived on potatoes; and I believe that to be true, because oatmeal is a much better food than potatoes are.

8694. You go back thirty years, but we have examined men much older, and their evidence comes to this, that the people are more expensively clothed now?—I believe that is true.

8695. But perhaps not to the same extent more comfortably clothed, and that they are not so well fed now, that there was formerly more milk and eggs and occasionally meat?—There were more eggs, because they did not give the eggs for tea, as they do now

8696. What I am pointing at is this, was not their food better and more substantial forty years ago than it is now?—I know that is the popular opinion; but when I read what Johnson, Boswell, Burt, and others say, I find that the children were not half clad and the men were not half clad, and accounts are given that would horrify us in the present day.

8697. But you would believe a trustworthy crofter speaking from his experience of sixty years ago?—If I did not believe that old men were prone to think that things were better in their youth than now, I would believe what the crofters say, for I do not believe that they have stated otherwise than truthfully—whether it is true or not.

8698. Taking the small crofts and large farms relatively upon the estate of Kilmuir, are you able to tell us upon which of the two classes the rents have been most increased?—I cannot tell relatively, but I know that the large farms pay much more per acre.

8699. That is not what I mean. Are you able to tell us whether, since Major Fraser entered upon his property, the increase had been greatest upon the large farms or upon the small crofts?—I cannot do it without making a calculation, but I think the increase must have been more upon the large farms. I cannot state it positively.

8700. I suppose it is upon the large farms that the whole expenditure was made. You said already that there was no expenditure made upon the small crofts in the way of trenching and improving?—Not much.

8701. I have a receipt here which has been handed up to me, and the man who hands it up says that it is exactly for the same croft. It appears that in 1856 the bare rent was £2, 18s. 6d., and in 1878, £12. The

receipts are for No. 2 and No. 3 lots, but the man says it is the identical croft?—It may be; he is a very respectable man. But the question is, whether the croft was worth £12 in 1878, though the rent was only £2, 18s. 6d. in 1856. I observe, however, that the £2, 18s. 6d. is only for the half year.

8702. Then the rent was £5, 17s., and in 1878 it is still a little over the double. Now, has the value of the estate been a little more than doubled within that time?—That is very easily seen by the valuation rolls and rental. I think it is about it. But that same rent of £5, 17s. was not changed before since 1830.

8703. Do you know the rent of Duntulm?—No; I cannot tell you the rent of it separate from a number of other places.

8704. But no expenditure by the proprietor in the way of trenching has been made on the croft to which I have referred within that period?—Not so far as I know.

8705. What has been done in regard to the big farms?—Very little indeed was done upon the big farms except upon buildings, with the one exception of the farm of Monkstadt, upon which a considerable sum was expended by the proprietor in draining the loch. I know of no other expenditure upon the large farms of Kilmuir except on buildings.

8706. Was anything done upon the buildings of this croft?—No. I do not suppose John Mackenzie ever asked it, or would wish it, or would pay the interest upon it. I fancy he is quite contented with his house.

8707. Observe, his rent is doubled. Would not that be fair interest upon the small croft, as upon the large farm?—Not if the place is worth the double rent. A place that has not been changed since 1830 may possibly be changed without any hardship.

8708. *Mr Fraser Mackintosh.*—Who made it double the value?—I fancy it was not the crofter; it was the change in the times.

8709. *Professor Mackinnon.*—In the matter of Suishnish, was there any one at all who came forward to offer for the one-sixth of the place?—No one. There was a man who came forward from another property, who said he would take one half of it, but none came forward for one sixth.

8710. So really, before you could let this place, you must find six men of the same mind to come forward, which would be rather a difficult thing?—Six tenants to come forward out of about 17,000 people is no great matter. Surely if all the crofters in Skye want more land and can stock it, six could be found to take Suishnish, which is beautiful land.

8711. With regard to the statement about the shooting tenant, if it came to your knowledge that the shooting tenant was preventing the crofter from working freely upon his own hill pasture at the shooting season, or otherwise owing to fear of accident—whether on the part of the shooting tenant or his gamekeeper,—would you support the crofter as against the tenant?—Most distinctly.

8712. And would you send the shooting tenant back to his business?—Most distinctly. I would never dream of allowing any shooting tenant to interfere with any crofter's use of his own grazing land.

8713. Does the shooting tenant not interfere with it if he follows the deer upon it?—No, that is an old hunting privilege which any Highlandman will be glad to allow to his neigbbour, and he will be glad to see him stalking deer on his ground if he is a true Highlander. I think he would be a very poor crofter who would not enjoy seeing a man stalking a deer.

8714. On his own ground?—Yes, or on any ground.

8715. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—I must ask a question, which I forgot, about my remarkable and troublesome old namesake Donald Nicolson. You

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stated that the expense of the case against him came to £50?—The whole sums decerned against him by the sheriff for damages, expenses, and one thing and another, came to £55.

8716. How was that made up?—What was the amount actually due to the laird for rent?—The sheriff decerned against him for all matters due to the laird, £55; but the sum due for rent was £8, 3s. 1d. I think. And he continued in possession for six months in spite of law and everything. The incoming tenant complained grievously of not getting possession at Whitsunday, and made a claim of damages against us. The laird did not get a single farthing but his rent, and anything that was over the incoming tenant got. It was put to his credit for the value of the houses.

8717. *How much would that come to?—Just a few pounds after paying* law expenses.

8718. You took off £25?—I did.

8719. Who lost by that?—Major Fraser had a decree, and we struck it off. We did not want to be hard upon the old man.

8720. You were so good that you only took £10 yourself?—I do not think I took £10.

8721. But you cut down your bill a little?—I think the bill was taxed. I think I got the taxed expenses, or near about that; but I was not very particular in making up the bill, knowing that Donald Nicolson was a very obstinate old chap, and that it was his obstinacy that put him in this scrape more than anything else.

8722. *The Chairman.*—We were told there was a charge made upon him for double rent, or something called violent profits, was that the case?—There was £16, that is to say two rents, but we did not get that; we credited that to the incoming tenant.

8723. Did you, on behalf of the landlord, receive these violent profits or this double additional rent in any degree at all?—Not for the landlord. The thing is this—we got £16 for the rent; that is to say, we got the whole year's rent; but we did not get this at all, it was credited to the incoming tenant, and it was perfectly fair, because the incoming man had to keep up a stock elsewhere by not getting possession at the term, and he suffered a lot of damage by it. We only got the rent, and no more than the rent, and £6, £7, or £8 was credited to the incoming tenant. We did not get a penuy but the rent.

8724. You did not get anything but the single rent due to you at the term at which the man was warned to go out?—Not a copper. It was all credited to the value of the incoming man.

8725. That is so far as the landlord was concerned. He got nothing but the rent due to him at the term?—Nothing.

8726. What did you get as legal agent?—I think between £9 and £10.

8727. As expenses?—On three occasions. There was a summons to remove, an action of interdict, and an action of breach of interdict, with concurrence of the procurator-fiscal.

8728. Was part of the £9 or £10 court expenses?—Court expenses, and taxed by Mr Maclachlan, the sheriff-clerk depute, and passed by him as right. I did all I could do to prevent that man ruining himself with expenses. I begged of him not to do it, but he would not listen to me, or to his own agent.

8729. Where did he get an agent?—He got Mr M'Lennan.

8730. But he was on the same side as you?—No, he acted as agent for Nicolson, and told him he was acting in a most ridiculous way, and advised him not to run himself into expenses and trouble. Many clients are not satisfied when they are told to make peace; they prefer to be egged on to war; and Nicolson went to Inverness.

8731. But the fiscal concurred with you in the action for breach of interdict?—He was bound to do so.

8732. So the old man had no agent then?—I do not think he had; and it is a good thing for him that he had not, because his expenses would have been three times more than they were.

8733. Extreme litigation is a thing much to be deprecated, but still I think it is remarkable that a poor man in the Isle of Skye should be in circumstances in which both the practising agents may be in a position in which it is impossible for them to take up his case?—Well, I have no doubt that the two practising agents will be delighted if another agent will come here and start.

8734. But you say he would not make enough to keep him in tea?—I do not think he would. [*Mr M'Lennan, procurator-fiscal.*—As my name has been mentioned, I may say that I was bound officially to give my concurrence to the application by Major Fraser, for which I got a fee of 2s. 6d. I had acted for Nicolson for a considerable time. I tried to persuade him to be reasonable, and I failed. I was bound to give my concurrence as procurator-fiscal when it was asked, but at the same time I state distinctly, and I wish the Commission to understand, that if he had had a defence, considering there was no other agent to defend him,—notwithstanding that I had given my official concurrence to the petition,—I would have done all in my power to defend him.]

8735. *Mr Cameron.*—Are you aware it has been a common cause of complaint among the people who have been before us as witnesses that the farms in Skye are as a rule too large, and that it would be advisable in the public interest to divide them into smaller farms?—Yes.

8736. Then was this at Suisnish not an honest attempt to meet the public wishes by dividing Suisnish among smaller tenants?—Most distinctly. Hearing the cry for land, I thought this was a good opportunity for establishing what I myself theoretically considered a good class of tenants, but I failed.

8737. *The Chairman.*—Did it occur to you that having failed in letting it in £30 crofts, you might offer to let it in £15 crofts?—No, that did not occur to me. In letting a new place I think we should try to do better than that. I think £30 tenants a better class than £15 ones.

8738. Before you leave, it is perhaps right that I should communicate a letter to you. You may remember there was a delegate of the name of Alexander Cameron, who made a statement at Bracadale to the effec that on a certain occasion you had used some harsh or impatient expression which he interpreted to be that Macleod of Macleod did not care though the Cuilore people should be put into the sea, and you offered a distinct contradiction to that statement, saying that such an expression never passed your lips. As the accusation was made in public, and as the contradiction was made in public, I think it is my duty to communicate the letter which I have received from Alexander Cameron, in which he states he is ready to give his oath before the sheriff that you said that Macleod of Macleod did not care although all the Cuilore people should be put into the sea, and he alleges that your two clerks heard you say the words?—I can only say that I still most distinctly adhere to my statemeut that such an inhuman expression as that, I am perfectly certain, I never gave utterance to.

8739. We are aware that things are imperfectly repeated, and are liable to misconception and misinterpretatiou, especially after a certain length of time, and it is not our duty to cross question anybody, or pit witness against witness in a case of that sort, so we will let the matter rest. We are quite willing to believe that you did not say so, and that there

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was a *misunderstanding*?—I must have been misunderstood; there must have been some misconception.

8740. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—About this matter of Suisnish, I should like to know what arrangements you proposed. Are there any buildin upon the ground at present?—No.

8741. What scheme had you in your head?—I had a certain view if the tenants came forward and said they were willing to take it. I had been observing that the crofters wanted more lands, and I thought this was a good opportunity, and that if six men came forward I would recommend Lord Macdonald to give it to them, and to help them in the building of suitable houses for themselves—to give the wood or a little money, and to do something—but not a single one appeared. I wrote to two or three personally, but they did not come.

8742. And you were prepared to give a lease also?—If the persons could satisfy me that they had the means of stocking, I would give a lease at once.

8743. For fifteen years, or what?—Yes, or ten years. The whole thing would be an experiment, and I think there would be no difficulty about the lease at all.

8744. What is the general length of the lease in the case of the bigger tacks?—Ten or fifteen years.

8745. With a break?—No, not as a rule, unless by special stipulation. There may be a break sometimes.

JOHN ROBERTSON, Esq., Farmer and Factor, Grishornish (60)—examined

(*See Appendix A.*)

John Robertson.

8746. *The Chairman.*—You are a factor?—I am factor for my son and for the Glendale trustees.

8747. Do you wish to make any statement to us?—Well, I have taken some notes. At the meeting at Skeabost there was a case mentioned by John Bethune, who stated that when I was factor at Skeabost a man was fined £4, 10s. for the keep of a horse. I want to explain that I was not factor for the late Mr Macleod of Grishornish at that time, but I occasionally gave him assistance. I am not aware of any case of the kind. I believe there was a case where a man was charged £1 a year for the grazing of a horse, and that is the only case I am aware of. I would like to refer to the matter of Edinbane and what happened at Dunvegan. Murdo M'Lean made several complaints as to my management of the Grishornish property, to which I wish to reply. I may preface it by stating that I have had charge of the property for fourteen years. During that time I have not increased the rental of this township. I have not evicted a single tenant. I have not encroached upon the hill grazings nor taken an inch of their arable lands from them. M'Lean states that I increased the rent of one crofter for taking a lodger, who he admitted was a hawker. He should have added, that it was for harbouring tinkers and becoming a nuisance to the neighbours that the rent was raised. He next charged me with increasing the rent of another crofter 10s. for quarrelling with his neighbour. He should have said fighting with his neighbour, and being otherwise troublesome to the crofters adjoining his land. Both crofters in 1882 had this increase taken off, and the rents made the same as before. The crofter who had his rent slightly increased for selling part of his crop off the property knew that by the rules of the estate he could sell it to any of the crofters or to any one on the property, and he had no excuse for refusing to comply with the rules. This crofter

and four others had been paying less rent than the other eighteen crofters who had half lots, and as they had about the same quantity of arable land, and were allowed the same summing of cattle, and received an equal share of the sheep profits, I considered they were bound to pay the same rent; and as two or three of the crofters had been complaining of paying more than the others, I reduced them, and made all as nearly as possible alike. These changes reduced the rental of the township £1, 4s., as will be seen by comparing the valuation roll of 1881 with that of 1882. I may here state that the late Mr Macleod of Grishornish, about twenty years ago, assisted six families to emigrate from the township, purchasing lands for them in America. He then removed the crofters of Kerrol, taking the vacant lands of Kerrol and Bendhu into his own hands. He expended a large amount of money in draining and trenching parts of these lands, and put up houses for the cottars of Bendhu. The rest of the lands he had under cultivation; and I may also mention that he erected on these lands the Gesto Hospital, and left it handsomely endowed for the benefit of the people of Skye, and Murdo M'Lean's brother lately received some of its benefits. This was the state of matters when I received charge of the property for my son, who is a minor, and as I have said, I have made no change on the crofters' holdings since. The houses were built by the crofters, and I have not interfered with them, nor have I interfered with the cropping of the land, but I have interested myself in the management of the stock of sheep. I purchased shares of these sheep, and I gave shares to those who had none, or who had not a full share, so as to make all equal in holding half or whole shares; I assisted at sales of their sheep and lambs, not even charging outlays, and the result is that for fourteen years the average profit has been £6 per share. A complaint has been made relative to the bank interest. The payments for sheep and lambs are as often made after the term as before it, as you will see by the past year's account, which I now produce. Besides, the bank only allows 1 or 1½ per cent. on current account, and though all the money was paid in two months before the account closed, the interest would not amount to more than 5s. This year the difference is on my side. M'Lean states also that only 100 or 120 lambs are usually sold. That is not correct. As you will see from the paper, 192 lambs were sold last year, and seldom under 180. Horses are not included in the summing, and no rent for them is paid. The charge of 10s. for each is divided amongst the crofters. I do not interfere in the sale of their cattle, and though I frequently ask them to give me the first offer of any animal they have for sale, it makes no difference whether they do so or not. I can buy from strangers as a rule on better terms. My keeping a meal store also appears to be a grievance, but as I expend in labour £600 or £700 annually, I require a store to supply my engaged servants and other workers with their ordinary allowance of meal. The store is open to any of the tenants who may want a supply, but I never asked any one of them to take meal from the store, and I have often cautioned my manager not to give them so much. Our prices for the past two years have been 20s. or 21s. per boll cash, and 22s. credit—except for four months—last July, August, September, and October—when it was 6d. per boll more, owing to the prices in the south being higher. Another delegate from Edinbane says that the crofters there had only four boats. I find, however, they have fourteen good sea-going boats. I think I have shown that the complaints made are groundless, and are not correct. I may just state that Murdo M'Lean and his brother have got upwards of £70 from me for draining during the last three or four years. These are my statements in reply to the complaints made, and I exhibit a letter from the banker showing the rate of interest.

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8748. We understand from you that for the last fourteen years there have been no evictions?—For a much longer period, but that is during my time.

8749. And during the same time there has been no increase of rental on the crofters?—None; as a whole, there have been a few shillings put on to equalise lower rents.

8750. And during that period has there been any subdivision of the crofts?—No.

8751. You mentioned that at a previous time six crofters were supplied with the means of emigration, and provided with land in America. Will you kindly state what intelligence you have respecting the fate of these people since they settled in America?—They have been successful.

8752. All the six?—So I understand.

8753. In what part of the country did they settle?—In Canada. There is a gentleman here who can tell all about them.—*Rev. Mr Darrock.* I have only to say that I happened to be in Canada at the time, and I saw the parties. They landed there, stopping on farms purchased for them by Mr Macleod of Grishornish, and most of them remained there in my time, but some of them were going further west, and getting land for themselves. They settled there on lands provided for them by Mr Macleod until such time as I understood they could purchase land for themselves, and they seemed to be very much pleased indeed with the country.

8754. Did they ever express any regret that they had left this country?—No, never.

8755. Were they supplied with clothes and passage money by the proprietor?—*Mr Robertson.* They were.—*Rev. Mr Darrock.* They seemed to be well clothed at all events.—*Mr Robertson.* We purchased the lands in addition.

8756. Have you any statement to make about Glendale?—No, unless you have any questions to put to me in reference to it.

8757. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—One of the complaints by the people who were here was, that they did not know the proper state of the accounts. You have now handed in an account; did you always give a copy of this to the people?—Yes.

8758. I do not observe the interest you refer to credited here?—There is no interest in the account, except against some advances for wool.

8759. But they seem to think that there was some interest coming to you from the bank?—No part of the money for the sheep was paid to me till 13th March, so that the account is rather in my favour than against me.

8760. The interest is in your favour?—Yes.

8761. *The Chairman.*—You mean there ought to be a payment to you rather than to them?—Quite so.

8762. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—There was also a complaint about a prohibition to take shell fish?—There was none except against taking oysters. I have a lease of the beds of oysters and mussels, and they make a handle of that.

8763. You don't forbid them to take mussels?—I don't forbid them, but I have a lease for the two.

8764. Is anybody at liberty to take bait off the shore there?—Anybody. I do not interfere with them if they do not touch the oysters. I pay a rent of £10 to the Board of Trade.

8765. For the oysters?—Yes.

8766. Have the oysters been increasing since the people were prohibited from taking them?—Yes, they are increasing.

8767. I suppose before your prohibition they were taking them indiscriminately?—They were taking them all away at that time.

8768. *The Chairman.*—Do you think they would have been exterminated if the people had retained the power of taking them away?—I believe they would.

8769. Are they increasing to be a source of profit?—They are increasing slowly, and last year was very much better than previous years.

8770. Do you offer any for sale?—I have not offered any for sale yet. I intended to send some to the Exhibition, but I was rather late in doing it.

8771. What is your object?—Is it to try to find a new source of profit in the country?—Yes, an oyster shore ought to be very valuable.

8772. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Is the right to gather periwinkles free to the people?—Free to the people.

8773. Is there any profitable oyster bank about Skye?—A great number. There are a great number of oyster banks about Skye.

8774. You do not say they are profitable now?—I do not think they are very profitable now. They have been cleaned off very much.

8775. Is there a good oyster bed at Skinidin?—I do not remember.

8776. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—I observe one complaint is that you have two shares of sheep on the hill, and that you do not pay for the grazing?—I have two shares on the hill, but they belong to that part of the Edinbane township called Kerrol. They have the same right to these two shares that the rest of the town has. There has been no change made by me.

8777. With regard to these two shares?—No change whatever.

8778. *The Chairman.*—I do not distinctly understand about the two shares. The delegates who spoke seemed to imply that you derive a full measure of profit from these shares, and that you do not participate in an equal degree of the expenses?—I stand in the same position as any one of them. I pay the same share of the expenses, and I hold the arable land of Kerrol in my own hands.

8779. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—How many shares are there altogether in this hill farm?—Twenty-nine.

8780. And you have two?—I have two.

8781. And they complain, I understand, that you don't pay for a certain portion of the grazing, and you say that is a separate matter altogether?—No, the grazing of Kerrol is enclosed. The late Mr Macleod made a sort of model farm, and he kept part of it in grass and cultivation, and had part of it planted. I just keep it in the same way.

8782. Is that the portion they complain of?—That is the portion they think they should have the run of.

8783. When was that taken from them?—About twenty years ago, but they were removed from the lands of Kerrol to Edinbane when he sent the six away to America, and they got lands that became vacant there instead.

8784. If you have that portion reserved, how is it pastured? You have sheep in common?—Well, there is a part of it given to the doctor of the hospital, but the sheep go on the hill where all the rest of the sheep are. The sheep don't come down there at all. It is the same as part of the crofts—exactly two crofts.

8785. This part, then, you consider exclusively your own?—It is exclusively the proprietor's. I am acting for my son.

8786. Have they got any grievance, in reality, about this matter?—I don't think so. I was not aware of it till I heard of it at Dunvegan.

8787. *The Chairman.*—You never heard of this grievance before? They never made any representation to you?—Never. Each share pays £10 rent, and receives the same advantages in the hill grazing as the other croft that pays £8 rent.

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8788. There is another matter, namely, that you raised the rents for the purpose of qualifying them as voters?—That is nonsense. The election was over before anything of the kind happened, and I had no inducement to do so. It was to equalise them, and, as you will observe from the paper, the changes reduced the rent £1, 4s., and did not, as a whole, increase it. They were all deriving the same amount of profit from the different lots. They had all the same arable land, and received the same summing of cattle.

8789. Do you mean you took it off some and put it on to others?—I took it off some and put it on to others.

8790. And it is those on whom you put it that are complaining?—Yes.

8791. And it is incorrect to attribute any such motive to you?—Quite incorrect.

8792. One of the delegates stated that you distinctly said you put it on because you wanted to make a gentleman of him?—It is quite possible I may have chaffed him, because at that time there was a little excitement about the election.

8793. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Where do the common stock winter?—Over all the ground.

8794. And do they winter on your arable ground as well as on the crofters' arable ground?—No the lands of Kerrol are fenced off.

8795. That is the complaint of the crofters perhaps—that you do not share in the wintering of their sheep?—That must have given rise to it.

8796. *The Chairman.*—If you wish to make any further statement you are at liberty to do so?—I have no other statement to make, unless I am asked in reference to Glendale.

8797. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Perhaps you could tell us something about Glendale?—I have had very little to do with it.

8798. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Do you wish of your own accord to make any statement about Glendale?—There is not very much that I have got to say.

8799. The proprietor, Mr Macpherson, is here to-day; does he wish to make any statement?—I am not aware.

8800. You do not wish to volunteer any statement?—I am not prepared at present.

The following is the account referred to in the examination of this witness:—

Edinbane Sheep Stock, showing Sales and Expenses for 1882.

1882.					
Sept 14.	Proceeds of 130 wedder lambs, sold at £11, 10s. per c. score, less 23s. 9d.		£70	0	0
	„	of 62 shot wedder lambs, and 1 wedder, 12s., sold at	17	1	0
1883.					
March 5	„	of 63 cast ewes, sold at £17 per score,	51	0	0
	„	of wool allowed unsold,	50	8	0
	„	of wool sold to tenants,	3	16	6
		of cast sheep skins, sold by Managers, as per list,	14	4	8
	„	of grazing for horses, 6 at 10s. each,	3	0	0
			£209	10	2

Expenses.

Shepherd's wages, £9; meal, £6, 6s., . .	£15	6	0			
Smearing 720 sheep, and meal, 20s., . .	4	13	0			
Manager's wages, £4, allowance for herding, 26s.,	5	6	0			
Smearing materials, ...	24	14	10			
Carting stuffs, 20s; repairing house, 10s., .	1	10	0			
Mr M'Kinnon's account, 4s. 2½d.; Mr Fenton's account, 10s., ...	0	14	2½			
Herd's wages, ...	3	5	0			
Interest to Greig, on advance of £53, 15s. 6d., 9 months at 5 per cent., . . .	£2	0	6			
				57	9	6½
29 shares, equal to £5, 4s. 10d. each share. .				£152	0	7½

JOHN STEWART, Scorrybreck, formerly at Duntulm, Proprietor of Ensay (about 60)—examined.

8801. *Mr Cameron.*—When did you first become tenant of Duntulm? John Stewart —I was tenant of Flodigarry in 1846. I commenced there.

8802. When did you take Duntulm?—Four years after that.

8803. That was in 1850?—Yes.

8804. And you have been there ever since until last Whitsunday?—Yes.

8805. What did your stock consist of on Duntulm?—Cheviot ewes and Highland cattle.

8806. Any blackfaced sheep?—No, not one.

8807. Were there blackfaced sheep when you first went to Duntulm? —I found no sheep at all at Duntulm.

8808. You put the sheep on yourself?—I put the sheep on myself.

8809. When you left did the incoming tenant give you the valuation for your stock?—Yes.

8810. Did you find from your experience at Duntulm that sheep were more profitable to you, or the breeding of cattle?—It depends on the seasons. When the price of wool was somewhat high, of course sheep paid liberally, but now I think cattle pay quite as well.

8811. How many acres of arable ground are there?—I have not the least idea. I can form an idea of what I cultivated myself. There was a great deal of pasture land that was formerly croft land, but I do not know the amount.

8812. How much did you cultivate yourself?—About fifty acres.

8813. May I ask your reason for not continuing on Duntulm?—The proprietor and I could not agree about the rent.

8814. The proprietor thought your rent should be raised?—Yes, or kept at the old figure.

8815. Did you think your rent was too high already?—I really thought so, or I would not have left it.

8816. Were you sorry to leave it?—No, certainly not.

8817. You have no affection for it particularly?—I liked the place; I was a long time there, and pretty successful.

8818. And if the rent had been satisfactory you would have remained? —Yes.

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8819. And you regretted that you and your landlord could not agree about the rent?—Yes, certainly.

8820. Now, to what do you attribute the fact that you were unable to continue at the same rent?—Was it the fall in prices; and if so, the prices of what?—The price of wool had very much to do with it; I could not farm it to pay.

8821. Would you be willing to take a large sheep farm now, on which there was little or no arable ground?—No, I think I will take no more farms.

8822. I suppose you made more out of Duntulm in the earlier years of your lease than you did in the later ones?—Yes, much more.

8823. But you think practically sheep farming is now anything but a profitable occupation?—Well, I think it is not very profitable at present.

8824. To what other causes do you attribute that fact besides the fall in the price of wool?—Winterings are very high, and we require to winter a good many sheep.

8825. Are not the present high prices of sheep stock one great reason why sheep farmers are unwilling to embark in a speculation of that kind?—Well, it requires a great amount of money to take a farm with any stock at present.

8826. Are they not afraid, if they go in when prices are very high, that when their lease comes to an end they may have to go out when prices are much lower?—Yes, I have no doubt that feeling exists.

8827. In fact, a sheep farmer who would otherwise wish to take a farm is deterred from doing so by the fact that, on the one hand, he has to employ more capital in stocking his land; and, on the other hand, from the low price of wool, he has to make less profit during the currency of his lease?—Yes, that is my idea.

8828. That being so, I should like to know what your opinion is with regard to the possibility of converting Duntulm farm, or a portion of it, into small holdings, to be occupied by the race of men who have been described to us as having occupied the greater portion of that land in times past? Do you think that could be profitably done?—Well, I question it.

8829. Will you give us your experience or your reasons why you think it could not be done?—I have seen it tried in Harris perhaps forty-five years ago.

8830. What was the result?—That the crofters only paid three or four years when the place had to be turned into a sheep run again.

8831. What became of the crofters?—They got other holdings. I have seen adjoining the farm of Duntulm there were two or three small farms, one of which paid about £30, and another, I believe, paid about £15 of rent; and they had to give up their holdings, they found the land dear.

8832. What is the nature of the land in Harris that you talk of?—Pretty fair arable land.

8833. About what size were these farms on Harris that were occupied by the small tenants, and which they had to leave?—I think the rents varied from £10 to £15.

8834. But that would be a comparatively small croft?—No, a very good extent with hill ground.

8835. On which they kept cattle and sheep?—Yes.

8836. How many acres of arable ground?—I do not exactly know the extent of arable land.

8837. Do you think the rent they paid was more or less on an average than you paid on your farm of Duntulm?—Much about the same.

8838. And these crofters could not make a living by it?—So I understood.

8839. Suppose that, instead of there being three of £15 each, there had been two or three of £30 each, would that have made a difference in your opinion?—Well, it depended entirely on their capital, and skill and enterprise.

8840. But supposing they had a fair average amount of skill and enterprise, and that they had capital sufficient, when they originally went in to stock their land, would they be able to carry on at the same rent there as you did at Duntulm?—Well, I question it; I am afraid that the rent at Duntulm would be found too dear for a division of that kind.

8841. Suppose it was not found possible or expedient to divide Duntulm altogether amongst the small class of tenants, and that it was found possible to give some of the most suitable land to small tenants, in your opinion would that spoil the remainder of the farm for a tenant who might use the larger portion of it?—Would that injure the farmer?—I would be afraid it would.

8842. Would it prevent the farm from letting?—I think so.

8843. In what manner?—It would reduce the size of the farm; the portion which the tenants would require would be arable land, and this would take the arable land off the farm.

8844. But is there not land on the farm of Duntulm which is now under permanent pasture, but which could be utilised by crofters as arable ground?—Oh, yes.

8845. That is to say, by ordinary delving?—I believe that the most of it would require to be done on the old system of the *cas-chrom*.

8846. Why could not horses be used upon it?—It is very rocky and broken ground, the land that is outside; what was cultivated by me within enclosures could be well ploughed, but most of what is outside would require to be delved with the spade or *cas-chrom*.

8847. But suppose it could be done and was done, in what way would the taking of that land injure the remaining portion of the farm of Duntulm, provided they did not take any of the present arable land that you have cultivated?—I suppose it would just make the farm less.

8848. Would that be the only injury that would be inflicted on the farm in your opinion?—I suppose it would, if there were proper marches made between them—a proper fence between the tenants and the tacksman who had the rest of the farm.

8849. You are well acquainted with the Isle of Skye?—I think I should be.

8850. May I ask whether the remarks you have made in answer to my questions as regards Duntulm, would hold good with regard to other large sheep farms in Skye; that is to say, whether they would be injured only in the same degree in which you think Duntulm would be if land could be found upon them suitable to be divided amongst tenants of the smaller class?—I suppose it would be something similar, if there was land to suit them.

8851. Then, according to the evidence you have given, there are many farms in Skye where land might be given to small tenants without deteriorating from the value of these farms except to the extent of the actual loss of land?—But that would reduce the value of the land. The tenant in possession could not expect to have the same returns, nor the proprietor.

8852. But is it not the fact that large sheep farms which are now in the market are almost impossible to let?—Well, what was explained before about the price of stocks has a good deal to do with that.

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8853. But are you aware there are large sheep farms that have been lately in the market, and have found no offerers at all?—There may be reasons for that. Perhaps they were not very good farms, or the proprietor might be seeking too much rent. I do not think there is any good farm reasonably rented but would let.

8854. Are you acquainted with any proprietors in the Highlands who have been compelled to take farms into their own hands for want of tenants?—Yes.

8855. Then, in that case, if large farms are so difficult to let, might it not be for the interest of the proprietor, as well as meeting a desire which is pretty generally expressed now, if these large farms were reduced in size, and more tenants enabled to live upon the land?—I suppose the proprietors who find it difficult to let their land ought to try that plan.

8856. What is your opinion as to the comparative advantages of Highland cattle and sheep? Do you think they could be worked together well on these farms?—I have found them to do well together.

8857. Do you think, if that practice were more generally adopted, the sheep farms could be turned to better account than by having only sheep?—I think so; in this country in particular.

8858. In the island of Skye?—Yes.

8859. You rather regret that there are so many sheep and so few cattle?—Yes; I think there should be more cattle.

8860. You are a great admirer of Highland cattle, I believe?—Yes, I like them very much.

8861. And you are a very successful rearer of them?—Yes.

8862. You have won prizes at the Highland and Agricultural Society very frequently?—Very many of them, and I expect to get a few more if I am spared.

8863. Do you think Highland cattle are suitable for large farmers as well as small crofters?—Yes; they are the native breed, and resist the cold and wet of our country.

8864. What sort of bulls do the crofters use in the island of Skye?—The best they can afford to buy. They are very endeavouring in that way.

8865. Are they generally pretty fair animals?—Very good.

8866. Have you ever sold young bulls of your famous breed to the crofters?—Scores of them.

8867. Do you find they are willing to take advantage of so excellent an opportunity of purchasing these?—Very willing.

8868. Do you think the crofters' stock has improved or deteriorated of late years?—Very much improved.

8869. What is your impression of the relative condition of the crofters at the present time compared with what it was when you first came to the country? Do you think they are better off and more comfortable, or not?—Well, I am afraid not in a sense. We are all more extravagant. I am a tenant myself, and I am much more extravagant than I was thirty years ago; all my requirements are more.

8870. I suppose we are all more extravagant, from the highest in the land to the simple crofters?—Yes; and we have had a very bad season this last year, which has damped the crofters very much. They lost their corn almost altogether, but they have had good fishings and easy access to the south, where labour is very abundant.

8871. Do you think they devote less attention to fishing than they used to do?—No; they go to the fishing every year. They are very anxious in that way. They go to Ireland and the east coast and everywhere.

8872. In short, they show a considerable amount of energy as to fishing?—Yes; if they had better boats and more of them, the people would struggle on and be successful too.

8873. And do you think they would struggle and endeavour to be successful on land if they had the chance? Do you think they are equally suited to become successful farmers as to become successful fishermen?—Well, I am afraid not.

8874. Do you think they have not got the requisite perseverance or skill, or what is it?—They are more indolent about their own land than they might be. There are no better workers or more faithful men for others, but I am afraid they are a little indolent at home. There are exceptions, of course.

8875. Do you think anything could be done to increase their skill in agriculture— to give them better information on agricultural matters, so as to enable them more successfully to cope with the difficulties of the climate?—Yes, I think a good deal might be done in that way.

8876. And you think they would be willing to learn if they had the chance?—Yes, and to help them by enclosures.

8877. What do you mean by that?—Divisions of their crofts.

8878. Fences?—Yes.

8879. To enclose their arable land from their hill land?—Yes, so as to enable them to sow grass seed. They cannot do so when the farm is in a common, without division or enclosures. They have no encouragement to put down any green crop or grass seed.

8880. Your opinion is that it is the want of enclosures which ought to exist, to prevent the trespass of their cattle on their arable ground, that prevents them sowing grass seeds?—A good deal of that.

8881. So if they had better fences they would be more encouraged to adopt a better system of rotation of crops?—Yes, and in many cases to take in more of the outland.

8882. Do you think they would be willing to do that?—Oh, yes.

8883. Do you think improving leases would be any encouragement to them?—Yes, I really think so.

8884. Do you think they would be willing to take leases?—I think so, if the restrictions were not very stringent.

8885. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—I think, since you have been at Duntulm, several additions have been made to the farm?—Some additions.

8886. Were they hill lands, or were there lowlands along with them?—Both.

8887. One whole township was added to Duntulm?—Yes.

8888. And the people were removed to neighbouring townships?—Yes, but two old tenants died.

8889. Can you tell me whether you gave the landlord a better rent for these lands than the original tenants had been able to give?—I think I was charged more than they paid for them.

8890. Were you willing to give more?—Well, I had to do so.

8891. There were a number of crofters situated near you at Kilmaluag?—Yes.

8892. Do you know what sort of rent they paid for their land?—Yes.

8893. Do you think those lands were worth more to a man of capital, a large farmer, than they were to these crofters at Kilmaluag?—Not worth more, I think. I think they were paying full rent for them; I should say too much now.

8894. Were they paying as much in proportion for the land as you were paying for Duntulm?—Scarcely; I was paying more rent for the last twelve years. I think it was about the dearest place in the whole island of Skye during the last twelve years.

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8895. And you do not think on the whole that the crofters could pay such a full rent for the land as the large farmers pay?—Not by the returns of the land alone, if they had no other resources.

8896. But suppose they had crofts of such a size as would prevent them going fishing, would they then be able to pay such a rent as the large farmer?—I would be afraid not.

8897. You spoke of indolence at home. Do you think that indolence at home arises from want of confidence in the landlord, from fear of their rents being raised if they make improvements on their crofts?—Yes, I think so; they assert that.

8898. Do you think that indolence would disappear if they had such security as tenants have in other parts of the country?—Well, it would disappear from a good many of them. There might be a lazy class for all that; but still, as a general rule, I think it would stir up the people a good deal to better their condition and improve their houses.

8899. With regard to crofts of the size we find in Kilmuir, would it be at all profitable to enclose each croft with an enclosing dyke? You have said that you cannot expect them to sow grass seed unless land is enclosed, and that is quite true?—Yes, it is an advantage to have it enclosed.

8900. But would it pay the expense to enclose each individual croft of the size that crofts are now?—I think it would.

8901. Even where they are crofts of six acres?—Yes.

8902. With stone dykes?—Yes, I suppose.

8903. When I talk of paying I mean, could the holder of the land pay interest on the cost of that improvement in addition to the ordinary rent?—It depends on the rent he is paying; if he had it at a reasonable rent.

8904. Suppose the farm of Duntulm were cut up into a number of townships, rented as low as Kilmaluag, which you say was fully lower than Duntulm, could the proprietor erect dykes around each crofter's holding, and expect the crofters to pay interest upon the cost of building these dykes?—Not at the present rent, because the rent is increased by school rates, road money, and other things, and with a rate of interest to pay it would come to be too much money.

8905. And yet after all it does not come up to the rent of the large farm?—Well, I think not.

8906. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You have now taken, I understand, the farm of Scorrybreck?—Yes.

8907. Is it a very large farm?—Yes, it is a large farm.

8908. What was the last rent you were paying for Duntulm and Flodigarry?—I think £1525, or something like that.

8909. For these two farms?—Three—Duntulm, Flodigarry, and Sartle.

8910. Do you know what the proprietor is getting from the present tenant?—I am not aware, but it think it is a pretty smart rent.

8911. Is it a fair question to ask how much you were willing to give him for a new lease?—I offered £1250.

8912. You went first to Flodigarry, what did you pay for it?—£200.

8913. How much for Duntulm?—£330.

8914. And how much for Sartle?—£130, but there were additions.

8915. Then before you left that estate your rental was more than doubled?—Well, there were additions made to the farms; there were some lands thrown in.

8916. What were they?—Lachsay and Scor.

8917. Who were the people on Scor?—The tenant who was there when I went was Sandy Macphail.

8918. Was he the only tenant there?—I think so; he and his son-in-law.

8919. What was your rent at the time Captain Fraser became proprietor?—I don't exactly remember.

8920. Did he put it up?—Yes, considerably.

8921. So it is not the crofters' land alone that he put up?—No, more than once my rent was raised.

8922. Can you give us a rough estimate of how much arable land there was upon those three farms which had once been cultivated?—I really cannot say.

8923. You yourself only cultivated about 50 acres?—Yes.

8924. Can you not give us a rough estimate?—No, I cannot; there was a great deal that had been in cultivation with the crooked spade.

8925. And it had once borne crop?—Yes.

8926. Am I exaggerating if I say 500 acres?—A great deal more than that.

8927. Would you say 1000 acres?—No, I would not say that.

8928. But a great deal more than 500 acres?—Yes.

8929. And those are the lands which you referred to when you said they were not perhaps altogether ready for the plough?—Yes.

8930. Because they had been cultivated by hand?—Yes, I believe that small crofts would still be better to be cultivated by the spade.

8931. As regards Harris, don't you think matters have changed very much since forty-five years ago?—Yes.

8932. Are you paying a smaller rent for Scorrybreck than the previous tenant paid?—I believe I am paying more.

8933. Do you get any advantage that he did not possess?—No, I do not; on the contrary, he had the one half of the shooting, and I don't have it.

8934. Did you wish the shooting?—I should like it; it would be an advantage.

8935. You stated in answer to a previous inquiry that you thought Highland cattle were the best source of making money?—I think so.

8936. For a big farmer as for a little farmer?—Yes, I think a mixed stock is best where the land suits.

8937. I would like to ask you, in refereuce to your remark about the people being rather indolent at home and excellent workers abroad, you mean that you believed that arose to some extent from the people not being very sure that they would be left in their holdings?—I attributed it to that. I do not say it is the case with all of them, but I think a good many of them are idly passing their time at home.

3938. Are you aware there are a great number of families that have been removed twice, three, four, and in some cases five times?—Not families of any importance or consequence; they may have fishermen or crofters.

8939. Would you suppose that such people would have any inducement to improve the places they are on for the time?—Certainly not, and that is my reason for saying they should have some hold on their ground.

8940. As you have lived so long in Skye, would you mention the length of lease they would be disposed to accept upon getting larger and improved crofts?—I should suppose nothing less than fifteen years.

8941. Do you think they would be content with fifteen years?—I should think so.

8942. Are you aware that in other parts of the country, such as Aberdeen and Inverness-shires, a great deal of hill land has been reclaimed upon improving leases of thirty-one years?—Yes, but these were very hopeless subjects when they commenced them.

8943. You also stated that not only some of the old land once in

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cultivation might be taken in, but also some good pasture land that had never been cultivated?—I think I said something to the effect, that land which had been cultivated many years ago might be broken up to advantage.

8944. But is there not land that never was under cultivation at all that might be taken in with advantage?—Yes, but that would involve great outlay.

8945. And you would give them a long lease?—Yes, certainly; thirty years at least.

8946. With such a long lease, say for thirty years, would you approve of the rental being a small sum at the beginning, rising gradually to a certain amount?—Yes, certainly, rising every ten years, and rising according to the profit.

8947. We have heard on every hand a great desire expressed on the part of the people to get more land. Does that demand, in your opinion really arise from a sincere desire to better themselves and improve their position at home?—Oh, I suppose so.

8948. And while no doubt some of them would not be able to stock those enlarged crofts all at once, is there any doubt that there are a good number of clever and active men with strong arms who would be able to begin and do something at once?—I should think so. They have strong arms. If people have the will they can always get the way.

8949. Would not the same class of people, if they knew they were likely not to be disturbed, be disposed in your opinion at once to begin to improve their houses?—They would be disposed if they had the means; but some of them are short of means.

8950. But those that have a little means would be disposed to do so?—I think so.

8951. In answer to a question, you stated that the people generally were more extravagant than formerly, and that you yourself were?—Yes, men who contented themselves with home produce at first must now have tea and all those extravagant outside luxuries or foreign ingredients, and the young people going south get into these habits and accustom us to these things at home, so that we have all got more extravagant.

8952. Do not all these things—what we may call improved food and extravagance in dress—point to a higher standard of living altogether, and that it is very likely their houses would be improved by themselves?—If they were in position and circumstances to do so, I have no doubt they would improve their houses.

8953. Is there anything all over Skye that is in a lower position, whether for man or beast, than the dwellings? Are the houses in proportion much worse than the style of food the people eat or the clothes they wear?—Yes; but the houses inside are much more comfortable than a stranger would suppose from looking at the outside.

8954. Are they not generally very dirty?—No, they are not; neither dirty nor inhospitable.

8955. Far be it from me to suggest such a thing as that; on the contrary. As regards the people, we have received the very kindest treatment. I spoke of houses. Were there many people removed from farms during your possession, at the instance of the landlord?—Not one.

8956. During all the forty years you were there?—Not one.

8957. You have seen or heard of numerous instances in Skye during your days?—Not in my end of the country at all.

8958. Whatever was done was before your time?—Yes.

8959. Was not Scorrybreck very full of people at one time?—I am not aware. But you can see traces where the land has been cultivated.

8960. You have walked over your new farm?—Yes.

8961. Don't you see the remains of old cultivation and ruins everywhere?—Yes.

8962. Have you any idea of the extent of the acreage of Scorrybreck?— John Stewart.
Not the least.

8963. Is it 10,000 acres?—I suppose it is.

8964. How many people are on it?—Only shepherds; seven or eight families altogether.

8965. *The Chairman.*—We have heard it stated to-day that keeping sheep for a length of time upon pasture ground depreciates the quality of the pasture. Is that consistent with your experience?—No, I have not noticed that.

8966. Have you ever heard it said in the country, that pasturing ground by sheep alone for a length of time spoils the pasture?—That is my own idea—that the sheep are the better of having cattle with them.

8967. Do you think it is the mixture of cattle with sheep that prevents the ground being spoiled?—I think so.

8968. What is the reason? How is it that the mixture of the cattle keeps the pasture wholesome and abundant?—I suppose the larger animal crops the large coarse grass that the sheep passes over, and also manures the land better.

8969. You have stated that the quality of the crofters' cattle is very much improved, and it has been argued from that, that the crofters are now better able to pay their rent than they formerly would have been. Is the higher price of cattle which the crofters now get chiefly owing to the greater demand, or is it owing to the better quality of the animal?—To both.

8970. But it is partly owing to the better quality of the animal?—Yes.

8971. Does the crofter contribute by his own expenditure or skill to make the quality better? Does he, for instance, feed the cattle more expensively?—I am afraid they have not been so well fed this year. The crop was rather scarce this year.

8972. But generally, do you think the crofter gives his cattle better food now than he did twenty years ago? Does he feed them more for the market?—No; I don't think they feed them any better than they used to do

8973. But you stated that they have expended some money in obtaining better bulls?—Yes.

8974. You have said that you think the people might be inclined to take up new crofts and larger crofts, and be capable of cultivating and stocking them. Do you think, in case such better crofts were granted to them, that they would submit to prohibition of dividing them? Do you think they would see it was impolitic to divide them, and submit not to divide them?—It is very difficult to prevent division of the crofts. I am afraid they would not be pleased to bind themselves by restrictions of that sort.

8975. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—There were no evictions made for the purpose of adding to Duntulm in your time?—No.

8976. But there was a good deal of pasture taken from the people on both sides of the hill?—Yes.

8977. When was Sartle added to Duntulm?—I got Sartle before I got Duntulm; when Hugh Macleod failed I got it.

8978. There were no crofters there?—No; there were cottars.

8979. But there was a considerable strip of moor taken from the people of Brogaig, Deig, and Glasbhen?—Yes, and added to Sartle.

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8980. When was that done?—It is twelve or fourteen years ago.

8981. Was that a very great disadvantage to the people there?—To some of them.

8982. They are now not allowed to keep a horse or a sheep, because they have no hill?—They have very few horses, but they have some sheep still.

8983. Was not Sartle big enough before, joined to Flodigarry and Duntulm, without that strip of moor?—Yes.

8984. Was the thing done at the proprietor's suggestion or at yours?—I never requested it; I never solicited or asked an acre of any man, great or small.

8985. Was it offered to you?—All the farms that I got were farms that could not be held by those that went before me.

8986. Do you allow your shepherds to keep a cow?—Yes, three of them. Some shepherds have three cows each; in general they have two.

8987. But there is not one crofter at Scorrybreck?—There is one poor cottar down at Rigg—a woman seventy-five years of age.

8988. How many miles is it walking round the cliffs from your house to Rigg?—About eleven miles.

8989. All inhabited by sheep?—And cattle and rabbits.

8990. Are there rabbits too?—Plenty of them.

8991. Was there any of the crofters' pasture that was given to you by Major Fraser, and afterwards sublet by you to the people?—No.

JOHN ROBERTSON, Merchant, Portree (42)—examined.

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8992. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—What is the nature of your business or trade?—Draper and grocer.

8993. You do a great deal of business besides that?—Yes, in fish-curing.

8994. I believe you were elected to say something here on the part of some people?—Yes, in my absence I was.

8995. Then you will be so good as to state what the views or facts are that you were asked to represent to the Commission?—I believe that the poverty of the people has been caused principally by their small holdings, by their being huddled together along the shore of what is considered the worst part of the land. I believe that is the great cause of the poverty of the crofters, along with bad seasons and the failure of the fishing. I honestly believe the principal cause is the smallness of their holdings.

8996. Is that the cause, so far as your knowledge goes, in the parish of Portree, and in Skye generally?—Yes. I have not been much in the west of Skye, but I do business with people there, and I have been listening to their complaints from time to time.

8997. Have you heard these complaiuts made for a long time back?—Yes, as far back as I remember.

8998. Do you attribute the representations that have been made to us by delegates chosen by the people in any way to the influence of persons from the outside, who have come putting notions into their heads?—No, I do not.

8999. Have you been reading the newspapers, and seeing the statements of the crofters in all the places we have visited?—Yes, and I may say they have put me in mind of the Gaelic saying—but the evidence since then has perhaps toned down the idea a good deal—'A bhéist a's 'mò ag itheadh na béist a's lugha, 's a' bhéist a's lugha a' deanamh mar a

'dh' fhaodas i,'—which means, 'The larger beast eating the smaller beast, 'and the small beast doing what it can.'

9000. Do they practise fishing much about here?—Yes, when there are fish to be caught.

9001. Chiefly the herring fishing from Portree?—Yes.

9002. The people of the Braes and all the townships along from Camustionavaig are engaged in the fishing?—Yes.

9003. And the people round about the bay of Portree?—Yes.

9004. Are there a considerable number of them engaged in the salmon fishing?—Not many; some are, of course.

9005. But that only lasts for a short time?—For a short season.

9006. Do they all go to the east coast fishing?—The majority of them go to the east coast.

9007. How do you find them in your dealings with them?—I find them very honest when they have the means to pay; but I find they are not able to pay regularly.

9008. I suppose they are owing you a good deal of money?—Yes.

9009. Is there a tendency to increase the debt from year to year?—Yes; especially when there is not a good herring fishing, I find there is great difficulty in getting my money from them.

9010. Last year was particularly bad?—Last year and the year before that. Last year was worse than the year before, and the year before that was still worse; but the year 1880 was a good year for fishing. I cured that year 1550 barrels, and last year only 850.

9011. Barrels of herring caught round the coast here?—Yes; there were a good few caught in Loch Hourn.

9012. A great many of the men go there to fish when there is fishing?—Yes; their boats, however, are too small for going that distance. As a rule, the boats are only suitable for the Sound of Skye.

9013. *Professor Mackinnon.*—You say you have heard complaints ever since you remember, and you have read the evidence given by the people themselves?—Yes.

9014. Is that evidence practically the outcome of what you have been hearing since you remember?—I think so; there may be a little colouring in part of it.

9015. Perhaps a little stronger, but just giving definite shape to what you have been hearing all along?—Yes.

9016. And have you been here all your life?—Yes, with the exception of five years.

9017. How long is it since you became engaged in business?—I have been twenty years in business.

9018. Have you observed generally any change in the habits of the people with respect to food and clothing during that time?—Not much; they are a little better.

9019. Not much within twenty years?—No.

9020. But gradually improving in that respect?—Yes.

9021. And their food in the same way?—I cannot say so much for their food. I always thought their food was as substantial before as now.

9022. Do they buy increasing quantities of luxuries?—Well, I don't see what they can buy except tea; milk is scarcer than it was.

9023. And getting scarcer?—Yes.

9024. So even if their natural inclination was against it, they are obliged to take tea as a substitute?—Yes.

9025. Then, this year apart, which was an exceptionally bad year, are you able to concur with those who say that of late years the condition of the people has been getting worse?—I do not know it is much worse,

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except on account of the severe gales of the last two years. As regards the fishing, thirty years ago this used to be a famous place for fishing. I remember when a boy, as many as 800 boats going out of the bay of Portree. The last good fishing was in 1857—the year I went to serve my time—and ever since 1857 it has been going gradually back, till within the last five or six years, when it has made a start again.

9026. That is the herring fishing?—Yes, and since then I think the people have been rather improving, for they have got better nets and boats than they had formerly. From the year 1857 till six or seven years ago, there were scarcely any nets worth speaking of, but since then they have got better nets.

9027. Do you think the fishing is capable of further development if they had better boats and nets?—If they had larger boats they could follow the herring fishing still farther off the island.

9028. What about the local fishing?—They are quite prepared for the local fishing.

9029. Is it going back or improving?—Last year was not so good as the previous year.

9030. Do you think it is capable of improvement—that they could do more than they do?—No, I do not think they could. Whenever they find that there are herring on the coast, they are at them. They are not lazy; of that I can assure you.

9031. Do you know about the cod and ling fishing?—We have nothing of that now.

9032. Lobsters?—Yes.

9033. You fish these in winter?—Yes, from September to the end of March.

9034. Do many of them engage in that during winter?—Well, the lobsters are not to be got every year. Round by Uig, Kilmaluag, Rona, Glendale, and Waternish, these are the places. There are no lobsters at the south end of the island or in the Sound here.

9035. Supposing the mass of the people were to obtain larger crofts, what would become of the fishing?—They would be able to devote a certain portion of their time still to the fishing.

9036. Would you think it advisable that a crofter should be a crofter, and a fisherman a fisherman?—Scarcely, I am afraid the fishing here is necessary. I would give a man a little land, even if he were a fisherman.

9037. Yes; but don't you think a good croft might suffer when the man was devoting himself to fishing?—It depends on the number of the family. There might be three or four brothers, and two could manage the farm and two the fishing. I do not think it could interfere so much with the farm.

9038. Their feelings are evidently set upon a larger amount of land. Have you found them expressing a reluctance with regard to emigration in any shape or form?—I do not think they are fond of emigration. I have often asked them about it, and they say that emigration has been tried and does not better those left behind a bit.

9039. Emigration as conducted hitherto in Skye has not benefited those who remained, but could it not be conducted so that it might?—Yes, certainly it could, if the land that belonged to those that went away were given to those who remained behind.

9040. Do you think in that view some might be induced to go?—Not so long as there are so many large farms in Skye; I do not think they would like to leave their native land.

9041. They would like to people Skye first, and then send the surplus to the colonies?—I think so.

9042. From your knowledge of these matters, is it your opinion that there are a considerable number of them, who upon reasonable terms would be able to undertake a moderately sized croft?—Yes, I daresay a good many of them are able; but I believe they would have been abler some years ago than they are now.

9043. But still you think there are some?—Yes, I think there are some amongst them who could stock it.

9044. But many are not?—Yes, a great many would require to be assisted. If they got a guarantee that they would not be removed out of these lands so long as they paid their rent, I have no doubt that some people would come to their assistance, and help them to stock their crofts.

9045. A guarantee against removal is not so much a practical necessity as is a guarantee against raising of rent?—I mean both; that the arrangement might remain for a certain number of years.

9046. Because, as a matter of fact, within the limited area they have got, there have been very few removals?—No, there have not been so many removals, as raising of rent.

9047. With respect to subdivision of the crofts, I suppose you would set your face strongly against that?—Yes.

9048. It has gone on too far?—Yes.

9049. And no doubt that is in great measure owing to the desire of the people themselves to keep their own family about them?—Yes, and because they could not get crofts.

9050. And due also in some measure to those removed from cleared townsbips being thrown in upon them?—Yes.

9051. That is within your own recollection?—Yes.

9052. Within your own recollection the area of the crofting population has diminished?—It has.

9053. By taking the hill pasture from them, in some cases to add to large farms, and in other cases by clearing the townships altogether? Have you seen both?—Yes.

9054. Have you seen the reverse process?—No.

9055. You have not seen a new township opened?—No.

9056. Or additional land given to old townships?—No.

9057. We have been told that that has been done at Ulinish?—It must have been lately.

9058. *Mr Cameron.*—I understood you to say that if people who were industrious and showed perseverance, took larger holdings, they would find people who would advance money to stock these?—Yes, that is my opinion.

9059. May I ask who these people are?—There are benevolent strangers in the country, that have been advancing money to a large extent already.

9060. Do you think the flow of money from these benevolent strangers would continue?—Well, along with the proprietors, they might continue to help the people.

9061. Do you think the proprietors would have it in their power to advance funds to stock any considerable part of the land in Skye?—Not to any very considerable extent; I would not wish the large farms to be all broken down.

9062. But in order to make a considerable difference in the number of holders of land in Skye, which many people desire or wish to see, would it not require a great deal of capital to be advanced? Do you think the proprietors and benevolent strangers would be sufficient to raise the capital?—I don't think the capital required would be very great, along with what they have, to stock a £10 or £20 croft.

9063. Would not that depend very much on the number of crofters that would require to be assisted?—Yes.

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9064. And if you wanted to help the crofters to stock as much land as one man now has, the same amount of capital would then be required?—Yes, but they are not absolutely free of stock. They have less or more cattle on the ground; and if these were allowed to multiply, the landlord need not be exacting the rent.

9065. But what would happen during the time the stock was multiplying?—I would have the landlord do what I often do,—take something to account. In the case of a fisherman or crofter, when he cannot pay his bill for meal, amounting perhaps to £10, to £12, or even £20, I have taken as little as £4 or £5 to account, and let him go on.

9066. But would not a crofter make rather a bad start with that debt hanging round his neck?—He might; but he would by-and-bye get out of it.

9067. What is the price of the meal that you supply?—20s. a boll.

9068. Have you read any of the evidence given in other places?—Yes.

9069. There was a dealer in Bracadale who stated to us that he has selling meal at 23s. a boll. Do you consider that dear?—It depends on where he took it from.

9070. Is it the best quality that you sell for 20s.?—I just write for meal; I do not keep a store of meal.

9071. Do you make a small profit upon it?—Very little.

9072. You can afford to sell at 20s.?—With a very small profit.

9073. Would you consider 23s. to be rather dear?—It depends entirely on what he paid for it.

9074. Do you deal in groceries, such as sugar and tea?—Yes.

9075. What do you sell tea at?—I have two classes—at 2s. 6d. and 3s.

9076. Sugar?—Fourpence per lb., and moist sugar at threepence.

9077. Do you consider fivepence a high price for sugar?—Yes, I consider it high, but it depends on where it is sold and what it takes to carry it to the place.

9078. What class of work are the people here most fond of when they go south? What do they take to most readily?—Railroad making.

9079. I believe Skyemen are famous for being good roadmen?—Yes, they are good at almost anything except improving their crofts.

9080. Were many Skyemen employed in the construction of the Callander and Oban Railway?—I think there were some.

9081. Have you heard of the scheme that is now proposed for making a railway by the west coast to Inverness?—Yes.

9082. If that went on do you think it would be useful in the way of finding work for the people who go south?—I think it would.

9083. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—What is the population of the town of Portree?—Between 700 and 800.

9084. Are you well acquainted with the feelings of the people generally in all public matters?—Yes, pretty well.

9085. Is there a great deal of sympathy in Portree for the crofters?—Yes.

9086. Is the feeling very general in the town?—Yes.

9087. You have said that industrious and sober crofters might get some assistance from outsiders, if they had larger lands given to them?—Yes, with a guarantee that the rents would not be increased, and that they would not be removed so long as they paid their rent.

9088. You told us several of them are in debt in your books? Would you not prefer as an outsider to advance money to a crofter to go into his new holding under these conditions, rather than to give him credit as you are doing just now?—Yes, I would. I have already helped them to pay

their rents, without charging them any interest, by signing bills for them.

9089. Is there anything in the character or disposition of the population of Skye that would prevent them from bettering themselves and their own condition, except the insecurity under which they labour, from constant evictions and fear of dispossession?—That is all.

9090. Are you aware it is a very natural thing for a man whose father and grandfather were in better circumstances than himself, to think with pride, of the time when his forefathers were in a better position?—Yes.

9091. They cling to that?—Yes, many of them do.

9092. And I suppose many of them would wish to be restored to the position which their fathers and grandfathers had?—Yes.

9093. That is a strong feeling with them?—A very strong feeling.

9094. Were you born in the country?—Yes.

9095. Supposing you wanted to take a croft at £10, with (say) five cows, two horses, and about fifty sheep, can you give me any idea of what money you would require to put into it?—I would require about £150.

9096. And in the case of a crofter who has already a good deal of that stock, the additional stock required would be comparatively little?—Yes.

9097. Perhaps £50 for each crofter would be enough in addition to his present holding?—Yes.

[ADJOURNED.]

PORTREE, SKYE, THURSDAY, MAY 24, 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.

LACHLAN MACDONALD, Proprietor of Skeabost (50)—examined.

9098. *The Chairman.*—Have you got a statement to make to the Commission?—I did not prepare a statement, but I would like to make a few remarks on the evidence given by two of the delegates at Skeabost on the 8th. They drew a very dark picture of affairs at Skeabost, reflecting on my character, as if I had committed certain acts of hardship upon them. I want to show you everything that has been done. One of the delegates, Mr Maclure, remarks that I made them pay for the sea-ware and that I prevented them from gathering shell-fish. Now the fact of the matter is, that in 1868 and 1869 there was a great demand for oysters in England, to lay down oyster beds. Consequently some speculators came from the south, and induced the people to go and gather the oysters off the beds at all times of the year, not only in the winter months but during the spawning season, and consequently destroyed the beds. In 1870 they poured down in hundreds on the oyster beds, and completely destroyed them. I remonstrated with them. They said they had a right to the foreshore. I

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said they had not. A case was instituted against them in Portree, and they were successful—the case was dismissed. I then appealed to Edinburgh, and the case was given in my favour. They declared that they had always had possession of the shore. In the course of the evidence that I had to give, it came out that one of the former proprietors had planted some stones on which sea-ware had grown, and that they formerly used to pay for the sea-ware, which they did not acknowledge at first, and by way of a sort of punishment, I charged them for the sea-ware. That was the reason they were charged. Another delegate, Mr Beaton, in the course of his remarks, said—'It is only a few weeks since a poor crippled man 'was sent to gaol for gathering half a score of oysters on the shore.' Now, that is wrong. No man was ever sent to gaol for gathering oysters on the shore, but in 1874 there was a man unfortunately sent to gaol, and I was the cause of sending him to gaol. He was only sent to gaol for a week, and this delegate had no right to mention the matter. He mentioned it without the authority of the man. I shall not mention the man's name, because he came to me on Saturday, and said he was particularly sorry that this person had unwarrantably mentioned his name; but as he mentioned the circumstance, and a certain amount of harshness is implied in my conduct, I may say that (though it is distasteful for me to say so) that during his week's imprisonment I gave £1 to his wife to support her, and when he himself came out of prison I gave him £5 to buy a sewing-machine, in order that he might prosecute his trade in an honourable way. Again, it is said that I demolished the yair. I have a map of the foreshore here, if it will be of assistance to the Commission. You will see the position of the yair. It is at the mouth of the river, and people were constantly coming and taking salmon, and that was the reason why it was demolished, because yairs are illegal. I don't believe the people thought it illegal, because I cannot say—and it is greatly to their credit—that ever since those two cases were given against them, they have been thoroughly law-abiding, and I have great confidence that whenever any point of law is settled, and they are thoroughly satisfied the law is against them, they are law-abiding, and will continue to be so—at least I hope so. That is all I have to say about the foreshore.

9099. I want to understand the map, where is the yair?—The yair is marked by a thin red curve. With reference to the other statements, Mr Macleod said—'The people are too crowded in Bernisdale. Fifty years ago 'they were in a prosperous condition. I had two lots once, and one of 'them was taken from me and given to another man.' Mr Beaton said—'I had a croft for more than forty years. My father had the croft from '1707.' [I am quoting now from the *Scotsman*.] 'We are very much 'straitened by the smallness of our holdings, and the crowded state in 'which we are. There are many crofts on which nine souls live. On one 'croft there are eighteen souls, and some have twelve on them. The popu-'lation is double what I have seen it in my younger days. When I was here 'first we were well off. We had plenty of ground, plenty of corn, and 'plenty of pasture for our cows.' Well now, I hope before I am finished with the few remarks I am going to make, that I shall be able to vary these statements you have been listening to, and show that matters, instead of going from bad to worse as they represent, are improving, and that the present condition of these two gentlemen is much better than it was in their younger days. To give a short history of the village, unfortunately the village has changed hands within the past one hundred and two years seven different times. Therefore I have only statistics from the year 1843. It was sold by Macleod of Macleod to Norman Macdonald, Scalpa, in 1771. He resold it to his son Sir John Macdonald in 1823. Sir John Macdonald

sold it to Donald Macdonald of Skeabost in 1836. This gentleman had possession of it for seven years. He then became involved in his finance, and sold it to a Mr George Gunn in 1843, who held possession of it till 1849. Mr Gunn then sold it to a Mr Robert Christie, who possessed it for twelve years. Mr Robert Christie sold it in 1861 to the late Kenneth Macleod, Grishornish, who possessed it for three years; and it was sold to me in 1864, and I have had the misfortune of owning it since. I did not come into possession of it, however, till 1870. The traditional history of the village is that before Norman Macdonald, Scalpa, bought it, it was occupied by three tenants, and when he bought it those three tenants left and went to America. He owned it as a farm on which he reared black cattle—I cannot say for how many years, but I have proof that in the year 1813 it was in his possession. There were no tenants placed upon it. It must have been betwen 1813 and 1823 that it was peopled. It was then peopled by twenty-four tenants or families. It has now got seventy, but the families of neither of the delegates were among those twenty-four. The parents of one of the delegates, Mr Maclure, came from Strath.

9100. In what year were there twenty-four families in it?—I cannot tell the year; it was between 1813 and 1823, when it was bought by Mr Macdonald of Skeabost in 1836; he brought in people. The father of one of the delegates, Mr Bethune, was a short time at Bernisdale, and he then left. His father was a pensioner, and had £18 or £20 of a pension, and no doubt was very well off, but his own history—Mr Beaton's history—I have got from 1845. His position in 1845 was this, that he owned half a lot in Bernisdale. His rent was then £4, 10s. He was 9s. in arrear. In 1853 his rent was reduced to £3, 18s., but he had run into arrear £13, 6s. 6d. He worked well, and reduced his arrears in 1880 to £5, 4s. 2d. His rent stood in 1880 the same as it did in 1853. In 1870 it was increased by Mr Macleod, Grishornish, to £4, 6s., and last year again it was reduced by me to £3, 18s.; and he is not in arrear. He paid up his rent. The position of the other delegate, Mr Maclure, was as follows:—In 1843, when he must have been very young, perhaps eight or ten, he said they were prosperous and in happy circumstances. His rent was £7, 7s. It was altered and adjusted in 1844, and his rent was made £6, 6s. He was in arrear, or rather his mother was in arrear to the amount of £35, 12s. 8d. This debt I cannot find from the books was ever paid. It stands in a column by itself. His rent was reduced in 1853 to £4, 15s., and then he had run into fresh arrears to the amount of £9, 12s. 9d. He was then a young man about eighteen, evidently a good workman, and he reduced his arrears to £5, 13s. in 1860.

9101. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Was he in the same position all through?—Yes, the same position.

9102. With the same size of croft?—Yes. In 1880 his rent was £4, 15s., and in 1870 it was increased to £5, there being an addition of 5s. made on account of statute labour. They were compelled to give so many day's work to the proprietor, and the proprietor Macleod of Grishornish commuted that into a money payment, which he thought would be more convenient for them. In 1883 his rental is £4, 10s. I reduced it last year, and he is now free from arrears.

9103. *The Chairman.*—Is that a permanent reduction, or is it a casual reduction?—It is a permanent reduction. Now, we have been hearing a good deal of rents being increased, but in these circumstances, from the figures I have given, you will see that in my unfortunate village, instead of the rents being increased, they have been decreasing every year. In 1843 the rental of the village stood at £440, 15s. It was adjusted that year to £367, 16s. 6d. The arrears on the village amounted to £914, 1s. 2d.

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Well, a few of them paid off a little, but £811, 10s. was a dead loss to the proprietor. They ran out between 1844 and 1853, and failed in the sum of £363, 18s. 11d. Their arrears in 1853 amounted to £557, 5s. 1d. They also ran out between 1853 and 1860 to the amount of £27, 8s. 7d., and the arrears in 1860 were £367, 4s. 11d. These arrears the late Macleod of Grishornish took over. He gave £80 to the trustees of Mr Robert Christie, the former proprietor, and never collected anything from the tenants, but let them all off; so in round figures you see that high rental brings its own punishment. The estate lost £811, 10s. They ran out £363, 18s. 11d.; they ran out again £27, 8s. 7d.; total, £1201, 17s. 6d. Add to this the debt taken over by Macleod, £367, 4s. 11d.; total, £1568, 2s. 5d. of dead loss in arrears since 1843. They say they are more crowded now than they were in their earlier days. I do not know what they could have been fifty years ago.

9104. Can you give us the gross rental at four different periods between 1840 and 1880?—In 1843 it was £440, 15s.; 1844, £367, 16s. 6d.; 1860, £367, 4s. 11d.; 1870, £343, 18s.; 1883, £292, 9s. 8d. I cannot give the sum in 1880, but it would be the same as in 1870.

9105. Just before the last reduction, how much was it?—£343.

9106. Was there any rise between 1870 and 1880?—No rise; there has been a constant reduction. There has been a reduction in forty years of £140, 5s. 4d.

9107. Perhaps it would be convenient, as we are still on the question of rental, to ask whether these different rentals apply really to the same subjects, or whether there has been during that period of forty years a withdrawal of hill pasture?—I have been most particular in seeing that they apply exactly to the same subjects—not one acre of difference. The next charge they make is that they are more crowded now than they were in 1843. In 1843 there were eighty-six families on those very holdings, which are now possessed by seventy-one or seventy-two. There are actually sixteen fewer families now than there were in 1843, and you have seen that their financial position is very much better now than it was then. Another thing I have to remark about the evidence is, that they said nothing about compensation. Now, if there is a single point on which I hold very strong views regarding the land question, it is on the subject of compensation. I think it is most necessary to give compensation, and I have been for the past ten years telling the people that I would give them compensation, and I have given them compensation; and a fortnight previous to the day on which the delegates gave their evidence, I actually paid £4 to a widow who had left her holding in that township represented by Maclure. I am disappointed he did not mention that circumstance. Another charge brought against me is, that I removed some of the tenants from Skeabost and crowded them into Bernisdale. For the information of the Commission, I have sketched two maps, one showing the position of Skeabost when I took possession of it in 1870, and when I was justified in removing them, and the other showing the position in which I placed the tenants whom I removed from Skeabost to Bernisdale. By the map of Skeabost it will be seen there were twenty holdings, and of those twenty holdings only ten were occupied, and they were not occupied all at one end or in one part of the town. The first four were vacant, and in my hands. Of the ten tenants Magnus M'Innes and Angus Macdiarmid became insolvent in 1870, and could not retain their lots any longer. John Macdonald became insolvent in 1871. There were then only seven left. Those seven I removed from Skeabost to seven other holdings in Bernisdale; and one of them was sent to Glen Bernisdale, three were sent to a place called Woodlands, and other three were sent to the Mains of Bernisdale. They

were put upon lots that were unoccupied. There was no one removed on account of the Skeabost people. The only one who suffered in the least was one of the delegates, Maclure, who said in his evidence that he had been in possession of two lots once, and that he was deprived of them. He was in possession of two lots only for three years, from 1870 to 1873. In 1873 the people were removed. His brother-in-law occupied one lot in what is called Glen Bernisdale, and he became insolvent, and then Maclure got it; but as his own lot was at No. 10, and the other lot he held was No. 1, with nine lots between them, I thought it was not doing him much of a hardship to deprive him of that lot and make room for Peter Stewart; but if he had remonstrated with me very much at the time, I certainly could have given him a larger holding, and I may be able to give him a larger holding yet. I have now finished with the question of removals.

9108. Are we to understand that in effecting these removals from Skeabost to Bernisdale, none of the parties removed were placed upon the land of Bernisdale in such a way as to circumscribe the previous holdings of the Bernisdale tenants?—Certainly.

9109. The old tenants in Bernisdale remained in possession of the same area?—Of the same area that they had. It was only on vacant lots that the new comers were put. Maclure's was one, but Maclure had possession only for three years.

9110. Were any of those removed from Skeabost put into any place except Bernisdale and its dependencies?—No, there were only seven moved, and I have accounted for them.

9111. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Were the places as good as those they were taken from?—The places were not so large, but I think they were as good, and I will tell you why. I gave each of them a present of a house, and I made him a present of a half share of the joint stock in the sheep, which might be worth about £2 a year, and in that way the rental is very light. One of them, I believe, a widow, has to pay out of her own pocket only 15s. I certainly think that their position was not made worse. On the other hand, I think it was made better, and no third parties suffered.

9112. *The Chairman.*—What became of the ground at Skeabost from which they were removed?—I took possession of it, and it is in my possession.

9113. As a farm?—Yes; but I am quite willing to let them have it again if they build these houses. There is another matter that I would like to bring to the notice of the Commission, namely, the insolvency of the tenants. During the period between 1870 and 1883, no fewer than ten became insolvent, and unable to pay rent, and were compelled to throw up their ground. I have now finished, and I will be glad to answer any question that may be put to me.

9114. You have given evidence upon the question of the amount of rent at successive periods, and evidence upon the subject of removals, which you state you have effected with every consideration for the wants of the people so removed. But though the area remained the same, and the rents have not been increased but rather reduced, is it the case or not, that the quality of the ground has deteriorated by overcropping in such a measure that what was once not a high rent may be practically a high rent now?—No doubt of it; but that is entirely their own fault, because they do not cultivate the ground properly, and do not manure it.

9115. The quality of the ground has deteriorated?—Most certainly, for they do not manure it.

9116. I want to know whether with their resources, and under their circumstances, they could manure or improve it in such a degree as to maintain its productive power?—Certainly.

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9117. Would you state how?—By a rotation of crops and manuring it—by having potatoes one year, corn another year, perhaps peas another year, and grass seed put down. I know one of the tenants who pays £4 or £5 for a small lot, and he entirely supports himself out of the croft; but he is a remarkably good cultivator.

9118. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—What is his name?—Malcolm Macdonald.

9119. *The Chairman.*—Then you state that you know individual cases of men who by their industry and their intelligence, without more capital or extraneous resources than the others, have maintained the productivity of their holdings, and are much better off?—Yes, I know that instance. Any man who will work his ground, and devote himself exclusively to working the ground, will make it pay; but he must manure it—he must put out a certain amount of money yearly in manuring it.

9120. Do you mean he must purchase artificial manure?—Certainly.

9121. But we hear in the south of Scotland that artificial manures are themselves the cause of exhaustion of the soil?—Well, that may be a question, but then they might raise green crops, and dig them into the ground. There are various ways of manuring the soil. They do that in Italy and in India.

9122. But those methods of improved farming to which you allude may imply the erection of fences?—No, I do not think so.

9123. You think not?—Yes. I tried to have fences once; I suggested fences. I wished to fence all their holdings, but they objected, because they said the sheep could not wander over the ground in the winter time.

9124. They liked to have the ground unfenced for the convenience of the cattle and sheep wandering over the ground in winter time?—Yes. My opinion is that they want security that they themselves should get the benefit of anything they improve and that they should get compensation. The result of the laziness we see is the fact that for hundreds of years they have been in this miserable condition, because if they improve their holding the rent was bound to be increased.

9125. But you have stated yourself that you have always recognised the principle of compensation, and you now mention that it would be a great advantage to them to have greater security of tenure. Have you ever offered them leases or discussed that question with them?—Yes, I offered leases ten years ago, and anticipated the present disturbance.

9126. What did they do?—One offered to take a lease. I asked if he would give me a rise. He said he would. I asked what rise he would give. He said a rise of a pound, and I wrote out a lease. This was the man Malcolm Macdonald. I gave him a lease, reducing the pound, which indeed I only mentioned as a joke. The others laughed at him, and no one has since come to me for a lease.

9127. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Can you explain their repugnance to a lease?—Certainly, because they think it would weaken their holding on the ground, and that when the lease expired the owner had a right to turn them out.

9128. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—What was the length of lease you granted?—Ten years.

9129. With compensation for improvements?—Yes.

9130. *The Chairman.*—You have admitted the principle of compensation, and the principle of security of tenure or security of possession, can you make any other suggestion for the improvement of the people?—Yes, I think there should be larger holdings. There are some very intelligent tenants who might rise in the scale, if there were holdings of from £20 to £30 that they could go into. I think it is too much of a jump for a crofter paying only £5 or £10 to take a farm that would require several

hundred pounds to stock it; but if there were small crofts of say £10 to £30, it would be an inducement for them to save money and to try and take one of those crofts.

9131. That would be attained by the creation of larger crofts or the consolidation of smaller ones. Well, when you effected this movement from Skeabost to Bernisdale, you might perhaps have had an opportunity of making such an experiment on some other part of the estate?—I intend to try, but I have not perfected my scheme yet. I am taking some time to consider it, but I think that holdings of say £20 or £30 should be consolidated in the same way as the smaller ones. I would not divide them. I would not give a man who had a £20 or £30 holding the right to wander over the field after his own sheep. I would have his sheep on the joint stock principle with the smaller ones, and I would not allow any man to wander after his own sheep if he did not pay a rental of at least £150 or £200.

9132. Then you are in favour of the principle of club farming?—Yes, most certainly.

9133. In preference to individual shares of stock?—Yes.

9134. But though the club principle may be the better one theoretically, if it is not acceptable to the people, may not the worse system be the best for them?—No, not at all. It is acceptable to the poor; it is acceptable to the great mass; it is not acceptable only to the agitators, or those who would have no compunction at robbing their poorer brethren. These are the people to whom it is objectionable—people who would take advantage of their neighbours. It is repugnant to their feelings, but not to the mass of the people.

9135. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—To what do you attribute the number of insolvencies during the short time you mentioned?—Simply to laziness and discouragement.

9136. But they have had every encouragement, because you were ready to compensate them for their improvements?—Only for ten years. I think the encouragement must be given for a number of years. The next generation may improve, but I have no hopes of the present one.

9137. What became of those insolvent tenants?—They are all settled as cottars on the place. Some of them I put into a large poorhouse which I built, and I have given them a large piece of ground free of rent.

9138. How do they support themselves?—Some of them may do a little work, and some of them may get a little help from the poor law officer. Then they are fed by their neighbours, who I believe are very kind to them.

9139. Are they people who are fit to go to the east coast fishing?—None of those who are insolvent are fit to go.

9140. Do you see any prospect of being able to teach the present generation to adopt a better system of cultivation?—Not the slightest.

9141. But you hope to teach the younger ones?—I hope to teach the younger ones.

9142. What measure would you adopt in order to teach them?—I have taken measures; for instance, I have commenced building houses for them, and I should mention about the number of houses I built. On this matter I speak from memory. Their houses were in a very bad condition when I came. I built some twenty-nine houses, for which they pay rent. They pay me 5 per cent., and I think that is a sort of improvement. There are seven houses which I gave to those people whom I removed, and no fewer than ten houses have been built under terms of compensation. One of the delegates, Maclure, held in his hand a letter from me promising compensation, and he ought to have mentioned that. He built a very nice

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house, and he is in very good circumstances. His children are well educated, and I have no doubt that the next generation will be a very great improvement on the present.

9143. What was the cost of one of the houses you built for them?—From £10 to £15.

9144. Does that cover the whole work?—No, it does not cover the furnishing inside, which they do themselves. It covers the roof and the walls.

9145. What interest had they to pay to you upon that?—Five per cent.

9146. That is 15s. a year in addition to the crofts?—Yes; I keep that in a separate column, in order to show them that the land is not so highly rented as they imagine.

9147. On what system do you offer compensation when they build their own houses?—To value the house when they leave.

9148. The walls?—The walls, the roof, and everything belonging to them. The question of compensation for improvement of land is rather a difficult question. I have not exactly decided how it should be done, but I have calculated hitherto the little I have paid on account of compensation, and I have been thinking of charging only 3 per cent.

9149. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Do you reside a good deal at Skeabost?—I reside about half the year at Skeabost.

9150. In fact, you may say you reside there except when business calls you away?—Not business, but I go south in winter when the climate drives me away.

9151. Are you acquainted with all your tenants personally?—I cannot say I am, but I am acquainted with most of them.

9152. You understand the Gaelic language?—Yes.

9153. Did you give them any special assistance last season, in the end of 1882 and in 1883?—Yes, I gave them seed oats and seed potatoes.

9154. Was that in the form of an advance or a gift?—Certainly in the form of an advance. I should never lend myself to spoiling them by giving them gifts.

9155. Will you explain about those houses which you say you can build at a cost of £10 or £15? Are they built of dry stone?—Dry stone, with windows, and thatched with rushes.

9156. Are rushes easily got there?—No, but they manage to get a sufficient quantity for a house, and they sometimes thatch it with straw.

9157. There is no prohibition against gathering rushes?—No.

9158. And none of the neighbouring proprietors have any prohibition against gathering rushes?—I don't think so, but I think a neighbouring proprietor would object to my tenants going to his land. There is no prohibition against their own tenants that I hear of.

9159. How many rooms do these houses contain?—Two, and a small closet.

9160. Where does the wood come from?—I got a ship-load of wood for the roofs of the houses from Arisaig.

9161. Is it what they call cabers—rough wood about 4 inches in diameter?—Yes, quite rough. They are simply an improvement on the old boltries, with windows and chimney cans, instead of having the smoke coming out at the roof and the door.

9162. Do you say you can really build those houses for £10 or £15?—That is what I paid for them.

9163. Does it include gathering stones?—Yes.

9164. And digging the foundation?—Yes.

9165. One of the delegates, John Bethune, says—'The present proprietor has put a manager over our stock, and we cannot sell anything

'without his consent.' What does that mean?—The real reason I put a manager over it was that there was a manager formerly over it, and they came to me and said they should have the management of their own stock. I said, 'I am as great a liberal as you are, and, decidedly, manage for 'yourselves.' They did manage for themselves for two years, and made a complete mess of it; and I was obliged to put another manager over them. I gave them a trial, and they failed; and then I appointed a manager, to whom I pay out of my own pocket £10 a year. He is an experienced cattle-dealer, and he sells their sheep very well for them.

9166. Do you consider a club farm, where the stock is the common property of the tenants, and where there cannot be quarrelling among themselves, preferable to a system under which each tenant has his own sheep?—I unhesitatingly say that they are unfit to keep their sheep separate. The stock should be converted into a joint stock, and have one shepherd.

9167. Is the stock managed more satisfactorily for the tenants?—Yes, they will hold their own against the big farmer in that way, but they cannot hold their own if they are allowed to keep their sheep as they like.

9168. What happens if one of the poorer tenants is short of means or gets into difficulties?—Sometimes he may mortgage his stock, sometimes I have paid him for his sheep stock, and I have paid even for one of the houses, and advanced him money on his house in order to keep him in possession of his ground as long as possible, in the hope that he might recover himself; I have known them deep in arrears, and yet recovering themselves.

9169. Do they ever raise money from the bank on the security of the stock?—I am not aware what their transactions are in that respect.

9170. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—You manage your own property. You don't employ a factor to do it?—I employ a factor to collect my rents, butthe administration is entirely in my own hands.

9171. And your land-steward acts under your orders?—Under my orders entirely. I am entirely responsible for anything that goes wroug, and the factor is responsible for nothing but the collection of the rents.

9172. I have heard that there was too much in his hands,—is there no truth in that?—I have heard many complaints againist him, and tried many cases against him, and he has invariably come off best.

9173. Then, in the matter of education, you take a great interest iu the education of your tenants?—Yes, I take a great deal of interest in education, and I am sorry that there was one small matter I forgot to mention when makiug my statement, but I shall be very glad to answer any questions, especially regarding the school of Glenhinnisdale, if you give me the opportunity of replying to what one of the delegates said with reference to it.

9174. By all means do so?—This delegate, Peter Macdonald, said—'The children, of whom there are twenty-five, have got no schooling for 'six months. The chairman of the school board is Skeabost, and the clerk 'is Mr Alexander Macdonald, Portree.' This implies a negligence on the part of the board, I admit. The circumstances of the case are as follow:—We had a Miss Falconer as teacher during last year. She was under obligation to give two months' notice in the event of her quitting the school. On 23rd December she wrote to the clerk that she was to leave on 8th January. The clerk wrote to her on the 28th December, saying—'No, you must not leave on 8th January, you must work out your time, 'and give us time to get another.' Then he called a meeting of the board on 4th January, and on the 4th, the very day the board had their meeting, Miss Falconer left the school, and left it without a teacher. The

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clerk immediately advertised for a teacher. Well, it took till the 6th of February to get in applications, and when the applications came in the clerk called a meeting of the board, and offered the situation to a young lady from Bridge of Allan—I need not mention names—and she came to Portree; but as she could not get a close carriage to take her to Glenhinnisdale she returned. We thought we were just as well rid of her. The clerk then made an offer to the next suitable person, but this young lady, on 27th February, declined his offer. On his receiving her answer he offered it to a third young lady on 6th March. She also declined. On 10th March he again advertised, and it took another month before he got in applications. He got in applications on 10th April, and called a meeting of the board. He offered the place to a young lady at Poolewe. She accepted and sent on her certificates, but when her certificates came they were found wanting. Looking into the matter of the certificates took seven days, and then, seeing the time was getting short, he telegraphed to another young lady, and she replied declining. This was on the 18th. Nothing daunted, he wired off at once to another young lady, and she also refused. He was now in despair, and so he advertised for the third time. Well, it took another month before he had applications, and he called a meeting as soon as he could on the 21st of May. This meeting I attended —the day before yesterday—and that is how the board accounts for the seeming dereliction of duty; but really, I think you will consider we have been more sinned against than sinning.

9175. *The Chairman.*—Why did the clerk not try the other sex?—I cannot say; probably he has got a weakness for the gentler sex.

9176. Why do you prefer generally at present a female teacher?—For very young children we find they are very much superior to men.

9177. Have you greater difficulty in getting female teachers who know Gaelic than in finding male teachers who know Gaelic?—I cannot speak positively on that subject, but I don't think there is any difficulty in finding those of either sex who can speak Gaelic.

9178. Were all those who replied to your advertisements Gaelic-speaking teachers?—No; I think there were some who could not speak Gaelic.

9179. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—What was the salary that was offered?—I think £35, and half the grant.

9180. Was it a regular board school?—A regular board school, but in a most remote situation. It is in Glenhinuisdale, and it is very difficult to get a teacher to remain there.

9181. *The Chairman.*—Reverting to the question of building these houses, which you state can be built for £10 or £15 each, is there no co-operation in the way of labour on the part of the township or on the part of the individual who is to have the house?—Sometimes there may be co-operation on the part of the individual who is to get the house, in order that he may pay smaller interest. Perhaps there may be a house that may cost £15, of which I may only have contributed £10, and the individual may have done the rest of the labour himself.

9182. But you are able to build such a house as you mention entirely by paid labour for £15?—Yes.

9183. What is the floor?—The floor is nature's earth—clay.

9184. Is the fire-place in the centre?—The fire-place is sometimes in the centre and sometimes in the end. I believe it is more convenient to have it in the centre, because they can sit round it and warm themselves when they have not a change of clothing.

9185. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Would you wish to make the principle of compensation compulsory?—Yes, most certainly.

9186. And not leave it in the hands of the proprietor?—Not leave it in the hands of the proprietor.

9187. And the same in regard to leases?—I think that would be rather distasteful to them, but it would be much better if leases were compulsory.

9188. You mentioned a preference for larger holdings and for a club farm. There would be no difficulty whatever in combining the two—in having different shares—one, two, or three?—Not the least; one man might have three shares and another might have four. I think of trying that, but I have not perfected my scheme.

9189. So that an energetic man like the man you mentioned might rise and become a farmer?—Quite possible.

9190. You stated they might hold their own against the big farmer by keeping a club stock with one shepherd?—Such is my opinion.

9191. I would like very much if there was good evidence of that, because the general opinion is the other way?—I know the general opinion is the other way, but I have gone into the subject, and I have gone into the figures—that is to say, provided the tenants will pay the rent—but if this foolish doctrine goes on which I hear expressed by them, that they have paid twenty-five years rent and ought not to pay any more, of course they could not hold their own against the big farmer. I think, however, that does not express the real feeling of the mass of the crofters, because it is nothing but communism, and they don't understand what they are doing. Fancy what would be said if the Chancellor of the Exchequer were to say, 'We have paid more than the national debt, let us confiscate the 'rest;' or, if a banker said, 'You have been depositing in the bank, and 'I have paid you interest for twenty years, but I will pay you no more, 'and I will keep the principal.' You are going into French communism. Those people I look upon as enemies of society, and certainly they have misrepresented the crofters.

9192. You think the general feeling of the mass of the crofters is more reasonable than that?—I hope so, otherwise they will be in danger of being extirpated.

9193. You made a very large reduction this year. I should think your preference would be for a smaller rent and exacting payment of it rather than for a big rent with arrears?—The rent is really nothing. There are other subjects that trouble them much more than their rent, which I observe have not been noticed. One of these is the matter of luxuries, such as groceries. The rental of Bernisdale is £289. Now, I have not the slightest hesitation in saying that there is yearly paid in that village for tobacco, tea, and sugar, fully £1000, or more than three rents. I may be wrong, but I will give any man a present of his rental who will prove to me that I am wrong.

9194. You stated that you had no hopes of the present generation becoming better farmers, but have you not one very good example?—I have.

9195. Might not the rest follow that example even in the present generation?—Some of them may, but he was a good farmer all his life.

9196. When the tenants you refer to became insolvent, were you able to double any of the crofts? There is a competition for them I suppose? —There is, but in one part of my township where there are now twenty-four tenants there were formerly only sixteen. I have now determined, whenever a lot runs out, to keep it vacant until a neighbour can take it, and I have one of that kind at present vacant. I have applications from outside for it, but I said—'No, it is kept here as an inducement to the 'crofter to try and improve his condition and get possession of it, so as to 'get back to the original size—sixteen families instead of twenty-four.'

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9197. And if they get a croft of sufficient size, you think the less they have to do with fishing the better for the croft?—Yes, if they know something about agriculture, but some of them really know nothing about agriculture.

9198. Might they not learn from that neighbour who knows it so well?—They might.

9199. With respect to the complaint about the management of the sheep stock, is it the manager of the estate who is the manager of the sheep stock at the same time?—The manager of the sheep stock is here, and I believe he is to be cross-questioned after me.

9200. Is he the manager of the estate?—Yes, he is the manager of the estate; but I may tell you, to prove to you that it was necessary to put a manager over them, that when the late Macleod of Grishornish got the place, it had only one hundred and forty sheep on it, and this delegate who complains of having been in such a very good position and being now reduced, had actually only three sheep, and this management of ours increased the stock to four hundred in the year 1870, and that man has now eight sheep instead of the three he originally had.

9201. You think there are none among them elected by themselves, with absolute power as your manager has, who could be entrusted with the management for want of skill?—I cannot say there are any. Perhaps there are. They elected two, and I allow them to elect two. My man is simply over them, to see that they sell their stock properly.

9202. For their own good?—Entirely for their own good.

9203. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—It imposes a great deal of additional trouble on you to administer your affairs yourself and to have so many people under you, and it would be more convenient for you undoubtedly to have only one tenant to deal with instead of one hundred or so; but do you think it would be more profitable to you to have only one tenant instead of one hundred or more families?—Well, I was formerly of opinion that it would be more profitable to me really to have tenants, and I considor so still, if they will withdraw some of those foolish sentiments and those communistic ideas which they have got hold of, and which will make me go against them, as it will others. It will make every right-minded person in the country go against them.

9204. Don't you think the amount which those people contribute to the British revenue by the quantity of taxable commodities they buy does more good to the country than would be done by a single tenant with a few servants?—No doubt of it, and that is the reason why they get all this assistance from the south. Shopkeepers from the south assist them, considering that they will get from a small club farm perhaps £1000, whereas from a sheep farmer they would perhaps get only £60 in the year.

9205. *The Chairman.*—I believe you have been in India for some time?—Yes, as an indigo planter.

9206. And you are interested in the system of land tenure and in the welfare of the people?—Yes; had it not been for my experience in India, I should certainly be inclined to turn them all out.

9207. It was your Indian experience which inspired you with an interest in the small tenants?—Yes.

9208. Now, comparing your Indian experience with your experience in Skye, do you think the ryot of India or the ryot of Skye has the greater share in the comforts and benefits of life?—I should certainly say there is not much difference, but if there is it is certainly in favour of the ryot of India.

9209. He has got greater security of tenure?—He has got greater security of tenure.

JOHN BAIRD, Proprietor of Knoydart (31)—examined.

9210. *The Chairman.*—Do you wish to make a statement to the Commission?—I have really no statement to make. I should much prefer being questioned on one or two subjects. I have heard the subject of deer forests brought forward, and I thought it desirable that I should be examined on that point.

9211. *Mr Cameron.*—When did you succeed to your property?—In 1876.

9212. In what state did you find your property when you succeeded? Were the farms all let, and to whom?—There are practically only five farms on the place—very large farms. Two of these were unlet, and I was obliged to take over the stock myself. I have since had other two farms falling into my own hands.

9213. But when you succeeded three of them were let to tenants?—Yes.

9214. To large tenants?—To large tenants who were non-resident.

9215. And the other two?—They were unlet.

9216. Were they in the hands of your uncle when he died?—Yes.

9217. And the sheep stock belonged to him?—Yes.

9218. Did he leave you the sheep stock?—I had to buy it.

9219. Have you had these farms in your possession ever since?—Yes.

9220. How have these farms answered with you financially?—I had a return last year for the first time upon the capital invested. Up till last year, I shall be sufficiently accurate if I say the rent was paid, and there was no return for the capital invested in the stock during the period from 1876 to 1881.

9221. Then what was the next thing that happened with the other three tenants? Did any of them leave, or were their leases out, or what happened?—One of the farms fell into my hands the year before last, and another last year.

9222. And you still have one tenant left?—One tenant left.

9223. When is his lease out?—In about six or seven years.

9224. Do you anticipate that that farm will also fall into your own hands?—As my experience hitherto has been, I should say so.

9225. In point of fact, you are in possession of four out of the five large farms, and you anticipate that when the fifth falls out of lease you will have to take that over to?—I believe so.

9226. And on the two farms which you have held for some years you have practically lost money?—In the sense that I had no return for the capital invested.

9227. If you had borrowed the money you would have had to pay interest, and therefore you would have lost it?—Yes.

9228. Of course, I need not ask you whether it is against your own will that these things have happened, because if you lost money you don't want to be burdened with more farms?—Very much against my will.

9229. Can you give us any idea as to the causes which render the taking of these sheep farms so difficult to arrange, and also to what you attribute your own losses on the farms you occupy?—In the first place, the chief cause why these farms are not let is because I declined to let them on the same terms on which they were let before. I declined to let them to non-resident south country farmers. I wish to divide them so far as I can into sizes which would form respectable farms for respectable resident tenants, and hitherto I have not had offers for that class of farm that were at all acceptable.

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9230. Before you go on to that point I wish to finish the other point. You say one reason was that you did not wish to let them to non-resident tenants. Do you believe you could have let them to non-resident tenants at the present time?—Not without very great loss. In fact, I have not had an offer.

9231. Did you advertise them?—I did not advertise them as large farms. I advertised the land to be divided up as might be thought most advisable to form workable farms.

9232. But you still think a non-resident tenant, if he could be found, would not be able to work those farms satisfactorily to himself without a large reduction of rent?—In 1870 a farm which was previously let at £826 was offered to the outgoing tenant for £700, and that was refused.

9233. Now, will you please go on with your statement as to what steps you took recently, when the other two farms fell into your own hands, to get them let?—I advertised. I hand in the form of advertisement that was put into the papers last year. It practically means that I was prepared to let the land to be divided up into farms that could be worked by resident tenants.

9234. How many large farms were advertised?—Three are advertised now.

9235. Into how many did you propose to divide them?—I was prepared to divide them to suit any reasonable offer on the part of any tenant who seemed desirable.

9236. Then you say you did not care though you got five, six, or seven separate tenants for the three holdings?—I hoped to get more than that.

9237. Were you prepared to build houses and do what was necessary in order to enable the tenants to make a start?—I was prepared to do all that, and to make a considerable sacrifice in order to have a resident tenantry.

9238. What was the result of these endeavours of yours?—The result was that I had two offers. I had offers for two pieces of land. One was in May 1881. It was entirely new ground, and very good ground. The offer for that was about 2s. 2d. per sheep. That we considered too small, the stock being all ewes. Then I had an offer for what I considered the best part of the land on my estate—practically a slice of the best land on the coast, cutting off the bill land, which had formerly been under sheep—and the offer for that amounted to 1s. 5d. per sheep; and that was only on condition of my expending about £1000 in putting the farm-house into repair and other matters of that kind, which would have brought the actual rent per sheep below 1s. That offer I felt justified in refusing. These were the only two offers I had, and the first offer was made before the advertisement appeared.

9239. Suppose you had fair offers for those two portions of the farm to which you allude, would you be able to let them without sacrificing the rest of the land, or would that have been a disadvantage?—The first I mentioned was in such a form as I wished to let. I should have been glad to accept a good offer for that.

9240. If the offer for the first mentioned piece had been satisfactory you would have accepted it?—Yes, but for the other it was absurd. It was merely taking a bit, and leaving the rest further inland useless.

9241. Did the former tenants, when their leases came to an end, make any offer of renewal or express any willingness to go on with their farms, or did they simply refuse to have anything to do with them?—I never heard from them at all.

9242. Did you take any steps to renew the leases?—I did not, because

I had a fixed determination not to continue the system of large non-resident farmers.

6243. You did not give them the opportunity?—I did not.

9244. You mentioned one cause of the difficulty of letting sheep farms. Can you state any other cause?—In my experience wool, is the great difficulty. I fancy if wool had been at a reasonable price during the years I have spoken of, there would have been no special difficulty in letting the farms; but the price of wool, combined with the low price of sheep, made wedder land particularly unprofitable. During the six years from 1876 to 1881, part of Scotas, which forms half the land I purposed clearing, produced not only no return for the money invested, but no rent—less than no rent, it is put in my paper. I was rather doubtful about that matter, so I wrote to my agent to see if it produced no rent, as I thought it must mean no interest on the capital invested, and he writes to me this morning—'Regarding the wedder land of Scotas, from 1876 to 1881, that 'land as stated produced no rent at all for six years, and no interest for 'the money invested in the stock upon it during those years.'

9245. Do you attribute the present difficulty of letting sheep farms at all to the high price of stock and to the doubt which a farmer has when he goes into a farm whether he will ever get his money back again?—I should say that is distinctly a difficulty now.

9246. What do you do about the wintering of your sheep?—I have to send them away.

9247. What does that cost you?—Something like half a sovereign a head for the young sheep we send away.

9248. Have you any idea, from what you have heard from people formerly connected with sheep farming, what the cost of wintering sheep used to be in old days?—So far as I know, there was less sending away of sheep in old days, and that was got at by there being few sheep on the place. In those days they kept only the number of sheep the land could winter and now, so far as I can make out, the number kept is the number the land can summer.

9249. But I presume they always sent away a certain proportion?—I believe they sent away a certain proportion.

9250. But you cannot say what was the former cost of wintering hoggs?—No.

9251. You have described to us the difficulties which beset the sheep farmer, and the difficulties particularly which beset you in your endeavour to let those lands; will you tell us what you have done in consequence?—I found that the chief stretch of my wedder land was a dead loss to me from year to year. For some six years I was losing money steadily upon it. It occurred to me to give it up as wedder land, and I am putting it under forest.

9252. *The Chairman.*—That means deer forest?—Deer forest.

9253. *Mr Cameron.*—Suppose you wish to let it as a deer forest, what rent do you expect to get for it?—According to the figures I have got here, putting the wedders at 2s. a year, which is a great deal more than the rent I can get, and more rent than it ever fetched in fact,—and putting the full stock, such as was given over by the outgoing tenant, as the highest that could be put upon it—the amount was £1716, 18s. on the part of the land that I propose foresting.

9254. You don't propose foresting it all?—Only a certain part of the wedder land; the high land.

9255. What do you expect from the forest?—I reckon it will be worth more than double that, at all events.

9256. Is there any crofting population on your estate?—None at all on

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this part or the part that is going to be forested. I have one township with eleven crofters on the side facing the Sound of Sleat.

9257. They are not near the ground you propose to forest?—They are not within nine miles of any point of it.

9258. Do you see any signs on your estate of the remains of crofting populations?—Yes, considerable remains.

9259. Do these places where you see the remains appear to be suitable for cultivation?—I think it would be possible to support a certain number of people in the neighbourhood of the remains, but I think that would be done at the expense of losing the pasturage of the inner and upper hill country which is at present under sheep, apart altogether from the piece of land I purpose foresting.

9260. Would you approve of the introduction of crofters into these places as they used to be before?—I think it would be an injury to the property.

9261. Are your eleven crofters at all crowded together so that you could move some of them from that place which you described to where they were before?—I have not had any complaint of crowding. I have not had any complaints from my crofters at all.

9262. What size are the crofts?—Something like 500 acres among the eleven.

9263. Including hill pasture?—Yes.

9264. How many cows do they each keep?—I have not got the numbers down separately, but they have fifty cattle of all ages. That figure refers to the cattle actually on the place, not to the summing. There are fifty cattle, one hundred and ninety-nine sheep, and five horses, among the eleven tenants.

9265. Then they are pretty comfortable?—So far as I understand, they are pretty comfortable. I have never heard any complaint from them.

9266. Would they get any more employment if you had a shooting tenant for the deer forest, or if you yourself occupied the deer forest?—I think the younger men might be employed as ghillies if they chose to give up their fishing.

9267. Do they fish much?—Some of them fish.

9268. Do they prosecute it with any vigour?—Not so much as I should like. I had a good deal of annoyance with them some years ago. I was very much annoyed at their not fishing, and I called the heads of the families together one day, and rather abused them for allowing the east coast fishers to come and take the fish away under their noses. They lie between Loch Hourn and Loch Nevis, and Loch Hourn has been a large fishing station of late. I asked why they stood by with their hands folded, when they saw the east coast men taking the food from under their noses? They explained that their only difficulty was the want of nets. I asked how much it would cost to supply them with nets. I was told about £15 for each boat, and the men there represented half a dozen boats. They were overjoyed when I told them I would furnish them with the money if they would repay me in a reasonable time. They said they would repay me in three months. I said that three years would do quite well. They went away quite overjoyed. When I came back next year I found that one man had purchased £5 worth of nets from a neighbour, but otherwise the offer had not been taken advantage of at all. I had told them they were to get nets, and my factor was entrusted to pay for them as soon as they were bought, and all they had to do was to send the bill to me.

9269. Have you talked to them since?—I have talked to one or two since. They seemed to me to be rather disheartened.

9270. They are not very keen fishermen?—I think they did fish better in the winter. The last year or two, when there was a great amount of fishing in Loch Hourn, they got a certain amount of employment about the fishers without having nets themselves. I don't think they can be called keen fishermen.

9271. Did they make much last year at the herring fishing?—Very little, I think.

9272. Was that owing to their own fault?—I can understand no other cause for it.

9273. It was a very good fishing last year?—I have been so informed. I was making some inquiry last winter, and I was told there was something like £180,000 worth of herring taken out of Loch Hourn.

9274. Into whose pockets did that money go?—There were about 1000 boats there. I think most of them were east country boats, and some of them were from Stornoway.

9275. You don't know the proportion between the east coast and west coast boats?—No, but there was a very large number of east coast boats, and they are large boats.

9276. *The Chairman.*—You spoke of certain large sheep farms which came into your possession, some untenanted and some tenanted. What was the ancient condition of those farms, both tenanted and untenanted? Were they in remote times held as small crofts or small farms?—As regards one or two of them, I think I can say they were not held as small holdings. There were always a number of small cottages upon them with crofters; but Scotas was regarded as an estate distinct from the rest of it at one time, and I believe that was held practically by one man. For Berrisdale the same may be said.

9277. About what time was the large sheep farming system introduced? When were the first leases given to non-resident low country farmers?—I imagine it is not more than twenty-five or thirty years ago, but I can only speak by guess.

9278. Then were the rents recently paid the first rents paid, or had there been a renewal of lease with a rise?—There had been a renewal, with a rise in some cases. The rent was certainly very much larger than it was at first.

9279. Can you give me any idea what was the amount of rent paid by the sheep farmer under the first lease, and what was the amount paid under the second lease, in any one particular farm?—I have not got it in any one case, but I have the estate rental, which will come to the same thing.

9280. It is chiefly under sheep farms?—Entirely.

9281. What was the estate rental under the first leases and then under the second leases?—In the year 1858–59 it was £2766, 9s. 6d.

9282. And under the second leases?—£4193, 17s. 10d.

9283. When the second leases expired, or were about to expire, you say you did not wish to relet on the old system, but if you had wished it you could not have got tenants to take the farms on the terms of the second leases, which produced £4193?—I very much doubt whether I could have got much more than the original rent for them.

9284. Suppose the property had been offered at the original rent of £2766, could that or something a little more have been got?—I can hardly say; certainly I think not more.

9285. So that practically, if there had been a determination to relet, the rental of 1858 could have been got?—I am not sure of that, but I had no wish to relet in the same way.

9286. I know you stated that, but I want to arrive at a sort of impression as to whether, if you had resolved to relet to the same class of tenants,

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they would have given the same rent which was given twenty or twenty-five years ago?—I believe it could be got now. I rather doubt whether it could have been got within the last year or two.

9287. Then I should say you are very much in the position of a great number of proprietors on the borders and in the south of Scotland, who are practically obliged to go back to the rental of about 1856. However, you embraced a resolution not to relet to the same class of tenants at all, and you had an honest and zealous desire to let the property in smaller parcels available for resident tenants?—Quite so.

9288. Have you abandoned all hope of being able to do that?—Not at all. I am perfectly ready to accept tenants at this moment, and very desirous to get rid of the anxiety.

9289. You intend to persevere in your previous intention?—Yes.

9290. Except with reference to a particular farm or class of land?—That is a portion composed of wedder land, which does not all belong to one farm. It is land which I have hitherto found unprofitable, taken mainly from one farm and partly from two others.

9291. But the withdrawal of that wedder land will not seriously impair the value of the sheep farms?—It will very highly increase it. It will make the farms more letable.

9292. But it was not from a desire to convert the land into a deer forest, but really from inability to let it otherwise?—If the land had been profitable to me, I should not have turned it into a deer forest.

9293. You are prepared to erect on the farms buildings and everything that is necessary to set up this smaller class of tenants?—That is my intention. I shall be unable to do it all at once for everybody, but that is my intention.

9294. What is the average rental of those smaller farms you propose to establish?—I have absolutely no fixed intention on the subject. I should like to have farms at from £100 to £200 or less. I should be prepared to have them at £50, if I found desirable tenants. The size of the farm would depend on the condition of the place. I should let it only in such a way that the hill grazing would be divided among the farmers who had the shore ground.

9295. Do you expect that the aggregate rental of these small farms would amount to as much as the £2766?—No, considering the buildings. I expect I should have to throw in the buildings probably.

9296. Then you expect to get the original rental of £2766 *plus* the rental of the deer forest?—Yes.

9297. Which would raise the whole rental to about £4192?—Somewhere about that.

9298. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—In what year did your uncle buy the estate?—I believe it was in the year 1859.

9299. What is the extent of it?—About 67,000 acres.

9300. Have you got a plan of it?—I have not.

9301. Have you any idea how much arable land is among those 67,000 acres,—I mean what had once been under the plough?—I cannot say.

9302. Would there be 2000 or 3000?—I should think not.

9303. How much then, roughly?—I have never thought of the matter. It is in extremely small patches, and what has been arable land is now in such a condition that cultivation is hardly practicable. At a rough guess, I should say that there is not one-third of the extent you have put; I should say it is very much under 1000 acres.

9304. You mentioned that you have eleven families of crofters by the shores of the Loch. Do you know the number of souls in those families?—I do not, but I think there are not above fifty.

9305. What other population is upon your estate?—The total population is about 450.

9306. Are you aware there was a very large population resident at one time upon your estate?—There was, I believe.

9307. Scotos was once an independent property?—I have so understood.

9308. And you stated you did not think there were many small tenants upon that at one time?—I stated it was held by one man. There are the remains of a number of small cottages; I do not know whether these were crofters' or cottars'.

9309. That makes you suppose the proprietor of Scotos had no tenants?—I did not venture to suppose that, but I understood it had been a sheep farm longer than any other place in the neighbourhood. That is what I meant to convey.

9310. There is another property,—Barrisdale. There was a well-known family of that name, Macdonald of Barrisdale?—Yes.

9311. Don't you suppose they had a very considerable number of followers,—in 1745, for instance?—Undoubtedly they had in those days.

9312. There is another farm of yours called Scammadale?—I have a place called Scammadale; there is no farm on it.

9313. Would you be surprised to hear there was a distinct farm and property there?—I am most anxious to have a family there again.

9314. I mean a family in the position of gentlemen?—I was not aware of that.

9315. Glen Medle is part of your estate?—Yes.

9316. Was there not an hereditary family there?—I was not aware of that.

9317. With regard to evictions which took place before your time, are you not aware that within the memory of living men there was a very serious eviction,—in the time of the Glengarry trustees?—I believe there were some very barbarous evictions at that time.

9318. And that there was some resistance on the part of the people?—So I have read.

9319. You made a remark which probably you would like to reconsider. In answer to Lochiel, you said that the introduction of crofters (you did not mention in large numbers or small numbers) would be an injury to the property?—What I meant was that I should like to carry out my idea of having moderate sized farms first. I think crofters might follow with advantage then. Work could be found for them. My conception is that a small crofter there would have no outlet for his labour beyond the work of his croft; and I think it is desirable that the crofters should find labour on a farm in the neighbourhood.

9320. Don't you think it would be better to begin the reverse way,—as a delegate told us in Skye, to begin with a smallish croft, but larger than the present, and work up till he gets a better?—Quite so, and I should be glad to have some of those crofters to take my larger farms.

9321. But then you might commence upon your own estate by beginning them low?—I am not sure of that. It does not seem that the crofters improve the land.

9322. That may or may not be; it depends upon the matter of encouragement. Now, with regard to the fishing, are you aware that the east coast people, with their larger boats and trawling, do really destroy the fishing of the small people?—I am aware a great deal of that goes on, but I am not aware it destroys the fishing. I am not sufficiently informed on the point to speak.

9323. But you are aware it is alleged?—I am aware it is a grievance.

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9324. With regard to your idea about settling those tenants whom you referred to, your property is not very accessible? Is there a good road through Glengarry?—To the edge of it practically there is,—to Loch Hourn.

9325. Have you made a pier upon the loch?—Sir Arthur Bass is making a pier.

9326. Is it to be open to the public?—Yes, he made it on that condition.

9327. Do you think the inaccessibility of your property had anything to do with the want of people coming forward?—I have no doubt it had.

9328. Is the climate a good one?—It is; I spent the last winter there, and enjoyed it admirably. So far as I can make out, we had the best winter weather there was in Scotland.

9329. You seem to find fault with the small people for not fishing, and you also told us you are suffering a good deal from not getting any return from your lands. Why don't you, in order to recoup youself, think of the fishing, and getting a share of the £180,000 taken out of Loch Hourn?—I have been very unsuccessful in my speculations, and I would rather let the people who work at it carry it out themselves. I would be glad to assist them another year.

9330. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Mr Fraser Mackintosh quoted a remark which you made in answer to Lochiel, to the effect that you thought it would be disadvantageous to the property to introduce crofters. Am I right in understanding you to mean that they would occupy the lower land, and you would not be able profitably to make use of the upper land?—Quite so; that was my meaning.

9331. *Professor Mackinnon.*—We had a gentleman here yesterday, himself a proprietor and a well-known farmer and grazier, who stated that large farms at reasonable rents ought not to remain long vacant. Your experience is quite different?—I have not tried to let large farms. I would not accept an offer for a large farm.

9332. Have you considered the question of increasing the holdings? Could that be done with the croftiug population you have?—It has never been asked for.

9333. They could not very well leap up from their present holdings to a farm?—I don't think any of them could.

9334. Would it be easy to increase their hill pasture in any way?—I have not considered the question. It has not come before me in any way.

9335. Are the rents the same?—The rents have been raised 5s. in the last thirty years.

9336. I mean are the rents about equal, or are there some of them larger than the others?—Practically, there is not much difference.

9337. There is not one who has two or three lots?—Practically, I believe they are tolerably equal, but I have not got the figures.

9338. Your difficulty about the crofting populatiou is that they could not occupy the higher ground; but if you occupy it by deer that difficulty would disappear?—I am speaking of another district. The land of which I am speaking is land which could be profitably grazed by sheep, but that which I am foresting could not profitably be grazed by sheep.

9339. But you stated that the rent would be double under deer, as compared with sheep?—I stated that as my belief.

9340. Why not occupy the whole upper land with deer in that case?—Because I prefer sheep where I can keep them properly. I do not wish to forest land.

9341. It is only the upper portion?—I have never contemplated putting the lower portion under deer.

9342. But if it yielded a higher rent?—I certainly should not do it. My desire is to have a resident population there, and I am prepared to do that at some expense. It is not my desire to raise the value of the property by what I consider an injury to it.

9343. My difficulty is in seeing why the argument should not hold good for the lower as well as the higher ground?—I believe that in the one case sheep farming can be made to pay, and in the other case it can not.

9344. Could not the wedder ground also be made to pay, only not so highly as the deer forest? Is not the same argument true of the lower ground?—I have farmed that place for six years at a dead loss, not only as regards rent, but as regards the interest on capital invested in stock.

9345. So it would not graze sheep at all?—It would graze sheep, but at a dead loss for those six years.

9346. The loss then would be greater upon the higher ground than upon the lower ground, but still deer would be more profitable both on high ground and low ground?—I have not contemplated having deer on the low ground at all. I really have not thought of it.

9347. *The Chairman.*—You look forward to a very great depreciation in the value of the largest class of sheep farms all over the country?—To a further depreciation?

9348. Yes.—I do not.

9349. Do you then think that generally large farms could be let now to non-resident tenants or any tenants at about the same rental as in 1856?—I should suppose so.

ANGUS BEATON, Manager, Skeabost (47)—examined.

Angus Beaton.

9350. *The Chairman.*—In consequence of what was said by delegates at Skeabost on a recent occasion, a statement has been placed in my hands which I am now about to read—'We, the undersigned tenants in Glen-'Bernisdale, on the estate of Mr Macdonald, do hereby certify that we are 'exceedingly sorry to hear of the incredible evidence Mr William M'Lure, 'our representative, stated before the Royal Commission. In the first place, 'the tenants who were removed from Skeabost to Bernisdale were provided 'with new houses at the cost of £15. He gave them these houses gratis, 'without interest or any charge. Moreover, he gave them half a share of 'the Bernisdale joint stock of sheep to the amount of £6, 10s. gratis, with-'out any charge. Likewise he gave them compensation for improvements 'made on land in the year 1873. Likewise he gave us potatoes and seed 'oats this year. Moreover, he gave us as much hay as we could manage, 'which saved us from selling our cattle last winter. Moreover, he made 'roads for the convenience of the people to carry home their peats.' Have you any knowledge of this statement having been drawn up?—Every word that is in the paper is true, and I understand the people have sent it in.

9351. Were you aware that this paper was sent in or about to be sent in?—The men were telling me it was about to be sent in.

9352. Do you know that this paper is the spontaneous production of the people, and that no influence from any quarter was used to induce them to send it in?—There was no effort of any kind.

9353. And the substance of the paper is to your knowledge quite correct?—Yes.

9354. It is signed by five or six tenants. How many tenants are there in Bernisdale?—Ten.

9355. In whose writing is that paper?—I do not know.

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9356. Do you not know the writing of all the people in the place?—No.

9357. It is not your own writing?—No, I never put a pen to it.

9358. Have you auy statement you wish to make of your own?—In the first place, the first delegate who came in made a charge against me with regard to a horse. In the second place, he complained that the soil was thin and poor, 1½ inches to 3 inches, and in many parts 6 inches. I measured the soil in presence of the man who gave this account of the land, and I got it from nine inches to three feet. The second delegate, Mr John Bethune, made a complaint against me in regard to two horses. In the first place, I had permission to keep a horse, and the horse had particular work to do, as there were no other horse in the town but itself. It had to convey or carry the wool from the town to the port, and to carry the smearing material back to the township from the port, and when a death occurred, this horse was employed to convey the dead body to the grave. John Bethune complained of seeing this horse of mine on the ground. There were five crofts on Bernisdale that were put under wood. The summing of these crofts was ten cows and ten stirks. The people of the township were getting the profits of the grass of these ten cows and ten stirks, with the exception of the consumption of my horse. Over and above, I had to keep the road in repair on the west side of the country. I had to keep a van for the men who were engaged in repairing the road, and two horses were required to convey it. It was for the road that it was used. The horse that I had a right to hold on the ground was not there at all. It was on another part of the ground for a part of the year working at the roads. It seems that the people of the township did not want my horse there, for there were other three horses in the town, but they were not mentioned to the Commissioners—none but mine.

9359. Is that all you have to say?—That is all I have to say.

9360. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Did you ever at any time turn off the Free Church minister's horse from the hill?—To tell the truth, I scarcely remember.

9361. Try and remember?—Yes, such a thing occurred.

9362. At the time the delegates were to be appointed to come before the Commission, did you attend any of their meetings? Did you attend the first meeting?—The meeting was nearly over before I arrived.

9363. Did you take any part in it?—Yes, I put in a word like the rest.

9364. Did you consider it consistent with your position as a representative of the proprietor to interfere with the people in the circumstances?—The proprietor had nothing to do with it; I was acting for myself in that case.

9365. Was the proprietor aware of your acting?—No.

9366. He knew nothing about it?—No.

9367. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—You hold a share of the land like the other tenants?—Yes.

9368. Was it in virtue of holding that share that you took part in that meeting?—Yes.

9369. Did you upset any of the arrangements that had been before you came in?—I told them they had not a full meeting—there were only fifteen present—and that they had better adjourn till they had a fuller meeting.

9370. Did they adjourn, or did they elect their delegates?—I did not know that they made delegates. If they did so, they were appointed before I went in.

9371. When were the delegates appointed, then?—The next night, when the men were all assembled.

9372. Were you present then?—Yes.

9373. Were the delegates chosen on that occasion, the delegates whose names were sent up to us?—Yes, except one man.

9374. Why was that change made?—A gentleman from Inverness, named Mr Mackenzie, came down, and I understaud that he and the minister of the Free Church took a considerable part in the work. Mr Mackenzie gave an insight to the men, and said he could appoint any delegate whom he chose, and that they were at liberty to say anything they liked against proprietors, ground officers, and factors.

9375. They made an alteration in one of the delegates?—Yes, in one.

9376. Why did they alter one delegate?—They thought that this man would speak matter containing less substance and less sense than the others.

9377. *Professor Mackinnon.*—It was entirely as a tenant in the place that you attended these meetings?—Yes, every one of them.

9378. Were you chosen at any of the meetings as a delegate yourself?—No.

9379. But you agree in all the statements in this paper?—Yes, everything in it is right.

9380. Why did you not sign it?—They did not show it to me.

9381. How was that? You are a tenant as well as they?—That paper is from the people in the glen.

9382. Did they take no part in the meetings for electing delegates?—They were present.

9383. Why did they not elect a delegate to represent their views?—They did so, but this Betbune was elected by the minister and Mr Mackenzie.

9384. And the delegate they elected was put out in his favour?—No, their delegate was also in, but they resent the testimony he gave.

JOHN FORSYTH, Factor for Sir Charles Ross of Balnagowan (61)—examined.

9385. *The Chairman.*—Have you got any statement to make to the Commission?—Yes. Before reading any statement, I may say I was requested by Lord Macdonald's agents to go over to the Braes district last summer, after the disturbances there, and value, and report to his Lordship on the state of his crofters. That report is what I have now to read. 'I 'have been factor on the Balnagowan estate in Ross-shire for eighteen 'years. Before being appointed factor I was for nineteen years tenant of 'the farm of Arabella, on the Calrossie estate, in Easter Ross. I have had 'considerable experience during the period of my factorship in dealing with 'crofters and small tenants paying rents of from £1 to £20. There is a 'considerable number of such crofters and tenants on the estate of 'Balnagowan. Their holdings are situated mostly in the parishes of 'Kincardine and Edderdon, in Ross-shire. The climate is better than in 'Skye, but in Edderdon the climate is damp and cold. These crofters 'and tenants pay much higher rents in proportion to their acreage than 'the crofters in Skye do, but they work their land according to the five-'shift or course of cropping, which does not exhaust it, and consequently 'they obtain from the land very much better returns. In June of last 'year I received instruction from Messrs John C. Brodie & Sons, Writers 'to the Signet, Edinburgh, agents for Lord Macdonald, to proceed to Skye, 'and make a valuation and report upon the crofts of the three townships 'of Peinchorran, Balmeanach, and Gedentailer, in the Braes district of 'Skye, belonging to Lord Macdonald. The crofters in these townships

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'had been trespassing on the grazings of Ben Lee, then occupied by Mr 'Mackay, and they had refused to pay their rents unless that grazing was 'given to them. My instructions from Lord Macdonald's agents were in 'writing, and were in the following terms:—"*Memorandum of Instruc-* '"*tions for John Forsyth, Esq., Parkhill, Ross-shire,* to enable him to '"furnish a report and valuation for the guidance of Lord Macdonald as '"to the holdings of his Lordship's crofters in the Braes district of his '"Lordship's estates in Skye.—22*nd June* 1882. The tenants of the '"crofts in the Braes district of his Lordship's estates, forming the town- '"ships of Peinchorran, Balmeanach, and Gedentailer, have lately refused '"to pay their rents, and attempt to justify their position by asserting '"that the grazing of the hill of Ben Lee was improperly taken from them '"at Martinmas 1865, and that it must now be restored to them without '"any addition being made to their present rents. The three townships '"above mentioned are distant about 6 miles from Portree, and are '"situated at the foot of the western slope of Ben Lee, which rises behind '"them. Prior to Martinmas 1865 the hill of Ben Lee (which lies '"adjacent to the market stance of Portree) was a commonty, and was '"open to all Lord Macdonald's tenants, and was taken advantage of by '"them at the market times, and for putting stray beasts on, &c. It was '"also to a great extent used by the tenants of the three townships in '"question. The boundaries of the three townships are distinctly laid '"down on the maps of the Macdonald estates prepared about the years '"1810–11, and the acreage is stated as follows:—1. Peinchorran crofts, '"56,359 Scotch acres; pasture, 279,466. 2. Balmeanach crofts, 50,380; '"pasture, 280,093. 3. Gedentailer crofts, 37,440; pasture, 251,061. '"These maps will be exhibited to the reporter by Mr Alexander '"Macdonald, solicitor, Portree, the local factor for Lord Macdonald. '"Although the arable land of the crofts was clearly pointed out, and the '"boundaries of the grazing land attached to each of the townships were '"distinctly laid down, there seems to be no doubt that the crofters were '"never kept strictly within their bounds; and as the commonty of Ben '"Lee lay contiguous to them they were allowed, on sufferance, as much '"grazing as they liked on the hill of Ben Lee. This privilege of grazing '"on the commonty of Ben Lee was not, it is understood, taken into '"account in fixing the rents of the crofters, and in point of fact they '"only paid for the ground included in the measurements above mentioned, '"as being taken from the old plan of the Macdonald estates. The rental '"of the three townships in question, prior to the year 1829, was £280, '"0s. 2¼d., but in that year it was reduced to £200, 17s., made up as '"follows:—Peinchorran, £70, 2s.; Balmeanach, £76, 19s.; Gedentailer, '"£53, 16s.;—total, £200, 17s. And from 1829 down to the present date '"it has remained stationary at the same figure. It is not quite clear '"what led to the reduction in 1829, but it is believed that a revaluation '"of the estate was then obtained, and the rents readjusted. The parti- '"culars of the three townships as at present let to the crofters are as '"follows:—1. Peinchorran consists of thirteen lots of about 5½ acres each '"of arable land, with grazing for four cows and twelve sheep for each lot, '"and besides grazing for seven horses for the whole township. The '"average rent per lot is £5, 8s. 2. Balmeanach consists of eight lots '"of about 6 acres each of arable land. The average rental is £9, 11s. '"per lot, and the grazing per lot is six cows, sixteen sheep, and one '"horse. 3. Gedentailer consists of seven lots of about 6½ acres each '"arable land, with grazing for five cows, twenty sheep, and one horse '"per croft. The average rent is £6, 14s. 6d. per lot. It will be '"observed the tenants of the townships hold crofts or pieces of arable

'"land averaging from 5 to 6 acres in extent, and in addition to the '"arable land the tenants of each township hold considerable pieces of '"pasture land situated immediately behind their crofts and occupied by '"each township in common. The lots of the various townships have '"been divided, and are now occupied as follows:—1. Peinchorran—the '"thirteen crofts are now occupied by seventeen tenants. 2. Balmeanach '"—the eight lots are now occupied by fourteen tenants and two cottars. '"3. Gedentailer—the seven lots are now occupied by thirteen tenants '"and two cottars. A detailed rental giving the names of the whole of '"the tenants, and showing the rents paid by them respectively, will be '"placed in the hands of the reporter by Mr Alexander Macdonald, '"Portree, and there is sent herewith a copy of the rental of the three '"townships for the year from Whitsunday 1864, as showing the tenants '"who were in possession of the various crofts when the hill of Ben Lee '"ceased to be a common, and was let by Lord Macdonald as a separate '"farm. The whole of the crofters are yearly tenants, holding from '"Whitsunday to Whitsunday. Many changes in the tenancies have '"taken place since Martinmas 1865, after which date they were pro-'"hibited from pasturing stock on Ben Lee, but it is understood that for '"many years past the crofters have been in the habit of trespassing con-'"stantly on the hill of Ben Lee, greatly to the loss and annoyance of the '"tenants of that holding. And the crofters who are now in possession '"of the crofts state that when Ben Lee was let by Lord Macdonald as a '"separate holding, it was arranged that the hill should be given back '"to the crofters at Whitsunday 1882, being the expiry of the lease for '"which it was then let. There seems to be no foundation whatever for '"such a statement; and the accounts of Mr Mackinnon, who was then '"factor for Lord Macdonald, show that the arrangement made by him '"with regard to Ben Lee was not of a temporary nature, but that the '"crofters were from and after that date to be prevented from sending '"their stock to the hill. It may be mentioned that, as the commonty of '"Ben Lee was not taken into account in letting the crofts, no abatement '"whatever was made on the rents of the crofters when the hill was '"resumed by the proprietor. The circumstances under which Ben Lee '"was let as a separate holding have been brought prominently before the '"reporter for his information, but he will understand that he is not '"expected when in Skye to inquire more fully into them than he may '"consider to be necessary for enabling him to carry out fully the instruc-'"tions embraced in the queries annexed hereto. At Martinmas 1865 '"the hill of Ben Lee was let at the annual rent of £100, and has since '"been possessed by various tenants, and is now let to Mr John Mackay, '"Portree, at the annual rent of £128. The hill is said to be capable of '"carrying 1400 sheep in summer and 1200 in winter. It may be '"mentioned to the reporter, that from Martinmas 1865 down to '"Martinmas 1881, the crofters acquiesced in the letting of the hill, and '"were peaceable and, contented; and, in point of fact, the rents prior to '"the last mentioned date were regularly paid. About the middle of '"November 1881, however, a deputation of young men—the sons of '"crofters—waited upon Mr Alexander Macdonald in Portree, and pre-'"sented a petition which had been signed by almost all the tenants of '"the three townships, to the effect that they demanded the hill of Ben '"Lee in addition to their present holdings, without any additional pay-'"ment of rent; but Mr Macdonald, on observing the deputation did not '"consist of tenants, dismissed them without entering into any discussion '"with them. The deputationists quietly left, and nothing was heard of '"the matter till the Martinmas rent collection. Upon 8th December

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'"1881 the tenants marched in procession to Portree to attend the '"Martinmas rent audit, and all appeared before Mr Macdonald, and '"plainly declared their intention or resolution that they must have Ben '"Lee in addition to their present holdings without payment of additional '"rent. Mr Macdonald explained to them that their request could not '"be granted, and pointed out to them that they and their predecessors '"had been in possession of their crofts holding from year to year without '"complaint for between sixteen and seventeen years, and that there was '"no change of circumstances which justified their application or request. '"No rents were paid, but the factor explains that there are many '"tenants quite willing to pay, but who are afraid to do so in consequence '"of threats of personal violence at the hands of the agitators should '"they do so; and that two widows having been suspected of paying '"their rents, their houses were surrounded by a crowd, who threatened '"them and broke down a tree in front of their dwellings. As no rents '"were being paid, Mr Macdonald, on 23rd March last, addressed a '"circular to the crofters remonstrating with them, and calling upon them '"to settle the claims of their landlord. No attention was paid to this '"circular, and Mr Macdonald accordingly resolved to enforce payment '"of the rents, and to evict the ringleaders of what he believes to be an '"organization formed for the avowed object of resisting their landlord's '"claim for payment of rent. Accordingly summonses of removing and '"for payment of arrears were issued upon 7th April last against twelve '"of the ringleaders, and placed in the hands of a sheriff officer for service; '"but the crofters assembled in force, took the writs from the officer, and '"burnt them. These proceedings, as the reporter is doubtless aware, led '"to the trial before the sheriff, and the conviction of five of the agitators '"for deforcing the officer. Since the month of April no step practically '"has been taken by Lord Macdonald with the view of obtaining pay- '"ment of the arrears due by the crofters, or of coming to a reasonable '"understanding with them in regard to the hill of Ben Lee. The '"crofters, on the other hand, both in December and in the course of the '"spring of the present year, threatened publicly that at Whitsunday '"1882 they would take forcible possession of the hill of Ben Lee, by '"placing their own stock upon it and driving off the stock of Mr Mackay, '"the present tenant. Upon 21st June 1882, Lord Macdonald's '"Edinburgh agents received the following telegram from Mr Alexander '"Macdonald, Portree:—'Have been informed by tenant of Ben Lee that '"Braes tenants sending cattle to Ben Lee, and that tenants informed '"Mackay's shepherd they were sending stock, have requested Mackay '"to ascertain definitely whether tenants taking forcible possession. On '"ascertaining definitely shall let you know. Informed tenants some '"days ago that their matter was receiving consideration.' No confirmation '"of this telegram has as yet been received, and the reporter will there- '"fore kindly inquire into the facts as to the present occupancy of Ben '"Lee. It does not appear to have ever been ascertained whether the '"grazing land belonging to the crofts proper is sufficient to maintain '"the stock at all times which they are entitled to keep under the '"arrangement with Lord Macdonald. The tenants themselves state most '"positively and strongly that their land will not keep their summing, '"and that they are consequently paying rent for the grazing of stock '"which the lands will not maintain. The local factor says there is no '"doubt that many of the tenants have their full summing and more, but '"that others are far short of it. The reporter will require to inspect '"each croft, and satisfy himself that the crofter has the full grazing let '"to him under his bargain with Lord Macdonald; and if, in the opinion

'" of the reporter, the grazing is not sufficient to maintain the stock which '" the crofter is entitled to keep, he will be good enough to say whether '" any, and if so what extent, of the hill of Ben Lee should be added to '" the crofts to enable the crofters to keep the stock which they are '" entitled to do under their bargain. A proposal has been mentioned to '" the effect that the whole of Ben Lee should be let to the crofters as a '" joint farm at the present rent, or such other rent as the reporter may '" consider to be its fair annual value; but it is doubted whether the '" crofters have sufficient capital to enable them to stock the hill sufficiently '" with stock of their own, and it is feared that, by enlarging the posses- '" sions by the addition of Ben Lee, Lord Macdonald might get himself '" into greater difficulties than ever with his crofters; the reporter, how- '" ever, will kindly consider this proposal and give his opinion upon it. '" Lord Macdonald is desirous, if it could possibly be arranged, to come to '" an amicable and mutually satisfactory arrangement with his crofters, '" and for this purpose he wishes the advice and guidance of the reporter. '" The reporter will kindly examine each croft in the three townships, and '" if he can manage it, confer with each of the crofters and hear from him '" personally what it is that he particularly complains of, and after having '" gathered all available information, he will form his own conclusion as '" to the fair annual value of each holding, taking all circumstances into '" account; and he will particularly state whether the grazing land '" attached to each township is sufficient for the stock which the tenants '" are entitled to keep. It would also be satisfactory for the reporter to '" ascertain and set forth in his report how, in his opinion, the rents of the '" three townships in question compare with the rents of neighbouring '" townships occupied by small tenants, and whether the crop of the arable '" land of each township is sufficient to winter the stock allowed to be '" grassed by the tenants. More particularly for the guidance of the '" reporter, in addition to the points above alluded to, in so far as these '" may not be covered by the following queries, he will be good enough '" to report specially upon the following points:—1. What would be a '" fair rent at present on a yearly tenancy of the subjects let to each of '" the crofters of the three townships of Peinchorran, Balmeanach, and '" Gedentailer? 2. Is the land occupied by each of these crofters '" sufficient to enable each of them to keep the number of animals of each '" kind contemplated by his bargain with Lord Macdonald? 3. What '" would be a fair rent at present on a yearly tenancy of the grazing of '" Ben Lee as let to Mr Mackay? 4. Should any, and what portion, of '" the grazing of Ben Lee as let to Mr Mackay be taken from him and '" added to the land let to each of the crofters of the three townships '" above specified, in order to make the rent at present payable by each '" of these crofters a fair rent, or to enable each of them to keep on the '" land let to him the number of animals of each kind contemplated by '" his bargain with Lord Macdonald? 5. If any portion of the grazing '" of Ben Lee now let to Mr Mackay should be taken from him and '" added to the land occupied by the crofters as above, what abatement of '" rent should be allowed to Mr Mackay to compensate him for the lands '" so resumed by the proprietor and added to the crofts of the three town- '" ships? 6. If the reporter does not recommend that any additional '" land be added to the crofts as above, is the reporter of opinion that '" any and what abatement of rent should be granted to each of the crofters '" of the three townships and to Mr Mackay, the tenant of Ben Lee, and '" if so, for what period? 7. Whether the reporter is of opinion that the '" land occupied by each crofter is not sufficient to keep the stock pro- '" vided by his bargain, he thinks that it would be better to give relief

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'" by abatement of rent, rather than by addition of land, and if so, what '" should be the extent of that relief? 8. What does the reporter find to '" be the actual present state of possession of the grazing of Ben Lee? '" Is it in the actual peaceable possession of Mr Mackay, the tenant of '" Ben Lee, or is his possession of it practically obstructed or usurped or '" interfered with in any and what manner, and to what extent by any '" and which of the three townships above specified, or by any and what '" other persons, and during what period? 9. Is the reporter of opinion, '" after the fullest possible inquiry made by himself personally on the '" spot as well as from his own observation, that the crofters of the town- '" ships above referred to are or are not possessed of sufficient means to '" fully stock with stock their own absolute property the grazing of Ben '" Lee, now let to Mr Mackay, in addition to the crofts now possessed by '" them respectively, and what number of sheep and of what kind and '" age, and during what period of the year, does the reporter consider to '" be a full and fair stock for the grazing of Ben Lee, and what amount '" of money would it be necessary for the crofters to possess to enable '" them to purchase a full and fair stock for that grazing of Ben Lee, apart '" altogether from the stock of the crofts now let to them respectively? '" 10. What course does the reporter advise Lord Macdonald to follow '" in the whole matter? Ought his Lordship to refrain to any and what '" extent from insisting on full payment of the rent and arrears now due '" by each of the crofters of the three townships above referred to, and by '" Mr Mackay, the tenant of Ben Lee, and what steps does the reporter '" advise Lord Macdonald to take, and at what time, in order to obtain '" payment of those rents and arrears, under deduction of such part of '" them, if any, as the reporter may advise Lord Macdonald to refrain from '" exacting? In considering the whole of the matters embraced within '" the foregoing memorandum and queries, the reporter will keep pro- '" minently before him that it is the wish of Lord Macdonald to act '" fairly and justly towards the crofters of the three townships above '" referred to, and towards Mr Mackay, the tenant of Ben Lee. The '" reporter will also kindly favour Lord Macdonald with any information '" or suggestion which may occur to him, and which may not have been '" specially referred to in the foregoing memorandum.—5 *Thistle Street*, '" *Edinburgh*, 22 *June* 1882." I may here refer to the following clause 'in a letter I received from Lord Macdonald's agents of the same date:— '"We need hardly mention that it is the desire of Lord Macdonald that '" you should take a thoroughly impartial view of the present position of '" matters, and that, although you are to proceed to Skye on his Lordship's '" instructions, you will pay due attention to any representations the '" crofters may have to make to you." In accordance with those 'instructions, I went to Skye in the beginning of July, and I examined 'each croft separately, and met with all the tenants, and heard what they 'had to say. I found that, in addition to the grazing belonging to the 'three townships named adjoining their own arable land, that they had 'right to graze their stock along with that of the other four townships of 'Connordan, Upper and Lower Ollach, and Achnahanaid adjoining. I 'had no hesitation in coming to the conclusion that these grounds were 'quite sufficient to graze the quantity of stock which each of the crofters 'was entitled to keep according to the summing of the respective holdings. 'The following is the report which I sent to Messrs Brodie & Sons as the 'result of my inspection and valuation:—" In terms of the memorandum '" of instructions sent me by Messrs J. C. Brodie and Sons, 5 Thistle '" Street, Edinburgh, on 22nd June last, for the purpose of enabling me '" to report on and value of the holdings of the three townships of

‘ “ Peinchorran, Balmeanach, and Gedentailer, in the Braes district of Lord
‘ “ Macdonald’s property in Skye, I beg to state that I went to Skye,
‘ “ and carefully examined the three townships together with the hill of
‘ “ Ben Lee on the 5th, 6th, and 7th days of July current, and that
‘ “ the result of my examination is as follows:—I think the best way to
‘ “ convey the result of my examination will be to answer the questions as
‘ “ put in the memorandum of instructions, reserving the few remarks till
‘ “ after I have answered the questions. 1. See valuation attached to
‘ “ this paper. 2. Now that it is ascertained beyond doubt that the
‘ “ Peinchorran, Balmeanach, and Gedentailer crofters have right to graze
‘ “ with the other four townships of Connordan, Upper and Lower Ollach,
‘ “ and Achnahanaid, they have grass enough for the stock they are entitled
‘ “ to keep according to agreement, but the arable ground possessed by
‘ “ each is not sufficient to grow straw to carry their cows and horses
‘ “ through the winter. 3. Mr Mackay, I understand, at present pays
‘ “ £128 for Ben Lee, which I think a fair rent, providing he had the
‘ “ undisturbed use of the grazing. 4. This question is not applicable
‘ “ now, as the crofters of Peinchorran, Balmeanach, and Gedentailer have
‘ “ right of grazing along with the other four Braes townships. 5. Not
‘ “ applicable. 6. Not applicable. 7. Not applicable. 8. Mr Mackay,
‘ “ the tenant of Ben Lee, is not in full possession of it. The tenants of
‘ “ the townships admit that, particularly from Whitsunday last, they have
‘ “ allowed their sheep to go on to Ben Lee; that they do not try to keep
‘ “ them off; and that they have no intention of doing so. Indeed, when
‘ “ going over Ben Lee to-day (7th July) I saw a great many sheep which
‘ “ I understand to belong to the tenants of Peinchorran, Balmeanach, and
‘ “ Gedentailer, well on to the Ben Lee grazing and among Mr Mackay’s
‘ “ sheep. 9. After a careful inquiry and from my own observation, I fear
‘ “ the tenants of the three townships have not funds sufficient to stock
‘ “ Ben Lee, but they say they could manage it. In addition to their
‘ “ present stock, £1400 to £1500 would be required to procure a sufficient
‘ “ stock for Ben Lee. I consider 1000 sheep a fair summer stock for
‘ “ Ben Lee, and the best stock for such ground is a blackfaced wedder
‘ “ stock. I think it would be judicious to let the crofters of Peinchoran,
‘ “ Balmeanach, and Gedentailer Ben Lee at a fair rent, if it could be
‘ “ arranged; I think it would ultimately turn out the best arrangement
‘ “ for all concerned. It would be a difficult matter to keep their stock off
‘ “ Ben Lee, nothing would do this except an iron fence; this would cost
‘ “ about £80 a mile, and it would be costly to keep in repair. It would,
‘ “ I fear, be often broken. 10. Failing coming to such an arrangement
‘ “ as I have suggested, I do not think Lord Macdonald has any course
‘ “ open to him except to vindicate his rights. His Lordship’s law agents
‘ “ are without doubt his proper advisers as to how this is to be done; but
‘ “ before taking any legal steps to compel payment of the rents due by
‘ “ the crofters, I would be inclined to put on a few firm shepherds—say
‘ “ three or four,—to turn off the tenants’ sheep and to keep them off,
‘ “ thus leaving it to the tenants to put them on again, if inclined, or to
‘ “ do what I understand has been done, to call upon the crofters to
‘ “ withdraw their stock from Ben Lee. I have already stated that the
‘ “ land held by each crofter will not grow straw to winter their cattle
‘ “ and horses, in this case it might be advisable to induce the crofters, or
‘ “ try to do so, to keep fewer cattle and more sheep; thus enabling them
‘ “ to winter their cattle without the necessity of their having to purchase
‘ “ straw or other feeding stuffs. As it has been ascertained that the
‘ “ crofters of the three upper townships have the right of grazing along
‘ “ with the crofters of the four lower townships, and if Ben Lee is let to

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'"the crofters of Peinchorran, Balmeanach, and Gedentailer, thus putting '"them in an improved position, would it not be wise to withdraw from '"them the right of grazing along with the crofters of the lower town-'"ships, and give the lower townships all the common grazing at an '"increased rent, thus also improving their position by enabling them to '"keep more stock than they do now? A few of the crofters are very '"poor, and although I have not made any difference in the valuation of '"their crofts on this account, I would recommend them to Lord '"Macdonald's consideration. The following are the results of my valua-'"tion:—[I omit the details.]

	Present Rent.	Valuation.
'"1. Peinchorran, . . .	£70 2 0	£73 13 0
'"2. Balmeanach, . . .	78 19 0	73 5 0
'"3. Gedentailer, . . .	54 1 0	56 12 9
	£203 2 0	£203 10 9

'" (signed) JOHN FORSYTH. *Auchoyle, 22nd July,* 1882." The arable 'land would at one time probably have been sufficient to grow fodder to 'carry the stock of cattle and horses over winter, but from constant cropping, 'without a sufficient supply of farm-yard manure, the soil has become 'exhausted. The rents of the crofts forming the three townships named I 'considered on the whole to be moderate. In the cases where I was of 'opinion the rents were too low, I understand no increase has been made, 'and in those cases where in my opinion the rents were rather high they 'have been reduced. In a letter which I addressed to Lord Macdonald's 'agents subsequent to the date of my report, I advised that, though the 'rent of Ben Lee to Mr Mackay was a fair rent, yet it might be well to 'let the grazings at £100 or even £90 to the crofters, who ought to have 'done well with it at either of these rents. The hill has actually been let 'to the crofters at £74, 15s., which I consider a very moderate rent indeed. 'On the whole, I consider the crofters of these three townships have now 'little to complain of. I think the crofts that have come to be divided 'should again be let as one holding, twelve to sixteen acres would be a 'fair croft, and only one family should be allowed to live on the croft. If 'the crofts were enlarged, this would probably induce the tenants to crop 'the land according to a regular system of rotation. They seem to be 'under the impression that this cannot be done at present, on account of 'the small size of their holdings.'

9386. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—How long were you about this inspection?—Three days.

9387. Was the weather good?—Very good. I never had an umbrella up except for about ten minutes one day.

9388. July is a nice time of the year in Skye?—It is.

9389. Had you ever been in Skye before?—I had been in it, and crossed the island before.

9390. Never on business?—I had been getting sheep there.

9391. Then your recommendations have been practically carried out?—Yes, I understand so.

9392. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—You refer to the smallness of the holdings as preventing, in the opinion of the people, a proper rotation of cropping?—Yes.

9393. But you mentioned that you have had great experience of crofters in Edderton and Easter Ross. Are there not small crofts there?—Yes.

9394. What size of crofts are you accustomed to deal with in Easter

Ross?—From £1 to £20. On the Balnagowan estate there are 126 crofts at from £1 to £20.

9395. A number of 3, 4, and 5 acres?—Yes.

9396. Do you find they follow a proper rotation of cropping?—Yes. They did not do so a few years ago, but I was able to induce them to do so, and they did better.

9397. Do you find that from the two-fifths of the land which they now crop with grain annually they get as much return as the tenants in Skye get from cropping their whole land annually?—Yes.

RODERICK M'MILLAN, Draper and Grocer, Portree (43)—examined.

9398. *The Chairman.*—Have you any statement to make to the Commission?—Yes. I am a general merchant. I am also a member of the school board of Portree. I take a very deep interest in the crofter question. I and the other delegates for this village were appointed at a largely attended meeting of the inhabitants, and at a subsequent meeting which was also largely attended we were intrusted to corroborate generally the evidence already laid before the Commission of the impoverished condition of the crofters in the isle of Skye. We were also asked to suggest to the Commission certain remedies which, in the opinion of the meeting and in our own opinion, would tend to improve the condition of the crofters, and we were further asked to state certain local grievances. From the nature of my business, I have since the year 1854 been in a position to know the circumstances of the people, not only in the immediate neighbourhood of Portree, but in several parishes throughout Skye, and I know it to be a fact that cannot be gainsayed that the people are much worse off than they used to be, not only this year, which is an exceptional one, but for several years back, and instead of their circumstances improving they have been for a number of years as a rule getting poorer and poorer; and it is beyond doubt that unless effective measures are taken without delay to remedy the state of matters, a large number of the crofters must necessarily be paupers. An attempt is being made to show the Commission that the condition of the people is better than it was forty years ago. With that I entirely disagree. The statement will not bear examination for a moment. There is certainly more tea and sugar consumed, but the scarcity of milk and other things accounts to a great extent for that. In the spring months, for example, there is more tea sold, chiefly because milk is then scarcer. Take the parish of Kilmuir as an example. I myself remember well the time when the crofters there were well off comparatively; they had more to eat and to drink, they had more money, they had more cattle and sheep to sell, more wool to make clothing; they were but little in debt, but now it is quite the reverse. In my younger days crofters from the east side of that parish had only to state in almost any shop in Portree that they came from that district, and goods would be given on credit with pleasure, it being well known they were in good circumstances, and that they were good payers. Now their credit, with a few exceptions, is entirely gone. The impoverished condition of the Isle of Skye is clearly attributable to the unequal division of the land, or, in other words, to the fact that by far the largest and best part of the land is occupied by the few, whilst the bulk of the people have only a small fraction of it, and that almost without exception the worst part. It is computed that four-fifth parts of the land in Skye is occupied by thirty individuals, whilst the remaining part of the population, say 17,000, have

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only a fifth part. It is driving the people off the best and largest parts of the land, and crowding them together on miserably small patches, that has very nearly ruined the island; and in my opinion, and in the opinion of those who appointed me as a delegate, the only effective remedy for relieving the distress which exists, and which is increasing year after year, is a more equitable division of the land. There is abundance of land in Skye for all the population—enough to give 150 acres (taking hills and mountains into account) to each family of five in the island, striking out this village and some other small villages whose living does not depend upon land. It is not the scarcity of good land, it is not the nature of the climate, it is not the natural poverty of the soil, it is not the failure of the herring fishing, it is not even the failure of the potato crop, that has brought an interesting, a peaceful, and a law-abiding people to the verge of pauperism. It is the large sheep farms—and that cannot be too strongly emphasised—that have done it. It stands to reason then that the chief remedy is the breaking up of the huge sheep farms and deer forests, and giving the land to the crofter population in suitable lots. There is one sheep farm in Skye almost equal in extent to the whole estate of Kilmuir, and many other very extensive farms on each of which there could be hundreds of families living comfortably. Again, no division of the land will be satisfactory without fixity of tenure; or, in other words, an absolute right for all time to come to the crofter occupants of the soil to the land which they occupy so long as they pay rent for it, the rent to be fixed not by the proprietor, but by valuators to be appointed by Government, and this would not be robbing the proprietors of their rights or of their rents, it would be only restoring to Highlanders the rights which anciently belonged to their forefathers. With fixity of tenure there ought to be also a provision to the effect that the improvements effected upon a croft should belong to the crofter himself, and that it would not be in the power of the proprietor to raise the rents of a croft on account of improvements made upon it by the occupier. Say that I got an acre of land at a fixed rent of 2s. an acre, and that in course of time I improved it to such an extent as to bring the value up to 20s., and that I was giving it up, I ought to have the right of selling these improvements not to the proprietor but to my successor, who would sit on this acre of ground at the original rent, he having paid me one slump sum, say eighteen years' purchase, for these improvemeuts. Reverting to the subject of fixity of tenure, I trace the preseut unsatisfactory state of matters to the want of it in the past. No proprietor of land, let him be ever so good-hearted, ought to have such absolute power over a multitude of crofter population as proprietors have had in the past. This power ought for ever to cease. Let a proprietor be ever so good, what security is there that his successor will not be the reverse? I may state that my opinions are not communistic, I have always been the reverse except upon the land question. I may state to the Commission that my opinions have always been conservative upon other questions except the laud question. In Her Majesty's dominions in India, as your Lordship well knows, the small tenants have fixity of tenure and rents at valuation, and why should not Her Majesty's subjects in the Highlands have the same? Another question that I notice the Commission asking is, how in the event of the crofters getting increased holdings would they stock them, aud the reply generally has been, we would expect Government to advance us money. I do not think Government would advance money on stock, it would not be real security, and Government, I suppose, would lend only on real security; but I think Government might easily advance money on permaneut improvements, which would as nearly as possble be leuding on landed security. Supposing then that a

crofter with fixity of tenure, by his own labour and that of his family effected permanent improvements on his land, Government could lend on these improvements, and the money so lent would help to stock his croft. Speaking on this subject the other day to a gentleman who was for a long time a crofter, he said, 'Oh give me so many acres of good land, and I 'would take as much crops out of it in one year as would make me 'independent.' In any case let the land be given back to the people at moderate rents with fixity of tenure, and there will be no fear of their not stocking it. I might here be allowed to remark, that the large sheep farms do not benefit the trade of the country the fiftieth part that the same quantity of land would do, providing it were occupied by a crofting population in good circumstances. I do not think emigration a good solution of the question. Two-thirds of the Skye people would have to emigrate before the other third would have enough of land according to the present division, and surely it is not desirable on many grounds to send such a large number of people away from the island when there is land enough and to spare. If there were a surplus population, emigration might then be thought of, at present it is simply out of the question. Possibly the best possible settlement of the question would be a scheme to enable the occupants of the soil to purchase their holdings, in the event of the proprietor being willing to sell; and to make any such scheme workable, transfer of land ought to be as simple and as cheap as bank or railway stock. I have been asked to state some grievances peculiar to the village. The want of grazing for cows and the want of ground for potatoes is felt very much by the village people, as it is only very few that have either. The land surrounding Portree is practically in the hands of two individuals, none of whom will give grazing to the village people, let them stand ever so much in need of it. The consequence is that the milk supply for the village is exceedingly scarce and very dear; and children and others suffer in their health through the scarcity of milk. Even our excellent procurator-fiscal has been refused grazing for his cow by Mr Stewart, the new tacksman of Scorrybreck, although he had it from Mr Stewart's predecessor. There is another matter which I was asked to state before the Commission, though it is scarcely in connection with the crofter question, viz., that in this village parties anxious to build houses can only get leases for ninety-nine years, which are considered too short. Formerly, I understand, the proprietor had no power to give longer leases, because the estate was entailed; but now, I understand, it is perfectly in his power to give perpetual feus. It appears, however, that he is not willing to do so, and I am asked to state to the Commission that it is felt to be a very great hardship that people who wish to build houses can only get ninety-nine years leases. It is calculated to reduce the value of house property to a great extent in Portree, and people don't want to build when they can only get short leases. There is one other remark I wish to make. It was stated here yesterday that it is impossible to get the same rents from crofters as from sheep farmers. I have simply to tell the Commissioners, on the other hand, that the large sheep farm of Raasay was let to Mr Mackenzie, the first and the only tenant who had it, for nineteen years, at the very same rent which the crofters paid for it, and when his lease was out he got it renewed at a very small advance upon the original rent, so that practically the crofters were paying Mr Rainy as well as the large sheep farmer did.

9399. Can you say, in reference to that last statement, that the crofters paid as regularly and were as little in arrears as the sheep farmers?—I am not able to state that. Possibly they were in arrears, because in my early recollection it was shortly after the great destitution of 1846, and very possibly they may have been in arrears then; but I have no doubt what-

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ever that if Mr Rainy had left the crofter population on the south part of Raasay, and taken some interest in improving their circumstances, there would *not* have been to-day a penny of arrears on their crofts, because that is the best part of the island.

9400. With reference to the local complaint of want of milk and of grazing ground, is there no common good,—no land belonging to the town?—Not an inch.

9401. Has no land ever been let to the inhabitants as a common grazing ground in former times?—I cannot speak to former times. I have only been here since 1856, and since then there has been no common ground except some lots in which some of the people got grazing for cows, and a very few got potato ground.

9402. Has any representation been made to Lord Macdonald on the subject?—I rather think not, and I may state that, in my opinion, it would have been better if Lord Macdonald or his factor had been approached first on the subject.

9403. Lord Macdonald, I believe, is coming to live in the immediate neighbourhood of the town, and perhaps a representation might be made to him on the subject of grazings. How does the town stand in reference to fuel? Have the people in the town the right of cutting fuel upon the neighbouring bog?—I understand they have.

9404. Have you exercised that right?—No, I never cut peats there.

9405. But the bog is open to all the people to cut peats?—I think so.

9406. Is any charge made for fuel?—There is no charge made.

9407. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Did the former tenant of Scorrybreck give facilities for cows grazing?—To a few, for instance, Mr M'Lennan had the grazing of two cows from Mr Macleod.

9408. I suppose most of the people in Portree who are well-to-do would keep cows if they had grazing?—Most willingly. They would think it a great privilege to have the grazing of a cow.

9409. What would they be willing to give for a cow's grazing?—£2 or £3, I believe, for good grazing.

9410. That is merely for summering?—Summering. They would have to winter the cows, of course.

9411. Did the former tenant of Scorrybreck give facilities for potato ground?—No, I don't think Mr Macleod did.

9412. Is there any authority of any kind in Portree? Has it been declared a public place?—No, it is just a parish, with the usual authority in a parish.

9413. Are you a native of Skye?—I am a native of Raasay.

9414. *Mr Cameron.*—You stated that in your opinion the difficulty as to the crofters' stocking new land, might be got over by Government advancing money on improvements made by the crofters?—Yes, to a certain extent. It would not meet all the case, but it would meet it to a certain extent.

9415. If the money were given by Government to assist the tenant in improving his land, how would it also be available for stocking the ground as well?—My meaning is this. Suppose I had a croft, and four or five grown-up sons, who worked upon it for two or three years and improved it, that is the value of my own and my family's labour, and I would get my improvements certified, and Government could easily lend money upon them then, and I could have the money to pay for the cattle and sheep, which I had got perhaps on credit, when I got my croft.

9416. But if the Government were to advance the money to repay for improving the land, it would be utilised in repaying you and your family for your labour in improving the land. Therefore, would not the

money be already disposed of, and how could it be available for the double purpose of stocking the land?—It would be so much wages earned by the family. Suppose I worked a whole winter on my croft, and at the end of the winter or spring I got this money from Government for improvements, it was for my own labour when I got it,—it was in my own possession,—and it was in my power to do anything I liked with it.

9417. But still labour is money, and if you expend the labour in improving your croft, you cannot also labour for other people, and you lose the wages you might obtain in other ways?—But I am labouring for myself.

9418. Still it is worth money, and if you worked for other people you would get the return in the shape of money?—Yes, but perhaps working for other people would not be so remunerative as working for my own croft.

9419. That may be so, but I am talking of an advance given by Government. If the Government made advances to you for improvements, they would be considered as remuneration to you for your labour, and for improving your croft. That would be an end of that transaction. But how would that same money which was paid to you for labour be also available for stocking the land?—It would be available if I had it in my hand at the time,—if I had any other way of living when I was working.

9420. You would require to keep yourself and your family going?—I might have some other means of keeping myself and my family without encroaching upon the money.

9421. But the money would be the value of your labour, would it not?—That would not make it less money. It would be at my disposal to purchase stock with.

9422. How could it be available as payment for your labour in improving and also available for stocking the land?—It is quite clear to me. Suppose I had so much meal and other food during the whole year, that I did not require to touch this money at all, and if I was enabled at the end of that period to have this money clear, without any demand upon it, it would be at my disposal for the purchase of cattle and sheep.

9423. Still, it would be for the support of your family, during the time you are labouring?—But I am supposing a case in which the family would not require that support during the time they were labouring.

9424. How would they find the support?—There are several ways of finding support.

9425. They could not do two things at once. They could not improve their crofts and earn money at the same time?—Yes, there is a lot of spare time. It would encourage people to work.

9426. Can you make any other suggestion, supposing this plan of yours was not feasible, whereby the crofters could stock their farms?—If they were not able to stock them at once, they might stock them gradually.

9427. But how would they pay their rent in the meantime?—Though the crofts were not fully stocked, they might be able to pay the rent. They might stock them by degrees.

9428. Do you suppose the Government valuators you spoke of would fix the rent on the assumption that the croft was fully stocked, or on the assumption that it would take a considerable period to stock it?—I suppose they would value the land according to what it was worth, supposing it was stocked.

9429. And in that case the tenant would be at a loss during the period he was working in order to get the full stock on the ground?—People have very often to fight against these things. Rome was not built in a day.

9430. *Professor Mackinnon.*—If I understood you aright, your plan would virtually be to feu the crofts. You spoke of fixity of tenure, to

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continue always?—I did not mean that the proprietor should have at no time a right to revalue the crofts.

9431. I think you said the crofter should never be dispossessed so long as he paid the rent, though the rent should be made a little higher. That is virtually feuing?—Granted.

9432. Would you feu the land out in equal shares?—No, I would have crofts of different sizes, according to the circumstances of those taking them. I do not think it would be a good plan to make every croft the same size.

9433. You would like them to be of various sizes?—Surely.

9434. Of course the nature of the country itself would require that,—looking to the matter of fences?—Yes.

9435. Would you not keep a considerable proportion for pretty large farms?—I have no objection to a portion being kept for large farms.

9436. Only you think there is too much at present?—I do think so.

9437. When you stated that you did not expect Government to advance money upon stock, and at the same time that the croft would require to be stocked from the very first year, was it your idea that the people should be prepared to undergo even greater hardships than at present in order to obtain an ultimate benefit?—Yes.

9438. Apart from that interminable lease which has been spoken of, upon what length of lease do you think the people could be encouraged to improve their crofts?—I would have no leases at all.

9439. Your own idea would be a continuous permanent lease?—I would have absolute security to the occupier of the soil.

9440. Would that give a right to the crofter to subdivide his croft?—No, I would not allow that.

9441. And who is to succeed in the croft?—There would be no fear of getting successors. I believe there is an earth hunger in Skye just now, the same as in Ireland.

9442. I want your own view, because my fear is that there would he too many successors?—Do you mean in the same family?

9443. Would the crofter be entitled to leave the croft to one son to the exclusion of the rest, or to distribute it amongst all?—It would be far better he should not have power to distribute it among them, especially a small croft.

9444. What would become of the others?—The world is wide; they can work for themselves.

9445. But is that not the case at present, and still they will not go?—I do not approve of that.

9446. What reasonable guarantee would you have that they would go then, when they will not go now?—Stern necessity would make them go then, if they could not get a part of the croft.

9447. You would make that statute law?—I would make it statute law so far as small crofts are concerned. Of course, with a person renting a farm at £100 or £200, I would not make it the law in that case.

9448. Would the heir be obliged to buy out the rest?—I would leave that to family arrangement.

9449. I am afraid, as a practical measure, you would have to consider it?—Well, I would leave it to wiser heads than my own.

9450. I understand you would not allow subdivision upon any consideration whatever?—I would allow no subdivision except in very very rare cases,—such as the case of a very old man who had only one son.

9451. That would be no subdivision.—In that case I would allow the son to live upon the croft till he was able to take it up in the course of nature.

9452. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—If the owner of the croft could not find

any one to purchase his tenant right, would you allow him to let his croft?—I have not thought upon that question.

9453. *Professor Mackinnon.*—You would make it part of your scheme under statute that the croft should not be subdivided?—Yes.

9454. And you would thus compel those, except the one who was to sit upon it, to seek their fortunes elsewhere?—Perhaps they would get another croft.

9455. Of course you would expect that a good number of them would be supplied by means of crofts that had run out, but still in a large population like this there would always be a large surplus who would be compelled to leave?—That is possible.

9456. Is it not natural?—As a rule, population in the Highlands has not been increasing of late.

9457. Is it not the case that there is a great increase of the population except when a continuous overflow goes elsewhere?—Yes, as a rule.

9458. *The Chairman.*—We have heard a good deal about the reluctance of the people to emigrate. Do you think, if there was an honest attempt on the part of the proprietors and the Government to do justice to the people in the island, and place them in a better position, others among the population would be more inclined to emigrate?—I would think so, most certainly.

9459. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—About the succession to the croft, would you give the crofter power to select the person to whom it was to be left?—Yes.

9460. In preference to its falling to his heir-at-law?—Yes.

9461. You would give him the power of nominating his successor?—Yes.

9462. That would do away with all the trouble about the succession?—I should think so.

DONALD MACDONALD, Farmer, Tormore (46)—re-examined.

9463. *The Chairman.*—You have a statement which you desire to make to the Commission?—Yes. I intended to enter into a more lengthy statement as to the management of property generally, statistics, &c., than I think it now necessary, owing to the very valuable and exhaustive statement made by my friend Mr Macdonald yesterday, and I will merely say that generally I agree with and can corroborate his statements. I have already made a statement before the Commissioners at Isle Ornsay in respect of matters in Sleat, and before entering into another statement I want to say that I find, on minute inquiry, that I may have been mistaken when denying that a notice had been put up to the inn doors as to a rent to be charged against shops. If these notices were put up, it was done purely through my clerk mistaking my instructions, as to which I will further explain if necessary. I must add, that there was never any intention to charge for such shops at Glendale where notices were put up, and it was not done, nor did the notice prevent shops being opened; and during my holding office several additional small shops were opened in Sleat, Strath, and elsewhere, where if the notice was put up, it was through a stupid mistake. I shall now touch upon the evidence given by the other delegates, who I may say made erroneous statements, to use a mild term; and I hope I am not out of order in doing so.

9464. Not at all.—Well, Donald M'Innes, delegate, Duisdale, in Sleat, said his township had been deprived of two pieces of hill land which was

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added to a tack, and no deduction given. This is a downright falsehood. This man had never an inch of land of his own during my recollection, but when the lease of the farm of Knock fell out about Whitsunday 1876, I cut off a considerable portion and put it under crofters. Four new crofters got shares, and of these Donald M'Innes is one. He had not a farthing to take the croft, but I have myself given him two cows worth £13 to £14 each. His rent is about £4, 15s., his summing two cows and a horse, and he also keeps sheep. Besides feeding his two cows and their followers on the produce of his lot, he sells yearly a considerable quantity of corn, or takes in stock to consume it.

9465. If in the course of your statement you meet with any strong expression, such as the word 'falsehood,' I would beg you to modify it, or insert another expression as you go along.—I will try to do so, but facts are stubborn things. I come next to Donald Beaton, Carradale, who said he had paid £16 for arrears due by a former tenant. I have looked up the estate ledger, and find there was no arrear against the former tenant further than she left value for. This was made over to Beaton; it was a very small matter altogether, and he did not actually pay one penny of arrears. I may add, that no tenant was evicted in Sleat during my tenure of office nor since, but I put several tenants in possession that never had lands before, and helped them myself personally in taking lands. I shall now proceed to the parish of Strath. I heard very little of the evidence taken here, but I understand the crofters of Breakish stated that they bad been deprived of hill land. This is false; I hope that is not too strong.

9466. I would prefer 'erroneous.'—Very well. The two townships got at Whitsunday 1878 additional ground—Upper Breakish to the value of £40, which is computed to maintain 600 sheep; Lower Breakish to the value of £20—and I could have got more rent for both pieces had I chosen to ask it. Hector Macpherson, Harrapool, said there was a woman present at the meeting who had lost her lands within the last ten years. This is *perfectly untrue; no tenant of Lord Macdonald's in this parish was deprived* of lands during that period, except one man, who, after repeated warnings, lost his land for persisting to keep a shebeen, much to the annoyance of his neighbours and fellow crofters. This man afterwards, I may mention, got lands, and I am afraid he still keeps a shebeen, and finds it profitable. I gave grazing rights to several crofters at Strolomus who had previously been cottars. I also gave other land to cottars at Broadford and Sconser. The Kylerhea tenants said they could make more money were they allowed to go away to seek work, and not be tied down to work at the ferry. I never heard of there being any obligation on them to work at the ferry, and I am perfectly certain there is none, and Lord Macdonald has never imposed such conditions on any of his tenantry. I understand the delegates from Tote, or the Unakill district, have complained of a rise of rent; this is a mistake. Till within the last few years they held their lands as subtenants or cottars, and paid rent to the tacksman, at the expiry of whose lease there was an adjustment of their rents, but nothing more than the estimated value of what they paid formerly was laid on them. A valuable piece of hill grazing was given to them, for which the old rent only was charged, though a considerable advance could have been got from one tenant, and I was offered that considerable advance. The tenants at the time of this change expressed themselves as highly pleased, and stated they much preferred the new to the former arrangement, and particularly as to holding their lands direct from the proprietor. There are now no cottars paying rent to tacksmen on the Macdonald estate, with two exceptions, to my knowledge. It appears from the evidence given in the newspapers that Neil Shaw, Eyre, a delegate from the parish of Snizort,

formerly from Glendale, said that he had been turned out of Glendale, and had been harshly treated by the factor, or wanted it to be inferred he had been, and that he got no value for his houses, &c. Mr Shaw, who was here yesterday, came voluntarily forward to me and said that he had never made such a statement—that he could not do so. Such being the case, it is unnecessary for me to reply to the alleged charge. I hope for Mr Shaw's sake the reporters have made the mistake. I shall now come to the very famous district of Glendale. It has been alleged by several of the Glendale tenants that they have been ill-used and badly treated by their proprietor and myself, when the estate was under my management. I am bound to say, and can prove, that there was not one single case of anything approaching harsh treatment; on the contrary, the tenants were always treated with the greatest consideration and kindness. It is quite true that the small farm of Lowergill was cleared, and the larger farm of Ramasaig partially and nearly completely so, but very good and substantial reasons can be given for doing this, and I will be glad to give a full explanation of facts in cross-examination. There was not one tenant removed to make room for any of these tenants, and there was not a tenant deprived of land or any other privileges on account of these removals, except in the case of John Mackay, Hamaraverran, who had about £10 worth of land, who was deprived of £3 worth of an uncultivated portion of his ground. This tenant at the time had no stock, and has now far more land than he can manage. There was no eviction on the property during my term of office, but one man was removed as being unmanageable; he was changed from one place to another as being a bad neighbour, and ultimately had to go; and on being told plainly that he must go, and the cause of it, he left without trouble. I do not intend to go into the details of all alleged grievances; many of them are too absurd and most of them perfectly unfounded. Before proceeding further, I will read a letter which I wrote giving a statement of facts, and which was published in March 1882:—

'*Tormore, Skye, 25th March* 1882.—Sir, As I doubt if your reporter, in 'the hubbub and excitement that prevailed, and especially as the conversa-'tion had necessarily to be carried on in Gaelic, could catch the meaning 'of all I said at my meeting with the Glendale tenants on Thursday last. 'I beg the favour of space in your valuable paper to enable me to give the 'substance of what I said in reply to the petitions recently forwarded to 'the trustees of the late Sir John Macleod by the tenants of the various 'townships on the property. The petitioners complain of increased rents, 'overcrowding, being deprived of land, change of marches, evictions, my 'adding to my own possessions on the estate, and various other grievances. 'I have acted as factor over the estate for about twenty years, and during 'that time there has been no increase of rent; and, looking to the rental of '1852, about which time Sir John Macleod bought Glendale and added it 'to his property of Skiniden and Colbost, which he inherited, I find there 'is little difference. The number of tenants on the same lands at Glendale, 'in 1863, was 108—now there are 113; but this small increase is chiefly 'owing to a farm, then in the hands of one tenant, who gave up possession 'of his own accord, being let to four crofters. On Skiniden and Colbost 'there were, in 1863, thirty-nine tenants; now there are forty-two—the 'increase being from a division of land made at the request of the tenants. 'No hill land has been taken from the tenants, and there is no intention and 'no wish to deprive them of any ground, or any privilege they have 'hitherto enjoyed. There has been only one tenant actually removed from 'the property during my term of office, and no tenant has been removed 'to make room for the tenants of Ramasaig or Lowergill. I have no lands 'on the property, and never farmed an acre of it in my own name or for

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'my own benefit. I, however, managed a sheep farm which came into the 'hands of the proprietor, and which from failing to get a suitable tenant, 'remained in his hands, and is now in the hands of the trustees. To this 'farm has been added the farm of Ramasaig and a portion of Lowergill, 'which were at one time under small tenants. Some of the petitioners 'make a handle of this, and wish it to be inferred that the tenants were 'deprived of their lands. There is not the slightest truth in this. Con 'siderably more than half the tenants (there were about thirty of them) 'left their places of their own free will, some of them leaving the country 'to better themselves, but the most of them at their own earnest request, 'getting better and more suitable possessions on the estate and elsewhere 'in the island when suitable vacancies occurred. With the exception of, 'I think, five or six, none of them had any wish to remain at Ramasaig, 'and I have repeatedly, and from year to year as the farms became more 'thinly populated, and having lots vacant for which no tenants could be 'found, offered those remaining the whole farm, if they wished to keep it, 'and if they could stock it and pay the rent. They would not do this, 'and consequently the few remaining got other holdings, when suitable 'openings occurred. None have been pressed to leave, and even still there 'are two tenants who crop there as formerly, and keep on their cattle and 'their horses, having the liberty to graze them with the stock of the pro- 'prietor, and there is every intention to continue these privileges till 'suitable places are found for them. The farm of Waterstein, now held 'by Dr Martin, has never been under small tenants. The present rent of 'it is £140. The rent of the tenants of the three townships demanding 'it to be given to them is £176, 0s. 8d.; the arrears at this date, £140, '17s. 9d. The tenants of these townships paid at the rent collection at 'the last Martinmas portions of their rent as formerly; but, as will be seen 'by their recent letter to me, they now distinctly refuse to pay any further 'rent till their demands are complied with. The farms now in the hands 'of the trustees, and which they have been hitherto unable to let, were, 'along with Waterstein, which Dr Martin gives up at Whitsunday first, 'inspected and reported on with a view to letting them together, and the 'trustees having invited an offer from me, it has been arranged that I 'become tenant at Whitsunday first; but I intimated on Thursday to the 'crofters that if they could satisfy the trustees that they could manage to 'stock and pay rent for Waterstein, or any part of the farm, that my agree- 'ment would not stand in the way of such an arrangement being carried 'out. I am extremely sorry at the state of matters at Glendale, and par- 'ticularly for the very unseemly behaviour of the people at our last meet- 'ing. During my connection with them, our intercourse has up to the 'present been of the most friendly nature, and I can only attribute their 'present excitement to the influence of a few evil-disposed parties who, for 'reasons best known to themselves, instigate the people to take up a "No '"rent" attitude. For the good of the people of Glendale, as well as for 'the general peace of the country, I trust that, after calm reflection, better 'counsels may yet prevail. There is no doubt that the tenants generally, 'all over the west coast, are better off than they were twenty years ago, and 'during that period, till within the last two years, their improvement has 'been progressive and decided. In respect to Glendale, any disinterested 'person visiting it now, and comparing it with what it was twelve or fifteen 'years ago, could not but be struck with the marked improvement in the 'houses (which have, for the most part, been renovated), and with the 'general improvement outwardly apparent. At the same time, all must 'admit that the last two years have been very disastrous, the Irish and 'east coast fishings, as well as the harvests at home, having proved very

'unremunerative; and, under these circumstances, the tenants deserve the 'sympathy of all classes. The tenants of a great part of Glendale were 'placed in their present holdings with a view to their prosecuting the fish- 'ing, for which Glendale is so famous, and they should not run away with 'the idea that their crofts were meant wholly to support them, for they 'were given to them merely for homes, and as a help towards their main- 'tenance. I have written this letter in as plain, full, and simple terms as 'possible, so that my good friends at Glendale may not misinterpret or mis- 'construe my meaning. Should it bring out any future correspondence, I 'will be glad to answer any questions, but will only notice such letters as bear 'the writer's full name and address.—I am, Sir, your obedient servant, D. 'MACDONALD.' I may say that no answer to that letter appeared in any of the papers. As the people of Glendale seem to wish to make out that they have been pressed upon by the proprietor, I may mention that in 1874 arrears to the amount of £500 were wiped off. Sir John Macleod, after I explained matters to him, and that I thought there was no use carrying on some old arrears and some arrears against poor persons, was kind enough to instruct me to strike off such arrears as I thought would really be beneficial to the people and as were really necessary to be struck off. Well, a sum of £500, less 3s. or 4s., was struck off that year. I come now to the statements recently made by the Glendale delegates. I have touched as little as possible upon these matters, as I was afraid it would be too lengthy. Alexander Ross, delegate from Faasach, made a long statement about various grievances, and in particular as to a dog of his that was shot. That case came before the sheriff, and was decided after considerable evidence being led, and I am sorry to say it appeared that the gamekeeper who shot the dog went far beyond his instructions, and acted most injudiciously. The other statements made by this man are generally unfounded, and to the most careless observer must appear absurdly exaggerated. There is one exaggeration so very absurd that it must, I think, have struck everybody, viz., that Ross stated that his well had dried up from from the dog falling into it, or something like that,—that it was some dispensation, or I don't know what you call it, but I hope he did not put it down to the factor.

9467. He stated the fact that the well had dried up subsequent to the destruction of the dog at the well, but I don't think he distinctly stated the supposed cause?—Well, I go on to Peter M'Kinnon, delegate. His evidence must be taken for what it is worth, and it is quite worthless. This man has shown towards me the most marked animosity for some years, and if the Commissioners think proper I shall be glad to state the cause of it. M'Kinnon found fault with me as factor and justice of the peace, and as general well-wisher of the people, for deciding some little squabbles between them and him. There are two cases which I unfortunately decided against him. He had engaged a boat's crew to fish lobsters for him, and two young men of the crew were drowned. M'Kinnon came to me with the statement, that he had a claim against the lads.

9468. I think, on the whole, perhaps it is better that the details of these cases should not be stated, as that might involve some painful assertions, and it might be necessary for us to give the other party the opportunity of stating his side of the case. It is sufficient that you should state that you had to decide two cases against M'Kinnon, which may be supposed to explain any animus on his part if such exists?—Very well, I shall do so; but perhaps you will allow me to make a remark about this case, because it is very important for me, and I think for the country generally. Your Lordship has no doubt seen a notice which I put up as to landing on the shores of the estate. Well, in the newspapers it was alleged or insinuated that this boat's crew lost their lives through not having liberty to land upon

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the coast. Now, this boat's crew was lost several years before the notice referred to was issued, and there had been no previous notice of the nature I speak of.

9469. That notice referred to landing on the shores of Waterstein?—Yes.

9470. In reference to that, one of the parties examined admitted that he did not think anybody would have been interfered with for merely landing upon those shores on account of bad weather?—I am very glad to hear it. There never was any intention of anything of the kind. Perhaps the notice was not judiciously worded; perhaps I did it in a hurry, or in a fit of temper, or some other way; but it was made an unfortunate handle against me. I come now to John M'Lean, Hamaravirran. He got possession of his present lot, having urgently requested to be removed from Ramasaig to the lot of an old woman who was quite unable to keep it, and who now gets a cow's keep and potato land *ad libitum* on the proprietor's farm, for which she pays nothing. John Campbell, delegate from Hamaraverran, has made several statements as to grievances which, with the exception of that referring to his quarrel with me for his harbouring Land Leaguers, are incorrect and unfounded. This man I always considered a very respectable hard-working man. He was very poor when I first went to Glendale. I befriended him in every possible way, and doubled his lot. I would not be afraid now to give him four times as much land, so far as means go. The influence of evil doctrine on the general body of the crofters can easily be imagined when this man, whom I knew to be previously friendly and respectful, was carried away to be most insolent and offensive. Allan Macaskill, Faasach, late tenant at Ramasaig, has also misstated his case; I draw it very mild. As to John Macpherson's statements, I can only say that I am much astonished that a man of his seeming intelligence should be carried away in the stream of rebellion, and it has all arisen from the evil influence of agitators. The Skiniden tenants also made mis-statements. I will gladly answer questions as to these. I don't think there is any occasion for my troubling the honourable Commissioners further on this part of the evidence, but will gladly answer any questions in respect of anything or all that has been said at Glendale, and particularly as to Waterstein. I am extremely sorry to find that the people denied the existence of a Land League, and a knowledge of the notices which were being put up. I can speak personally as to both, having seen some of the notices, and I believe they are still to be found. As to their being bound by a league, there is plenty evidence to prove that they said and believed they were under such a bond, for they repeatedly said to me that they were so, and sworn to stand by each other against all law and against all force till their demands were complied with. Their actions at that time and subsequently are sufficient, though, if required, plenty more would be forthcoming. I may say in passing, that a very marked and great improvement has taken place and is going on in the condition of the crofters' houses at Glendale. I think this must be apparent to any unbiassed visitor to the place, and more than one credible and observant proprietor has remarked to me on the comparative increase in this respect; but I suppose this too will be put down by some as factorial oppression and poverty. As to the general condition of the people, the people on Lord Macdonald's property are most undoubtedly far better off than they were thirty or forty years ago. I am certain their improvement during that period has been decided and progressive. Some years, of course, they are better off than others, owing to a prosperous fishing, better seasons, better prices, and from other causes. It is true that they have had now three successive bad seasons, and on many of them this must have a serious effect. I may

state causes to show how they must be far better off now than formerly. In my own recollection, wages in general have doubled, in many cases quadrupled; prices for Highland cattle the same—sheep the same. I will be glad to give present and past prices. The expenses of the people have grown along with their improved circumstances, and perhaps in some cases have outstepped the increased income. I don't think it is any exaggeration to say that generally the families expend as much now in the simple article of tea and sugar as their forefathers did in oatmeal. Many intelligent men among them have often stated so to me. They have also other luxuries never dreamt of twenty or thirty years ago. How do they dress now in comparison to then? Who can find fault with them? I certainly don't, and the better they are to do the better I should be pleased. I remember when a man thought he paid a lot out for what they call shop produce, if he paid £6, or the best of them up to £10, now double these amounts, and even treble them, and it is quite common; and they can buy their supplies far cheaper now than formerly. I never hear or see now of people going to gather the common shell-fish of the coast to tide over the scarce season. In my first recollection this was too common, and done to a very great extent all over the country; and as a proof of what I say, let any one show me now from the point of Sleat to Portree a single heap of shells near a tenant's house that would fill a cart-load, but let them try the sites of former dwellings, and not one of those but will prove my statement. I could state a great deal more on this head if necessary. The land by overcropping has no doubt deteriorated, but however well farmed the land will not give good crops of grain. This is much owing to climate. I may be wrong, but looking back to my younger days, and from what I hear others say, I think the climate is certainly not improving, but decidedly getting worse; and I myself gave up cropping a large extent of good arable land in the very best condition at Ostaig, owing to its not paying. That farm was in the very highest state of cultivation. It was cultivated on the five-course shift, and I limed it and manured it in every way, and made it so far as I could a model farm. I had to give it up, because I was losing money by it. It is nonsense for the crofters to maintain that their poverty is owing to such causes, and they are quite aware that their grain crop is much more valuable as food for their cattle than for meal making; and I am quite certain, were they able to grow more corn and better grain, it would still all go in feeding cattle. I should like to ask the bankers in Portree to whom the greatest portion of the deposits in their respective banks belong. I am credibly informed these amount close to, if not over, £200,000. I can only state that I have no deposits myself, and I think I may fairly say that most if not all of my brother tenant farmers are not in a very much better position; and I am afraid the proprietors are not the best supporters of the banks either in that respect. I come now to what may be too much of a personal thing, but I have been so much abused lately that I should like to make a few remarks about myself, and to bring out some things I should like the Commissioners to know. A deal has been said as to my dealings in meal. Well, I did deal in meal, but not to my profit. I was driven into it, and I could easily prove this and satisfactorily. I have, I believe, now outstanding for meal £2000. A very great part of this I don't expect to recover; but had I done what many others have done, and taken joint bills for these amounts, and I could have easily got the people to give them, I would have been safe, but many a poor man would be ruined. I never to my recollection in my life took a bill from a tenant for meal, and I disapprove much of the system which, though almost unknown in my end of the country, is common in many places. I never charged in any one case interest on my account, and with

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all my dealings with the people. I am not aware of ever having a man in court for debt, nor have I allowed any harsh measures to be used. It has been said that meal mills were put down by me. Well, the mills of Strath and Sleat were in disuse long prior to my entry into office. Where there were mills they remain still, and in better order than when I found them. I may remark, that what millers charge for grinding is one-twentieth of the corn ground. It has been said that I am rich at the expense of the crofters. Well, I have looked particularly into the state of my affairs, and I find I was a poorer man the year I resigned Lord Macdonald's factorship than I was the year I took it. I have not as much land now on Lord Macdonald's property as I had the year I entered on the factorship. There are eight years to run of my lease of Tormore and Ostaig, and if Lord Macdonald would kindly relieve me of this, I would willingly give it over, and it would form a good field for tenants deserving of more land and able to take it. I hope I will be pardoned for saying what I have said about myself. I hope it will not appear egotistical, because I have been driven into doing this by the way I have of late been maligned by anonymous writers of articles in Radical newspapers and other like publications. I am sorry I do not stand alone in that respect, but I have come in for a greater share than my fair due. My principal reason for bringing this matter forward is to try and show who have been the chief movers in abusing me and stirring up the whole country to rebellion. I know that this proceeds very much from outside agitators, and I care not what they say or write; but I am distressed and grieved that a few of my own good countrymen have been instigated to speak against me when I certainly did not deserve it at their hands. I have done my very utmost to keep down the price of meal and to keep up the price of cattle. Naturally the dealers in these must owe me a grudge, and I daresay they do. I care not for that. I have done my duty; and I believe, were it not for my keeping a large supply of meal, and opening an opposition store, that there would have been real cases of starvation. I know there would have been. I could prove this were it required. There is one letter that is rather original. I could show fifty, but this is original, and comes from rather a curious source. It comes from the great Skye poetess, who I am sorry to hear has been going about with rather curious company. May I ask Sheriff Nicolson, who is up in Skye matters, to read it? He need not read it publicly, but I shall be gratified if he looks at it. Well now, I am done. Who are the chief instigators of this and the rebellion in Skye and the west? I can lay my finger on them at once, and will name them if the Royal Commission give the same guarantee of protection as the crofters have asked for and got from the poor unfortunate factors.

9471. If you are seriously asking us for a guarantee of that description, you must perfectly understand that we cannot give you any guarantee.—Well, if your Lordship will allow me to state the names, I will take the risk of my life. I am not a coward, and let them fire away at me.

9472. You will have to do it upon your own responsibility. You must judge whether it is expedient to go on or not. We have avoided as much as possible eliciting names; but your name, of course, has been thrust upon us, and we could not avoid hearing it?—I am much obliged to your Lordship for letting me know that my name has been used, but I was quite prepared for it. I have had so many kicks of late that it is a wonder I was not kicked into kingdom come. If it is any satisfaction to the Commissioners and to the people assembled here that I should state my opinion as to the agitators who are the cause of this rebellion, I shall be glad to do so.

9473. I will not object to it?—Well, my Lord, I have not the slightest hesitation in saying that the literature that was distributed among the people of this country was the first mover in this unfortunate rebellion; and, without naming many, I will name the principal paper that came here, and that was the famous but fortunately now defunct *Highlander*. The editor of the *Highlander*, I believe, is still alive and going about. I saw in one of the papers that he was to be down here educating the people in rebellion. I have not seen him, but I am not sorry he is not here. Well, I will pass him over,—he is not worth powder; and I will come to No. 2,—Mr M'Hugh, the secretary of the Irish Land Reform Association in Glasgow. Then comes No. 3,—the last but not the least,—and certainly if the others have to answer for a lot of sins, he has to answer for a great many more. He has got a broad back and a very thick hide.—His name is Dean of Guild Mackenzie.

9474. I must beg of you, Mr Macdonald, in naming a gentleman, to speak of him with ordinary respect?—I beg your Lordship's pardon. I hope I have not committed contempt of court.

9475. No, but we appeal to your own feeling of propriety to say nothing that is provocative or offensive?—Well, I should be sorry to come down to Mr Mackenzie's station and give him kicks in the way he has kicked me, but it is rather hard not to give a kick occasionally.

9476. Well, you can give him the kick in another place.—I may just say (it is more for amusement than anything else) that I believe this wonderful Dean of Guild, in a publication of which he is the editor in Inverness, has given me a great deal of credit for being the author of this Royal Commission. Well, I do not know I have been any cause of it, but if I have I am not at all ashamed of it. I remember travelling,—if I may mention the circumstance,—with this wonderful Dean of Guild, and he rather drew me on the subject. He thought that I should be opposed to a Commission. I certainly told him I was not, and that I should be very glad of a Royal Commission indeed; that I thought it would be a very good thing, that it was bound to do good or harm, and that I hoped it would do good, and that it would go on. 'Oh,' he said at once, 'if you are 'of that frame of mind, I will tell you between ourselves that there is to 'be a Commission.' This is a very long time ago; some two years ago. Well, I suppose he must have been well informed. He was coached up in his subject, and I led the wily dean into making some remarks. I said to him—'Now, Mr Mackenzie, if this Commission is to go on, you will 'decidedly be one of the Commissioners; they could not get on without 'you.' 'Oh,' he said, 'that too is about settled.' Well, I have stated who the principal agitators are, in my belief; but I am sorry to say that I believe there are in our own country local agitators. I am very sorry for that, and I am very sorry indeed to bring the matter forward, and perhaps I should not bring it forward, and perhaps I am doing it injudiciously. I shall be very glad however, to answer any questions that may be put to me.

9477. I did not exactly seize what you said about the farm of Waterstein, in reference to your own supposed occupancy, and I will invite you to repeat your statement in another form. Will you have the goodness to state what are the farms at the present moment in your occupancy in the island of Skye?—I have the farm of Ostaig. Properly speaking, that embraces the whole; but these are several farms put together, and for reasons best known to themselves, newspapers have made out that I have five or six. I have simply nothing in Skye except Tormore and Ostaig.

9478. Are they adjacent?—They are.

9479. What are the area and rental of these farms?—The rental is about

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£500 just now, taking off a piece that I was allowed to sublet to a man, and the area that I farm is close on 5000 acres.

9480. Had you at any previous period, and especially during the period of your being factor for Lord Macdonald, any other farms in your occupancy?—I had the island of Pabbay, in Strath, for one or two years.

9481. What was the largest area and the largest rent for which you were responsible at one time?—£600 or £650 was the largest rent I ever paid.

9482. And what area?—Not above 6000 acres.

9483. Was any portion of these farms inherited by you from your father?—My father and his family had Tormore for a long time.

9484. When the farm of Waterstein became vacant, was it ever your desire or intention to become the tenant of that farm?—It was. I read a letter, in which I stated that I had been invited to come forward and give an offer for that farm, for the whole land they possessed. I did come forward, and was accepted as tenant, but I never became the tenant. I withdrew from it when the people got up in this rebellious state.

9485. You never became tenant of it?—I never became tenant of it.

9486. Was any stock of yours, belonging to you personally, put upon it?—There was; six hundred or seven hundred or eight hundred sheep of mine came from my farm in Nairnshire, with a view to stock it, if the people would not interfere. I was very much afraid they would interfere, but the trustees held me to my bargain, under the understanding that if they could not implement their share of the bargain, they would take the stock which I took there at a valuation.

9487. You say, on the one hand, that you never were tenant of this farm; on the other hand, you did put your own stock on it, and did so in consequence of a bargain. Do you mean to say that the bargain in fact was never a complete one on both sides?—Never a complete one. The term day is the 26th, and so far as I remember the sheep came there on the very term day. The people would not allow the sheep on—at least prevented them going on part of the ground—and therefore the trustees could not implement their bargain with me, and I simply walked out of it, and my stock was taken by the trustees at a valuation, and put on the ground at their risk and as their property.

9488. And it is now their property?—It is now their property. I have not the slightest interest in the property or in the stock.

9489. You had various farms, or what had been farms, to the extent of £650. Were they all from Lord Macdonald?—All from Lord Macdonald, in the Island of Skye.

9490. Was there at any time during your occupancy of these farms any cases of eviction of crofters from the area of these farms?—At Glendale not one single case of eviction. There were many cases in which tenants removed voluntarily to other portions of the estate. There were two men on the small farm of Lowergil who would have preferred, I believe, to stop, but the proprietor did not see fit that they should remain there, because four of the other tenants had removed, or were removing, of their own free will. The man Shaw was one of the two that wanted to remain.

9491. Then there were a certain number of cases of persons removed from your farms?—They were not my farms at all; I never had a farm there.

9492. But the question I asked was this, you were tenant of certain farms under Lord Macdonald. Now were there at any time evictions or removals of persons from the area of the farms held by you?—The case of the Carradale tenants came up. There were four tenants there, and they were changed from small holdings into larger holdings.

9493. There were therefore certain removals?—There were. That was the only case.

9494. Were these removals with the consent of the tenants, or were the tenants acting under a certain amount of constraint?—Certainly not; every one of them, whatever they may say to-day, was anxious to be removed from that place, because it was four miles away from a public road. There was no school, there was no road, there was no fence of any kind. If they went to buy a boll of meal, they had to carry it on their back four miles. It is natural to suppose that they would not like to live in a place of that kind.

9495. I only wish to arrive at certain simple facts. In the cases of removal from land occupied by you as tenant, were these removals to your benefit and advantage; were they advantageous to the value of the farms held by you?—Not the very least, and there was one tenant of a farm rented at £15 who came to me, and said, 'Though I am giving up this 'place, I may come back; my son is in Edinburgh in a good position, and 'we may wish to take it.' I said, 'You will get back your lot at any 'time; and if the people are turned out of it you will get the whole of it.' This was said a long time ago, and I am quite ready she should come forward now and take it. I was driveu on to take it. It was because I could not get another tenant for it that I took it myself, and as matter of fact, in its immediate neighbourhood, I sublet to a man a farm six times the extent of this little bit at Carradale. It does not stand to reason that I should turn these tenants out to make room for myself, when I was very glad to get quit of another piece of fully more proportional value.

9496. Was there any case in which the whole grazing of a township, or any portion of the whole grazing, was taken from the township and added to farms in your possession?—Not in my occupancy; not one inch.

9497. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—I understaud that Shaw told you that something in his examination the other day had not been properly reported?—As regards the report I saw in the papers, and which several others saw, I tried to get hold of a paper to-day, but there are plenty of witnesses here who say that Shaw said that he had left Lowergil—that he was pressed out of Lowergil, that he knew what factors were, and rather abused factors, but one specific thing he mentioned was, that he had left without being paid for the value of his houses. I talked to him last night for saying such a thing, aud he said he had never said it, and he would be the last to say it. I believe Shaw is here, aud I sball be glad if you ask him the question. [*Neil Shaw.* Mr Macdonald said to me yesterday that it was stated in the papers that I said I had got nothing for the houses when I left Lowergil; what I said was that there was not a penny of arrears against me at that time.

9498. Did you get compensation then for the houses?—I caunot tell; but I will tell everything I got, and everything I gave away, and you can see for yourselves.]—*Mr Macdonald.* I have a copy here of the account under which I settled with Shaw, and I shall be very glad to read it.*

9499. *The Chairman.*—I think really it is very difficult for us to enter into details of this description during our inquiry, because it might lead us into endless discussions?—Very well; all I want is that the facts should come out.

9500. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—You attribute the state of the crops to the fact of the weather in Skye having become greatly worse of late years?—That is my candid and decided opinion.

9501. Now, what I want to find out is whether the weather is so bad in winter time, that it promotes indolence among the people, and makes it difficult for them to work?—No doubt it does. It is apt to increase lazy habits; and there is no doubt of the fact, that if a man goes out in the

* See Appendix A, XXIV.

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morning and gets drenched to the skin, it is not very likely he will work the other part of the day.

9502. Then you do not think, in reference to the people who come home from the fishing, and remain there from Christmas till seed time, that it would be very easy for them to spend that time in improving their land?—Well, they might do a great deal in improving their land that they do not do, and the most of them will admit that themselves. They could do a great deal in draining and in improving the land.

9503. In spite of the weather?—In spite of the weather. There is no doubt the weather is a bar in the way, but it is more a bar in the way of raising a good crop, because the amount of moisture in the soil prevents it ever coming to a good head. It ripens, but the weight of grain is not there, and when it is ripe a storm may come and do a lot of damage; and that is very often the case.

9504. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You stated a little ago there was a good deal of extravagance, particularly in the matter of tea?—Well, I don't know these were the words I used. I did not say it was extravagance. I said there was a very large amount of money spent on tea, and there is no denying the fact, and what I said was that many a man spent now-a-days on tea and sugar what his forefathers did not spend on meal.

9505. The witness who immediately preceded you in this town of Portree said they have no grazing whatever, and that milk is exceedingly scarce. Now, is it not the fact that the consumption of tea has very much increased in consequence of the scarcity of milk?—I cannot see that milk can be scarcer now than it was in the time of their forefathers.

9506. That is your statement?—Well, that is my opinion.

9507. You stated you have been before the public for some time?—I don't think that can be denied.

9508. I am putting that as a reason for taking a little more time in your examination than I otherwise might have done. Will you mention what was the rent paid by Fraser, the former tenant of the store at Isle Ornsay?—I cannot say. The store and land attached at Isle Ornsay are not exactly the store and land held by Kennedy.

9509. But I ask what rent he paid?—I cannot exactly say; but I know there was a very considerable rise upon it.

9510. Did Fraser make a good deal of money there?—I cannot say for certain, but it was supposed he made a very large amount of money there.

9511. Which he lost by a bank failure?—I believe he lost a great deal of money.

9512. Was he wishing to remain?—I believe he was at one time. I may state that the place was valued at £130, so far as I remember; I may be wrong a pound or two. Fraser was offered the place at the increased rent, £130. Moreover, he offered £128 for the place; and I may mention that it was not with me that Fraser was treating, because I thought it was better he should treat with Lord Macdonald's Edinburgh agent, Thomas Brodie, W.S.

9513. Why?—He and I were not on very good terms. I cannot say we were on bad terms, but I had put up an opposition meal-store to his, and we did not pull so well together as we had done at one time.

9514. Did Fraser go to Edinburgh to your knowledge on the subject?—He did.

9515. Were you there at the same time?—I was.

9516. On the same subject?—I don't know I was. That may have been part of my business, but very likely I had a great deal of business to do besides that. I should not have gone simply on that business.

9517. To whom then was it given? Was it not given to you?—By Lord Macdonald's Edinburgh agent.

9518. Yes?—On my word of honour as a man and a gentleman, it was not. My name never came up in it.

9519. It was given to Neil Kennedy and Company?—It was given to Neil Kennedy simply.

9520. Not to the company?—Not to the company.

9521. You stated the other day that Kennedy was not a man of much capital, and that you helped him?—I stated two facts; that he was not a man of the capital that the Isle Ornsay shop required.

9522. And you did help him?—I did help him, and I never denied it.

9523. Now will you or will you not say that you have an interest, and always had, in that shop?—I will say that I never had an interest further than that I backed Kennedy and lent Kennedy money, that I never heard of a balance sheet, that I never heard of a stock-taking, that I deal with the shop, that I regularly pay my accounts every half year, at all events that I clear my shop account with Neil Kennedy every half-year as every tenant does, that I never got a pennyworth from Kennedy without paying for it, and that I never got a reduction on any article, but paid for it as any ordinary tenant does.

9524. I am referring to the time when you were factor?—I am referring to that period, and to any other you like.

9525. But I am strictly referring to that period. You had a store before at Ostaig?—Yes.

9526. Was any of the business or were any of the accounts at Ostaig transferred to the new shop of Neil Kennedy?—Unfortunately for me, not one single sixpence; and I may say that every penny which the people owed me then they owe me still.

9527. I show you a document which has been handed to me. This document bears to be dated 'Isle Ornsay, 18th August 1875,' and is in these terms—'Received to account of Donald Beaton Carradale, £2, 16s. 'of old account, also £7 of new account, Neil Kennedy and Company.' Can you explain the meaning of that?—No, I cannot. It is a very stupid document. All that I can say I have stated on my word of honour as a gentleman, and I know that for their own convenience people have paid very small sums to Nei lKennedy or his clerk for me, and it was most stupid for Neil Kennedy to mix up his accounts with mine when they never were mixed up in reality.

9528. During your time were the rents on the Macdonald estate considerably increased?—They were.

9529. All over?—All over.

9530. What was your motive in doing that?—When I say all over, I should explain there were some townships that were not increased one shilling.

9531. Lord Macdonald has land in four parishes?—Yes.

9532. And there has been a very considerable rise in each parish?—A very considerable rise.

9533. What was your object in doiug that?—Well, I thought I stated that at Isle Ornsay, but I am not sorry to state it again, Lord Macdonald has small tenants in four parishes, and the whole rise upon the small tenants was some £250. I cannot state without going into figures what the total amount of the tenants' rent was, but I think I stated the other day that there would be a rise of something like 5 per cent., and I think I am not very far wrong. Well, the reason of the rise was this—and it was stated to the people at the time—that a low country valuator, an east coast man, came down here to value the sheep farms.

9534. Who was that?—Mr M'Bay, Elgin. He valued all the sheep farms, or at least all likely to be soon out of lease—my own among the

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rest. He put a very large increase on all the farms, or nearly all of them. I think it was the next year after that that I had a conversation with Lord Macdonald, who, was, as I stated already, one of the best of men, but it was natural for him to suppose that, getting this large rise from his sheep farmers, he might expect the same rise, or some rise, from his small tenants. It was in contemplation to get an east coast man to value the crofters' lands. Well, I said to him that I thought it would be a foolish thing, and he certainly did not press the question. I said I thought, if he would allow me to treat with the tenants myself, the tenants and I would agree amicably about it. Well, there was a report given in by some valuators, confirmed by the ground officers, and I made up an estimate which was put before the tenants. I will not say it has put before every tenant. It was put before the tenants who came forward to pay their rent on the regular rent day, that they were to pay this rise. I never heard a grumble the first year. They all agreed it was far better for them to pay whatever rise was put upon them directly under my own management than under the valuation of an east coast man. I think I am safe to say that if an east coast valuator had gone as a valuator of these lands there would have been a very different story for the small tenants from the rise I put on.

9535. Was it not the fact that, dealing with the large class you had to deal with, and the comparatively small rents they had to pay, they would have agreed to any rent you chose to put upon them, though you had doubled it in every case, rather than leave?—I don't think they would have put up with it without a grumble, but I am afraid they would agree to pay a rent that would be ruinous to themselves. I am afraid they would. I admit it quite candidly.

9536. I should like you to give some explanation, if you can, of the letter or circular you sent to people at Waterloo referred to at the meeting at Broadford.—'Mr Finlay M'Innes. 16 *Waterloo, Tormore, by Broadford,* '*Skye, 31st Oct.* 1872. Sir, I have to intimate that your land and grazings 'have been valued at £1, 15s., and you are to be charged at that rate from 'Whitsunday last. If you consider yourself aggrieved you will intimate 'the same to me, by writing, within ten days from this date, when I will 'relieve you of your lands and let to another.—Your obedient servant, D. 'MACDONALD. *N.B.*—I have strict orders to allow no arrears after Whit-'sunday 1872.' The witness also states that this was the first notice he got that his rent was to be raised. What explanation can you give?—It may have been the first written notice, but it was certainly not the first verbal notice he got. He had notice probably six or twelve months before.

9537. It is dated 21st October 1872, and the witness was asked—'Is it 'correct that five or six months after the term you were told for the first 'time your rent was to be raised and to go backwards? Was that your 'first notice?' and he answered, 'Yes, that was the first notice; and the 'whole of the township the same way?'—Well, the man may be correct, but it would be a singular case. He may have been away on the occasion when I gave notice to the other tenants, and told them of the rise to be put upon them; but he certainly got verbal notice of the rise of rent before he got that written notice, and that was merely a formal notice he got.

9538. What do you say to the other notice, that he would require to remove within a few days?—The intention certainly never was to remove him. It does not say that he is to remove in a few days.

9539. No, but it states 'If you consider yourself aggrieved you will intimate the same to me by writing within ten days from this date, when I will relieve you of your lands, and let to another?'—Well that is before the Martinmas rent collection. The meaning is to get notice in due time

before the Martinmas collection, which is on 26th November, and he certainly would not write to me supposing he was going to give it up. I don't think I had a single answer to these letters, but the fact is that he would come forward at the rent collection and pay his rent up to Martinmas, and then he would give me notice if he did not intend to keep on after Whitsunday following, because there never was a case—it could not be legally done—of turning a tenant out at the Martinmas term. The notice may not be written in the strict terms in which perhaps it ought to have been; but the meaning is that this man got notice that if he was displeased with his bargain he might give up possession at Whitsunday next. I never dreamed he would do it.

9540. At Whitsunday next?—At Whitsunday next.

9541. That is rather inconsistent, because the letter says that he is to be charged at the rate of £1, 15s. from Whitsunday last?—I am afraid I must leave it there, with two illegalities—first, in raising the rent during the currency of the terms, and then telling the people that unless they agree to pay they will be turned out in ten days? It was never raised during the currency of the terms.

9542. It looks very like it; but I must leave that in the meantime. You stated that you had had a good many debts outstanding, and were unable to recover them?—I did not quite state that I was unable to recover them. I said it was doubtful; but I think if I were pressed into pushing them I might make them good.

9543. They must have been standing for a long time?—Yes.

9544. How many years is it since you closed your own store?—I forget exactly; but it is a considerable time.

9545. Why don't you apply to the owners of the £200,000 that is in the bank? Your debtors must be the owners of some of that money?—Not necessarily. There may be a man in a township who has £500 in the bank and twenty men in that same township who have not a single shilling in the bank. Well, the man with £500 in the bank may not owe me a shilling, and the other nineteen may.

9546. Is it possible that there is a crofter in a township owning £500?—I have not the slightest doubt of it.

9547. Would not that person be able to take a good big croft?—By all means.

9548. Then the money question is not so hopeless as we have heard?—No, I don't think it; and I don't think I have said it was.

9549. In regard to the general improvement of the people, is that not due to the fact that their clothing and food are really obtained in consequence of the wages they earn in the south to a much greater degree than in the old times?—There is not the least doubt about that.

9550. So really the better clothing and food is not in consequence of the greater produce of the soil?—I never said it was, and I never thought so.

9551. You made a remark about shell-fish, indicating that in former days the people were in the habit of using shell-fish as an article of food; had you any reason for that?—The reason is perfectly plain; they had not sufficient food, or if they had, they would not have gone to the shell-fish.

9552. Bnt is shell-fish not a healthy article of food compared with other things?—I have not tried it, and I would not like to try it.

9553. Is there any sale for shell-fish?—A very great sale for whelks.

9554. Is that prohibited, or are people prevented from gathering them?—I can only speak for myself; I never prohibited it.

9555. One question more before we leave the store. What were the prices that you got when you had your own store as compared with other

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dealers?—I have already stated, I think, that I undersold other dealers. I know I undersold them sometimes by 3s. or 4s. per boll.

9556. I may mention that we heard at Glendale that the store, occupied during your time there, was highly serviceable?—Oh, bless me, Yes.

9557. You say that you only possess Tormore, which may be said to be your paternal inheritance. Have you no interest in the farms of Knock and Gillean in Sleat?—Neither directly nor indirectly. Lord Macdonald's factor is here who let the farm of Knock to Neil Kennedy, and he knows I was not in the country, and could not possibly be consulted about the matter. I believe it is the fact that Kennedy was driven to take it.

9558. When the hill pasture of Kilmore was taken away, who got it?—There was not much hill pasture taken from Kilmore. It is a very old story. There was a very small pendicle of a hill about three or four miles away from the township, and it joined with the farm of Ord, and I believe Ord was getting very much the benefit of it. It was a very narrow strip, and Ord spoke to me about it. He was going to put up a fence, and this piece of ground came in the way, and they made an offer of it to him. It was a matter of arrangement in fact between themselves, which I as factor agreed to. Ord paid £4 for it, which I know was a very large rent, and they got a proportionate reduction.

9559. Who got the farm of Gillean?—A man named M'Innes, who once a blacksmith.

9560. Was he not also a ground officer?—Never.

9561. Had he never any office?—Never in Skye.

9562. Did you advance him money to take it?—I did not.

9563. Had you no dealings with him?—I had not.

9564. Of any kind?—I have often bought sheep and cattle from him, as I did from other people, and he has bought from me in like manner.

9565. Will you explain very briefly now the alleged story about your sending some of your men round and giving the tenants notice to bring in their beasts at a certain time, that a selection might be made of the beasts. Was that done to any extent?—It never was done at all; but this was done, that often before the markets the tenants would come to me and ask me to go and buy their cattle, and I would go. Well, when a man is asked to go and buy cattle off a farm, one does not like to give full prices; but I can safely say I always gave full prices, and I do not think any one will deny that I did. I never bought a beast from anybody in regard to which I would not conscientiously swear that I gave more than value for it.

9566. Are you aware that any ground officer in your employment was in the habit of doing what I have mentioned?—The ground officer, so far as I am aware, never bought a cattle beast for me.

9567. But for himself, when you were factor?—Not for me.

9568. I put the question in this way. Are you aware that any of your ground officers, when you were factor, were in the habit of doing this?—Never.

9569. You are not aware of it?—I am certain it is not so.

9570. Or any other official of the estate?—Or any other official.

9571. Before leaving this and going to Glendale, are you aware that a document has been prepared and signed by a number of people in Sleat in your favour?—I am not aware it is signed by any number of people, or by any one in fact; but as I was at Isle Ornsay the other day I met a man on the road, who told me that he and his fellow townsmen and the whole of the parish, or a certain number of them, wanted to send some statement to the Royal Commission about the questions that had been put. I did not enter into details, and I know nothing at all about it.

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9572. Will you look at this paper [shown paper], and tell me who wrote it?—I cannot really say. It seems to be Donald Macpherson's handwriting, but I don't know.

9573. Look at this notice—'*Tormore, by Broadford, Isle of Skye, 10th June* 1876.—Sir, I have to intimate to you that you have been entered in Lord Macdonald's rental for house and shop at Gedentailer, at a rent of £3 per annum for the year from Whitsunday 1876 to Whitsunday 1877, payable in equal portions at Martinmas and Whitsunday, the first half year's payment falling due at Martinmas next 1876.—Your obedient servant, per D. MACDONALD, Mr ANGUS MURCHESON, Gedentailer, by Broadford.'

9574. Is that your writing?—I cannot speak distinctly as to the case. I think there was some row; it was simply a reminder to a man to keep on his good behaviour, but I will not speak positively.

9575. This letter bears that you were fixing a man's rent in the middle of the term?—Yes, it does; I see it is a few days after the term. Possibly I had a verbal understanding with him before that, but I will not speak positively.*

9576. You stated that bills were common, but not in your part of the country. That is a matter of rumour which you have heard?—Yes, but it is a rumour that is generally believed.

9577. But there was no such thing going on in your part of Sleat?—No, and I don't think there is now, though I don't know it so well as I did then.

9578. What I mean is that the district of Sleat is the most prosperous part of Skye at this moment?—Well, I am not sure of that.

9579. Will you not stand up for your own part of Skye?—No, I don't see I have anything to do with it at all.

9580. Have the comparative state and circumstances of the people improved?—Well, I think from what has been said that the inference would be that Sleat must be in a state of misery.

9581. That is not my impression at all?—That is the impression which is wished to be conveyed.

9582. I wish to ask you a few questions about Glendale. Your name has been mixed up a good deal in regard to the different farms, and what the proprietor states is this—'Mr Macdonald, Tormore, has never held any part of the property for himself. He held Ramasaig and other farms only on behalf of Sir John Macleod, and he has not had any land in Glendale himself': that is so?—Yes.

9583. Was your name entered in the valuation roll?—Never.

9584. Whose name has been entered?—Sir John Macpherson Macleod's.

9585. Then what has given rise to all this idea in the minds of the people here?—I cannot tell. I know it was always supposed so, and I did not see it was for me to enter into explanations with other men about what was not mine.

9586. You did want Waterstein?—No, not particularly.

9587. Yes, you said so?—When did I say so?

9588. In your own statement, to the best of my recollection?—No, I did not.

9589. What reference did you make to it?—I said I was invited by the trustees to give an offer for the farm, and that I did so.

9590. Did you not go a little further, and say that you were disposed to take it, or words to that effect?—I was disposed to take it, because I did take it. I accepted the trustees' offer, and they accepted me as tenant.

* See Appendix A, XXIV.

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9591. What could be the object of the trustees of the late Sir John Macpherson Macleod in keeping so much of the estate in their own hands?—I suppose it was because they thought it more profitable for themselves. This place of Ramasaig was inhabited by a number of people when I took the tack of it, but even before then there were vacant lots. I used to offer those vacant lots to people in the other part of Glendale, and I never got a man to go to Ramasaig, but when there was a vacant lot in any other part of Glendale a Ramasaig man was determined to get it.

9592. We have been informed by the people themselves that they were very anxious to get Waterstein when Dr Martin gave it up, and that they never got a distinct refusal of it. Why did they not get it? Was not that a splendid opportunity for you to do something for the people?—I at once stepped out of the way of their getting it, and I never heard a single word from any of the tenants that they wanted it, though they knew two years beforehand that it was to let. I never heard a single word from them till after I myself had taken it and the bargain was concluded, and then whenever I did hear they wanted it, at the first meeting I had with them I told them I would not stand in the way of their getting it.

9593. Did you give them any assistance in getting it?—I stated to them at that meeting that if they would take my advice, they would pay the rents and arrears, make a specific offer for Waterstein, and satisfy the trustees that they could stock it, and that I would see what I could do for them. My intention was to do everything in my power for them; I did not go further than that with them, certainly.

9594. May I ask why it was that you gave up the charge of the estate?—Because I could not be humbugged with it. I did not care to be trying to govern people that would not be governed.

9595. In fact you threw it up?—I chucked it up; I wish I had never seen the place.

9596. How many tenants were removed at Hamara for you, and what became of them?—There were three, I think.

9597. What became of them?—There was one Hector Maclean. The old man died, and his family removed of their own accord. That was the first change, I think; but there are a great many people who can speak to it. I lost sight of the family. Another man was Roderick Macdonald. He was removed for bad neighbouring. Then there was John Maclean, a mason, whom I employed for a long time in making roads and dykes, and in fact snpported him. There may have been another, but the valuation roll will show.

9598. You and the tenants seem not to have got on very well?—We did.

9599. Did you ever ask Peter Mackinnon for arrears amounting to £6, 10s. due by a former tenant?—He was never a tenant. He is in the position of being trustee over his sister. In fact, the land is held for the heirs of Hugh and John Mackay. The tenant became insane, and Mackinnon was appointed guardian for the good of the sister, and he has remained, and has been reaping the benefit of the land ever since. He may give the benefit or part of the benefit to the widow and children, but so far as I know he does not, and in point of fact we never considered him a legal tenant; he just represented another person.

9600. Did you ever give him any receipt?—Of course I did, for every payment he made.

9601. He complains that you changed his receipts—that you got back his receipt, and put in another name. Did you ever do that?—Certainly not, so far as I remember. I don't think Mr Peter Mackinnon is a man likely to allow such a thing. I know that if he gave in those receipts for

any purpose, it must have been for some purpose of his own. There may have been an error; but I know if he gave in a receipt, it was not changed.

9602. Of late years I suppose your dealings with the people were not of a very harmonious character?—Oh, very.

9603. Latterly I mean?—Very; I never had any question with them till March 1882. We were on the very best of terms, and I can speak very kindly of the people of Glendale.

9604. Did you ever accuse them of reading newspapers?—I never accused them, but I may have put them on their guard against reading certain literature.

9605. Did you ever threaten the people there for forming their own opinions in the election of members of the school board?—I never did.

9606. Were you a member of the school board?—I was. I think I was elected on two occasions.

9607. Did you use to attend?—I think I attended the first. I don't think I attended the second much.

9608. You were not a good attender at the meetings?—I cannot say I was.

9609. Would you object, considering that in some of the places the crofter population is very considerable, that at least one member coming from that class should be upon the school board?—I think there should be.

9610. Would you approve of that?—I would approve of it. I always did approve of it, and on the parochial board too, and I had them on the parochial board.

9611. Where?—I had them in Sleat and in different places.

9612. Except those you have mentioned in your own statement, did you remove or cause a removal from one part of the estate to the other?—There were several removals, but very few.

9613. It was only a shifting?—Yes.

9614. Can you really say that those shiftings were for the benefit of the people who were shifted?—As a general rule it was by their own desire, but not in every instance.

9615. I would like if you could give me a possible explanation why it was, for instance, that the people of Lowergill were removed, and the place put into the proprietor's hands?—The tenants at Lowergill were only six, so far as I remember.

9616. What possible object was there in removing these, and putting it into the proprietor's hands?—So far as I remember, the first move in that direction was that Roderick Gillies gave up his lot and came to Skiniden, and arranged to take a house and get a cow's grass or two. Then Hugh Shaw had a young family, and he wanted to remove, and made some exchange with a namesake of his who left of his own accord to go abroad. Kenneth Mackinnon wanted to remove too, because he had a young family; but afterwards he came to the island of Pabbay, where he still is, and where he is much better off than he was at Lowergill. Neil Shaw, who was here, would have stopped had he got his share of it; in fact, he would have taken more. Donald Murcheson, who is at Ramasaig, is very much better off than at Lowergill.

9617. Was he anxious to go?—No, I think not; but he is much better off at Ramasaig than he was at Lowergill. Charles Mackinnon and his brother were in the same lot. Charles got a lot at Fasach and Sandy got a lot at Meiloveg. Charles did not make a good exchange to Fasach, but in every other case they are much better off than they were.

9618. Do you remember changing a polling station on one occasion from the schoolhouse to your own lodge at Hamara?—Never.

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9619. The election never took place at the lodge?—Never, so far as I know.

9620. You are quite aware there is a good deal of discontent, which you attribute partly to outside influence and partly to some local influence. There must have been some foundation for all this discontent and agitation?—In some cases there might be.

9621. Will you not go further, to say it is so in many cases in the island—that the people are overcrowded?—Yes, taking the island all over, I would say there are many cases.

9622. Can you suggest any remedies to the Commissioners?—Give them more land, with all my heart, if it will do them good.

9623. Don't you think that, in consequence of their attention being now so much drawn to this matter of getting more land—as many of them whom we have seen seem to be strong, active, and able to labour—if they did get somewhat larger holdings, and security that they would not be disturbed, at all events for some time, they would make a good move in advance from what they have hitherto done?—Well, I will not say that. They talk of fixity of tenure, but except in exceptional cases they have had fixity of tenure.

9624. That poor man behind, Shaw, is not an instance of that?—He would not like it. Ask him whether he would go to Lowergill. I do not think fixity of tenure would benefit them in every case, but it would in some cases.

9625. I am very anxious to get your answer upon this matter, because from your experience it is of great consequence to get your opinion upon it?—I don't think fixity of tenure would benefit the people. It might in some cases, but I certainly would put them upon such a footing that they could not be deprived of their lands, according to the whim of a proprietor, and certainly not of a factor.

9626. Would you make any further suggestions?—No, I will answer questions.

9627. I am done with the examination. I am merely inviting you to speak on the general question?—I would rather not.

9628. I do not think it is fair to allow you simply to give an answer to a lot of statements made against you during your time as factor. We should like you as a large farmer in Skye to give your opinions?—Well, in answering any questions put to me I will try to give my opinion unbiassed; but I would rather have questions put to me, and I will answer them in a broad way.

9629. Well I will put this again to you. Seeing that the feeling of the people and the minds of the people have been as we have seen and heard very much directed to this matter of enlarging their holdings and having some kind of permanence—that is to say, that they would not be removed after ameliorating and improving their lands—don't you think that though some of them are at present very poor, yet many of them have the capital in their hands, and are able and willing to work? Would you not think that if they got the chance they would take advantage of it, and that it would be a great benefit to Skye, and change it from its present unhappy state?—I should be rather afraid of that. I should be rather doubtful of it.

9630. Then surely you do not propose that things should remain as they are at present?—It would be a very unhappy state of feeling if they were.

9631. You would not endorse, I presume, what one proprietor told us the other day—that he would give £500 to clear every crofter off his estate, and let them go where they liked?—Well, if the crofters take up the no rent attitude, as they have done in some parts, and defy the proprietor's

rules, and set the law of the country at defiance, I certainly do not wonder at a proprietor making such a suggestion and expressing such a wish, but I should be very sorry that such a state of matters should continue.

9632. *The Chairman.*—I think it is right that I should read the paper to which I previously referred, which came into my hands signed by a number of tenants:—'To the Lord Napier, Chairman of the Royal Com-'mission—My Lord, We the undersigned tenants of the parish of Sleat, 'considering what we think to be the most uncalled-for manner in which 'Mr Macdonald of Tormore was cross-questioned as to his dealings with the 'people in cattle and meal, we do hereby most distinctly state and declare 'that, instead of the said gentleman taking undue advantage of us in any 'respect, we are perfectly aware that he has been the means always of 'raising the price of cattle, both at home and at the markets; and the 'drovers who came to the island often complain of his doing so to their 'injury, though for the good of the tenants. Moreover, we can state with 'truth that he was driven from his good wishes towards us into an exten-'sive meal business to keep down the oppression of others; and had he not 'done so, there are plenty still alive who can testify that there would have 'been extensive starvation. We have always considered and still know 'Tormore to be the people's best friend, and we are distressed and ashamed 'at the base and false statements made lately. There is little time to get 'this paper signed, but we can truly state that we represent the parish 'generally, and should sworn evidence be taken we believe there is not 'one man in the parish but will willingly corroborate this our statement.' This is signed by about seventy persons in various townships?—I can only say that I am very much obliged to them indeed, and very much obliged to your Lordship for your courtesy in reading it.

9633. There is another letter from a single person bearing testimony to the good intentions of Mr Macdonald, and to the services he has rendered to the people, signed by Samuel Campbell, but perhaps it is not necessary that I should read it?—No, I think it is better not.

Rev. JOHN DARROCH, Minister of Portree (52)—examined.

9634. *The Chairman.*—I believe you have a written statement which you wish to read?—Yes.

9635. Will you be good enough to read it?—'*Portree, May* 23, 1883. 'To the Right Honourable Lord Napier, Chairman of the Royal Commis-'sion for the Highlands and Islands.—My Lord, Having taken notice of 'various standing grievances of the Skye people so repeatedly brought 'before your honourable Commission in this island, I have been a little 'surprised to find no complaints made on the sum of heavy taxation, more 'especially those for poor and school rates, and roads and bridges. It is 'difficult to account for silence upon such a subject, unless the people had 'not been properly instructed by their counsellors as to what to say. Still 'there is not the slightest doubt that such a grievance does exist, and that 'the crofters do complain of it heavily, for I have heard the people speak 'of it frequently, not only in this parish but in various other parishes in 'the island. You will therefore excuse my calling attention to it, and 'expressing the hope that it may yet receive legislative attention, with the 'view of affording a remedy. The burden arising from these various 'assessments would scarcely be credited in the more highly-favoured parts 'of the country. As to the poor rates, they were always a heavy burden 'here, as may easily be imagined. However, they were not formerly felt

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'so much until the pressure of other taxations was added to them. Then 'of late years the assessment for roads and bridges have become vastly 'increased. This arises from the fact that Skye has been cut off from the 'rest of the country and constituted into a separate district, and so must 'bear the heavy burden of its own roads and bridges; and there are also 'new roads wanted in various parts of the island, which it is impossible 'to construct without a ruinous assessment. You have heard a statement 'of the case of Glenmore (and it is not the only one), where the necessaries 'of life, coming to a large extent from other places, have to be transported 'on the backs of ponies, or in the absence of such a quadruped, on the backs 'of the unfortunate natives. Such is indeed a hardship and a grievance 'requiring remedy. But worse than these are the school rates, which since 'the beginning of the new Education Act press so heavily upon the poor 'tenants. Previous to this Act there was no felt grievance on this score, 'for all the schools in this parish (and there was no less than eight of 'them) were supported without the cost of a penny to the parties interested. 'Since then, however, matters have sadly changed in respect of taxation 'for schools, without at the same time a corresponding benefit. Instead 'of being a benefit, it is rather the contrary in most of the schools in this 'parish. Parents and children seem determined to nullify the compulsory 'law of attendance. They seem to make every effort, by a thousand 'evasions and excuses, to shirk the duty of attending school, and the con-'sequence is that these youth attain to their scholastic majority in a state 'of far greater ignorance than obtained under the old regime of moral 'suasion. And yet, let it be noted, that this non-attendance which is con-'nived at by parents, manifestly increases the burden more and more, by 'preventing the possibility of earning a reasonable grant for average 'attendance. But in their infatuation parents seem to disregard this view 'of it, and act as if by cheating the authorities there were a gain instead 'of a loss. This is the universal complaint of teachers. One of them told 'me lately, that out of a school roll of fifty scholars, it was quite impossible 'for him to present an average attendance of ten scholars. If matters are 'allowed to go on as at present, there is but a sad look-out for the educa-'tional interests of the island, and the case is the more aggravated that 'the rate-payers have to be at the cost of such delinquencies. But it may 'be asked, are there not "defaulting officers," and what they are doing? 'We answer, they are doing very little except drawing their salaries. In 'fact, they are powerless for any good. And the school board also are 'equally impotent to cope with the evil or to afford a remedy. This 'important body, with all their wisdom and erudition, and the defaulting 'officers, though accoutred with policemen's batons, are utterly incapable 'of carrying out the provisions of the Educational Act in this exceptional 'part of the country. And the reason is obvious. It is found in that 'deplorable state of poverty which has been brought before your honour-'able Commission for the last two weeks. When people are in want there 'is a great temptation for sacrificing every interest to that of earning a 'morsel of bread. Now it is a fact that the great majority of children 'here are poorly clad, and are not able to attend school during the incle-'ment season. And when weather favours, they are found at the sea-shore 'gathering shell-fish, or doing something else for helping a poverty stricken 'family to eke out an existence. In this way the schools are deserted, 'and the deficiency must be made up by the unfortunate parents them-'selves. Now, is it not a great hardship to be burdened with a system of 'which we cannot take advantage? Is it not a sore grievance to be 'saddled with a machinery which we cannot work? Is it not cruel to 'wrest from a poor crofter his hard earnings by land and by sea, in order

'to pay for costly structures, high salaries, school board elections, defaulting officers, rate collectors, money interest, and all the other expenses 'incident to the carrying out of the new Act, and at the same time to be 'precluded by the form of circumstances from deriving any benefit in 'return? I hold this indeed to be a very sore grievance to the poor people 'of Skye; and if any one is disposed to doubt it, let him just look at the 'school rates, and be at once convinced by the logic of figures. What are 'the school rates? A year past they were 2s. in the £, an exorbitant tax 'which was scarcely ever heard of in any civilised country. And this 'year they are but a trifle less, who could believe it? Could our friends 'in the south imagine that the wretched Skye crofters were paying 2s. in 'the £, and meanwhile their children not getting the benefit of an education. 'Who can say, then, that some reform or remedy is not required? But 'notice we are not undervaluing the benefits of the new Education Act 'where it can be taken advantage of. What we hold is that it is not 'adapted for such a place as Skye without a material modification. What 'Skye needs is in fact free education, or at least to be put on a par with 'other places in point of expense. If the majority of other places receive 'an education at the rate of 4d. or 6d. in the £, surely it is not too much 'to ask the same privilege for such a poor locality as this. We would 'therefore humbly plead that 4d. in the £ should be made the maximum 'school rate for this and for all the Western Islands, and that the deficiency 'should be paid by Government. We would also have all school fees 'abolished, because although now charged they are almost never paid. 'We would therefore humbly suggest to your honourable Commission to 'represent the matter to Her Majesty's Government with the view of 'securing virtually a gratuitous education for the section of the country 'just mentioned; and may we not trust that such a patriotic measure shall 'enlist the services of eloquent and influential legislators connected with 'Highland districts, who in this way would confer a lasting benefit on 'their poor countrymen, and relieve them of a sorely felt and pressing 'grievance? I would like further to make a statement regarding a branch 'of industry which seems to have escaped notice, but which is a consider'able source of benefit to the Skye people, and which might be made 'more beneficial by extension of the scheme—I mean the salmon sea fishery. 'I have been authorised to refer to this matter before the Commission by 'one who has a right to speak on the subject, and who has ever evinced 'his desire to benefit the island in his own line of business. I refer to Mr 'James Johnston of Montrose, of the firm of Joseph Johnston & Sons, the 'extensive salmon fishers on this coast. This branch of industry, I may 'say, in his own words, "is one of the principal sources within the island '"of circulating ready money, and upwards of two thousand pounds per '"annum is yearly paid in wages, and if it were more extended, it would '"be beneficial to the natives at a time of the year when other employ'"ment is not to be had." This suggestion of one so well acquainted with 'the island, and so much interested in its welfare, is well worth considering, 'because if it were acted upon it would doubtless be a great boon to a large 'number of the natives. For it will easily be seen that the scheme is 'practicable, and offers advantages over foreign fisheries. It is immediately 'at hand, and there is ready disposition to engage in it, with the certainty 'of good and sure pay. In fact, there is rather a premium for this service, 'and parties who receive employment find themselves so fortunate in earning that they can afford to do little else the rest of the year. What is 'needed is such an extension of this enterprise as would bring to Skye, not 'two thousand, but ten thousand per annum. The mode of extension must 'be left to others, but this enterprising gentleman seems to hint that special

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'legislation would be necessary in order to insure against serious losses by 'parties investing heavily. He says, in fact, "I think that Skye and the '"Western Islands should have special legislation." His operations during 'the past two years have been attended with loss instead of gain. And 'yet we candidly believe that his perseverance in the work, in the face of 'pecuniary loss, was prompted in a great measure by the benevolent spirit 'in which it was begun; that is, in his own words, "for one great reason, '"to help the Skye people." I am sure that every one in this village and 'parish will readily believe the sincerity of his professions as to his good 'wishes for Skye. We have had such an instance of his disinterested 'kindness during the past winter. It is enough to say that the generosity 'of his gifts, by which he endeared his name to the needy poor in our 'midst, and to the children of this and other parishes, is not to be esti-'mated by its money value. It implied kindly thoughts and a generous 'and good heart. We cannot therefore question his desire for improving 'the condition of the Skye people, through the term of business in which 'Providence has placed him, nor do we doubt the wisdom of one of his 'expressions in devising the means towards that desirable end. It is 'therefore hoped that Mr Johnston's suggestion will receive the considera-'tion to which it is entitled, and be taken advantage of for ameliorating 'the condition of the Skye crofters.—I have the honour to be, my Lord, 'your most obedient servant, JOHN DARROCH, minister of Portree.' I have only to add that the manager of the salmon fisheries, Mr Lawson, is present, and if you desire to interrogate him as to the number of people employed, or anything else in connection with the salmon fishery, he is ready to answer questions.

9636. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—You say that the children in summer time are much employed in gathering shell-fish. Is that for the purpose of consumption?—It is not for consumption, but for sale.

9637. You mean whelks?—Yes.

9638. They do not gather them much for home consumption?—They do in some places, to my own knowledge.

9639. In this parish?—In this parish.

JOHN LAWSON, Salmon Fisher, Portree (58)—examined.

John Lawson.

9640. *The Chairman.*—Will you endeavour shortly to make a statement of your own opinions with reference to the salmon fishery connected with the Isle of Skye?—I am very sorry to say that I am not prepared to do anything of the kind, for I did not know that I was to be called forward. If you ask me any questions that I can answer I will be very glad to do so.

9641. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—We have been told that Mr Johnston has for the last two or three years conducted these fishings at a loss, but he says he thinks they may be improved by some form of legislation?—That is, by extending them round the island. What we have on lease we cannot improve much more, but what he means to say, as I understand—I never knew anything about that till I heard Mr Darroch read it—is that if he was lessee of more of the Skye shores, he would extend the fishing still further, and that would give more employment.

9642. Is he not able to take more fishings?—He would take them if he could get them, but proprietors are not willing to go into the affair.

9643. The shores are not all fished?—No.

9644. And Mr Johnston wishes to fish them?—Yes, because I know he has tried.

9645. *Professor Mackinnon.*—To what extent does your lease extend?—We have Major Fraser's shore, Lord Macdonald's shore, and part of Macleod of Macleod's.

9646. Have you Mr Macallister's?—No.

9647. Nor round the other shore between?—No.

9648. And you would want to have the whole complete round of the island?—We might slip parts of the island.

9649. Has any one else got the other shores?—No, there is no fishing on the island but ours.

9650. How many people are employed?—We employ one hundred and ten fishermen.

9651. Are they mostly natives of this place?—They are all natives, except myself and my son.

9652. Supposing you got the whole fishings of Skye, how many would you employ?—I cannot say exactly in the meantime. It would depend upon our success in opening up those fishings.

9653. Roughly, how many would you say?—We employ one hundred and ten, and we might perhaps add another fifty or perhaps another hundred.

9654. By getting the rest of the shores you could improve the fishing of the whole place?—It would only improve the shore that is lyin waste.

9655. You would not increase the number of fish by your mode of fishing in any way?—We would have to bring more to the ice-house, as we would be putting out more expense.

9656. It is just to stretch the length of your shore?—That is all. We do not consider that we would diminish the fish on the ground we are fishing.

9657. Don't you think the limited ground you have is better, because there is no other person fishing?—No, I don't believe that.

9658. So there would be no diminution of your profit even supposing another lessee took it up?—No, supposing there were other one hundred and ten men fishing as strong as we do.

9659. You think the salmon could supply you all?—Oh, the sea is wide between here and America.

9660. So it is just in proportion to the extent of the shore that you would develop the fishing?—Yes; besides the men I have mentioned, we have four carts driving to us and a small steamer.

9661. There would be more fish and more men?—Yes, and more material put out.

9662. More fish caught over the island?—Yes.

Captain ALLAN MACDONALD, Proprietor of Waternish (60)—examined.

9663. *The Chairman.*—Do you desire to make a statement to the Commission?—I have no statement. I was not aware that I would be called upon to make any statement.*

9664. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—I suppose you have read in the papers the account of our inquiry of Waternish the other day?—I did.

9665. Have you anything to say in reference to what was stated by the witnesses there?—Yes, with regard to removals; and that I occupied townships which had been in the possession of crofters, which I did not.

* See Appendix A, VII. for Statements.

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9666. Do you say there have been no removals?—Certainly, no removals.

9667. The people complain of being crowded and having too little land —I am not astonished at it.

9668. Would it be possible to give them any more?—I do not think so. Since I entered into possession I have given them 1500 acres in addition to what they had before, and should I give them 1500 more I think they will be equally crowded in the course of a little time.

9669. Then the population has increased in your time by the natural increase of the people?—Yes.

9670. You have not taken people in from outside?—I have not.

9671. In what way would you propose to remedy this overcrowding?—Well, I do not see any possible remedy for it, but that when young men get married, and settle down in their father's lands, they should be removed. I do not see any remedy for it but that.

9672. Have you taken any steps to prevent subdivision of land?—Yes, I sent word by the ground officer that I would not permit it, but they did not care much for that.

9673. And so the population has gone on increasing?—Yes.

9674. Now, with this increase of population, have you observed there has been any increase of poverty?—Well, no, because from having given them so much additional land since I came into possession, I think their condition has been rather improving; but I daresay they are pretty well crowded now, and will continue to be more so.

9675. Have they obtained any new means of support within your recollection?—The fishing is the only industry there.

9676. Has the fishing not deteriorated too?—I cannot say it has. I think if the people had piers, and better boats and material, they would prosecute the fishing very successfully.

9677. We have been told in more than one place that the fish have to a certain extent disappeared, both herring and cod and ling. Don't you think that is the case?—I don't think so. This last year was not a favourable year for fishing, but the year before I have known a boat's crew—I think one family—who got 200 crans of herring in about twenty days, which I don't think bad.

9678. The herring fishing at home is a more or less precarious fishing?—It is.

9679. But the cod and ling fishing is much the same year by year?—Very much the same.

9680. Do you think that has fallen off at all?—I do not think it has.

9681. Do the people make much of that now-a-days?—No, they do not. They salt the fish themselves, and send it to the Glasgow market.

9682. Do you think they might catch and salt more fish?—I think they might, had they boats and proper material and piers. It is a very great labour, because they have to haul the boats up on the beach immediately they come on shore, and if they had piers they would just fasten the boats alongside the pier till they went out again.

9683. What is the population of your property?—About 1020, I think.

9684. Are there many points on the property where it would be necessary to have piers?—I think there are four very suitable places.

9685. But would you require a pier at each of these places to suit the wants of the 1020 people?—The people are located on both sides of the points.

9686. Would they require two piers on each side?—On each side.

9687. Would one pier on each side not answer the purpose?—Not well, because the townships are separated on both sides.

9688. What would be the cost of erecting piers that would suit the people?—I should think from £800 to £1000 each pier.

9689. That would be a very considerable outlay for a population of 1020. Unless there was some certainty that they would be able to make a good living off the fishing, would it not be a very large outlay to make?—Well, the British Fisheries Society had part of those lands at one time, and they built a small village, which you may have observed the other day. They erected a pier there at a cost of £2000, thinking it would pay; but I do not think the fishing is very well conducted there.

9690. It was not a success?—No; in fact, there were only ten or twelve crofters there altogether at the time, and now there are thirty-two. That is in the immediate neighbourhood of the pier at the village of Stein. That pier was destroyed.

9691. And you think, notwithstanding the want of success which attended the establishment of this village of Stein, if the people had proper piers and nets and boats, they might make a good living by fishing?—I think so.

9692. At home?—I think so.

9693. Do you say you think the people have not got much poorer or much richer in your time?—I think they are very much better circumstanced that when I first knew them.

9694. In what respect?—Better clad and better fed.

9695. Are they better housed?—Well, they are very careless about their houses. I induced some of them to build a middle wall with a chimney in it, but they would not follow it. I got one or two of them to do it, and I went to see how they were getting on. When I went in I found the fire in the centre of the house, which they prefer, because they say they can get round it.

9696. But their clothing and food have improved?—Yes.

9697. How is it that they have been enabled to purchase better food and clothing?—Well, the value of stock has gone up very much since my early recollection. I remember stirks used to sell for £1 and 30s., and now they get £5 for them.

9698. What is the age of the animal?—One-year-old.

9699. What is the price of a two-year-old?—£7 or £8, and £10 or £12 for a cow. I remember when cows used to sell for 50s. or £3.

9700. Are there any natural processes at work by which you think the condition of the people will go on improving, their food getting better, and their clothing better?—I don't know about that, because I believe the people now are overcrowded.

9701. Do you see any way of reducing this pressure of population?—I think the crofter system altogether is a very bad one. I think that a crofter, to enable him to live at all, should have at least £30 worth of land.

9702. But that is not possible in the present state of things?—It is not possible at present.

9703. How do you propose to give him £30 worth of land?—I don't know unless some of them were assisted to emigrate.

9704. But if a good scheme of emigration were provided under which these arrangements were all satisfactorily made, do you think they would be then inclined to emigrate?—I think many would.

9705. They complain not only of the smallness of their holdings, but of the want of certainty of tenure. Do you think it would be desirable to give them leases or confer upon them anything like fixity of tenure?—I think it would be the very worst thing that could possibly be done, fixity of tenure; at least it would tell very badly on the considerate landlord and the man who allowed his tenants to increase and settle down till they were

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overcrowded. Fixity of tenure would fix them there as miserable poor creatures, who could not benefit themselves in any way. It certainly would be a good thing where the tenants were not crowded, but where they were crowded I think it would work very badly indeed.

9706. Do you think it is a measure which should be deferred till the numbers of the people were reduced?—Exactly so.

9707. With regard to security and raising of rent, they complain that if they make improvements, their rents are apt to be raised. Do you think that that acts as an impediment to the making of improvements, the fear of having their rents raised?—Well, no doubt in some cases it will do so. But I should be inclined to raise the rent of the man who did not improve, and let the man who improved have the benefit of his improvements.

9708. *Do you think it would be desirable to give legal protection to the* man who made improvements?—I think so.

9709. That he should be allowed compensation in some form or other?—Certainly.

9710. Would you make it a saleable right?—Well, I think it ought to be.

9711. *The Chairman.*—You stated that you had given up about 1500 acres for the improvement of the crofters' lands?—Well, I fancy it would be for their improvement. I stated that I had given them 1500 acres in addition to what they had when I entered into possession.

9712. In whose occupancy were these 1500 acres?—In my own.

9713. Is it all in the form of hill pasture, or is part arable?—Part arable, but the greater part hill pasture.

9714. Have you in that way constituted new crofts, or have you added these acres to existing crofts?—It is just a separate part of the district where there were no crofts before in the neighbourhood.

9715. And on these you have settled others?—Yes.

9716. May I ask what is the whole area of your property occupied by crofters?—About 4500 or 5000 acres.

9717. How much is occupied by yourself?—About 5000 acres.

9718. How much is occupied by large tenants?—None; I have no large tenants.

9719. So your property is nearly equally shared between yourself and the crofters?—Quite so.

9720. Do you think that, without inflicting any serious damage upon the property occupied by yourself, you could still enlarge the boundaries of the crofters?—I would not be inclined, while the present system exists, to give them any more land, because it would only be a question of time when they would become overcrowded, whatever quantity of land I gave them. But if the system was improved, I would be glad to do anything I could to assist them.

9721. What improvement do you refer to?—To provide against overcrowding and marrying down two or three families upon one croft. I may state a case on this land which I have given off to the crofters. Since I entered into possession I gave one man a croft of about ten acres. He pays about £9 of rent. He has now two sons married upon that ground along with himself. So this croft must support three families instead of one. There is no use giving them extension of land, if that system goes on.

9722. But if you could be protected against the evils of subdivision you would be inclined to create new crofts?—I would.

9723. And you think you would be able in that way to derive as good rental as you do from farming yourself or from having a large farm?—I do not think they pay so well as a large farm does.

9724. If you wished at this moment to let the land which you now

occupy yourself in the shape of a large farm would you have a difficulty or not in finding a tenant?—I would have no difficulty.

9725. At a fair rent?—At a fair rent.

9726. How would you propose to protect yourself against the evils of subdivision? One person who was before us said he thought there ought to be a legislative enactment against subdivision?—That, I fancy, would be necessary, because I do not think it could be done in any other way.

9727. In fact, you do not think that any proprietor is sufficiently stubborn and hard-hearted to resist their claims?—Well, I do not think they will be advised by any landlord. They just carry out that system, and it works very badly.

9728. Have you found that upon the ground farmed by yourself there is any deterioration of the productive qualities of the soil, or do you find the soil as productive as when you began?—The climate is very much against us here. We have a very bad climate, and that tells very much against the crops.

9729. Do you think the land farmed by the crofters has become deteriorated by constant cropping?—I think so.

9730. Is it worse than when you first recollect it?—I think it is.

9731. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Is the climate getting worse?—I think so. I remember in my early days we used to have heavy falls of snow in winter, which we have not now.

9732. And you think that would help it?—I think so.

9733. You mentioned that the price of a cow at Waternish was something like £10 or £12?—Yes.

9734. Taking that township of Hallistra which we saw the other day, with a lot of very miserable-looking beasts upon it, do you think that anybody would give £10 or £12 for any cow upon the crofts of Hallistra?—I know a cow in Hallistra that was bought for £14. I may add that all cows look miserable at present, for it has been a severe winter, and the people lost their crop, and the cows were starving.

9735. Have you done anything in the way of which Mr Stewart, Duntulm, spoke, to improve the breed of cattle?—A good deal.

9736. For the benefit of the crofters?—A good deal. They get improved stock from me at all times.

9737. Do you know all the people on your estate?—All.

9738. And you are a constant resident?—Yes.

9739. You do not prohibit cattle dealers from coming to buy from your crofters?—No.

9740. Or anybody upon your estate?—No.

9741. We have heard a good deal stated to-day to the effect that farming is very unprofitable. Do you find it so in your own experience?—It was very unfavourable this last year.

9742. That applies more to crop, does it not?—Yes.

9743. But cattle, I presume, are much the same?—Cattle are rather improved.

9744. Is your stock a mixed stock of cattle and sheep?—Yes; Highland cattle and sheep.

9745. Which do you depend upon most, the cattle or the sheep?—Well, the sheep are easier managed. The black cattle are very expensive to keep, particularly in a bad winter; they require a good deal of hand-feeding.

9746. Mr Stewart stated that he was in favour of going back a good deal to the old system of having cattle in Skye more than sheep. Do you concur in that, or do you not?—If we had a better climate, I think he is

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right; but with this climate it would be very expensive to rear sufficient food for them. Sheep require little or no hand-feeding, but cattle do.

9747. Do you go out boating a great deal?—Yes.

9748. Is it consistent with your observation that there are valuable fishings about your coasts?—I believe so.

9749. You do not think these are falling off?—No, I do not think the cod and ling fishing is falling off. The herring fishing is, because, I think, of the Stornoway fishing.

9750. But you desire apparently larger boats and protection in the form of piers?—Yes.

9751. You think these two things would very much benefit your crofting population?—I think so.

9752. *The Chairman.*—At what age do the crofters generally sell their cattle?—They generally sell them at one-year-old, for this reason, that they have not sufficient land to keep them; but it would be to the advantage of the crofter if he could keep his stirk, and not sell it until it was older.

9753. As regards their sheep, do they sell the lambs?—Some sell their wedder lambs; some keep them till they are three-year-old wedders.

9754. Which is the most common practice?—I think keeping them as three-year-old wedders is the general practice.

9755. When you first recollect, what was the crofter's wedder worth on an average?—About five shillings, I should think.

9756. At three years old?—They had miserable sheep at that time. They had a small sheep which was peculiar to the country—very different animals from the sheep they have now.

9757. What is the crofter's wedder worth now?—I should think from thirty to thirty-five shillings.

9758. What was the two-year-old worth when you remember?—About £2 or 50s.

9759. Does the crofter now go to any greater expense in feeding his cattle, or is all the additional price pure gain?—He does feed them; being a superior breed of cattle, they require particular care and attention.

9760. Then he goes to some expense in preparing these animals for the market?—He does.

9761. Is there any sale of dairy produce or butter?—There is, to the merchants.

9762. By the crofters?—Yes; I sell none.

9763. Do they get much better prices than they formerly did?—They do; very much better.

9764. What would butter be worth per pound when you first recollect?—I cannot remember.

9765. What do they get now?—I am not very sure.

9766. But there is not very much sold, I suppose?—Not much.

9767. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—You live among your own people?—Very much.

9768. Your home is there?—Yes.

9769. And you move about among them constantly?—I do.

9770. I suppose you are acquainted with everybody upon your estate?—Yes.

9771. You know their condition and their circumstances?—Pretty well.

9772. If there is any grievance, is it made known to you personally?—Generally.

9773. You do not employ any factor?—No.

9774. You manage your own affairs?—Yes.

9775. Have there been any grievances addressed to you personally with

regard to the want of land, too high rents, or anything of that kind?—No. No representation of that sort has been made to me.

9776. Not until this Commission was appointed?—Not even since then.

9777. Since you came into possession of the estate, do you think the condition of the people is worse or better than it was before?—Better.

9778. Have you made any considerable increase on their rents?—No; I have not raised their rents one farthing. I do not think their rents have been raised for forty years, and you may understand that their condition must be improved to a considerable extent, because forty years ago the price of a stirk was £1 or 30s., and now it is £5.

9779. Do you think they are better or worse off in respect of food, clothing, education, and everything else, in their social condition, than they were when you came into possession of the property?—I do not say in regard to education. The children cannot be got to attend school. But as to food and clothing, I am satisfied they are better off.

9780. You think that their food is really more wholesome food, and that there is more of it than they had before?—Yes.

9781. Have you any recollection of their having at any time been reduced to the necessity of using shell-fish for want of any other food?—I have.

9782. Within your own recollection?—Within my own recollection.

9783. How long ago?—Upwards of forty years ago.

9784. Was that before the great potato failure in 1846?—Yes.

9785. Did they really to a considerable extent depend on shell-fish for their daily food?—In summer they did to a considerable extent, and there are heaps of shells still to be seen at their old houses.

9786. Has there been anything of that sort within recent years?—No.

9787. Do you think they have less milk now than they had forty years ago for themselves and their children?—Well, I daresay they have; but still I think they have a sufficiency of milk.

9788. Is there any family on your estate that does not keep a cow?—I am not aware of any except some cottars; but all the crofters have milk.

9789. With respect to the recreations of the people, have you noticed any difference since you were young? Is there less music and singing and gaiety than their used to be when you were young?—Much less.

9790. Do you consider that an improvement or the reverse?—I must say I like to hear them sing a song. I remember, when they used to manufacture kelp, it was pretty in the evening to hear them crossing in their boats and singing songs as they rowed along.

9791. And they used to sing songs when reaping the harvest?—Yes.

9792. Do they ever do so now?—No.

9793. What do you think is the chief cause of that?—I think the clergy rather discourage it.

9794. Do they impress people with the idea that all such amusements and songs are profane, and should rather be avoided than otherwise?—I don't think that. It is the abuse of these things that they complain of.

9795. Do you think they were abused?—I think they were, sometimes. Young men, when they sang songs of that kind, might be found carrying a bottle of whisky in their pocket, or something of that sort, and thus I daresay these amusements were abused.

9796. Do you think there is more or less whisky drunk now than there was forty years ago?—A great deal more, I am sorry to say. I believe that at the small inn in the village of Stein there is nearly as much whisky consumed as the value of the whole rent they pay to me.

9797. By the crofters on your estate?—Yes.

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Capt. Allan Macdonald.

9798. Drunk on the premises?—I cannot say about that; but it is landed at the inn there.

9799. That is the only inn on your property?—The only inn.

9800. *The Chairman.*—Has there not been a reaction of late years? Has the present temperance movement not reached the place?—I cannot say it has. The clergyman of the parish did something in that way, but I do not think he was very successful.

9801. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Has that inn been always there?—So far as I remember it always has.

9802. Is it required by the local circumstances, or is it more for strangers?—It is to a certain extent required because of the steamer calling there, and people landing from the steamer and going by the steamer.

9803. Then you do not see your way to remove it?—Not very well. I daresay there would be complaints if it were removed. Still it is no advantage to the district.

9804. Where is the nearest one to it?—At Dunvegan or Edinbane.

9805. Do you think the people themselves are sensible of the disadvantages of the inn in the way of temptation?—No doubt the heads of families are, but the young people are not sensible of them.

9806. Do you think, if there was any form of local option, the people would be inclined to vote it down?—I believe they would.

DONALD COLIN CAMERON, Tacksman of Tallisker (56)—examined.

Donald Colin Cameron.

9807. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Have you any statement to make?—No, I have no statement to make; I want to be questioned.

9808. *Mr Cameron.*—Have you observed in the newspapers the account of the meeting which the Commissioners held at Bracadale?—I have.

9809. Did you observe that we examined a witness named John M'Caskill?—Yes; he is a merchant, not a cottar.

9810. He made some statements which you no doubt would like to have an opportunity to explain?—Yes.

9811. M'Caskill, after comparing you to the Babylonians who came after the Assyrians, proceeded to say that another M'Caskill—your predecessor, I presume—had left a remnant of the people for his own convenience, but when Mr Cameron came to Tallisker he would have nothing to do with any of the people, and, as I understand, began to litigate, holding that their being allowed on the tack was not mentioned in the lease?—There was no litigation, but letters passed.

9812. Did you ever express any feeling of hostility towards the people you saw there?—No.

9813. So it is not the fact that you said you would have nothing to do with the people?—No.

9814. This witness also gave us in evidence that the cottars were obliged to work for the tacksman whenever he required them, and that the strongest man only got a shilling a day and a woman sixpence. Will you explain the nature of the arrangement between you and the crofters?—They are bound to work certain days, but I don't suppose there is a single cottar on the farm who has worked more than twenty days. They were bound to work as I wanted them, but I never pressed them much. In summer I have four hired women to prevent me sending for these people. When I want them on certain occasions they get a shilling a day and their food.

9815. What food do they get?—Porridge and milk for breakfast, and flour scones and meat and broth or potatoes for dinner.

9816. Do you suppose they get better food when working with you than when working at home?—I should think they do.

9817. What would that add to the value of their labour?—A shilling a day. At smearing time I allow them 2s. 6d. a day and board and lodging.

9818. How long does smearing last?—About one month, and as soon as the smearing is done the money is paid down that very night or next morning.

9819. So, for one month of the year—and that not a month of the year when they get much work—they receive 2s. 6d. a day and their board?—Yes.

9820. What arrangements are there in regard to the rent for the houses which they occupy on your farm?—They do not pay any rent for the houses. Matheson, who is a merchant in Carabost, pays no rent; for the last two or three years he has been paying rent for his father-in-law.

9821. Was there any bad feeling between you and John M'Caskill?—Yes, there was.

9822. How did it arise?—I cannot say at all; but Mr Macdonald, the factor, knows I never wanted to evict him. I had him warned through Mr Macdonald, but Mr Macdonald can state that I never wanted to evict him. I only wanted to bring him to his senses. His brother came to me to get the man back, and he got it, and since then he has built a house with stone and lime, which shows he is not afraid of being evicted.

9823. How did he make the money to build a stone and lime house?—He is a shoemaker and keeps one or two men employed, and keeps a shop, dealing with his neighbours.

9824. Had he any quarrel with you about the shop?—I wanted himself or his brother to work when I desired him, and he declined.

9825. You had no quarrel with him about the shop?—No, never.

9826. But because he did not choose to fulfil the conditions on which he had the holding?—Yes; because he would not take his turn of work when I wanted him with the other people, and the other people would say —'Why do we come to work when the other man is let off?'

9827. He said that he and his mother, who was about seventy-five years of age, were served with summonses to remove because he refused to work?—Yes; because the house was hers. He had two brothers living in the house and a sister, and if the sister had gone to work occasionally, I would have been as content as with himself; but the family refused to work at all.

9828. Have you had any trouble with any of the other cottars?—No.

9829. You believe they are all well-disposed to you?—Yes. Not one of them appeared at the meeting at Bracadale.

9830. You mean the meeting previous to the arrival of the Commissioners?—At the meeting to appoint delegates, not a soul of my crofters appeared except John M'Caskill.

9831. Who was at the meeting then?—The people on the other side.

9832. And they elected John M'Caskill?—Yes; and at the meeting the other day none of the crofters appeared against me except this John M'Caskill.

9833. Do you suppose there was any undue influence used to get M'Caskill elected?—No; but there was a female emissary sent round to arouse my people to come, and appear against me, and not one of them went. I was told—I cannot vouch for the truth of it, but I will get at it yet—that a new dress was offered to one of my oldest crofters to induce him to appear against me—a man named Malcolm Cameron—and the old man said that he had as much land as he wanted, and that he would not appear.

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9834. You mean, to appear against you before the Commissioners?—Yes; he was appointed, I believe, but he never attended the meeting of delegates.

9835. To turn to another branch of the subject, on your farm of Talisker, there is a great deal of land which was formerly occupied by crofters?—There is a great deal of land.

9836. In your opinion, could that land be resumed by crofters with advantage to themselves and with advantage to the landlord, and also without doing irreparable damage to the rest of the hill ground?—I think it would do great damage to the rest of the hill ground, because they would have the best and the tenant would have the worst.

9837. But if it were done in moderation—that is, not the whole of the low ground taken, but a certain quantity of the farm taken and divided into small holdings—would that interfere with the whole of Talisker?—Yes, I should let them have the hill land with the low land.

9838. And suppose they could not stock the hill land, what then?—That is a question between themselves and the landlord.

9839. But you think it would not answer to give them the low land without the hill land?—Yes, I have told Macleod that before.

9840. Would it not be possible in this way—supposing they had good-sized crofts, and cultivated them fairly and well according to modern skill, using their best endeavours to make the land what it should be, and supposing the tacksman should then have the right, on paying for it to the crofters, of a run over the land for his sheep in winter?—I do not see how that would work. It would be better to give them good-sized crofts and hill pasture as well, and let them keep sheep of their own.

9841. You are aware that in some parts of the mainland that system is adopted and found very beneficial, and sometimes they get one-third of the rent back from the tacksman?—I do not see how that would work upon Talisker.

9842. You know my part of the country?—Yes; you have a good deal more of high land than I have.

9843. And that is all the more reason for the tacksman wanting to winter his sheep in some good place?—Well, I do not see how it would work.

9844. But, as I understand, the lease to the tacksman would be a lease of low land for his sheep in winter?—Yes.

9845. If he had, by arrangement entered into with consent of the landlord, the right of running his sheep over the same land, and perhaps with the advantage of sown grass, which he has not now, would that not pay and enable him to pay money to the crofter instead of to the landlord?—Well, you see, we put the sheep up to the top every afternoon at one o'clock. We have them below in the forenoon, and we put them up in the afternoon to get shelter and dry beds, which they could not have on cultivated land.

9846. Could you not move them from the cultivated land in the same way as you do now?—Well, I doubt there would be nothing for them to eat.

9847. You admit it is done in other parts of the country, where the land is worse than on your farm?—Yes; but you have more heather in Lochaber than we have. It is all green land.

9848. Can you suggest anything that might be done, so far as lies within your knowledge, to improve the position of the cottars on the land under your occupation?—I would give them more land decidedly. The proprietor should do it.

9849. Where would you give it?—On differents parts of the farm, wherever he wanted.

9850. On your farm?—Yes.

9851. I understood you to say that none of it could be spared.—Oh after my lease is out.

9852. You do not suppose that I imagine anything could be done during the currency of your lease, because neither landlord nor anybody else can break that agreement; but I am talking of the interests of the country in the future, and what might be done if opportunity arose, and I am glad to find you think that the cottars on the farm of Tallisker might be allowed to have more land without detriment to the sheep farmer?—Well, of course, the farmer would require to get a deduction of rent.

9853. Of course, proportionate to the land taken from him?—Yes.

9854. But do you think it would be such an injury to the sheep farmer as would render it almost impossible to let the bulk of your high hill grazing?—You would require to keep fewer sheep, and the rent would be reduced. It is altogether a question with the landlord.

9855. Then do you say that you approve of the cottars getting more land after your lease expires?—What I should like to see done is to give the crofters low land and hill land as well.

9856. And to take it off that portion of the farm of Tallisker which would not interfere with the letting of the rest?—And the tenant to get valuation for what is taken off.

9857. What tenant?—The tacksman.

9858. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—What is the extent of your farm of Tallisker?—Between 11,000 and 12,000 acres.

9859. How much old arable land do you suppose is on it—land that was once cultivated?—Several thousand acres—perhaps 2000 acres—that had been under cultivation perhaps sixty or seventy years ago.

9860. How many people are on your farm of Talisker altogether—shepherds, servants, and cottars?—Over 200.

9861. How many would you find it necessary to have to work your farm supposing there were no cottars there?—I have nine shepherds, two married ploughmen, and a gardener.

9862. Are these all the out servants?—Yes.

9863. The nine shepherds are dotted about the whole of the farm?—They are scattered all over the farm.

9864. And that is the staff which you ordinarily require to work the farm?—Yes, except for a few weeks in summer. I only cultivate 25 acres altogether, and I require a few people now and again to assist in securing the crop and at the clipping.

9865. Do you know a place called Cuillore?—Yes; that is on Mr Scott's farm.

9866. Do you think it hard to see so many people on that small township and so much of Dnirinish in the hands of one man?—I always heard of Mr Scott that he was exceedingly kind to his people.

9867. I am putting the general question. Don't you think it hard to see so many of your fellow-countrymen crowded together and living on that small spot, and thousands upon thousands of acres in the hands of one man?—I decline to answer that question; I don't know much about it. However, if you press me to give an answer, I think they would be better off if they had more room.

9868. Did I understand you to state, in reply to Lochiel, that there are parts of your farm that could be sliced off, hill ground and low ground?—Or fenced off.

9869. That would provide a good number of nice crofts paying from £10 to £30 of rent, and still leave a very handsome remainder for a big farm?—Yes, that could be done no doubt out of 10,000 or 11,000 acres.

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9870. How long has your lease to run?—Seven years.

9871. Have you a break in your lease?—No, I wish I had.

9872. Supposing your lease were expiring next year, would you renew it on the same terms?—I could not.

9873. It is not merely that you would not, but you could not?—I could not with profit to myself.

9874. Do you think that small crofters such as I have referred to would be able to pay in proportion as much as you pay?—I don't think it.

9875. We have always heard that stated?—I don't think it.

9876. Tell me why you think that?—Because families of crofters living on £30 crofts would be rather expensive in their habits. They could not all make a living out of the land at the rent I pay; but if they got it cheap enough, I have no doubt they could.

9877. Then do you put it in this form, that if 10,000 acres of land in the possession of one man were divided amongst thirty, it is impossible for those thirty to pay such a rent as the one man pays?—I say so honestly, the landlord would suffer in his purse.

9878. *The Chairman.*—What is the position of your dwelling-house; are you near the sea or in the interior?—About a quarter of a mile from the sea.

9879. Are you sheltered from the sea?—Yes, very well sheltered.

9880. Is the house on high ground?—No, it is only 20 feet above high-water mark.

9881. Have you a good garden?—Very good.

9882. A walled garden?—No, there is a hedge round about it.

9883. A good deal has been said in the south of Scotland of the capacity these islands might have for growing garden vegetables for the supply of Glasgow or the great towns generally, have you found that garden vegetables thrive well?—Well, in some seasons they do; but one gale of wind may destroy the whole garden, as it did in October last year. I had not a single cabbage in my garden that I could eat last winter after that gale.

9884. What vegetables of the better sort do you cultivate besides cabbages?—Carrots, beetroot, peas, and beans; but sometimes a gale of wind comes and knocks the peas down, so that I have none.

9885. Do you think that garden vegetables are a precarious crop?—I should say so most decidedly.

9886. Then you can hardly imagine that the crofters, with all the industry possible, would be able to raise vegetables for exportation?—Nothing but potatoes, if the potatoes would grow.

9887. Of late years, have you found the potatoes in your garden and fields deteriorating?—I had not a single potato after the month of April last year, they all rotted in the field.

9888. Have you changed your seed occasionally?—Every second year, and the potatoes were like nuts or small apples.

9889. You consider the potato very precarious?—Most precarious. No man in the Highlands should depend upon it.

9890. Have you any small fruits, such as currants and gooseberries?—Yes, and a few apples and pears.

9891. Do they grow and ripen well?—In dry seasons they do, but not in wet seasons.

9892. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—You said you employed smearers at 2s. 6d. a day; are these all your own cottars?—Not all my own. I would take as many as would come, but I have to get people.

9893. How many cottars have you on whom you can call to do your

work at 1s. a day?—Between men and women, about twenty, I should think; but I never have more than three or four at a time.

9894. But there are about twenty families?—Yes, about twenty families.

9895. And you can call either for male labour at 1s. or female labour at 6d.?—Yes, with their food; but I never insist upon it except in the case of those who remain at home. I never prevent a man going away to earn his living.

9896. Have any of them ever offered to pay you a rent instead of doing you service?—Never, except M'Caskill.

9897. Did you decline it?—Yes, because the rest would say they should do the same. I wish to say that not a man on my farm worked twenty days last year. I have not had a single crofter working for me since the beginning of November.

9898. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You stated a little ago that you had never troubled a man for not working for you?—If he was at home I would certainly trouble him, but I never prevent a man going away to other work.

9899. In consequence of that answer, I must put a specific question to you. Did you know a man named Murdoch Stewart?—I did.

9900. Did you put him out of his place for not coming from the south to attend smearing?—I was away in the militia at the time, and I could not get hands to work for me, and he and another man named M'Diarmid, when they saw I was away, took advantage and stayed away. They were bound to come and smear wherever they were. I had only half my number of smearers that year, and I certainly warned them, and they went away. He worked in the south during the time. I had him warned next summer after he came home.

9901. Did he go?—He went, and he is far better to-day than he would be with me.

9902. But I understand he is not pleased with you for doing it?—Well, I don't know at all.

9903. What family has he?—I think he is in Portree.

9904. Do you know there is one of them in the room listening to you?—No, but I am sure he is far better off than he would be with me.

9905. He was just selected as an example, I suppose?—That is so.

9906. *The Chairman.*—Did you find that system of obligation to labour in force when you entered the farm?—Yes.

9907. How many years ago did you enter?—Thirty-three years ago.

9908. What was the rate of wages you paid at that time?—One shilling a day to the men and food.

9909. And 6d. a day and food to the women?—Yes.

9910. And it is the same now?—Yes.

9911. During those thirty years has the rate of wages generally risen in the country?—I think so.

9912. Did it ever occur to you that it would be equitable to make some rise in your wages corresponding to the general rise of wages in the country?—They never made a complaint to me, and they were willing to come.

9913. You say that a man does not work more than twenty days in the year?—I am sure not.

9914. That would be at the present rate of free wages worth about 50s.?—Yes.

9915. It is a considerable tax upon a man's earnings in the year?—Yes.

9916. Does a man get three full meals during the day?—Only two.

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9917. And a woman the same?—Yes.

9918. Is the food carried to them in the fields?—No, they get it in my own kitchen, and they feed with my own house servants.

9919. You mentioned the number of labourers, such as shepherds, in your employment. Have you any drainers?—There are four men from Bracadale who drain for me sometimes, and those four men earn £60, £70, or £80 a year. They take draining by contract.

9920. Could the cottars not do that description of work?—Well, they don't care for it.

9921. You have the system of superficial drainage that we have in the lowlands?—Yes. They only clean the drains. I give them 8s. 6d. for 100 roods for cleaning. I have just these four men who come to me year after year, and I don't like to part with them. Before I leave, I should like to mention that I have a man in my employment who has been fifty-seven years on the farm. He was guide to Sir Walter Scott in 1814 when he came to see Coruisk.

9922. What is his age?—Eighty-three. His name is John Cameron, Tuisdale. I have the son of the first shepherd whom my father engaged in 1815. His son is herding for me still.

9923. Do you mean that father and son since 1815 have been in your employment?—Yes, and I have another man who went into my father's service in 1825. I have his two sons in my employment; and I have another man whose father entered my father's service before I was born, in 1826. He died after being three years with me, and his son took his place. My gardener has been thirty-three years in my employment. I just state these facts that you may not think I am such a monster of iniquity as some would have me appear.

DONALD C. CAMERON, Tacksman of Glen Brittle—examined.

Donald C. Cameron.

9924. *The Chairman.*—You wish to make a statement in relation to what has been laid before the Commission?—I do. There were two witnesses from Soay who stated that there had been actual starvation, and that the people in Soay had been obliged to live on a dead stirk, and that they had no meal in the island. I never heard of such a thing, but I know that for a week the poor people were storm-stayed by weather. I believe they have no cause for complaint, and not one of the men would look me in the face the day they were there, and I could not catch their eye. They would not look me in the face, and they made statements which were not correct. I believe that the delegates whose evidence I have heard and read in the papers have told untruths—that is to say, they have drawn their statements from the place where fancy is bred. I agree with all that has been said against the delegates, and I believe that they are inspired by the Free Church, and that these are the Fenians we have—not the Free Church of the south, but the Free Church north of the Caledonian Canal—the Free Church that kept the people unbaptised; the Free Church that had seventeen bastards on one island; the Free Church that never visited, but sent ignorant unlettered men about the place to spread discontent among the people. That is my experience. I have been thirty years on my present farm. I am sorry for it. The Gaelic and the Free Church and the want of education are the curse of Skye. That is all the statement I have to make.

9925. You must not be led to use violent expressions, such as stating that any form of church is a curse to the country.—I am a Christian;

that is my reason. They teach false doctrine—Ultra-Calvinism. I am quite ready to go in and discuss the question with anybody.

9926. Let us rather proceed to the question of the hardships of Soay. We had a very unfavourable account of its condition—that it was a very poor, cold, unprofitable place, that the soil was exhausted, and that the people were in a very depressed condition. Is that your experience of the island, or can you give a better account of it?—The island is there to speak for itself, if anybody goes and sees it.

9927. But I have never conversed with it?—Seeing is believing in this country. You cannot believe anything except what you see and what you have experienced. I have had all my friends abused, and is it after the manner of brave men to abuse the dead? Why, they have abused my predecessor, Mr M'Caskill, and called him all the names they could lay their tongues to, in spite of friendship, and blood, and relationship, and all the rest of it. It is not the people, but they are inspired to do it.

9928. Now, you have been a long time in the country; let us rather hear a deliberate expression of your opinion upon practical questions. Do you think with reference to the island of which you spoke, that it is a place unfit for habitation and cultivation, or is it just as good as other places?—Far from it. It is not fit for cultivation. None of this country is, but it is a splendid fishing station, and the people of Soay are supposed to be the best off and most comfortable in the district from which I come.

9929. Do they make a great deal of money by fishing?—No, because they are too lazy. They make just what will keep them alive, and that is all they want.

9930. You have heard what has been said. Without alluding to the exaggerations which you think have taken place on the part of the crofters, do you think, looking calmly at their condition, that their condition is, and has lately been, getting worse, or do you think it is getting better?—When I first came to the country I never saw a shoe on anybody's foot. They went to the peats barefooted, and when I walked on the hill and came to the peat bog the prints on the moss were those of the naked feet. To-day it is nothing but fine new shoes and Balmoral boots, and the girls wear ulsters and bonnets.

9931. We have heard a great deal about exhaustion of the soil in consequence of constant cropping, and diminished holdings, and divided holdings; is that consistent with your experience?—In the district where I am there are no crofters—only some miserable cottars whom I found there, and I exact no rent from them; but I allow them to keep cows for nothing, because I came there to found a home, if I could, under the form of speculation.

9932. Have you found those cottars useful labourers in connection with the farm?—They would not do a turn unless I had the power to take a stick to them.

9933. How have you found your own industry—sheep farming? Is that as profitable as it was?—It did very well until I foolishly went into competition with speculators and gave too big a rent, and wool went down in price, and I have been losing money of late years.

9934. Well, your account of all classes and all interests is discouraging. Can you suggest anything that could be done to improve the state of the place?—Emigration. I look upon the cottars as much more comfortable in this country—that is to say, if they get leave to keep a cow—than the crofters are. Crofters in this country are very hard-worked, and have very bad times of it. As one man expressed it to me, he had to work all the day with a hold of his cow's tail, whereas a cottar has leave to send his cow where he likes—it may walk five miles—and it gets plenty to eat;

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but the crofter's cow, outside the dyke that hems it in, is as bare as the road. That is what they state to me. The cottars are very comfortable.

DUGALD MACLACHLAN, Bank Agent and Clerk of Court at Portree (41)—examined.

Dugald Maclachlan.

9935. *Professor Mackinnon.*—How long have you been in Skye?—I came to Skye in 1856, and since then I have been resident in Skye, except for about six years, when I was abroad.

9936. So you have known Skye almost all your life?—I may say I have.

9937. And of late years you have known the whole island?—Yes, pretty much.

9938. And the condition of the people?—Yes, generally.

9939. Especially those of the crofting class?—Yes, I may say I know a good deal of their condition.

9940. I need not ask you if you have read the evidence, for you heard it all. Do you agree in the main with the description which the delegates of the crofters throughout Skye have given of their own condition?—Yes, I do, most certainly.

9941. You believe it is a fair statement of their condition?—I believe that their condition is very poor as a rule—that they live from hand to mouth.

9942. And even putting last year out of question, that it is getting poorer?—I must say that is my impression. They cannot stand a bad year. When a bad year comes they go to the wall at once.

9943. The main cause which they themselves give as accounting for that state of matters is the small holdings?—Yes.

9944. Do you agree with that?—Yes, I do, so far as my knowledge enables me to judge.

9945. You believe that is the main cause of it all?—Yes, I do.

9946. And almost the sole remedy that they themselves suggested was to increase these holdings?—To increase these holdings. I may say that I am an emigration agent, and I have the honour of representing the colony of Queensland in this country as emigration agent. I have heard the opinions of the crofters on the subject of emigration, and, of course, there is but very little inclination that way.

9947. You have heard them express their opinions among themselves for a number of years past?—I have.

9948. Putting it broadly, were the opinions which they have expressed in this inquiry much to the same effect as those you have heard for some years back?—Very much, except as to some of their petty grievances which have come out here.

9949. But the great cause of the distress, and the great remedy for it, which they expressed here, they have been in the habit of expressing pretty generally from year to year?—Yes, for a long time past.

9950. Do you yourself agree that if it was practicable to increase these holdings such a scheme would reasonably be expected to remove at least a part of the present distress?—I think so, certainly.

9951. Of course, we all know there is plenty of land in Skye to give the people enlarged holdings; but have you considered the question of framing a practicable scheme, supposing it were agreed upon?—Well, it is a subject upon which all of us have been thinking for these last years—we

who live by dealing with the producers of wealth in the country—and it is a very serious problem.

9952. What solution of the problem would you be prepared to recommend, to make it practicable for them to acquire larger holdings?—Generally speaking, the crofters themselves—a very large number, at all events—would not be able to stock these holdings, but there are many of them no doubt who would be able to stock very considerable holdings. But the difficulty would remain, what to do with those who are not able. In the course of applying the remedy of increased holdings, there is no doubt the landlord's interest would have to be taken into account, and conserved out of some fund or other, and also that the tenant should be helped to stock these larger holdings. So far as I personally am concerned, my opinion is that there is a fund just now in existence which is of very little service in many parts of the Highlands, and which could profitably be applied in that way, both to enable the tenant to stock his holding and to compensate the proprietor for any loss.

9953. Have you any objection to name that fund?—I may as well come out with it; it is the funds of the Established Church. I think it would be very much better to apply them to that purpose than to keep them as they are. I think it would be a very great privilege that Christians should be enabled to pay for their own religion.

9954. It would be a natural question to ask, whether those who have undertaken to pay for their own religion in this part of the country are able to pay for it, but we had better not pursue that?—Yes, they do that, because those who pay for religion here are mostly of the class to which our Saviour called attention when he saw the widow casting her mites into the treasury. They are those who would share their last mite for the cause of Christ.

9955. I suppose you would not think of taking the funds belonging to the Church itself. That would be reserved for the State to put it on the proper footing?—Well, though I have come out here in that way, I have not fully considered the scheme. The fund is there—the money is there—and what we say in the Highlands generally is that it might be much better applied.

9956. Have you considered to what extent that remedy would be sufficient for Skye?—No, but I know it would be sufficient to a very considerable extent.

9957. In the first place, there are a good number of crofters who would be able themselves to stock crofts?—Yes.

9958. In the second place, there are some who would require a good deal of assistance?—Yes.

9959. Now, supposing you capitalised the whole ecclesiastical revenue of Skye, would you exhaust it all?—I cannot say; that is a matter of calculation.

9960. *The Chairman.*—Then would you make a rapid calculation?—Perhaps the funds of the Established Church in Skye may be worth some £3000 a year.—[*Rev. Mr Darroch.* Not half of it.] That is between the value of the glebes and the stipends.

9961. *Professor Mackinnon.*—What is the average value of the livings of the Established Church in this island—£350 a year?—No, I would not say that.

9962. £300?—Perhaps £250 or £300.

9963. With the glebe?—With the glebe it might be £350.

9964. How many livings are there?—Nine.

9965. That is £3150. Multiplying that by 25, it brings out £78,750. So far as that goes, there would be no interest to be paid back upon it?—No.

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9966. How would you distribute it? Would not those who are decently well off require their share of it as well as those who are not?—Possibly.

9967. It would be a capitation grant?—It would be very difficult to judge who was able and who was not, because you could scarcely pry into the private affairs of each crofter.

9968. Would you not compel any one, before you gave him assistance, to make some statement of his affairs?—I would not be prepared all at once to go into the details of the method of applying the scheme, but I only state broadly that that appears to me to be a fund which ought to be made available for some useful public purpose, and let the good people of the Established Church, who compose, generally speaking, in this country the wealthiest portion of the community, have the privilege of paying for their own Church.

9969. There was a great deal said about the conditions on which these enlarged holdings should be given to the people. Have you formed an idea in your own mind what reasonable conditions should be imposed?—Of course, we repeat the parrot cry of fixity of tenure.

9970. What is meant by that?—Just that the tenant should not be removed at the will of the landlord, so long as he paid his rent, and a fair rent.

9971. How would the rent be determined?—By some neutral party.

9972. And revalued how often?—Very much on the lines of the Irish Land Bill, namely, once in every fifteen years. There is practically such a valuation periodically now in the country. We know it by the name of summing. That amounts to the same thing.

9973. And so long as the tenant pays his rent, he is not to be removed?—Yes.

9974. I asked a question of a gentleman before about the right of succession to such a croft. Have you anything to say upon that subject? Would you allow the croft to descend from father to son?—Yes, I should certainly think so.

9975. Would the one who was allowed to succeed be obliged to buy out the rest of the family?—Yes, I should think so.

9976. You would on no account subdivide the croft?—No; I would certainly be against subdivision.

9977. And if he was unable to buy out the rest, what then?—It would be subject to the rules of the market.

9978. Would it become the proprietor's?—I suppose then it would come into public competition. Some other crofter might be got to take it.

9979. Would you say that the tenant might then be entitled to sell it to the highest bidder?—I would rather be afraid to adopt such a plan, because it might end in the same state of matters of which we are now complaining. It might end in such high rents being exacted as would induce the distress of which we are now complaining.

9980. What is the minimum croft you would make under this scheme?—These are really matters which are pretty much outside my business.

9981. You have given a good deal of attention to the matter?—I could not help doing that, because I come so much in contact with the people who are principally interested.

9982. What would be the amount of stock you would have upon the lowest sized croft?—I would not believe much in crofts which were not of sufficient size to enable a family to live in comfort, and I would say that such a croft would be one upon which a tenant could keep six cows, thirty to forty or fifty sheep, and a horse, with perhaps twenty to thirty acres of arable land. I have been considering the matter, and of course I speak very much from hearsay, but I have had the opinion of a very considerable number of crofters as to the kind of croft they would consider a

comfortable croft, and though my figures are at second hand, I may say that just about an hour ago I took the figures which I have now given from a crofter of very great experience and knowledge. His idea of a good croft, as I have said, is twenty acres arable, with a stock of six cows, one horse, and fifty sheep.

9983. And the rent would be fixed by a valuator?—The rent would be fixed by a valuator, and would amount to a certain proportion of the profits of the croft.

9984. Then you would have the arable ground fenced off, I presume, in a croft of that size?—I should think so.

9985. And the hill pasture might be worked upon the club system?—I think so.

9986. These figures would be the minimum croft, but you would have a gradation right up?—I would have a gradation right up to the peasant proprietor. I would like to see the path opened up to the Highlander not only to work a comfortably sized croft with profit and comfort to himself, but to work himself into the proprietorship of it.

9987. I understand your claim to fixity of tenure practically meant that?—Practically it does.

9988. But you would not confine all the crofts to much the same size?—Would you not allow a gradation among them, so that a man might be able to get one, two, or three times as big a croft as you have mentioned?—I think so.

9989. And still leave large farms in the country?—Oh, there ought to be plenty of room in Skye for sufficiently large farms as well as for the accommodation and comfortable living of a very great number of small farmers, and that is what we desiderate in the country.

9990. Do you think there is a sufficient amount of available land in Skye at the present moment to make such a scheme as that feasible with its present population?—That is a question of statistics and calculation into which I have not gone, but there is no doubt that any one who goes along the roads in Skye and looks right and left must see immense tracts of country which are suitable for the occupancy of small farmers. You see them uninhabited by human beings.

9991. Don't you think that for such a scheme as that the present population is too large?—Possibly it may be.

9992. What would you do with the overplus?—I have heard of a scheme of emigration. I would certainly encourage those who are willing to emigrate, but I would be very sorry indeed to see the people emigrate.

9993. Even although you are an emigration agent?—Yes, I think it would be a loss to the kingdom, for a more loyal set of subjects could not be found.

9994. At the same time, of course, you know perfectly well that, under any conditions whatsoever, in a place like this there must always be an overflow of people?—I would like to see the country so comfortable as that there would be just a natural outflow of people to the waste places of the world, to accomplish what Providence seems to be in course of accomplishing—giving the government of the world to this nation, to the English-speaking people.

9995. But don't you think there is room at this moment for several Skye men to go and occupy waste places elsewhere?—Yes, there is plenty of room in foreign countries.

9996. So, even if your scheme were practicable at home, it would be necessary to carry on the other scheme along with it from the present time?—Yes, I would certainly agree to the promotion of a scheme of emigration, which would enable those who are so minded, and who con-

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sider it better for them to leave the country, to do so, but hand in hand with that I should like to see an effort made by the legislature to provide comfortable livings, and to see to it that the people in the country have elbow room at home.

9997. You spoke of those who were so minded, but would it not require to be compulsory?—Oh, dear no; don't speak of compulsion.

9998. On your scheme of the future, where would you put the people if the crofts were not subdivided?—If they saw there was no room at home, they would fast enough go abroad.

9999. It does not look like it just now?—We have had several reasons for that. The people are so poor that they must go to Glasgow and the south, or to the fishing, to earn money for their families. They cannot go far; they must always remain, as it were, in sight of home.

10000. Has it not been the case that hitherto poverty at home was the great motive power for emigration over the world, and that people emigrated more largely when ill off than when wealthy?—Yes, certainly.

10001. How can you expect then that in the future people will voluntarily go away when they are comfortable, and will not allow the crofts to be subdivided?—My idea is that if the sons of the family were so numerous that they could afford an overplus when they saw their people comfortable at home, they could, without any reluctance or compunction, leave the old folks, and go and cut out a living for themselves elsewhere.

10002. Just as you see in Skye and elsewhere at present, in the case of people who are comfortably off, that the families scatter easily?—Yes.

10003. Do you think that the sole cause of the objection to emigrate on the part of those who are not so well off is that they wish to remain at home in order to attend to their parents?—I don't say that is the sole reason, but it is a very powerful reason.

10004. Do you think it is the chief reason?—I might almost say it is. The ties of affection are very strong amongst Highland families, and they especially love their native soil.

10005. Is that not the case when they are well off just as when they are badly off?—Yes, but when they picture the old people in misery lying on the straw at night, and covered with meal bags instead of blankets, they cannot have the heart to go very far from home.

10006. Don't you think there ought to be some among them that would say, 'Rather than lie along with them in that way, I would emigrate and 'send home to them the price of a blanket?'—Well, they ought certainly.

10007. But you suggest that if they were becoming more comfortable the people themselves would work out the problem by going away?—Yes, I say so. When I speak about meal bags, I don't mean every case, but I speak of instances of which I have had believable testimony on one or two properties in Skye. Certainly it is not the case on other properties that I know.

10008. Have you paid much attention to the education of the district under the administration of the Act of 1872?—No, not very much.

10009. We all understand that the education of the island has not been taken advantage of so much as one would wish, but is it your belief that there are a greater number of children receiving elementary education here than was the case thirteen or fourteen years ago?—I believe so, but there are people who are better able to judge of that than I am. I know that within my short memory in Portree, say fifteen or twenty years ago, the number of children attending school in Portree was very much smaller than it is now.

10010. But it is admitted that the compulsory clause of the Educati n

Act has not been worked so successfully in Skye as we might reasonably expect?—No.

10011. Are you able to suggest any remedy by which matters might be improved in that respect?—I hear people who ought to know complaining of the action of some school boards—that they are too stingy with their salaries, and don't encourage a proper class of teachers.

10012. The buildings are excellent at any rate?—The buildings are excellent, but you will never get a proper teacher without offering an inducing salary.

10013. There was a statement made to-day upon which I should like to ask your opinion as a banker, but I am not very sure whether you feel yourself entitled to speak about it. From your knowledge as a banker, are you able to give us the benefit of that knowledge as to the circumstances of the people?—To a certain extent I am.

10014. Mr Macdonald, Tormore, in part of his evidence, without making a specific statement, so far as I understood him, left upon us the impression—and I thought it was meant we should have the impression—that a large number of deposits in the banks in Portree, amounting, as he supposed, to something like £200,000, must be in the name of the crofter class, because he supposed the proprietors would not, or could not, deposit there, and that the large tacksmen did not, and therefore it was left to be inferred that the great proportion belonged to the crofter class. Can you confirm that statement?—I cannot by any means; he is under a very great mistake.

10015. Of course, if I found any reason to believe it was the case, I could almost see my way to your scheme being worked out without trenching on the funds of the Established Church?—Oh no, I don't see it.

10016. You don't see how you could do without the funds of the church?—I don't see it.

10017. So far as the means of the crofters, to the best of your knowledge, are concerned?—No, I don't think it. There may be a good proportion of the crofters who might be able to provide stock.

10018. You believe there are a considerable number who would be able to take a croft if they got it, and others who would require more or less assistance?—Quite so.

10019. But still a large margin who simply could not?—Who simply could not.

10020. Who have nothing?—And worse than nothing, as we have heard.

10021. In that respect you generally concur with and back up the statements that were made by the delegates of the crofters themselves?—Yes, upon the whole. The crofters on the north end of the island are worse off, I believe, than the crofters anywhere else on the island.

10022. That was attributed to the system of bills that was carried on? Did you observe in one of the papers that the banks were said to charge 10 to 15 per cent.?—Yes, and that is a complete mistake.

10023. The ordinary rate is charged, and that is all?—The ordinary rate, as fixed by the Council of Bankers in Edinburgh.

10024. And the difference between that and 10 or 15 per cent. is charged by another person?—10 or 15 per cent. is never charged. As I understand the evidence of the delegate referred to—when he spoke of 2s., 2s. 6d., and 3s. being charged for accommodation bills, that referred entirely to what the securities charged, which was beyond the knowledge of the bank agent, though he might by a round-about way come to know that there was something charged. There was another delegate of whom the question was asked, in that end of the country, what interest was generally paid to the banks, and he said about 5 per cent., or 1s. in the £.

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10025. The interest to the bank is the ordinary discount rate?—Yes.

10026. And this 10 to 15 per cent., if it exists at all, is paid to quite different parties?—Yes, it is an outside transaction between themselves, with which the bank agent has nothing to do at all.

10027. *Mr Cameron.*—Do you consider that the actual rents paid by the crofters in Skye are high, or the reverse?—I judge very much by hearsay, and we have heard a good number of them say they would rather pay three times what they pay for a croft three times the present size than be on the present croft, though they should get it for nothing.

10028. That is hardly an answer to my inquiry, because nobody could have a croft for nothing. Taking the value of the land and the produce got out of it, do you consider that the present rents are too high, taking them all over?—I think that the rent which the proprietor might, under present circumstances, reasonably expect would be too high to charge a crofter, and I think for the difference there ought to be some way of compensating him. Although in Skye here we may be credited with advanced ideas on the land question, we never would dream of advocating a policy of spoliation of the landlords. We wish to repudiate that most sincerely.

10029. Then you would not be apprehensive that, under a system of valuation by a neutral person, the rents might be raised beyond what they are now?—No, I would not. I see that the same system is adopted under the Irish Land Bill, and I don't see why it should not work successfully in this country.

10030. That, of course, would depend upon the rents not being too high?—Yes.

10031. Supposing that the rents were not too high in this country, but very moderate, would you feel any apprehension that under the system you propose, instead of being decreased, they might be increased?—I don't think they would be increased.—[*Mr Alexander Macdonald.* I just wish to say one word about the banks and deposits—namely, that no person in Skye, I believe, can tell the amount of deposits in the banks. I don't know myself, though I am agent for one of them. Mr Maclachlan is agent for another, and he does not know; and Mr Skene is agent for another, and he does not know. We all keep our own secrets, and no one in Skye has the slightest idea of the amount of deposits in the three banks].

10032. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—You propose to adopt fixity of tenure. Do you mean to adopt it before the crofts are enlarged, or to confirm the present state of things?—The present state of things, with enlarged holdings.

10033. But with the holdings as they are, do you wish to establish fixity of tenure?—I would wish that it should not be in the power of the laird or factor arbitrarily to evict any man so long as he paid his rent.

10034. Even with the present small holdings?—Yes, most certainly, even with the present small holdings. If an eviction took place, I should like to see it carried out in the same way in which I saw it carried out in the property of Mr Macdonald at Skeabost, which was done in a proper spirit and in a proper form. There was a tenant in the township who made himself very disagreeable to the rest of them, and the whole of the township joined in a petition to the landlord to have him removed, and the landlord gave effect to their desire.

10035. If you had fixity of tenure, of course you could not have removals?—No.

10036. In regard to the school salaries, you said that the salaries in Skye are very low?—Yes, I hear the complaint general.

10037. Do you think that tends towards making the education given

here inefficient in character?—Well, it tends in many instances to keep schools vacant for months in the year.

10038. And not to procure the best class of teachers to fill them?—Yes, certainly.

10039. And probably the children don't make the same progress under these second-class teachers?—I believe it would be the cheapest way to employ a good teacher at first, and so earn a larger amount of grant.

10040. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You have the records of the sheriff court under your charge, I believe?—Yes.

10041. Have you prepared a list of the decrees of the court for some time back?—I attempted to do it, but it involved so much work that I have not been able to complete it.

10042. Will you make up and hand in a correct statement?—I will. I should like to verify it before giving it in. I have made up a list of decrees of removal from agricultural small holdings since 1840.

10043. You will hand it in to the Commission by-and-by?—Yes, when I have verified it to the best of my knowledge.

10044. *Mr Cameron.*—Will the date of each be mentioned?—Each year.

10045. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—What number do they amount to?—Roughly, they amount to 2046 decrees of removal proceeding upon summonses of removal.*

10046. Are these extracted?—They are extractable decrees. They may not have been extracted. It cannot be known to what extent these decrees were acted on.

10047. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Is that what we popularly call a warning?—Yes, a warning against the tenant, and the decree is the sheriff's authority granted upon it.

10048. Do you add to that the number that were enforced?—I cannot. I have been asked simply to give this information—the number of decrees of removal since 1840.

10049. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You have walked and driven about the island, and seen a good deal of Skye?—Yes.

10050. Can you confirm what many delegates have stated, that the pasture is deteriorating in many places?—Yes, both from my own judgment, so far as it goes, and from the opinion of men of practical experience.

10051. When you were going about the island you have seen what enables you to corroborate what has been stated here—that there are hundreds of ruined houses?—Yes.

10052. You can also confirm this, that the people have been crowded into confined areas?—Yes.

10053. And that in consequence subdivision has occurred?—Yes.

10054. Suppose the crofts were enlarged as you propose, would there not be a much larger trade carried on in the island?—Very much larger; that is what we desire.

10055. And lawyers and bankers and everybody else would be benefited?—Yes, every class of people who thrive by dealing with the wealth-producers of the country.

10056. Were you present when Mr Baird of Knoydart was examined?—No.

10057. Because he stated that he would not take any farmers for his big farms who were non-resident. I suppose that some of the Skye proprietors are finding it to be well to take that step in advance and to have resident farmers as much as possible?—There are just three that are non-resident.

10058. But these are pretty large?—Yes.

* See Appendix A, XXIII.

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10059. We have heard of the large farm of Scorrybreck. Have there been a great number of people removed from that farm at times?—Yes.

10060. The tenant himself stated that the extent of that farm was eleven miles, but does he not rather minimise the extent of it?—I hear it spoken of as fifteen miles in extent.

10061. You think eleven is rather under the mark?—I think so. I have always heard it spoken of as having fourteen miles of sea coast.

10062. And that includes bays?—If you followed it out and in you might make it almost as long as from here to Stornoway.

10063. Then you mean in a straight line?—Generally.

10064. Are you aware of any inconvenience that occurs to the people of Skye from there being only two practising agents in the court?—I really cannot say there is.

10065. Have people complained to you as an official of the court and asked your advice, or anything of that kind?—I cannot say.

10066. Then it is not a grievance?—I cannot really say it is. The court business has diminished very much of late. People are getting to be more sensible and less litigious. There used to be a time when there was an immense amount of business done in the court here. Now that is not the case. The introduction of the Debts Recovery Act and of the Small Debts Act has tended very much to decrease litigation.

10067. We find in many cases a repugnance on the part of the people to take leases. Can you explain that?—The impression they gave me is that they don't want leases to give them connection with the soil. They consider that necessary with strangers, to give them an introduction to the land, but they say, 'We are here already, and we don't want that.'

10068. Is that the only account you can give of that repugnance?—I think so; at least except in so far as regards agreements that might be entered into as to the mode of cultivating the soil.

10069. Would you give us your opinion as to the general conduct and behaviour of the people and their character? They are accused of being indolent and lazy, and of not working sufficiently?—I daresay that the Highlanders, as agriculturists, may with a considerable amount of truth be charged with laziness, but I believe it is not their fault. It is the fault of the conditions that have been imposed upon them by the legislature, for their condition seems to be such that there appears to be a premium upon laziness, because they see instances, such as that of Donald Nicolson, Totescore, who was arbitrarily cleared out of his possession, and although there should be only one such case occurring in a decade, it gets wind all round, and every person feels that he may be treated in the same way if a neighbouring sheep farmer should happen to offer a pound of rent more than he is able to pay, and his sense of insecurity is such that his energies are depressed.

10070. If they had proper inducements, do you think they would work as well in Skye as they work in the south?—Most decidedly.

10071. In speaking of the enlarged crofts for crofters, the money question always comes up as a difficulty, but don't you think that a young, strong man, willing to work, really has his capital in his two hands?—That is his capital; his bodily health is his capital.

10072. Is that not a very good capital?—That is a most important capital.

10073. Might it not really be of more importance to a man to be strong and healthy than to be somewhat weakly and in possession of £100 or £150?—There is no use of a crofter undertaking the cultivation of a croft even if he had the money, if he has not physical health to work it, because he simply hands over the profit of the croft to another man.

10074. Considering the hard times which the people in Skye have generally passed through, what do you say as to their behaviour?—It has been most exemplary. Such a thing as agrarian outrage is utterly unknown.

10075. It was mentioned to-day by Tormore that the agitation only began recently. How long is it since this agitation and movement of discontent began?—In my experience, the first active expression of discontent and rebellion against the rents in Skye took place on Captain Fraser's property very early after he got the property.

10076. Even so far back?—Yes, very shortly after he got the property.

10077. And that is some twenty years ago?—Yes, fully that.

10078. Do you think that the successive increases of rent which he put upon his estate still kept up agitation?—Yes.

10079. Then it cannot be considered a thing of to-day?—No, and it is certainly not attributable to Irish agitators. The next active rebellion was when Mr G. G. Mackay of Raasay took to improving his estate, and carried out some removals. He sent an officer with summonses of removal, and I believe the officer crossed the ferry, but he had some difficulty in returning, for his boat was not to be found. Then came the agitation on Captain Fraser's property, in the case of Valtos, about three years ago. He came to see that he was in the wrong and that he had been overcharging them for a number of years; but the discontent has been fomented on Captain Fraser's estate in Skye—no doubt about that.

10080. Then there are some parts of Skye better off than others?—Yes.

10081. The district of Sleat?—I would rather not particularise. As to the character of the people, I was asked to give some statistics of the emigration which took place some years ago, but I have not been able to get these with any degree of accuracy; but in hunting up the matter I came upon an appeal to the public by a Skye Emigration Committee in 1852, in which this passage occurs:—'In considering the appeal now made on behalf of 'the people of Skye, it will be borne in mind that periods of suffering are 'often periods of turbulence and disregard of the rights of property; that 'there was much in the social arrangements of Skye, and not a little even 'in the system on which the relief fund was administered, to excite bitter-'ness, irritation, and discontent; yet during five years of suffering, no single 'case of violence, tumult, or outrage of any kind has occurred; and though the 'principal movable property in the island—its sheep flocks—is peculiarly 'exposed to depredation, and detection extremely difficult, yet sheep-steal-'ing, or theft of any kind, has been comparatively unknown. It may 'indeed, be said, that in no district of Britain of equal population, and 'however prosperous, has crime been more rare than it has been in Skye, 'during years of misery, danger, and want.'

10082. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Was Sheriff Fraser the chairman of that committee?—Yes. That is the character of the people to the present day.

10083. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Are these decrees of removing often made use of by the landlords to recover their rent in preference to taking out small debt summonses?—I don't know, because you have no power to recover under them, but it is a means of frightening them.

10084. And they pay?—I suppose they do.

10085. Have you any means of making up a complete return which will show the cases in which the decrees were acted upon?—I have no means of showing to what extent they were acted upon. The records of the court do not show it. Of course; all these decrees could not have been acted upon, for if they had, there would have been no population in Skye t day.

10086. *The Chairman.*—You have stated your desire that larger crofts

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should be formed out of lands now occupied by proprietors or by tacksmen?—I cannot see how they could be formed without so encroaching.

10087. Do you contemplate compelling the proprietor to surrender the land when it is in his own hands, for the formation of such crofts?—If he has an undue proportion of it in his own hands.

10088. How would you settle the question whether he has an undue proportion or not?—That is a question of detail into which I would not be prepared strictly to go; but there is the parish of Bracadale, which is almost absolutely a waste, that is a very undue proportion of the land devoted to the maintenance of a very few.

10089. I want to get at your idea of the principle upon which you would contemplate compelling the proprietor to surrender lands in his own hands to form crofts?—I don't know that any proprietor in Skye has such an undue proportion of land in his own hands, unless in the island of Raasay.

10090. But still, if you have matured an opinion upon the subject, I should like to have an unqualified expression of it. Are there circumstances in which you think it desirable that the proprietor should be obliged to surrender?—By all means.

10091. Suppose the other case, that the land is not in the possession of the proprietor, but in the possession of a tenant holding under lease, do you contemplate cases in which it would be desirable that the law should oblige the lease to be cancelled, and the land surrendered for the formation of the crofts?—Well, the leases are not so long. There are generally breaks in them, and I don't know that the exigencies of the case are such as would demand such a compulsitor to be immediately acted upon.

10092. Then you contemplate rather that at the termination of existing covenants the claim of the crofters to an augmentation of land should then be admitted?—Yes.

10093. At the end of existing contracts?—Yes. I would like, of course, that any change in that way should be made with as little inconvenience as possible all round, and with no loss either to the holder of the lease or to the proprietor.

10094. Well, but the rights of property are not dear to people only on account of their pecuniary value. They are dear for many other considerations,—considerations of pleasure, ornament, indulgence, pride, and so on. I wish to understand whether you think the principle of compulsion ought in extreme cases to be applied or not?—Certainly.

10095. You have also stated that you desire that the crofters, or persons in a humble condition, should have the means of becoming actual proprietors of their own holdings?—Yes.

10096. Then you would give the crofter or small tenant the power of claiming to purchase his holding, irrespective of the consent of the proprietor?—Well, I have a great admiration for the provisions of the Irish Land Bill, and I consider that any measure for the amelioration of the condition of the Highland crofters would be incomplete or superficial without provision for the purchase by the crofters—crofters who are able and willing—of their own holdings.

10097. But does the Irish Land Bill contain any provision enabling the small tenant to purchase the property of his holding without the consent of his landlord?—I believe it does not.

10098. Then do you desire the principle of compulsion, or would you admit that the right of purchase should only be exercised with the consent of the landlord?—Well, I would not be prepared to give a definite answer right off; it involves very grave considerations.

10099. Speaking of the crofts in general that you desire to see formed, I understand that having selected the proper type of croft sufficient to

support a single family, you think that croft ought to remain an undivisible quantity?—I do think so.

10100. Looking at the smaller class of crofts that exist now, do you desire that the holders of those crofts should have fixity of tenure?—Yes.

10101. In the event of small crofts—smaller in value and dimensions than your typical crofts—becoming naturally vacant, do you think that these small crofts ought to be relet or regranted in their present dimensions, or ought they to be added to other crofts?—Added to other crofts.

10102. Where would you fix the limit? Would you say that a croft below £5 in value should be added to another, or where would you fix the limit?—I would try to bring up the average crofts of the country to a size which would support a family in comfort.

10103. But in endeavouring to attain that ideal, which may be a very good one, how would you provide for that class of persons who desire to gain their living by fishing or other form of industry, but who don't want to be left without land altogether?—The Highlander is a born land animal. He is not a fisherman. He is quite a different being altogether from the east coast fisherman. The east coaster is a fisherman; the Highlander is a born soldier.

10104. But how could they be provided with those typical crofts sufficient to maintain a family? Some must be fishermen; how would you provide them with cows' grass and small holdings?—I don't see how it could be done without encroaching upon large farms.

10105. You would provide for them by grants of land on the large farms and on the lands in the hands of the proprietors?—So far as in the hands of proprietors to an undue extent.

10106. To what rule would you subject that class of small tenants? Would you give them also fixity of tenure?—Yes, I cannot see it would be wise to make exceptions.

10107. Then you would give everybody who has a house and a small portion of land attached to it fixity of tenure so long as he pays his rent?—Yes.

10108. What would you do with people who live in houses in the village of Portree?—That is a different thing. These have no land, and we in Portree would give our eyes for it.

10109. They were asking for it to-day?—Yes, and I hope they may get it. Before I retire I may be allowed to make an explanation which I consider necessary in regard to the case of Donald Nicolson, Totescore. I don't know but perhaps there has an impression gone abroad that there was some discrepancy between Mr Macdonald's statement of the case and what I stated in explanation at Uig, when appealed to by Donald Nicolson. There may be some outsiders who don't understand it.

10110. I don't quite understand it myself. I shall be very happy to hear your explanation?—The explanation I wish recorded is that the £35, 11s. 8d. was paid by me—passed out of my hands—and no portion of that remained in my hands. The proprietor kept in his own hands £15, 17s. 6d. as the value of the man's house.

10111. The original sum mentioned before was not £35, but £55?—With that, so far as I was concerned, I had nothing to do. I had only to do with the account of expenses which was rendered to me by Mr Macdonald, acting for Captain Fraser. My sole object is to make it clear that I passed the whole of the money that came into my hands on account of Donald Nicolson to the proprietor or his agent. I have here a note of expenses, &c., due by Donald Nicolson to Captain Fraser of Kilmuir, as follows:—Rent and violent profits, £16; expenses decerned for, £4, 18s. 8d.; do., further, £3, 4s.; extract decree and charges, 10s. 6d.; ground officer eject-

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ing, and party, £2, 18s.; expenses for breach of interdict, £8, 0s. 6d.; total, £35, 11s. 8d.; to value of houses, £15, 17s. 6d.; leaving a balance of £19, 14s. 2d., which was paid by me to the factor on 5th December 1877, and for which his stamped receipt is produced.

Mr Macdonald—It is quite correct.

10112. The question that interested us most was to know what the proprietor actually got; whether the proprietor got any more than the amount of the simple rent due to him at the term?—Not one single farthing but the rent. The incoming tenant got the difference. Anything we got for violent profit went to the incoming tenant, to pay the damage which he alleged he suffered from not getting possession at Whitsunday.

10113. Then did the incoming tenant pay the proprietor any rent for the period during which he was not in the farm?—No; we just got the rent, and nothing but the rent. I will show my books to the Commissioners, showing that we did not get a farthing but the rent, and that the incoming tenant got the rest.

10114. Have you any other statement in connection with this eviction? So far as I remember, it was stated by Nicolson that his rent had been doubled, and that he was willing to submit to his rent being doubled, but then that they charged him £1 more, which really was the straw which broke the camel's back, and that he would not stand it?—That was his statement, but we deny that. The £1 had nothing to do with his eviction; it was his misconduct.

10115. Was his rent doubled?—Yes, it was; but that had nothing to do with the eviction. He was quite agreeable to the rent.

10116. Why was his rent doubled?—Like all the rest. It was according to the valuation of Mr Malcolm, like all the rest of the tenants on the estate. That had nothing to do with his eviction.

10117. There was a case cited by Mr Maclachlan of a model eviction, in which all the tenants in the township petitioned the landlord to get rid of an inconvenient member. Was the case of this poor man as bad as that? Do you think that his fellow-crofters would have petitioned for his removal?—I think it was a worse case, or fully as bad. The tenant who suffered from Nicolson's carelessness about his stock is here, I believe; and another tenant, whose sheep got killed by Nicolson's dog, is here. I have no personal ill-will to Nicolson, not the slightest.

Mr Maclachlan. I have no doubt it would involve going into a long proof to prove his misconduct, but there is no doubt that the circumstances at the time produced an impression on my mind which I have not forgotten yet, as being an exercise of the utmost high-handedness on the part of the landlord.

Mr Macdonald—That is your impression.

Mr Maclachlan—I only speak of my own impression.

10118. We will stop this discussion, because it is impossible to go into the question. There is no doubt that in this matter Mr Maclachlan acted a most honourable and humane part, according to his view of the case.

Rev. FINLAY GRAHAM, Free Church Minister, Sleat (42)—re-examined.

Rev. Finlay Graham.

10119. *The Chairman.*—You desire to make an explanation?—Yes. It is about such a small matter that I am almost ashamed to speak of it, but still Tormore left the impression that I went about canvassing for votes, and not relying upon his word. He said quite truly that he informed me that there would be no poll, and I relied on his word, and let the time pass when I might have enlightened my people in the method and rules of the

election. He said that I went about canvassing amongst the people, but I did no such thing. However, his officers were round the parish canvassing for the votes of the people. He was, as I thoroughly believe, misinformed on this point; and, to say the least, it was rather strong to use the machinery of the estate against the only Free Churchman who wanted a place on the school board.

10120. Your impression is that you did not get quite fair play on the part of the authorities on the estate in connection with the election for the school board?—Yes.

10121. And you believe you would have been elected if there had been a poll?—There was a poll.

10122. But you had not sufficient time to prepare?—Tormore told me there would be no poll, and I relied upon his word; and some people informed him that I went canvassing after that, which I did not do. His officers went and canvassed while I was at ease.

10123. And if you had had time to prepare the constituency, and recommend yourself to them, you believe you would have been elected?—I don't know about that.

JOHN M'LEOD, Tacksman of Monkstadt (60)—examined.

10124. *The Chairman.*—Have you any statement to make?—No.

10125. Did you come here by invitation of the Commissioners?—Yes.

10126. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Are you a native of Kilmuir?—Yes.

10127. Have you lived all your life in Kilmuir?—Yes.

10128. Do you see much difference in the condition of the people since you were a young man?—No.

10129. What part of the parish were you born in?—Kilmaluag.

10130. And you have now gone to take up your residence next door to Kilmaluag again?—Yes.

10131. Do you think the Kilmaluag people are in as good circumstances as they were when you first remember?—Fully.

10132. Do you think the land returns as much crop as it used to do?—I think not; but I think there is more money in the place than there was when I was young.

10133. You have occasion to know that?—Yes.

10134. Do you deal in meal at all?—Not just now.

10135. What reason have you for thinking there is more money in the place than there used to be?—They are getting better prices for stock.

10136. But, on the other hand, they must spend more money than they used to do?—Yes, in dress, and so on.

10137. Then, though they get more money, if they spend more money, perhaps there is not more money left in the place after all?—As to that I cannot say.

10138. You cannot say whether they are more in debt to the meal merchant than they were?—I don't think they are.

10139. We were told that the people were in debt for meal to the extent of £700. Do you think that is a true statement?—I don't think it is true at all.

10140. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Something like that was also told us about Gleuhinisdale. They were said to be in debt £600, chiefly for meal. Do you think that is an exaggeration?—I think so.

10141. I suppose you heard most of what was said at Uig and Stenscholl?—No.

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10142. Did you see it in the newspapers?—A little of it.

10143. Was there anything which you thought decidedly incorrect?—About that debt; I think it was not right.

10144. Do you think the rents are too high?—Well, when they get better prices for the stock, I think the rise in rent is nothing in comparison with the rise in prices.

10145. I suppose your own rents have been raised a good deal also?—No; of course there were additions.

10146. We were told about grass that was taken from the people to be added to your farm?—I never removed a tenant since I was born.

10147. But did Captain Fraser do it?—He gave them as good places as they had in compensation for that.

10148. But since you got Monkstadt a good many of them were shifted to other places?—No, not in Kilmuir.

10149. But I suppose you remember that a good many were removed?—Yes; but they got as good places as they had in payment for that.

10150. They say themselves that the places are not so good?—I think they are.

10151. Do you think the amount of their pasture is the same as it was?—I think so. They went to the two best places I knew of on the estate—Kilmaluag and Balmaquien.

10152. Were there no crofters on these two places before?—Yes, in Kilmaluag; but some of them went of their own accord to America about that time.

10153. Were there crofters at Balmaquien before?—Yes.

10154. Was it new crofts or old ones that these crofters got?—Old ones.

10155. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Do you remember the last forty years back?—Not exactly.

10156. We have been told there were a large number of people removed and a considerable number of crofting townships cleared in Kilmuir during that time. I suppose there are a considerable number of townships that were peopled then which are not peopled now?—That was forty-three years ago. It was in Sulister and Erisker.

10157. You don't remember a single township of crofters cleared on Kilmuir at all?—No, except Graulin.

10158. Do you remember hill pasture being taken from townships that are not cleared yet?—Yes.

10159. So that the amount of land occupied by crofters now in Kilmuir is very much less than it was when you first remember?—No, except a wee bit hilly ground.

10160. It is less by the two cleared townships and the amount of hill pasture that was taken away?—They got the offer of a hill, I am told, but they would not pay the rent.

10161. Has the population of Kilmuir increased or diminished within that time?—I am not sure. I think it is fully as large as it was.

10162. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Did you ever advise Major Fraser to raise or to lower the rents?—Never.

10163. Did you not advise him to lower them?—No, I had no business to speak to the major about a matter of that sort.

10164. Did he not sometimes get advice from you?—No.

10165. I have been told that he himself said you had advised him to lower the rents: perhaps you forget it. I suppose you can truly say that you never gave him any bad advice?—I believe he would not take it well if I would do so.

10166. Did you ever give him any advice against the people?—Never.

10167. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Have you been all your days in Skye?—Yes, I may say so.

10168. What rent was your father paying for his place in Kilmaluig?—I cannot say, but the first rent I paid was £34.

10169. What have you been paying of late for Moukstadt?—About £1005.

10170. You are not in arrears?—Not a penny, except what is due since Martinmas last.

10171. Then you are one of the few men in Skye whose circumstances are better now than they were forty years ago?—I know small tenants who pay only £12, and who have £800 lying in the bank in Portree.

10172. Do you find sheep-farming now as profitable as it has been in past years?—Yes, except the wool.

10173. Then you do not quite agree with your neighbour Duntulm, who said he was going back a good deal upon sheep?—Well, cattle would pay fully as well as sheep—good Highland cattle.

10174. Have you a good number of cattle yourself?—I have over three hundred head of black cattle. I wish to state in regard to Donald Nicolson, that when he got the place he evicted a poor man named M'Innes, who had a delicate consumptive son. This young man was sent off to a barn, and he lived only three days. Then Nicolson allowed his horse to stray with my milk cows. He came and offered me 7s. 6d. He left his horse six weeks there with the milk cows, and when he came and took it away he never gave me a penny.

HUGH MACRAE, Farmer, Lettermore (33)—examined.

10175. *The Chairman.*—Where is your residence?—Principally in Portree.

10176. Do you wish to make a statement to the Commission?—Yes. I am not going to enter into the several grievances of the crofters, the Commission having had ample evidence of that from themselves, but I wish to state before the Commission, though it may not exactly come within their province, but which affects the prosperity of this romantic village, that with one or two exceptions house property here is only held on a ninety-nine years' lease, and at the expiry of each lease the property becomes the absolute property of the landlord and his heirs. Is not this confiscation of property? What encouragement is there for improvements under such conditions? I concur generally with the evidence adduced before you with regard to the oppression and chronic poverty of a great portion of the people. I am in a position to know a great deal of the circumstances of the people, my late father having been for upwards of forty years an extensive meal dealer and general merchant here, my brother and I having succeeded him. I have no doubt whatever in stating that the condition of the people generally is gradually getting worse, and that they are now in a much worse position than they were thirty or forty years ago. In fact, a large proportion of them are practically bankrupt; and if some measures are not adopted to ameliorate their condition, a number of them will soon be chargeable to the parish; indeed, if it were not for remittances from relations outside Skye, a proportion of them would have succumbed ere now. This was far from being the case forty years ago, the people then being in comparatively easy circumstances, owing little or nothing, but are now deeply in debt. Their present condition is due to the insecurity and insufficiency of their holdings, and the deprivation of their

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hill pasture, and the huddling together of large numbers of them on unproductive land, to make room for sheep and deer. The chronic poverty prevalent in the land is mostly if not wholly due to the unequal distribution of the land, the most and the best of which is in the hands of a few. There is sufficient land in Skye to support in comparative comfort the present population; it supported a much larger one before, and not a tithe of the food now imported was required to be imported then. The land then was under cultivation, it is not so now. All that is necessary to remedy this sad state of matters is a redistribution of the land, giving each family as much arable and pasture land as will keep it in comparative comfort, and then to apply the principles of the Irish Land Act by fixing *fair rents and giving security of tenure. Nothing short of this will allay* agitation, restore contentment, and satisfy the just demands of the people. What need I speak of emigration as a cure for the present condition of the people, when the Highlands have been all but depopulated, and when the condition of those left behind has not improved in consequence, as is apparent in presence of the condition of many parts of the country, when the cry of hunger and of deep and wide-spread distress is heard in various parts of the land, and but for the contributions of charity and public alms many of the people would have perished from want. It is not true that, in the Highlands at least, the people have pressed on the limits of subsistence, and that the only remedy is emigration. There are thousands of acres in Skye, fit for cultivation, growing little else than fog and brakens. What is wanted is migration. The time is gone bye when the welfare and natural rights of the people can be sacrificed to any parchment rights the landlords may possess. I for one have no fear of the issue, once their political power is conceded, to which the present Government is pledged, that the people will work out their own salvation. Put the people in possession of the land from which they and their forefathers were removed, and ways and means will not be wanting to stock the land. I hold that land, being limited in extent, should not be dealt with on commercial principles. This is not a question of mere rent; it is one involving the well-being of the people, even of their very existence. Among all the Acts passed by the lords of the soil, I am not aware of one to preserve the people, but there are many on the statute book to preserve game and deer. I hear a great deal of the evils of absenteeism; what will it benefit the crofters on Lord Macdonald's estate by his Lordship residing on his property? Simply nothing. Major Fraser, who got a comfortable and fairly prosperous tenantry, resided a great deal on his estate; has that benefited his tenantry? I appeal from their former to their present condition. *I am satisfied that, as regards Skye at least, where the proprietor* is resident the people are in greater subjection and bondage. Let the people ask for no more charity, but let them demand their rights. If the money spent by the late Government in fixing a scientific frontier had been applied instead in bettering the condition of the people, matters would not now be as they are. Let the Liberal Government, who has shown so much solicitude concerning the Egyptians, grapple with this question and restore their rights to a noble, loyal, patriotic, law-abiding, but down-trodden people. I think it a mistake, however, to consider the crofter question as a mere local question affecting only the crofter population, and that can be settled by remedies that have only a surface and local application. It involves the great social problem of modern civilisation, viz., the institution of private property in land, the ownership by some of the people of the land, on which and from which the whole must live. It is this system that produces the destitution in the Highlands and the hideous squalor of our city slums; it involves the problem of the distribution of wealth. Is

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not labour the source of all wealth? without it you have no wealth. How comes it then that the creators of this wealth get but the barest living of it? Manifestly owing to the ownership in the natural agent land. Is not rent the devourer of wages, or in other words the earnings of labour. This is the system that keeps the masses of mankind mere hewers of wood and drawers of water for the benefit of a fortunate few, who reap where they do not sow, and appropriate to themselves wealth which they had no share in producing. This is the question worth fighting for, and not any mere local one, which is only in the interests of a class; it is universal in its application, benefiting equally every man, woman, and child within the realm.

10177. Have you any further statement to make?—I have not.

[ADJOURNED.]

CASTLE BAY, BARRA, SATURDAY, MAY 26, 1883.

(See Appendix A, XXV., XXVI., XXVII.)

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.

MICHAEL BUCHANAN, Crofter and Fisherman, Borv (40)—examined.

Michael Buchanan.

10178. *The Chairman.*—Have you a croft?—My brother is a crofter.

10179. Do you help him to pay the rent?—Yes; I have laboured for the last twenty-eight years to pay the rent with him.

10180. Were you freely elected a delegate by the people of Borv?—Freely and unanimously.

10181. What number of persons were present when you were elected?—There were six or seven from the township of Borv, having the consent of all the rest.

10182. Would you be so good as to make a statement of what their wishes are?—Yes. I only wish to have first the opportunity of saying a few words. I should like to get an assurance that my interest, and that of my brother, whose name is written in the rental, should not be hurt by any procedure taken by the landlord or factor—I mean in the way of eviction—for any truthful statement I may make here to day before the Royal Commission.

10183. Is there any person here representing the proprietor?—*Mr Ranald Macdonald*, factor for Lady Gordon Cathcart.—I have to state that any one and every one here may speak fully and freely without any fear of any kind whatever. *Witness.*—The people are complaining of the smallness of their holding and its inferior quality, of the up-handedness of the factors, and the oppression of landlords. Before the year 1827 the island of Barra was almost always occupied by crofters, who lived comfortably and contentedly in possession of reasonably large crofts, the population being then about 3000, and at present it is only 2000.

10184. *Mr Fraser Mackintosh.*—Are you referring at present to the whole estate of Barra?—The whole estate of Barra.

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10185. And all its islands?—All its islands. Unscrupulous factors and ground officers and estate officials laid their hand pretty heavily upon the people, and left them in such a state that they could scarcely ask land and pay for it, their whole stock being taken away; and some of the inhabitants even up to the present day never saw a cow in their fold or a horse to be harnessed at their door. This has been the severest blow that ever the inhabitants of this island suffered. The next attack was that stirks and two-year-olds were taken away from them by ground officers and other estate officials, and sold to their own friends by private bargain at the respective prices of from 2s. 6d. to 6s. 6d.

10186. *The Chairman.*—You say that the first wrong was about 1827. When was this practice of taking the stirks introduced?—The first took place forty-years ago, and the second took place thirty-seven years ago. Down from these dates incoming factors and incoming ground officers were participating in the same action.

10187. Down to the present time?—Down to the present time. People in those days, particularly in such an outlandish place as this is, did not understand very much the use of receipts. They used to pay their rents, and when the receipt was handed over perhaps some of them carried it home, and perhaps some of them did not. However, those who did carry it home perhaps lost it or mislaid it. The next time they made their appearance before the factor to pay their rent they were told—'You did 'not pay your rent last year.' 'I did.' 'You did not; where is your 'receipt?' I have seen some of them going home a matter of six or seven miles, and coming back breathless with the receipt. Some would happen to find it at home, and some would not.

10188. How long ago was this about the receipts? Does that continue till the present time?—No.

10189. How long ago is it?—About twenty-two years ago. The large farmers in this island, in the event of an incoming factor, would of course get first in contact with him; and I understand that we, the poor people, would get a very bad character, and we would be most likely, during that man's time, under the suspicion that we were bad characters. Any grievances that we stated to the factor he would postpone or resist. He would say, 'I will see you to-morrow,' and then when I saw him to-morrow he would say, 'Oh, I can't do anything for you.' On the other hand, if any of those large farmers were to express any grievance, they would be sure that the factor would listen to them.

10190. As regards this partiality to the farmers and against the crofters, was that in former times, or is it still kept up?—It was in former times, and is still kept up in a less degree.

10191. Have you any further statement?—That their cattle were forcibly taken away from them, and in many cases after selling those cattle some of the men did not get any credit for the proceeds. I refer to the cattle taken away in those days.

10192. You mean the cattle that were purchased by the factors or ground agents?—They were taken away by the ground agents and factors.

10193. And no payment made?—For a nominal price, and in the name of rent, and in many cases afterwards the people never got credit for the money proceeds. The inhabitants of the island being reduced to such poverty, the consequence was that they were not able to pay rent, and could scarcely ask for land. Consequently the best and the most of the land fell into the hands of large farmers, and the poor men were huddled together, the one lessening the holding of the other; and that was on the most worthless and useless patches of land that could be found within the marches of the parish of Barra. Labouring under such disadvantages, they

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were obliged to apply to Dr M'Gillivray for some ground, for which they paid sixty days' labour per acre of sandy, inferior, and exhausted soil. About six years ago there were letters down from the English market desiring the natives of this island to gather every kind of shell-fish, particularly cockles, which were and are very abundant, and to be found on the strand lying adjacent to Dr M'Gillivray's farm. Dr M'Gillivray tried to prevent any collection of this shell-fish. The people did not pay much attention to what he said. Then his brother-in-law, being at the time the head ground officer on the estate—or, at least, he was called so—drew up a paper with orders that it should be posted up on the chapel door, threatening the gatherers of this shell-fish with certain penalties. The officiating clergyman of that chapel did not give his assent to this proceeding, and told his congregation that he considered it an illegal act. Being thus baffled, those two gentlemen, as justices of the peace, ordered policemen to watch for fear that any of the shell-fish should be laid down above high water-mark.

10194. Was Dr M'Gillivray a tacksman or a proprietor?—A tacksman. He is the largest farmer on this estate. His brother-in-law, to whom I have referred, Roderick M'Lellan, then commenced to prevent the thoroughfare down to the shipping place, and even prevented the use of the steamer's boat to carry the cargo on board. Seemingly they were willing to deprive the poor inhabitants of the produce of the sea, as they were instrumental in depriving them of the produce of their native soil. They coveted, and succeeded in their attempts, and put us back to the precarious occupation of fishing, which limited our livelihood to an inferior condition. Another prevalent grievance is, that should I or any other man, particularly any other tenant who pays his rent honestly, say a word on behalf of another man, mostly all the officials on the estate are down upon him, and consequently he is afraid to say much. The inhabitants of this island have every confidence in their present proprietrix, Lady Gordon Cathcart, that she would promote their interest and comfort were their cases properly laid before her ladyship, but the factor steps in and offers every possible opposition. As to the fishing resources of this island, I must suggest that the people cannot derive their livelihood out of the sea, for the following reasons:—For the stormy seas by which this island is surrounded, for the irregularity of the ground and banks by which it is surrounded, because the nourishing ingredients natural where fish live are not to be found about this island, and because they can only fish opposite here at certain seasons of the year, and if the weather does not permit at these certain seasons of the year the fisherman loses the privilege. I admit that the fishing industry is a great help combined with that of land. The reason is that when I don't get to sea, if I have less or more land I have still something to support me; but supposing I have no land, if I am going to sea and getting no fish, I have nothing at all whereby my family can live. The second reason is the insular situation of this island, and its irregular postal communication, from which we learn the state of the markets. Though local merchants here would buy fish, they must always be very cautious; they must always depend upon the contingency of future markets. In regard to a fisherman's land, I should say he should have about seven acres to keep a cow and a horse, with potato ground. To keep a cow is very necessary, because milk is a very nourishing article in a family where young children are brought up. It is peats that we generally use on this island as fuel. The peats are now so much run out and consumed, except in inaccessible patches of moss land, that fishermen would require the use of a pony to carry home their peats. The farmers do not go about here as they do on the east coast with a cart selling peats;

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neither does the dairyman go about selling a pennyworth of milk; the coal merchant does not go about here selling half a cwt. of coal. Therefore, unless the fisherman has land here, he cannot obtain any of those above described articles. I should also say that the fish-curers who visit this island ought to receive every encouragement from Government, as they are the only means of giving work to the inhabitants of the island, particularly when successful—men, women, and children. The encouragement I mean is the extension of the wire from Loch Boisdale to Castle Bay, whereby they would learn the state of the English, Scotch, and continental markets, and the fishing of the different Hebridean stations. The scarcity of land necessarily produces scarcity of fodder and provender—I mean hay and straw. When any part of their grazing gets bare, the beast that grazes there naturally goes away to graze where the grass is allowed to grow. When our patches are getting bare, our horses and cattle are very apt to go over the march of the big farmer—that march which is neither stone-dyke nor fence—and the consequence is that the beast is taken by the farmer's servant by order of the farmer and put into a pound. That pound is not fit for an animal; the beast is up to the belly in mud and water. The farmer is not very apt to give an intimation when he pounds that beast. Sometimes there is a lapse of twenty-four hours, and the consequences are great losses and deaths of animals. It also subjects the horses of this island to a local disease called trance—I mean by that, that all the natural functions of the beast are suspended. It shakes and gets short of breath, and loses all self-command, and dies in a little while—of which I have seen instances. Again, arising from the same cause, we are obliged to live in thatched houses, and we are obliged to make application to Dr M'Gillivray for bent grass to thatch our houses. We have to labour twelve days for two small cart-loads of that bent, and in many instances the application is refused. We thought of late, and we had great hopes, that our holdings would be enlarged on account of Lady Gordon Cathcart and her factor receiving back the lease from Mr M'Lellan, Vatersay, but it happened unfortunately that we did not get the chance. That is all my voluntary statement.

10195. You have mentioned two abuses which prevailed in former times—one of them, according to your account, in your own recollection. The first abuse to which I allude is that of the compulsory purchase of cattle, and the price being withheld, or not being credited in the rent account, and you stated that the practice of purchasing cattle arose about thirty-seven years ago, and continued on till a later period. Can you give me any example, with date and name, of the price being withheld from a crofter?—Yes. There was an old widow woman in a township of this parish, called Earsary. The ground officer and other estate officials came and took away a fine heifer about three years old, I believe, for the matter of 30s. or so, in the name of rent. They did not proceed very far when they met with a native of this island who they thought had money, and they asked him if he would buy that heifer. He said he did not know. They said they would give him a bargain of it. He said he did not know if he had enough money to buy the beast. 'Oh, you need not be afraid; 'we will give you a bargain.' Then when he thought he would get a bargain he bought the beast. They then invited him back to a shebeen, and drank the proceeds; and the man is within the walls of this building at this very moment.

10196. How much did the man give for the heifer to the ground officer?—That is more than I can state, but we can get the information from the man who is within the house.

10197. Can you state that whatever was given for it was not

carried to the widow's account?—Yes; she did not get credit for the proceeds.

10198. Can you cite any other examples of that nature?—Yes. There was a man named Donald Mackinnon living in the township of Tangasdale, and the ground officer I refer to was John M'Gregor.

10199. *Mr Cameron.*—The same gronnd officer as in the other case?—Yes, the same ground officer. He came to this man's house, and asked him for a stirk. Well, the man could scarcely refuse him, for he knew the consequences too well if he did refuse him—there was a staff of legal officers along with him—and he gave the stirk. They then went to some house in the neighbourhood and drank whisky there for a good long time, and then they asked the man would he buy the stirk for 7s. He said he had not 7s. 'Oh, yes; you must have 7s.; we know you have 7s.' 'No,' says the man; but the man's wife being within reach of hearing—she used to weave with one of those handlooms—had 7s., and she went and bought the animal for 7s., and the 7s. was paid there and then.

10200. *The Chairman.*—Was the value of tbe animal not carried to the man's credit?—The value of the animal was not carried to the man's credit, and the man is present here.

10201. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Do you mean that the wife bought back the animal for 7s.?—Yes.

10202. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Was it Mackinnon's own wife who bought the animal back?—Yes.

10203. *The Chairman.*—With reference to the other abuse you mentioned about the receipts, you stated that when receipts were not preserved a second payment of rent was exacted. Can you give us any example of that?—Yes; I was present one day in North Bay inn about sixteen years ago, and I saw a man belonging to Bravaig going in. His name was Murdoch Mackinnon. Mr Birnie told him he had not paid his rent last year, and the man said he had. Mr Birnie said he had not. He was rather a hasty man in temper, and the man was very certain he had paid bis rent, and he was a little bolder. He was obliged to leave the house. He went away in my presence and came back panting, having by good luck fallen in with the receipt. Mr Birnie took the reeeipt, and pulled a shilling out of his pocket, and said, 'Here, you can drink this shilling.' The man is here.

10204. But he brought the receipt?—Yes.

10205. And he was not obliged to pay?—No, otherwise he would have been obliged to pay.

10206. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—What did Mr Birnie give him the shilling for—for his trouble?—Yes, for his trouble in going there.

10207. *The Chairman.*—Have either of these two abuses—either the compulsory sale of cattle or the exaction of rent a second time—existed in recent years—say within the last ten years? Does the practice of compulsory purchase of cattle exist at all?—It does not.

10208. How long is it since it ceased?—I believe about twelve years ago.

10209. Then there is perfect freedom in the sale of cattle at present?—Perfect freedom, so far as I know.

10210. Is there any trouble about the receipts?—Well, last year—I am not exactly sure whether it was last ycar or the year before—I saw a little. I saw a man who was obliged to go back to the township of Kentangaval, because Mr Barron, the new factor, told him he had not paid last year's rent. He was a yonng lad, who represented his mother. He had to go back for the receipt.

10211. Still it is right that people should keep their receipts, and produce them when called for. Do you mean to say that the factor's books are

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not regularly kept and entered up?—I don't mean to say that; I only mean to say I have seen it done.

10212. What about the gathering of cockles, which I understand is an old practice in the island? Is there any difficulty or impediment at present?—They are not gathered at all at present.

10213. Are they still to be found in the same quantities?—Still to be found in the same quantities.

10214. Are they not gathered anywhere?—Not gathered anywhere within the boundaries of this parish that I am aware of.

10215. What is the reason of that?—Want of demand in the English market.

10216. But do the people not gather them at all for their own food?—In former years it was the case, but now the people are generally employed elsewhere.

10217. Then they don't use cockles for making broth or for food in any form?—I never saw them used for food for the last twelve or thirteen years.

10218. But if the people wished to gather them would the tacksman or proprietor now impose any difficulty?—The proprietor never imposed any difficulty; on the contrary, Mr Birnie, when factor, was very much against doing so.

10219. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Very much against imposing difficulties or against gathering cockles?—Against prohibiting them.

10220. *The Chairman.*—He was in favour of allowing the people to do it?—Yes.

10221. Is Dr M'Gillivray still tacksman of that farm?—Yes.

10222. Do you think he would impose any difficulty now?—I cannot exactly say as to that.

10223. With regard to the postal and telegraphic communication, have you made representations about postal communication to Government?—I understand that the chief factor on this estate is present, and he is a man who knows more about that than I do, only I feel the want of it as well as any other man.

10224. And he can give information about the telegraphic wire also?—Yes.

10225. Does the poinding of the cattle still continue?—It does.

10226. Does it continue in the same degree, or is it less done than formerly?—In the same degree, if not increasing.

10227. But do the crofters really do their best to prevent their cattle straying on the tacksman's farm?—So far as known to me.

10228. Is there any case of a wire fence between the tacksman and the crofter?—Not that I am aware of.

10229. Not in the whole island?—Not in the whole island.

10230. You stated that twelve days' labour was exacted for the privilege of getting two small cart-loads of bent. Is that the case on all the tacksmen's farms, or only the case on one?—Only the case on one, because it is on one farm only that the bent grass grows in sufficient quantity. It grows upon other farms, but not to such an extent.

10231. But the other farmers do not charge anything?—It is so scarce that they cannot supply us with it.

10232. But for what it is do they charge?—It is only against the one tacksman that the complaint is made, for he only can supply it.

10233. Is there any complaint about heather?—There is heather enough. I have had complaints about heather. We use it to roof our houses, and I have heard different complaints about that, but I never heard any labour asked in return for the heather.

10234. Is there any complaint about the sea-weed from the shore?—Not that I ever heard, unless we went over the marches into those big farms. If we did they would ask some payment for it, otherwise some labour. We would not be at liberty to take it away on our cart.

10235. You would not be at liberty to take the sea-weed from the shore of the tacksmen's farms?—No, unless sanctioned by themselves.

10236. Did you ever hear any case of their refusing the liberty or charging money?—I have heard of their refusing liberty, but I never heard of any case where they charged money.

10237. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Where is the township of Borv?—On the west side.

10238. How many families are there in Borv?—About thirty-six families of crofters, and the exact number of cottars I cannot tell.

10239. Have the thirty-six crofters got the township equally divided among them?—The township was founded about sixty years ago, and made into fourteen crofts. It is now made into eighteen, and these crofts are in several instances inhabited by four and in general by two.

10240. Are the eighteen crofts equal in size?—They are equal in size, but not equal in quality of land, and are at different rents.

10241. What has your brother?—The half of a croft. My forefathers had the same land for the last fifty years. During the runrig system my grandfather had a great part of the present croft, and this present croft consists of about eight acres, and we occupy the half of that croft.

10242. You have about four acres?—Yes.

10243. What do you pay for that?—£4.

10244. What grazing privileges have you?—We have only our own part of a small hill; I cannot exactly tell the acreage of it, but it is on the common pasture of the parish for all townships on the east, west, south, and north. It is a central place.

10245. Is there any limit to the number of cattle you can turn out upon it?—There was in former times, but I cannot exactly say what it was.

10246. What stock do you yourselves turn out on that pasture?—We have two cows, a heifer, and two working ponies.

10247. Are the other crofters in the township rented in the same proportion? Do they pay a similar rent for the acreage and stock which they have?—They do in proportion, but, as I have mentioned, some of the crofts are not the same rent owing to their not being of the same quality. Some pay more rent than we do that have the same acreage, and some pay less than we do that have the same acreage.

10248. But I suppose they have more or less stock in those circumstances?—They have.

10249. Has the population of Borv increased in your time?—It has, but if the population of Borv were restricted to the local increase of the place there would be quite sufficient land for them; but the township of Borv was the only place where they were huddled into from other places at the time these were cleared.

10250. Do you know how many people were brought in from other townships at the time of these clearances?—There were fourteen from Green and Cliad; two from Cregston, a township lying contiguous to Borv; and three from Ollosdale.

10251. Is that all?—All, with the exception of the increase of men belonging naturally to the place.

10252. When did these clearances take place?—These men came into the township thirty-five years ago.

10253. Who have those lands of Green, Cliad, Cregston, and Ollosdale now?—Up to the present Whitsunday, Ollosdale was occupied by Donald

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Macdonald, who succeeded his father, Archibald MacDonald, for whom that township was cleared; Green and Cliad are Dr M'Gillivray's; and those men who came from Cregston were replaced by men from other townships. I mean that Cregston is for the present occupied by crofters.

10254. Who has got Ollosdale?—I believe it is let to six or seven men.

10255. Crofters?—Crofters.

10256. Where were they taken from?—James Mackinnon, Neil Galbraith, Malcolm M'Leod, and Alexander M'Lean were taken from Borv, and Alexander Galbraith from Scalladale; and the parish minister, the Rev. Alexander Macdonald, has got another croft, and the miller has got another.

10257. Were the people who were taken from Borv crofters or cottars?—They were crofters.

10258. So there has been an enlargement of the crofts in Borv at the term of Whitsunday?—The croft which James Mackinnon occupied is let to two other men now. I believe one of these men was removed from his own, and his own was given to another man, Donald Cameron. Donald Cameron held half a croft, and that was given to a man who was along with him, and the other man who was occupying the second half had owned lands before.

10259. Has anybody got a bigger croft than he had before?—I believe Kenneth M'Ouish got a bigger croft, because another man was removed.

10260. Is that the only benefit to the people?—That is the only benefit that I know of.

10261. That is the only case of doubling a holding?—The only case that I know of.

10262. But you have got rid of four people from Borv, and therefore to that extent the pressure of population must be reduced. People who were cottars before have now become crofters?—Only one that I am aware of—Hugh M'Lean—who got half a croft. I understand he was a cottar before.

10263. Would the people of Borv wish to be removed to another part of the island?—I did not consult the men's mind as to that, but for my own part I believe the rest of them would be removed to any part of the parish where their condition would be better.

10264. Yes, of course; but in what part of the parish would their condition be better?—I believe their condition would be better either at Poll or Kilbarr, or Scarival or Vaslin, or Cliad or Ardvore, or Orradh or Bogach-na-forla, or Ru-lisor Sandray or Vatersay, or Uy or Caolas, or Bentangaval.

10265. In whose possession are the places you have mentioned?—Some of them are presently in the possession of Dr M'Gillivray, and others in the possession of Roderick M'Lellan; and the present tacksman of Vatersay is Donald M'Douald.

10266. How long has Dr M'Gillivray been in possession?—I believe he was in possession of Poll, Kilbarr, and some of these other places a long time, but only in possession of the rest for the last thirty-five or thirty-six years.

10267. There is no part of these places but what he has had for thirty-five or thirty-six years?—That is so.

10268. You say that Dr M'Gillivray demands sixty days' labour for an acre of potato ground?—Yes.

10269. Is that male or female labour?—Both.

10270. Does he take it in either?—Whenever he wants service to be done, there are some families in which there are no males, and in such cases the women go and work.

10271. He will take sixty days of a man's work or sixty days of a woman's work?—I only say he takes sixty days' average for an acre of land, but in small odd cases women are working as well as men.

10272. If he takes a woman, does he increase the number of days?—I don't think he does.

10273. Do people take a whole acre at that rate, or only a small patch?—If one man does not do it, eight do.

10274. They take the eighth of an acre each?—No, but each takes the planting of a barrel of potatoes, and we always calculate an acre to plant about eight barrels.

10275. What return do you get from the eight barrels?—Sometimes we get about eight barrels, ten or twelve in a good year, and some years hardly double the seed put in.

10276. Eight or ten barrels for the one?—Eight, ten, and sometimes twelve, for the one barrel; but in a great many cases not double the quantity of the seed we plant.

10277. But in an ordinarily good season?—In an ordinarily good season we get generally eight or nine barrels. In extra seasons we get about that.

10278. Do you know how long Dr M'Gillivray has had his tack?—I cannot say how long it is since he occupied the farm of Eoligary, but I should say it is thirty-five or thirty-six years since he got all these places I have mentioned.

10279. When will his lease be out?—I cannot say.

10280. *Mr Cameron.*—How many crofters do you represent here?—I represent about thirty-six crofters.

10281. Is that the whole number of crofters on the island?—The whole number of crofters in the township of Borv.

10282. But you told us there was only six or seven present at the meeting when you were elected a delegate?—From the township of Borv.

10283. Do you know why the other thirty were not there?—They were employed elsewhere, only they gave their consent.

10284. In what form did they give their consent?—They gave their consent in such a form as this: 'As we have to go elsewhere to attend our 'respective services, we give you our consent to elect whom you like.'

10285. Was that in writing?—I cannot exactly say whether it was or not.

10286. Could not the meeting have been held at some period of the day or some day of the week when more people might have been present?—They all go to work. Whenever the bills came here and were posted up, the news went rapidly through the whole parish of Barra, and they commenced to gather from the different cantonments. They were there from our township, as many as were necessary, and there was a meeting held in the class-room, and the question was put to them, and they said they were there representing those who remained at home as well as those who had come.

10287. In any case, out of thirty-six, only six or seven managed to be present at this meeting?—That was all I saw present.

10288. Might not a day or an hour have been fixed when more could have been present?—The bills were posted on a Saturday, and as hurriedly as we could we passed the word through the parish, and as many gathered here as could. A great many were not coming to the island till Sunday morning.

10289. Was there not time to arrange for a more largely attended meeting?—That was all the time.

10290. Do you mean there was no time to arrange for a more largely

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attended meeting?—I tell you I saw the bill on the Saturday, but a great many of them did not, and I intimated seeing such a bill, and told them to do something to meet the Royal Commission.

10291. You stated in answer to the Chairman that you and the people whom you represent complain of the oppression of landlords and factors. Do you complain of the present oppression of landlords and factors, or do you refer to a period before you were born?—I partly refer to a period before I was born, and that upon good authority, but in general to the period after I was born.

10292. As you have heard from the factor here that you will not be put in any worse position in consequence of what you state to the Commission, perhaps you will mention some of the oppression on the part of the factor beyond what you mentioned in answer to the Chairman?—I think I have stated all the acts of oppression voluntarily that I can presently remember.

10293. You have no definite or distinct act of oppression committed by the landlord or factor that you can remember, except in regard to the stirk being sold and the money not credited to the tenant?—There was another particular case belonging to the township I represent I can scarcely call it a very hard case. There was a woman named Isabella M'Lauchlan in Borv, about two years ago, who had sublet a bit of land, and she wanted the use of the whole of the land herself. The woman to whom she had sublet the land would not part with it, and the matter became a factor's affair, and I believe the factor said it would be better they should settle it themselves, otherwise he would turn out the woman who had been first in possession of the land. Then Isabella M'Lauchlan's son went to pay the rent, and John Macdonald refused to receive it, on account, I believe, of non-compliance with the factor's request. I believe the woman got a removal summons, but of late years she was reinstated in half of the croft by Mr Macdonald, the chief factor.

10294. Then, in point of fact, she was not removed?—She was removed, but she got another croft.

10295. And you said that you did not consider that a great case of hardship?—Not a great case of hardship, when I saw the woman get the land.

10296. I want to ask you about the stirk. Do I understand that the factor took the stirk away from the crofter and sold it on pretence that the proceeds would be credited to him for payment of the rent due, and that the proceeds were not credited to him for the rent due?—I say he did.

10297. Do you know whether it ever occurred to the crofter to put the matter into the hands of the procurator-fiscal?—He did not do that. He was afraid that if he did so he would be worse off and only double his own misfortune.

10298. Does it not occur to you, if the statement you have made is correct, that it was more a question for the procurator-fiscal than it is for the Royal Commission?—You know that best, your Honour, only I had to state it.

10299. You said the horses and cows were taken away from you forty-two years ago, and the stirks thirty-seven years ago?—Yes.

10300. Where did the stirks come from if the cows were taken away five years previously?—There were some men whose stock was cleared completely away, and some men to whom perhaps a cow or so was left. There is a man in the township of Tangasdale from whom nine head of cattle were taken that same year.

10301. As a rule, do the crofters in this island not possess cows?—A great many do not possess cows.

10302. What has been your occupation all your life?—My occupation was crofting and fishing.

10303. Have you been all your life in the island?—All my life. I have often been away, but I never remained a year away without visiting it.

10304. When the lease of Mr M'Lellan fell out, did the crofters make any application for the farm?—Yes, some of them did. The crofters of the township of Glen did, and a deputation went and waited upon the chief factor, Mr Macdonald, in Aberdeen.

10305. Did he give any reason for not giving the farm to the crofters?—I am not aware of that.

10306. You saw the correspondence in the newspapers upon the subject?—I did.

10307. When did the kelp manufacture cease here?—I cannot exactly say in what year, but it went on here during the late Colonel Gordon's time, and abundantly in the time of the late General M'Neill.

10308. Did it go on subsequently to the year 1827?—It did.

10309. Was not the cessation of the kelp manufacture the principal cause of the poverty of the people in the island?—I do not think it was; it was partly.

10310. To what do you attribute it, if it was not due to the disappearance of the kelp manufacture?—I attribute it to the following reasons, to the famine that followed the failure of the potato crop, coupled with the doings of the factors, studying not the interest of the crofters or cottars.

10311. Do you think the people could live by the island here entirely?—I think so.

10312. Do you think there is land enough to support a population of 3000?—I can safely say there is.

10313. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You have lived here, you say, all your days?—Yes.

10314. And your predecessors before you, for about eighty years?—Yes, on the same land and mostly in the same house.

10315. You gave us as an important date, the year 1827, before which things were in a favourable condition. Who was the proprietor before 1827?—It was the late General M'Neill—Roderick M'Neill—the sixth Roderick M'Neill.

10316. Was the property sold in 1827?—It was not sold, it was let by the late General M'Neill.

10317. When was it sold?—About forty-two or forty-three years ago.

10318. That would be about 1840. Now, there have been extensive evictions and clearances from this estate at different times?—There were.

10319. When did these begin?—About thirty-five or thirty-six years ago.

10320. Were there any at all in the time of the M'Neills?—Not that I am aware of, except from Poll and Kilharr.

10321. Were these upon an extensive scale?—No, the people were only moved up to the adjacent townships.

10322. May I take it that all the townships which you stated might be given back were cleared?—You are quite safe in doing so.

10323. Were there circumstances of great hardships in connection with some of the evictions?—Heart-rending.

10324. Take the last one, which probably occurred within your own recollection?—I have seen with my own eyes the roof of the house actually falling down upon the fire, and smoke issuing.

10325. The houses were knocked down?—Yes.

10326. Are you aware, in connection with the last eviction, that the

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people when they arrived in Canada were in a most miserable condition, dependent upon charity?—I have seen that stated in public prints.

10327. Do the people here occasionally receive letters from some of those who were evicted?—Occasionally, but not very often.

10328. Do you know how they are getting on?—I believe two or three per cent. got on pretty fair, but the rest we receive very bad accounts of.

10329. Do you know how many fighting men the old M'Neills of Barra could take out?—Two hundred men, so far as I am aware.

10330. Had they any property besides Barra?—In former times the Barra estate extended as far as North Boisdale.

10331. That was part of South Uist?—Yes; to the north march of Boisdale,—the march of Boisdale and Kilphedar.

10332. And all that was the M'Neill's property?—Yes.

10333. Can you give me a list of the local factors upon the property since the Gordons acquired it, and the length of time they held office?—There was a man named Webster. I think he was a south country man.

10334. He was not a Barra man?—No; so far as I remember, he was not a Highlander.

10335. Had he any Gaelic?—I never heard him speaking Gaelic. The next was a man named Robertson. He was a stranger also,—I think, a Perthshire man. The next was a man named Clark, a stranger; then there were Fleming, Young, George Gordon, John Rule, William Birnie, then Drever, Taylor, Barron, and now Mr Forbes Phillips.

10336. These were all strangers?—Yes. I forgot to mention Dr M'Leod, who was not a stranger, but a very well known gentleman.

10337. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—He was factor for Lord Macdonald?—Yes, at the same time.

10338. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Then all these people have been factors since the acquisition of the property by the late Colonel Gordon?—Yes, and Mr Macdonald into the bargain. He is not a stranger.

10339. Was there not some local person of the name of Thomson factor here a year ago?—No, his name was Barron. He left lately, and Mr Phillips succeeded him.

10340. Did the people present him with a testimonial?—I think they did.

10341. And he made a speech to them in reply?—I was not present, and did not hear it. It may have been in another place; but I was present when subscriptions were received.

10342. Did he not thank them when the presentation was made?—I did not hear.

10343. Are you aware he stated at any time here that he gave up his position because he could not agree with some things that were going on?—I am not aware of that. I have heard that Mr Walker, South Uist, made such a remark.

10344. *Professor Mackinnon.*—You have two local factors just now, one in South Uist and one in Barra?—Yes.

10345. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—What is the value of a day's labour here to a man if he gets a day's work to do?—The value of a man's labour here among big farmers is a shilling.

10346. Then, according to that, Dr M'Gillivray gets at the rate of £3 per acre, being sixty days at one shilling a day?—Yes.

10347. Do you consider that a high rent?—I do.

10348. Have you any idea of the extent of Dr M'Gillivray's farm?—I suppose he occupies about 6000 acres.

10349. Has he a number of cottars?—None that I am aware of, except shepherds and servants.

10350. What may be the amount of population upon his farm?—He has seven shepherds besides his own domestic servants.

10351. There will be about fifty altogether?—I cannot exactly say.

10352. What proportion does his farm bear to the whole island?—Pretty well on to the half of the island, and the best half.

10353. And the other islands?—The other islands.

10354. I want to get some information about Vatersay. Was it advertised in the newspapers for people to offer?—It was advertised in the newspapers to be let.

10355. Did a deputation from the islands here go to Lady Gordon Cathcart for the purpose of getting it?—No, they went to wait upon Mr Macdonald, the chief factor, at Aberdeen.

10356. How many went?—Three.

10357. Were you one of them?—No.

10358. Did they want to be transported bodily to that island, with their houses, or was it merely as grazing that they wanted it?—I believe they considered themselves quite transported as they were, but they wanted to get over there to better their condition. They wanted to go and live there.

10359. How many made the application?—I cannot say, but I believe mostly all inhabitants of Glen and Castle Bay.

10360. Are these two towns very much crowded?—They are not exactly two towns. This bight is Castle Bay, and the contiguous township is Glen.

10361. Did they want the proprietrix to build houses for them?—I don't think they did.

10362. This place, Castle Bay, seems to be very rugged and rocky. There does not seem to be any cultivation at all?—It is very rocky and rugged, and the green patches which there are are very bleak, barren, and sterile ground.

10363. Were there any people at one time on Vatersay?—Yes.

10364. Is the land there capable of cultivation?—The finest land on the island.

10365. What was the story about there being no sufficient supply of water on the island?—I heard that, but I do not think it is true.

10366. Don't you suppose the people themselves studied the matter very thoroughly before they made application?—I think they did; but I am aware of three spring wells there, which with a little labour would supply water to the island.

10367. Was her Ladyship ever upon the island?—I cannot say; it was only once I ever saw her here.

10368. She did not state of her own knowledge that there was no water?—I cannot exactly say whether she did or not.

10369. With regard to Dr M'Gillivray wanting twelve days' labour for bent, does the bent grow naturally, or was it planted?—It grows naturally, and grew naturally. It was never planted in that place.

10370. Bent is very useful for keeping sand together?—Yes, and the more cutting among the bent the better growth.

10371. Would all the cuttings the people require do any harm to the proper growth of the bent as a proper protection against the sand bank increasing?—It merely encourages growth.

10372. Then what possible reason could Dr M'Gillivray have for exacting such a large sum as that for a thing that was of no use to himself?—I cannot say, if it was not to get his own work done at as little expense as he could.

10373. That is the only solution you can give?—Yes.

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10374. Has Dr M'Gillivray got anything added to his tack within the last ten years?—Not that I am aware of.

10375. *Professor Mackinnon.*—You said that if you had to go for sea-ware on the shore you would have to pay for it to the tacksman. Have you not sufficient sea-ware on your own shore?—No, we have not; and I will tell you how. It is cast sea-ware that we get. It is very much owing to the drift, and is more liable to be drawn ashore on the strand adjacent to the big farm.

10376. Have any of the crofters got sheep?—Yes.

10377. How many has your brother?—About eight sheep.

10378. Do they stray to the neighbouring farm of Dr M'Gillivray?—They do.

10379. Do any of his sheep come your way?—Yes.

10380. Do you pound them?—No, we do not take any notice of them.

10381. Why do you not pound them?—That is a question I cannot exactly answer.

10382. Do they come as often your way as yours go his way?—They come equally our way.

10383. So that his sheep get free upon your pasture, and yours are pounded upon his?—Yes. I account for it in this way, that if I had anything against Dr M'Gillivray, perhaps I might have to go to him for a favour to-morrow, and it is not very likely I would get it.

10384. He is the only one to supply you with hent?—Yes.

10385. About the cockles; supposing you were to use them now, would the tacksman object?—I cannot say whether he would or not.

10386. But he objected before?—He objected before.

10387. The factor did not?—The factor did not.

10388. How long were you away from the island?—I was several times away from the island, but I never remained away from the island the whole year.

10389. I suppose you got your education in the parish school here?—Yes, under Mr Arbuckle, the parish schoolmaster.

10390. You said you understood from the public prints that the emigrants were pretty badly off when they arrived in Canada. Was there an account of the same nature sent home by the people themselves to their friends?—Very much the same.

10391. So it was the general belief in the place that the account in the newspapers was upon the whole true?—It was the general opinion of the people here that the account in the public prints was true, because they attributed a great deal to the treatment they saw the men getting before they emigrated at all.

10392. Was there anything peculiar that happened at the time the horses and cows were taken away?—Yes; there was a Spaniard lying wrecked on the strand adjacent to Tangasdale. Well, the very man I refer to who took the cattle forcibly away made the men work about that ship. She was loaded with fish, and the fish became quite useless; and the people thought they could make use of the fish. They were not allowed to do that until such time as it was mostly taken away by the tide; but I believe he made them labour a great deal about that ship, and never gave them wages,—at least I understood that from the men who worked.

10393. There are not so many wrecks now?—No.

10394. Is it the lighthouse that has prevented that?—It may be attributed to it.

10395. Is that a loss to the place?—I don't think it is.

10396. Now, about the mau's stirk, you say the man is here whose stirk

was taken away and given back to him on payment of 7s.?—Given back to his wife.

10397. Were all the people drinking?—Yes, they were all drinking; and I believe they were there for a good long time the following morning.

10398. And the wife would not get back the stirk without the 7s.?—No. I have also to state, in conclusion, that there was a very severe remark passed one day we came to Castle Bay to meet the chief factor. There were some gentlemen present, who called us privately—but I was within hearing—Fenians, and we were not very well pleased to hear ourselves called Fenians. We do not like the name.

10399. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Have your ideas been in any way influenced by what you have heard from Ireland?—Not in the least. I am not an Irishman, neither have I imbibed their notions.

10400. Do many of the Barra men go to the Kinsale fishing?—None, —all to the east coast.

10401. Who was it that called them Fenians?—The medical practitioner of this island.

10402. I suppose the people here are not much given to law?—No, they are very simple, harmless people.

10403. If any man has a case against another, where does he go for an agent?—He goes nowhere for an agent. In particular cases they might apply to the procurator-fiscal.

10404. For that purpose have they to go all the way to Loch Maddy?—Yes.

10405. Then do you think they suffer any injustice from the want of lawyers near them?—I cannot say, but I know it is bringing very unnecessary expense upon them.

10406. When they have to go all the way to Loch Maddy?—Yes; it is a long and dreary way to walk, and they have to cross two ferries.

10407. Is there any agent there except the fiscal?—None, except a man of business, whose name I think is Wilson, and, if I remember right, they are in company.

10408. So only one side of a case can be heard at Loch Maddy?—That is all I understand about it.

10409. How long does it take to go to Loch Maddy?—For my part, I would take about two days going there.

10410. I suppose you would rather lose something than go on such business?—I would, by far.

10411. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You were asked by Lochiel about the number of people who sent you here. Has there been anybody consulting with or advising or directing you from the outside to the steps you should take in coming here to-day?—None whatever.

10412. Did the clergyman of the place, or the priest, or others, interfere in any way or assist you in getting up your meeting?—They did not interfere in any way, only they were very encouraging to us by coming and sitting along with the people.

10413. The priest was present at your meeting?—He was present.

10414. And you are quite prepared to state that the proceedings in the schoolhouse, as regards the appointment of the delegates, truly represented the feelings of the crofters throughout the whole of the island?—I am quite prepared to say that, and it was quite a legal affair, and we kept a copy of the sederunt.

10415. Who wrote out the paper that was signed by the chairman?—A merchant's clerk.

10416. Now, is it the case that, from the state of matters in this island, it is practically impossible for the crofters to do anything but submit to

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whatever the proprietor or factor may put upon them?—Owing to the position in which the people are, it was ever a very prevalent idea on this island that they would have to obey their superiors, particularly landlords and factors; and, I believe, should they wish to do anything, they could scarcely do it without consulting either landlord or factor, whether to their own benefit or to the reverse.

DONALD CAMPBELL, Crofter, Cregston (57)—examined.

Donald Campbell.

10417. *The Chairman.*—Are you a fisherman?—I am not a fisherman just now.

10418. Have you been freely elected a delegate from Cregston?—Yes.

10419. How many people were present at the meeting?—The great majority of the people of the place, and afterwards two came with me to the schoolhouse here.

10420. Have you a statement to make on behalf of the people of Cregston?—Yes. They complain that they are kept down for the last sixty years with high rents, their little holding is made smaller, and deteriorating from having been long cropped, so that they are not now worth cultivating. They cannot support themselves but by their earnings elsewhere, only they lose their time by working after it and about it, and although they are still constantly engaged with it, they are not able to make a livelihood out of it for themselves and their families. They are in that condition for the last sixty years. There are to-day twenty-six families where there were only twelve fifty years ago. They are very badly off. They have been very much held down during that time, and the first improvement was since the present proprietrix, Lady Gordon Cathcart, came into possession. It was difficult for her to do very much to improve their condition, it is so lately since she came into possession, and she found them so very poor. It was difficult for her to remedy the great poverty that prevailed. They were of opinion that if her feeling towards them could find expression she wished to improve their condition, but they have not yet been able to find much of the benefit of her good wishes,—only the time is short. They were much held down in every way. Every one that was anything like well off in the place was holding down the others. At first we had a great deal of land in the place, and they crowded those in these places upon the other poor people. Some of us whose names were in the rent-roll of the proprietor were deprived of some of our lands to be given to these people. Others who had no bit of land at all were still a burden to us. We were keeping all these people, and we were on the rent-roll of the proprietor, and we have got no abatement of rent, although we had to maintain these people. If they had any stock,—a horse, or cow, or sheep,—we had to graze them; and they cleared the ground for the large tacksmen altogether, and they took the people that were upon them and put them upon us. So, the piece of land that our fathers and grandfathers had, three or four families are upon the piece to-day. At one time they were preventing us walking here to the place where we could put our fish upon the rocks. Very stormy winters prevailed, and our chief means of support, the potato, has been precarious ever since the potato disease. Some years it would not grow well. During winters such as these, perhaps the people of the place would have no means of support except shell-fish. They wished to deprive us of the shell-fish, and the poor people would go four miles away at ebb tide to gather shell-fish, having no other means of support in their households except what they would bring home of shell-fish for that day. When

the tide was low, perhaps they would gather more than they would be able to put beyond the tidal mark. They were in the habit of preventing us from laying it down upon tufts of grass within reach of the tide; and they set up a notice to be posted on the doors of the church preventing us going at all. The clergyman we had here at that time told the postman that if he would put up that notice upon the door of the church, he would deprive him of his situation,—so anxious was he that the people would not be deprived of that privilege. Since the poor people were aware that the priest was an educated man, they were encouraged, and they continued gathering the shell-fish. Everything of that sort they wished to deprive us of. Those who managed the property for the proprietors, until the present proprietrix came into possession, would not allow the young people to marry upon the estate or to build houses. If I allowed my son or my daughter to remain even in the stable, they would deprive me of my holding, or threaten to deprive me of my holding. But Lady Gordon Cathcart has done away with that state of matters. They have left us so poor that when the children of the poor man grew up, not one of them could remain assisting the father. They would require to earn wages through the world. Perhaps the son would go away before he was of age, to earn wages, and never return. They sent away most of our relatives to America thirty-five years ago. They pulled down the houses over their heads, and injured them in every possible way. They valued the brutes *higher than the men whom God created in his own image, and were more* gentle with them, and all the respect that we have received during the last fifty years has been received from the present proprietrix. But it was difficult for her to improve our condition. We must speak the truth to all men.

10421. *Mr Cameron.*—Have you any complaint to make of the present proprietrix or the factor?—The present proprietrix has not made us,—has left us as we were,—all the advantage we had received.

10422. So I understand you have no complaint to make of the present proprietrix or the factor?—We have nothing to say. I cannot say that they have made us anything worse than we were when she came into possession.

10423. Do you think that if this property was owned by any one who had to depend upon the rents derived from the island alone, they would be able to do as much for it as Lady Gordon Cathcart has done?—I hope that any proprietor might do something for us. I think any proprietor might put us in the position in which our fathers and grandfathers were.

10424. What is your own idea of what the proprietor might do to benefit the people of the island?—To give them the land at the same rent at which their grandfathers had it; and they are now so poor that even supposing I should get the holding at the same rent at which my grandfather had it, it would be difficult for me to stock it, for poverty has pressed upon us so sorely and so long.

10425. Then, if you and your neighbours are so poor, how would you propose to enter upon those lands which you desire to get?—I think, if we got assistance in some way, we would endeavour to repay it in a number of years.

10426. But without assistance you think they could not take more land?—There are some that could take up a little more than they have.

10427. Did you hear all the evidence given by the last witness?—I was not inside at the time.

10428. The last witness told us he held four acres, and kept two cows, one heifer, two ponies, and eight sheep, and that his rent was £4. Do you consider that a high rent?—If these acres were the kind of land that would

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yield good crops, perhaps the rent might do; but in the case of any one of my neighbours in the township in which I am, the place is rocky,—it is only rocks, and it should not be cultivated at all. For the place I occupy myself during the last fifty years, I do not remember it without a crop, and the only variation was potatoes and barley. It is about five acres so-called, half of it rocks.

10429. And you cannot plough the whole?—We will be endeavouring to do it, but it is hard to say what would. I could not possibly go six yards without coming upon a rock. During the last three years I was not able to take more than two returns out of it.

10430. How many cows have you on the common grazing?—One cow and a heifer.

10431. Any sheep?—No.

10432. Any ponies or horses?—Two horses.

10433. What is your rent?—£2, 15s.

10434. Have you ever been in any other part of the Highlands?—Yes.

10435. Have you ever compared the rents in other parts of the Western Highlands with the rents which you and your neighbours pay here?—No, I was only a poor working man.

10436. Are you a fisherman?—I was at times fishing, but I have given it up now.

10437. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Are you buying meal every year?—I had to buy for the last two years every morsel of meal that supported ten of a family. I am bringing home during this year two bolls of meal every month.

10438. What does it cost you?—Oatmeal, 22s. a boll; flour, 17s. 6d. and 18s.

10439. Are the people in your township ill off for milk for their children?—Very little milk. I had not for the last twelve months as much milk as would allow for one meal a day to the family. Our cattle are so poor for want of grass that they could not provide milk. They could not feed the calves. They also give very ill usage to our cattle in another way here. If they grazed upon the lands of the large farmers they would pound them, and then the cows would be ill-used. They would lose their calves, and the mares would lose their foals. The shepherds would put them in in the morning, and they had not the civility to send us word; although I and my son would be searching for the animal the whole day, they had not the civility to send us any word about it, and gave us no warning, and perhaps when I reached the door they would be in the other end of the place and I would have to go home.

10440. Have the cattle that are reared upon Dr M'Gillivray's farm a considerable reputation in the market?—Yes.

10441. Supposing that you and your co-crofters got a share of these nice rich lands that we hear of, would you be able to rear plenty stock to give milk?—Yes, certainly, if we got any land suitable. I know well it is the worst portion of the land that we have got.

10442. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Do you sow oats, or only barley?—Both oats and barley; a little oats.

10443. What return of oats do you get?—I scarcely get any return at all. I use the best of it as fodder for my cattle. I only got as much as resowed the crop.

10444. What return of barley?—Two returns.

10445. How many returns of potatoes?—For the last two years, six returns.

10446. Did you get that last year?—Last year, about five.

10447. And seven in the previous year?—Yes, about seven.

10448. What in the highest year?—The best year would be eight or nine.

10449. What quantity of oats do you sow?—About two bushels.

10450. How much barley?—About other two.

10451. And potatoes?—About eight barrels of potatoes, but it is not my own ground I plant them on.

10452. But on your own ground?—If I planted eight barrels of potatoes on my own ground, I could only sow one bushel of barley and one bushel of oats.

10453. But, as you usually sow two bushels of each, how much potatoes do you plant besides that?—About three barrels.

10454. And you get about twenty barrels back?—Yes, the year they yield an average crop.

10455. Have you a family fit for work?—The eldest I have fit for work is a girl of twenty, and the next to her is fifteen.

10456. If you do not go to sea, and have no more return than you have mentioned, where do you get the money to buy twenty-four bolls of meal in the year?—I earn it. I have been in the south country continuously for the last thirty years earning wages to support my family.

10457. As a labourer?—As a labourer, getting any work that I could get. I was many years at the east coast fishing.

10458. Did you ever work at the Barra fishing?—Yes, I used to serve as one of the crew upon an east coast boat.

10459. Why did you drop that?—I was poorly, and was getting weak for the work.

10460. Are any of your neighbours working at the Barra fishing?—The young men serve in the crews of the east coast boats here.

10461. Have none of them got boats of their own, like the east coast people?—Yes, about seven or eight, which they got a year or two ago.

10462. Are they doing well with those boats?—Yes, they are doing as others do; sometimes better, sometimes worse.

10463. If the people all had boats such as the east coast fishermen have, and as good tackle, could they make as good a living as east coast fishermen do?—Yes, at some times. The fishing would suit remarkably well here if they were in the same condition in which my father and grandfather were. The place is very much exposed,—a wild coast,—and there are many times of the year when they cannot fish. They could fish when the weather was suitable for fishing, and if they had land they could work upon it when it was wild weather; but to be fishermen solely, without anything to support them during the wild seasons, causes them loss. They will require to risk the boats and the tackle in wild weather when they have nothing to support the family at home. Perhaps, after one has bought fresh tackle, it may be destroyed by the rough shores before he is able to earn as much money as pays for the tackle alone.

10464. If you are able to work at the fishing only at odd times of the year, do you consider that working at such odd times would really pay the interest on the cost of an expensive boat and full tackle?—Yes, if you only fish in good weather.

10465. The east coast fisherman fishes the whole year through, and he is thus able to make a fair living, and pay interest upon his expenditure. Could you make a fair living, and pay interest upon your expenditure, if you fished only a part of the year?—The shore that the east coast fishermen have is different from this. Their shore is a channel; it is not so rough as this. [Question repeated.] I think that if I tried the fishing here during the wild weather I might lose both interest and profit.

10466. We understand that, but, if so, will it pay to have this expensive

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tackle at all?—They can only work the big boats here with expensive tackle, and the big boats are here only at the fishing season at this time.

10467. *The Chairman.*—Do you say that while the proprietrix, Lady Gordon Cathcart, has shown respect to you, and done nothing to make your condition worse, she has done nothing to make it better?—She has not made it better as yet. Some of us have not got the benefit of her good wishes as yet, but she has given liberty to some. Before this time, when young people married, they were prevented from building houses. She has given them orders and permission to build houses.

10468. Has she done anything in the way of improvements?—She made a pier, and I believe that those who got big boats received assistance from her in order to get the boats.

10469. Has she made any charge for interest or otherwise upon the money advanced to the people to buy better boats?—I do not know; there are others who can tell about that.

JOHN M'KINNON, Cottar, Glen, and formerly Crofter in Tangasdale (69)—examined.

John M'Kinnon.

10470. *The Chairman.*—Have you been freely elected a delegate?—Yes, by the people of Tangasdale.

10471. Have you a statement to make on their behalf?—Yes. I have to say that they lost their land, the one-third of the township, and other land was promised to them for it, but they did not get it.

10472. Do you mean they lost their land in Tangasdale?—Yes, the one-third of their land was taken from them, and they were told they would get other land for it, but that promise was not redeemed.

10473. How long ago was that?—Sixteen years ago. After the rent was paid I was put out at the end of a month. They have lost their means. The land is dear.

10474. Are you on the proprietor's lands or the tacksman's lands?—On the crofters' lands.

10475. How do you earn your subsistence?—By day's wages from any person from whom I can get it.

10476. Do you get employment from the farmer?—I get work from Mr M'Neill, merchant here. I never went to seek employment from the large tacksmen.

10477. What are your wages?—2s. and sometimes 2s. 6d. a day.

10478. What description of work are you employed at?—Curing fish.

10479. How long does that sort of work last during the year?—Generally half the year.

10480. What do you do the other half?—The rest of the year I work about his own house.

10481. At the same wages?—No, the day is short then.

10482. How much then?—1s. 6d.

10483. When you were young, what wages would you have got for the same description of work?—I was not at that kind of work when I was a young man. I had land of my own then.

10484. But in the case of other people who did the same kind of work, how much did they get?—The highest was 1s. 6d., 1s., and so on.

10485. When you were young, were meal and other commodities dearer or cheaper than they are now?—Meal was dearer then than it is now, but there was no meal imported at that time. We did not need it. Plenty

grew upon the land. When the men had planted the land, there was as much growing to them as would support them in meal.

10486. Is there more money circulating now, in consequence of the increase of fishing?—Money is scarcer with them. They make more money, but they give it away for meal and for other means of livelihood.

10487. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Who made the stuff that is in the coat you wear?—My wife.

10488. Where did she get the wool?—It grew with the tacksman here.

10489. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You said that part of their hill was taken from them sixteen years ago. Who got it?—The tacksman that left Vatersay got it,—Mr Archibald M'Lellan.

10490. Why was it taken from them and given to him?—To add it on to the tack.

10491. Was there any reduction of rent made at the time?—No abatement of rent. We were promised additional land in exchange for it, which we did not get, but the rent remains upon the township still the same as it was before.

10492. Can you give us any idea how many acres were taken away from them in this way?—In my opinion, there were at least 80 acres,—perhaps up to 100.

10493. And you got no reduction of rent?—No, not a penny.

10494. Has Mr Macdonald, who is now present, been the head factor for a great many years?—Yes.

10495. Did they represent this grievance to him?—No.

10496. Why not?—We would not get it any way—even supposing we asked it; but I was broken down, and did not like to make much of a row about it.

10497. Were you and your co-crofters afraid that if you made a disturbance you would be put out altogether?—Certainly.

10498. You stated in answer to his Lordship in the chair, that they did not import much meal in your younger days. Was there a mill in old times?—There is a mill yet at the other end of the island.

10499. Is there much doing at the mill now?—As much as is sent to it, and it could grind as much as would feed the whole island.

10500. Is there much meal ground at the mill?—No, there is not so much meal ground as would keep the mill going one day in the week. All the meal is imported.

10501. Has the principal tacksman, Dr M'Gillivray, a good deal of arable land under cultivation?—Oh, plenty of it; I may say he has the half of Barra, and he cultivated a good deal of it.

10502. And, notwithstanding all that, there is only work for the mill now one day in the week?—It does not get the one-sixth it could grind. The meal comes from Glasgow.

10503. Are the crofters generally, as we have heard in parts of Skye, getting poorer and deteriorating in their circumstances?—Yes, they are. The land is so small, and it is getting inferior by continuous cropping. The people are getting poorer.

10504. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—How long did you hold land in Tangasdale?—Thirteen years.

10505. Had you more land at the beginning of the thirteen years than at the end?—Yes, I had my share of the third portion that the township lost.

10506. Did you lose your croft in Tangasdale altogether, because you came to poverty?—No, the croft was taken from me to be given to a policeman whom they brought into the place. It was not because of poverty that I was deprived of it, but through injustice.

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John M'Kinnon.

10507. Were you in arrears when you were turned out?—I brought home some money after paying the rent; I had no arrears.

10508. Then you did not wish to give up the croft?—No, it was taken from me in order to be given to the policeman. The policeman selected mine rather than that of any one else in the township, and of course he must needs get it.

10509. Was the choice given to the policeman?—Probably that was the case. At any rate, he fixed his eye upon mine.

10510. *The Chairman.*—Who was the factor at that time?—Mr Birnie.

10511. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Was it because it was a good croft that it was taken from you?—The very reason, because it was the best.

10512. Did you get any compensation?—Nothing was given to me. The rent was paid, and there was nothing due by me.

10513. Did you get any compensation for your houses?—I left the houses with them; they were of no use to me.

10514. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Are you as well off now as a day-worker as your neighbours whom you left behind you in Tangasdale are as crofters?—Not by any means.

10515. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Are you as happy?—I am happy enough though I am not so well off; but I shall soon be past work.

10516. Have you a wife?—Yes.

10517. And a family?—Yes, three daughters and a little boy.

10518. *The Chairman.*—Do your daughters go abroad for service?—Yes.

10519. All of them?—Yes. One of them goes to the east coast fishing, and they assist her too when the fishing is going on.

10520. They do not go away as servants?—There is another who goes out to service here in this place.

10521. Have you got a little house here of your own?—Yes.

10522. Did you build it yourself?—Another had it, and it was vacant when I entered.

10523. Do you pay anything for it?—Yes, I pay 7s. 6d., and road money and poor money, altogether coming to 12s. 6d.

10524. Did you pay anything to the man who left the house?—Yes; I paid him £3. It is a small house.

10525. Have you any land with it at all?—No; not the breadth of my bonnet.

10526. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Have you a cow?—Yes.

10527. How do you feed it?—I get bits of land from other people out of which I grow fodder to feed my cow.

10528. Do you send the cow out to pasture in summer?—Yes; on the hill.

10529. How much do you pay?—£1 generally.

10530. How much rent do you pay for the bits of land?—I pay it in work; I work to them.

10531. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—How long is it since you came to your present house?—Nine years.

10532. Have you been charged 7s. 6d. of rent ever since you came there?—I was paying it until last year and this year. I have not paid it for the last two years.

10533. Do you pay to the proprietor or to the crofter?—To the proprietor.

10534. Is it for the house you pay it, or for the right to cut peats?—It is upon the house; they never charged us for peats.

10535. To whom do you pay this £1 for the cow's grass?—To different people. I pay it to the one from whom I can get the grass.

JOHN MACPHERSON, Cottar, Kentangaval (68)—examined.

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John Macpherson.

10536. *The Chairman.*—Were you freely elected a delegate by the people?—Yes.

10537. Have you got a statement to make on their behalf?—The tenants who are paying rent are complaining that there are too many cottars disturbing them with the small holdings they have—that they are a burden to them.

10538. How do they make their living?—Some of them by fishing, and at other times by bits of land which they get for work to plant potatoes.

10539. Do you pay your rent to the tacksmen or the proprietor?—Not to any body,—no rent whatever.

10540. How long have the cottars been settled there?—I cannot really tell how long, but they never had any lands,—these twenty-four cottars. The cottars bade me to say here that they never had any lands, and that they wanted lands if they could get them, and that there was a kind of promise to them this year that they would get them.

10541. Do they live upon the crofters' land or upon the tacksmen's land?—They stay on the land that the tenants have got.

10542. They have their houses on crofters' land?—Yes, but they go and labour on big farms.

10543. Do they pay any rent to the crofters in the form of work?—No.

10544. You do not work to the crofters without pay?—No, we never give them anything for the houses.

10545. Do these twenty-four cottar families generally possess cows?—A few of them have cows.

10546. How do they manage to keep the cows?—They buy what will keep them up, and some of them have patches of land on M'Lellan's farm.

10547. When they have ground for the pasture of a cow, how much do they pay for that pasture?—They do not get it from the tacksmen. They did not use to get it from the tacksman at all, but from the tenant.

10548. But do they ever pay the tenants any money, or do they pay them in labour or assistance?—In money.

10549. How much do they pay for one cow?—£1 or thereabouts.

10550. How do they get the keep of the cow for the winter?—They buy it from those who have not a cow.

10551. How much usually would you pay for what you bought to winter a cow?—15s. or thereabonts, but the most of them had a little fodder of their own in addition. They paid 15s. or thereabouts for fodder for the winter.

10552. Who receives the £1 for the grazing of the cow, is it the proprietor or the small tenant?—It is the tenant who gets it.

10553. When you work at day's labour, how much do you get for the day's work?—About two shillings.

10554. Do you ever get half-a-crown?—I never work, but they tell me they get that.

10555. How do you live?—I am a dealer in a small way, and sometimes I act as agent for curers in engaging women for them here, and so on.

10556. Are they women of the place whom you employ, or do women come from other places?—Very few; whenever there are not enough to supply them they take a few from the east coast.

10557. But are there women enough here to do the whole fishing business?—Sometimes, according to the number of boats that come.

10558. Do the women like the work? Are they ready to accept it?—They are very ready to accept it.

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10559. What sort of wages do they get?—They get £1 of arles money in the winter time. There are three women for every boat the curer has. For every barrel they fill and pack they get eightpence, and when there is no packing or gutting they get threepence an hour for any other work the curer wants them to take.

10560. How much would an active able-bodied woman make in the fishing season?—According to the work.

10561. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Suppose she had as much work as she could do in the day, how much would she make?—About £3 in the season, forbye the arles.

10562. *The Chairman.*—That is about £4?—Yes.

10563. Four pounds for six weeks?—The fishing lasts six or seven weeks, but some seasons they do not make £1. They did not make £1 last year.

10564. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Do they get their wages paid to them in money?—Yes.

10565. How many tenants are there in Kentangaval?—About nineteen or twenty.

10566. And twenty-four cottars?—Yes.

10567. And the tenants have sent you here to complain that these cottars are a burden to them?—Yes, and the cottars too.

10568. Where did these cottars come from?—They were raised there.

10569. Are they the children of crofters?—The children of both crofters and cottars.

10570. Had your father land?—Yes.

10571. Have you a brother that has land?—My mother and sister were the last that had it.

10572. Have any of your friends lands?—No, they are all dead.

10573. Who has got the land your father had?—Mr M'Neill has it now.

10574. Why did you not get it?—I was too young at the time, and my mother was put out.

10575. Could she not pay?—She could pay it, and more than that.

10576. Why was she put out?—She was put out on account of not being pleased with them for taking the sheep from her at the time of the great wrong that was done by Colonel Macneill.

10577. He took the sheep from you?—Yes.

10578. And she made objection to that?—Yes. She had more sheep than any crofter that was in Barra, and there were plenty at that time. There were no big farmers in the island at all, and the hills were full of sheep belonging to the crofters, and my mother had more than any of them. She had about one hundred sheep on the hill, and all these sheep were taken away over to Vatersay by Colonel Macneill's orders. I saw the constable and foreman take them away, and owing to my mother objecting to that the croft was taken from her. She had two cows, and a mare and a foal, and a colt and a few other beasts. A while after that, and after the croft was taken from her, there was a call put out again that there was to be an account given to the colonel, and the constables came round and every one gave them a cow. Let him be tenant or cottar the cow was taken from every one in Barra, after the sheep were taken away.

10579. Do you mean that the cow's grass was taken away?—The cow itself, from every one in Barra, was to be taken away. So many constables came for the cows and took them away, but my mother objected to giving a cow. She had two of them, and they were on another man's grass on tethers, and the constables went and took one, and the tether along with it. There was a sister of mine in the family at the time, and I was quite young at

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the time, and we met them with the cow coming up the road. My sister ran at one of the constables and hurt him on the knee, and took the cow from him. We could run better than they, and the cow ran well, and ran back to the house; she knew the house—and in she went, and my mother took a stone, and put it at the back of the door to keep it fast. The constables came to the door, and tried to break it open to get the cow. I got above the lintel of the door with a stick in my hand, and knocked off the hat of one of them with the stick. They went away and told this to the factor—the colonel was not at home—and told what we had done to the constable, and how the man was harried, and all by trying to take the cow away from us. The factor gave them an order to take all she had from her then—to come and take every cow and horse that belonged to her. That factor's name was Macrae, Askernish. I was about twelve years old at the time

10580. *The Chairman.*—Were the cows taken on account of arrears of rent?—There was no settlement required to be taken or given.

10581. But were the people generally in arrears of rent to the colonel?—I do not think they were. It did not look like that. They would take whatever they liked at any time. There was never any settlement for years at all. Those who are at the herring fishing want me to tell that they are charged net ground by the proprietor.

10582. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Are these the east coast people?—No, they are the Barra people. They complain they are charged 7s. 6d. for net ground—for the nets they land on their own ground.

10583. That they pay rent for nets on the ground for which they pay rent as crofters?—That is what they tell me.

10584. Do you know it as a matter of fact?—I believe it.

10585. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Have any of them a receipt for that?—It is the curer who charges them for it.

THOMAS ROSS, Fish Curer, Burghead, Morayshire (57)—examined.

Thomas Ross.

10586. *The Chairman.*—Have you any statement to make to us?—Yes. In regard to telegraphic communication, I beg leave to say that we stand much in need of some more facilities.

10587. Will you explain what the object or purpose of it principally is—to notify where and what?—Looking to the number of boats and curers we have got here, we have very bad facilities for doing business as regards postal or telegraphic communication. For instance, if we were sending away a telegram from here to-day, it would not be at Loch Boisdale for two days, going by the regular postal boat across the sound. If we had the telegraph on to Castle Bay it would be a great facility for the fish curing interest.

10588. Where is the nearest telegraphic point?—At Loch Boisdale, I understand.

10589. Then you wish it to be brought on from that place to Castle Bay?—Yes.

10590. Would it be submarine the whole way?—No, about six or eight miles.

10591. And that would be very useful to you in the transaction of your business?—Yes, very much so.

10592. With reference to the announcement that you had so much fish to despatch, or for what purpose?—In the first place, we require to take all our fish curing utensils, stock, and salt from home. We only take out

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part at the first of the season, and then according to the success of the fishing we have to send home for additional supplies. We have not communication to let them know what we require, without such facilities. As regards salt, we take perhaps fifty or one hundred barrels per boat, and that may be consumed in a very short time. If we had telegraphic communication, we could send home for it, and have a vessel despatched immediately, giving us a supply in a very few days. Another thing is, that we would have communication with our continental markets, to see what market would suit us best. It takes about six days for a letter to come from our quarter to here, and it will take three days for a telegram. I had one lately which was five days on the way.

10593. What are your principal continental markets?—Hamburg, Stettin, Danzic, Königsberg, St Petersburg.

10594. They are all in the North Sea or in the Baltic?—Yes. Then we have about 350 boats between here and Vatersay fishing at this moment, and these 350 boats are valued at £400 a boat.

10595. Including nets?—Nets and boat. I understand that is a low calculation.

10596. What is the average tonnage of these good boats?—I suppose it may be about twenty-five tons.

10597. And you think that one of these good boats all found is worth about £400?—On an average, including the nets. Now each of these boats coming here would wire home on their arrival—350 boats—and also previous to their leaving, which would be some consideration to the telegraphic department. Then we take out about two women to each boat—some have one and some have two—and these women would be telegraphing home, and we have a cooper for every two or three boats, and there are thirty-three curers in Castle Bay and twelve in Vatersay. The amount of telegraphing which they would have would be something considerable.

10598. Are most of the women brought from the east coast, or are most of them found on the island?—Most of them on the island.

10599. What number of women are generally brought from the east coast?—I could scarcely say, but an average of one or two per boat.

10600. Do they come round with the boats?—Some come round with the boats, and some come by Oban.

10601. Do the women generally belong to the families of the men who come with the boats, or are they hired?—Well, they are hired, but they generally belong to the men as a rule.

10602. How long does it take for the boats to come round when they come round the north of Scotland?—They come round by the Pentland Firth in two or three days. I believe three days is considered a good passage. Coming through the canal, they take four or five days.

10603. *Mr Cameron.*—Which way do most of them come?—By the canal.

10604. *The Chairman.*—Is the use of the canal increasing?—I really cannot say for that.

10605. Have you made any application to the postmaster-general about this matter?—We petitioned the postmaster-general three times since I came here first. This is my fifteenth season in Castle Bay, and during that time we have petitioned the postmaster-general three times.

10606. Was that for postal communication?—No, for telegraphic communication.

10607. What answer did you get?—They were to take it into consideration. Last year we had 490 boats between here and Vatersay, but owing to the failure of the fishing last year the number of boats has been reduced, but we have hopes of a good supply this year.

10608. Do you pay a great amount in wages?—As regards the women we take out from home, we generally allow them so much during the season —£3, £3, 10s. or £4. The women on the island receive £1 of earnest, and what they can make per barrel—eightpence per barrel.

10609. And they realise about the same amount?—If the fishing is good they will realise about £3 or 50s. on an average.

10610. How many men are employed in the business?—Each boat has about six men.

10611. To what extent are they paid by you?—We do not pay these men. We only pay according to their fishing, so much per cran.

10612. You do pay the men so much per cran?—We pay the skipper of the boat, and he generally has one or two or three fishing along with him. The crew is generally made up by four men from home.

10613. Then there are men employed on the beach?—The coopers.

10614. Are there any men actually employed in preparing the fish?—That is all done by women.

10615. Where do you get the casks?—We make them all at home on the east coast.

10616. Where does the wood come from, the staves and hoops?—We get it round our own district principally, and some from Norway. There is not much coming into our district to speak of from Norway, but Aberdeen, Peterhead, and Fraserburgh are greatly supplied from Norway.

10617. What are the barrels made of?—Some fir and some larch. These are the two principal qualities. Larch is preferable.

10618. In your transactions with the women or the men whom you employ, do you ever pay in goods, or do you always pay in money?—All cash. We deal in no goods.

10619. There is no truck system of any description in your hands?—Nothing whatever.

10620. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Do you think the fishing here is capable of being developed?—Perfectly so.

10621. How long do you remain here each year?—Generally about seven or eight weeks. We arrive about the first days of May and our time is out on the 23rd of June. Then we have our fish to prepare after the boats leave.

10622. What is the usual fishing time?—Generally from the 15th or 20th of May to the 23rd of June. If we have fish when the boat's time is out, we have the fish to prepare afterwards, and to see them shipped, so we calculate upon being on the island for about eight weeks.

10623. Do you know if there is any fishing of any kind during the rest of the year?—Yes.

10624. What kind?—Ling is the principal fishing, I believe.

10625. Is it a good station for the ling fishing?—I understand so. I do not do anything in it myself, but I understand it is a good station for ling. I believe there are great quantities caught at times.

10626. Is it a good fishing station to keep the fishermen employed all the year round?—I understand it is.

10627. But of your own knowledge you do not know?—Not of my own experience, because I never did anything in that line. I understand they do a great deal here with lobsters. Now, taking into consideration 350 boats at eighty crans per boat on the average—we are bound to take one hundred and fifty per boat, but average it at eighty crans—it comes to about £70,000. The fish cost us about £2 per cran. After paying bounty money and all other expenses, I average them at £2, 10s. per barrel, and taking eighty crans per boat, it comes to about £70,000. It is a good amount of money that we have at stake. Then we take out one hundred

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and fifty barrels per boat, and I value these at five shillings per barrel, which comes to £37, 10s; salt, £10 per boat; bounty money to each boat, £50; coopers' labour and women's labour per boat, £20;—in all, £117, 10s. When these things are taken into account I think we are justified in advocating telegraphic communication as much as possible.

10628. What is the bounty?—£50. I pay that, and many others I know pay the same.

10629. What is the nature of the payment?—When we engage these boats to go and fish for us, we give them so much per cran and £50 of bounty money. This bounty is just given as a compliment; we do not receive any benefit if we do not receive fish.

10630. It is a sum to secure their services?—Yes, and they have £1 or £2 earnest money after that. I pay £50 of bounty money and £2 of earnest to each boat.

10631. When do they receive that £50?—Immediately on our arrival home.

10632. Do you arrange the prices before you leave home?—Perhaps six months before we leave home.

10633. What prices do you give?—Some fifteen or sixteen shillings per cran for about a week at the beginning—from the 15th to the 23rd or 24th of May—and then twenty shillings all over. Some do not commence to take their fish till the 20th of May.

10634. You do not settle with them till they are home?—We give them so much to pay expenses, and settle with them immediately after arrival home.

10635. Is the price the same every year?—No, it varies. The bounty money is the same every year.

10636. That is to say, there is sometimes more competition to secure men?—Yes, and according to the fishing. Last year men were not willing to come out without a higher bounty.

10637. *Mr Cameron.*—Besides the reasons you have given for requiring additional telegraphic facilities here, is it the case that you would be very much better off if you had better meaus of communicating with steamers to come and fetch away the fish when there are more fish brought in at one time than at another?—Yes, that is very much required.

10638. You wish to telegraph that there is an extra supply of fish, so as to get it away rapidly?—Yes.

10639. I suppose that not having this telegraphic communication, you feel yourselves placed at a considerable disadvantage as compared with those on the east coast, who have these advantages?—Very much so. We can do no business in a manner without being prepared at once with all we get. We made a great preparatiou last year at the commencement of the season to see what the result was, and I suppose the average of each boat did not come to £10. My own average was six crans.

10640. And you think that in fairness you should be placed upon an equality with the curers on the east coast?—Yes.

10641. In any replies which you have had from the postmaster-general has he ever alluded to the cost of laying down a wire between here and Loch Boisdale?—Not to our petition, but I believe that was done to the proprietor.

10642. Did you happen to hear what that cost was stated at?—No, I did not.

10643. Did you hear that one reason was on account of the tides and the difficulty of laying down the wire in the sea, because the tides were so strong?—I did hear that.

10644. Do you think that might be overcome?—Yes; it is only in that one sound. The breadth is six or seven miles.

10645. Do you know who has been surveying the ground?—No.

10646. I suppose there are other places in the United Kingdom where telegraphic cables are laid now under similar difficulties?—More so, I think.

10647. Are you aware there was a select committee of the House of Commons sitting last year on the subject of fisheries, and especially as to what purpose the surplus fund derived from the herring brand should be devoted?—Yes.

10648. Was there a Mr Ferguson examined before that committee from Loch Boisdale?—Yes.

10649. Are you aware that in the report of that committee it was recommended that this place, Barra, being without telegraphic communication, was a very great source of hardship and injury to the fishing interest?—Yes.

10650. And they recommended Parliament to find the money for the purpose of supplying the deficiency?—Yes.

10651. So I hope you feel encouraged in persevering in your attempts by that fact?—Yes. I hope and have confidence that it will be here if I come back next year.

10652. Mr *Fraser-Mackintosh.*—The local requirements would not need the telegraph; it is only the fishing?—I would not say, but there are some gentlemen here who would require the telegraph as well as we do.

10653. But that is of comparatively minor importance?—Yes.

10654. Are you aware that the post-office, when applications are made to them for extensions such as this, are always willing to do it if a guarantee is made that they will have a certain return for their outlay?—Yes.

10655. Do you know whether any sum has ever been stated that would pay the post-office, under which they would give this line?—No, I never heard the sum stated, but I have heard that Lady Gordon Cathcart offered so much as a guarantee.

10656. I suppose the fish curers and others would not be disposed to do more than use the wire considerably?—Well, I don't know about that. I heard it talked of here not long ago that they would be willing to do something before they would want it.

10657. Do you think that is the general idea among your colleagues and others in business—that they would do this?—I really do think so.

10658. Can you give us any idea how much money will be left in this locality by each boat during the six weeks of the year?—I should say there would be from £600 to £700 altogether for women alone.

10659. I presume that most of your supplies you bring with you?—Yes, but there is a good deal of money spent here in groceries forbye what we take out.

10660. By the crews of the boats?—By the crews and fish curers and women.

10661. Then how much do you put it at altogether? You have mentioned a sum for women; would you double that for men during the six weeks?—Yes. There are a good many men engaged here for the boats. Some boats have one man and some two men belonging to the island, who receive from £5 to £7 each, and they have their meat during the time provided by the owners of the boat.

10662. So you would run the amount up to £1500?—Yes, I am bound to say that all that money is left behind. I know, since I came to this island first of all, a great deal of difference in the appearance of the people. I think they are getting better.

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10663. What interest has the proprietrix, Lady Gordon Cathcart, in giving a guarantee? Do you pay her any rent?—Yes.

10664. In what form?—We pay £5 each to Lady Gordon Cathcart for the ground we occupy to cure the fish on.

10665. How many curers are there?—There are thirty-three in Castle Bay and twelve in Vatersay—forty-five altogether. Each of these pays £5 *for his ground.*

10666. Is that the only benefit she receives?—No. After that we pay seven shillings and sixpence for each boat for spreading the nets to dry. Each boat has to pay that, use it or not use it.

10667. One of the delegates complained that it is taken from them?—We pay it to the factor.

10668. But you take it off the men?—Yes, just according to bargain. Some do not. But we have to pay that seven shillings and sixpence for each boat in the loch, spread or not spread our nets.

10669. That is £5 per curer and seven shillings and sixpence per boat?—Yes.

10670. As regards your provisions, do you try to bring everything you can with you?—Yes. There is one thing we are very much at a loss for here, namely, butcher meat. We have to take it all from home.

10671. Can you get plenty milk?—I sometimes have a privilege from Dr Macgillivray, who sends me a jar now and then, which is the only milk I see.

10672. Fresh butter?—No.

10673. Eggs?—Plenty; any amount of eggs.

10674. That is the only thing the cottars can give you?—Yes.

10675. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Do the crews whom you employ get their supplies from you?—No. They provide themselves from the merchants at home.

10676. You do not assist them?—Anything we give them is all in cash. We give them no groceries.

10677. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—What do they get for eggs at this time of the year?—Fivepence or sixpence per dozen.

THOMAS JENKINS, Curer, Burghead (45)—examined.

Thomas Jenkins.

10678. *The Chairman.*—You have heard what has been stated by Mr Ross?—Yes.

10679. Does your opinion correspond generally with his?—Yes.

10680. Have you any additional statement to make?—I think Mr Ross has gone over the ground pretty well. Now-a-days everything is done with expedition, and we miss the telegraph so much here that we often miss the market on the Continent. On the east coast, if we do not sell to local agents we sell by telegraph to foreign agents, and generally it is done by telegraph. I have no doubt that if we had the telegraph here we could do the same. We are placed at a great disadvantage. We are placed so that we may perhaps miss the market, or have to sell our herring at a price below what we might get if we had command of the foreign market by telegraph.

10681. Is the foreign market or the home market the more important?—The foreign market. We do very little indeed in the home market. Looking to the capital employed, there is no other industry in Great Britain, so far as I know, that has not the facilities of telegraphic communication in this nineteenth century, and I think we are far behind the age.

The capital employed by the fishermen alone amounts to £140,000. The fish curers' capital will amount to £40,000, and the estimated income to the country—that is the money realised for our produce—is £70,000 or £80,000. That I consider is a great industry, and a benefit to the country in general; and I think we should have facilities for conducting our business in a proper way, as we have on the east coast.

10682. Your business on the Continent seems to be, as Mr Ross stated, entirely with the North Sea and the Baltic?—Yes, principally the German and the Russian market.

10683. Why have you no connection with the south of Europe?—There is a prohibitory tariff in France. A few east coast herring go to Odessa, but the carriage is heavy.

10684. You have no business with Spain, Italy, or any of the Roman Catholic countries?—None. Germany is our principal market for the east coast fishing, and Russia takes a good deal of our west coast herring.

10685. Do you complain much of the German tariff?—It is not very high—only about 3s.

10686. What is the reason why the east coast boats are so very superior to the boats on the west coast?—Well, the people have devoted their attention more to fishing, and they are more skilful. The east coast also is more adapted for fishing, and the summer fishing is of more importance.

10687. If the people here possessed boats of the same class, could they find employment for them during the whole year, or is the weather in the west here so bad outside that the boats could not be used in winter?—Well, I believe that during the winter it is a very exposed coast, and there are a number of days and weeks, and perhaps months, when they could not prosecute the sea fishing as we do on the east coast. Another thing is that I don't think the fishing is so important. The haddock fishing is the east coast fishing, and the winter herring fishing. Of course it has never been tried, and there is room for improvement here.

10688. Then you think that the stress of weather is much greater and more frequent on the west coast than on the east?—I think so, in Barra.

10689. How many years have you been connected with this place?—I have been more or less connected with it since 1870.

10690. Do you find the local owners of boats here improving in that period? Are they getting better boats?—It is only within the last three years that there were any native fishermen prosecuting the herring fishing. This year, I understand, there are eight boats from Castle Bay—well-equipped boats. I suppose they half got assistance to enable them to prosecute the fishing, and I think they are doing fairly well.

10691. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—But not so well as the east coast boats?—Equally well. They bought them from the east coast people, perhaps two or three years old.

10692. You spoke of the weather being so very stormy; do you know how many fishing days there have been since the fishing commenced this year?—Very few; I suppose half a dozen days would cover it. We had two days only this week. Tuesday was the best fishing ever seen in Castle Bay, and last night was very bad.

10693. During most of the time you have been here, has the weather been so stormy that no fishing could be done?—Comparatively.

10694. I suppose that would be still more the case in winter and spring?—I am sure it would.

10695. Do you think the natives of this place, if they had boats of a suitable sort, would be able to prosecute the fishing systematically, and live by it?—I believe they would.

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10696. Do you know who gave them assistance to get these good boats?—I think Lady Cathcart and Mr M'Neill, merchant here.

10697. Some or them fish with their old-fashioned smaller boats?—Yes, at the white line fishing, but not at the herring fishing.

10698. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You said that though you did not think the fishing on the west coast could be prosecuted all the year round, still it could be developed and improved a good deal. In what form do you think it could be improved?—By a larger class of boats than they use in the winter time. They have only been using the smaller class of boats. The fishing might also be improved by the use of better gear and better lines, and by the men becoming more skilful and more persevering. In that way I believe they would come to develop the fishing in this part of the world.

10699. Do you concur with what Mr Ross said, that you and the other fish-curers would be disposed to join in giving a guarantee to the Government to make up the interest on the capital required to lay the telegraphic lines?—I believe the curers would be inclined to give a small item, but I maintain that the importance of our industry demands it.

10700. You spoke of £70,000 as the probable income coming into this country from abroad. That is the produce of your herrings?—Yes.

10701. Have you any idea how many miles of telegraph it will take to go on to Loch Boisdale?—About twenty miles.

10702. Have you any idea of the expense of the telegraph per mile?—I cannot say. I think the Government should not make it a matter of expense at all. It is a great source of wealth to the country, and other parts of the country are benefited by us being here.

10703. Do you think that if you had the benefit of the telegraph you would be able, having a proper command of the market, to leave more money behind you?—I believe we would take more money out of the business, and hence we would give the more for our article.

10704. You would leave more behind you?—I believe we would. The more we get the more we spend—that is generally the result. The more we get on the east coast the more we give to our fishermen, and the more all hands are paid. I cure over 6000 barrels on the east coast, and I could not manage the business without telegraph and telephone.

10705. *Mr Cameron.*—The petitions which Mr Ross spoke of were not signed exclusively by east coast fish-curers?—No, but by residents in Barra as well.

10706. And I snppose the guarantees demanded by the Government have generally been demanded from private individuals?—Yes.

10707. It is generally considered that a public interest of such importance as has been described to us should be considered by the Government without any guarantee?—I think so.

10708. How long have you been connected with the fishing business?—I have been curing on my own account for the last twenty-three years.

10709. Here?—Since 1870.

10710. Do you consider that the people are likely to make better fishermen with large crofts or with small ones?—My belief is that the fishermen here are partly dependent on the fishing and partly dependent on the land—that they should have grazing ground to keep a couple of cows and a score of sheep or so, with the fishing combined.

10711. You think that the time of year when they would be occupied by the fishing would not interfere with the time that would be required for the land?—No, the cultivation is nothing here; it is the grazing.

10712. Why is it that the east coast herrings are chiefly in demand in Germany and the west coast herrings in Russia?—I don't know, but

the Russians seem to like a herring that is oilier and fatter in its nature.

10713. They don't take the salt so well as the east coast herring?—They take the salt, but we don't cure them so salt.

10714. Do they stand a long time?—Yes, if you keep them away from the sun. They will not stand the sun along with our east coast herrings.

10715. So it is a matter of curing?—Yes.

10716. And if the Germans chose to buy your west coast herrings, you could salt them?—Yes. In Germany it is the poorest class in the country who eat the east coast herring, and in Russia it is the richest class who eat the west coast herring.

10717. But you could cure the west coast herring if you had a market for them?—Yes.

10718. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—It has been alleged that the west coast herring, being fatter and oilier, don't take the salt so well as the east coast ones?—That is nonsense. You can cure them quite well, if you keep them away from the sun.

10719. Your answer is, that by keeping them from the sun, they can be salted as effectively as the east coast herring?—Yes.

10720. *Mr Cameron.*—And if people chose to buy them; you could convey them as easily to the interior of Germany?—Yes, but if you cure them too salt, people will not buy them.

10721. That applies to the east coast?—No; there is a certain degree of salt that you must use for the east coast, and if we used the same amount of salt for the west coast herring, we would make them uneatable.

10722. That was my impression, but your former answer rather removed that impression?—They will take the same quantity of salt, but it will make them not of the same value.

10723. There is a difference in the character of the two kinds of herring which makes them require different treatment in regard to salt?—Yes.

10724. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Do you get a greater price for the west coast herring from the Russians than you do for the east coast herring from the Germans?—Yes, double.

10725. And you would spoil the west coast herring by putting more salt upon them?—Yes.

10726. So they are more valuable in that way?—Yes.

10727. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—We were told by Mr Ross that last year there were 490 boats. You have been here twelve years; have you known a season when there were 490 boats here, averaging over eighty crans?—No, not in my experience.

10728. What is the highest fishing you have known here?—In 1870, 150 crans was the average.

10729. How many boats were fishing that year?—I cannot say; I think they were in North Bay, Castle Bay, and Vatersay.

10730. Might there have been 450 boats that year?—Yes, and the average was 150 crans.

10731. Would the price be 50s. per barrel?—That year it was not so high. It was the year of the Franco-German war, and the blockade was put on, and our herrings were excluded. We had to rush them into the Russian market or get them in by way of Denmark. We lost a pound per barrel in that way.

10732. But it is quite possible that in some seasons you would draw more than £70,000?—Yes, we get encouragement to take double that quantity.

10733. I have heard it said that if a fisherman does not fish the whole year regularly, it will not pay to have those large boats with expensive tackle; is that your opinion?—Well, I don't know that. £400 at 20 per

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cent. is good value. I think they are well able to pay that, supposing they only fished six months.

10734. To whom do the boats belong?—On the east coast they belong to the fishermen alone.

10735. They are not the property of capitalists, who embark capital in the construction of boats and let them to the fishermen?—No.

10736. They are a joint stock in the hands of the fishermen?—Yes.

10737. How many partners are there in a boat?—Generally two on the east coast, and they hire the others.

10738. Each boat proprietor, then, puts in £150 or £200. Are there a considerable number of men able and willing to do that?—Well, all our east coast men do that.

10739. Do they borrow much money upon the boat?—Generally, when they are building a new boat, they get assistance. I have given them £100 to assist them.

10740. The class of boat has improved very much?—Yes, very much, especially during the last five years.

10741. Is that both with reference to tonnage and construction?—Both tonnage and construction.

10742. What is the change that has taken place?—The change is to a boat of a longer keel, with a greater draught of water and greater sea-going ability. The model of the boat has also changed within the last five years from the round, scarfed boat to the type known by the name of the Zulu.

10743. Were the boats always decked as they are now?—No; it is about fifteen years since the first deck was used.

10744. What is your opinion about the introduction of a deck?—A very great safety.

10745. Is it in all respects better, or are there disadvantages attached to the decking?—Well, it is in every respect better, and I don't see any disadvantage. Some people say there is greater danger of life being lost; but take the number of hands employed in that industry, and see the number of boats lost every year. Of course when a boat founders in rough weather, that is a different thing; but there are only two or three lost in a season out of the thousands employed. There is no other industry in which there are fewer accidents. Take quarrying, for instance; there is scarcely a newspaper but contains accidents to quarriers. I consider the deck a great improvement, and I have nothing to say against it.

10746. Is there any change on the rig?—There have been changes on the sails within the last two years.

10747. Do you think that is an improvement?—I think it is.

10748. Do you think there is any further development or improvement to be made in that class of boats?—Well, I don't know, unless you come to steam.

10749. Are there any herring boats actually furnished with steam?—There are two or three on the east coast. I think there were two at Aberdeen belonging to Leith, and one belonging to Wick; but they belong to capitalists, and not to fishermen. It requires too much money for a fisherman to invest in these.

10750. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Does the herring fishing here begin before the Stornoway fishing?—About the same time; about the 1st of May.

10751. We had a statement made to us by a fisherman on the west coast of Skye. In accounting for the decline of the cod and ling fishing, he said that the cod fed on the broken herring at the Barra fishery, and were getting so well fed there that they left the shores of Scotland. Is there any ground for that opinion?—I should think that was a very

fanciful reason. But fish are very erratic creatures; they change their localities.

10752. Is the herring got here of the same quality as the Stornoway herring?—They are considered superior.

10753-4. I suppose the further south you go the finer the herrings are?—I think that the Castle Bay herring are the finest in Scotland.

10755. Finer than the Loch Fyne herring?—You cannot compare loch herring with sea herring. I believe the Loch Fyne herring are the finest for the table. They are fleshier and more plump. The Loch Fyne herring would not cure for the Continent.

D. W. M'GILLIVRAY, Surgeon and Farmer, Eoligary (74)—examined.

10756. *The Chairman.*—Before I ask you any questions, have you any statement to make in consequence of anything that has been said to-day in your hearing?—I wish to correct a statement made by Buchanan about the size of my farm. He said I had the half of Barra. It is less than one-third, which makes a very great difference. Some person spoke about the country people being prevented taking cockles. I have been thirty years here, and I never heard of anybody being prohibited. They were common property, and people were never prevented taking cockles.

10757. Then there never was on the shore of your farm any prohibition with reference to taking cockles?—No. The principal sand on which the cockles are found is just on my farm, in to the centre of it, and no person was prohibited from going there to take them as they liked. At one time it was doubted whether or not they could be called something like oysters or mussels for bait, as the people in the south country are in the habit of protecting them. We made inquiry about that, and found there was no rule to prevent it, and nothing further was done. The people took them and sent them south.

10758. Were they ever prohibited taking any other description of shell-fish from your shore?—No. There was a great quantity of the common whelks, and that is the business of the women, and they make it a great business.

10759. Do they come and take them freely?—Yes.

10760. Have they always done so?—Yes, when the whelks are in season. There is never any prohibition of taking shell-fish of any description. We have no mussels to signify, and we have no oysters.

10761. Did you ever hear that before your time there had been any difficulty about them?—No, I don't think there was any difficulty about them. So far as I recollect—and I recollect Barra about fifty years—I never heard of any difficulty. I have heard that in the time of General M'Neill, in taking cockles, they used to turn up the sand a little, and when he was in the habit of driving from home, and came across a pit, he did not like them to dig pits in the sand where he was going, and that he prohibited them in the line of road, but not anywhere else. That was long before Colonel Gordon bought the property.

10762. Then with reference to the alleged price of bent exacted in labour, have you any remark to make?—I used to give bent freely to the people for thatching their houses, and I was always inclined to improve dykes or drains, and I put together a bit of the quay down there, and for the working of these things I gave them a quantity of bent. It was a very low charge that I made for it—a horse-load for 3s., and in the short winter

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days I have seen them take three days' work, and a day's work at that time was only 4½ hours—from eleven till about three.

10763. Does the gathering of this bent do harm or good to the pasture?—I never like to pull it up. I have made pretty good grazing ground, that was sand when I came to Barra, by planting it.

10764. Is that the same description of grass that they use for thatching?—Yes.

10765. And when they gather it for thatching, do they cut it?—Yes, with a hook. We don't like to take it out of the ground. It is the best protection for sand drift that we have on the west coast, and I have seen scores of acres of ground recovered by planting bent.

10766. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—That was first done by Dr M'Leod?—Yes, and he did it for me; and I have sometimes helped him with forty people planting bent. When I came first there was a great deal of sand drift, and I planted it to the edge of the sea.

10767. *The Chairman.*—Then when the people cut the bent upon the ground, do they do any harm to the pasture?—They do. It is grand winteriug for cattle. When it is new it is very juicy and sweet, and we just give them the strong part of it, and a certain part of it which is not good for cattle is sufficiently good for thatch, or for any other purpose than feeding cattle. We sometimes cut pieces of bent early in the season in order to make it into good high ground, and they come to it and pick it up, and about a month ago our cattle used to feed upon it.

10768. With regard to the statement of the witness that you are in the habit of receiving twelve days' labour of a man or woman for two cart-loads of this grass; is that accurate?—It is grossly exaggerated.

10769. What is the real price paid for the bent?—Just about 4s., or four short days' work.

10770. For how much?—For a cart-load.

10771. Would it be one of our ordinary Lowland cart-loads?—Not quite so much as that.

10772. How did they take it off? Did they take it in parcels or in a cart?—They come one day and cut it, and make it into bundles, and we count so much for the bundles.

10773. Have the people ever complained that the price was too high?—No, they come for it willingly. They come for it more than we could give it to them. As for the potato labour, we are in the habit of giving an amount of potato ground to the people at what I call a moderate rate. This same year I gave a pendicle of my own farm when I saw the people in distress. Lady Cathcart was anxious that we should do everything in our power to help them out, and I gave two hundred families potato ground on my own farm. There will be at least 2000 barrels in the course of the season, and I only ask for the planting of a barrel 2s. or two days' work at those works I mentioned. I generally bargain with the people to work, and there is no money at all; it is all labour for the improvement of the place.

10774. About how much would it amount to per acre—how many days' work?—I cannot say; I don't know how many barrels would be planted to the acre.

10775. On these terms, have you found the people willing and desirous to obtain work?—Yes, very; I have often been applied to when I could not supply them. I have heard it stated several times to-day that the ground had got out of heart, and could not produce crop. The ground I have given is better ground, and sometimes I gave them pieces of ground that had not been cultivated before, and I improved it, and gave it to them at a very cheap rate.

10776. In fact, you have never had any difficulty with them? They have not complained that these rates are high?—No, they don't generally complain that the rates are high, but sometimes I believe after I give them pieces of ground in this way, it is long before I get the benefit of what I do. It takes three years before the ground recovers any proper sward of grass, and I am two years of that without any. There is nothing in it till the grass grows again, but in the end it is worth more, and that is a principal way in which I improve the land. I could not improve the outer parts of the land where it is mossy, but by taking forty or fifty people and giving it to them at a cheap rate, and they will improve it, and the improvement will be for the benefit of Lady Cathcart. We consider it a very good way of improving the ground. It is not sublet, because I do not take anything from it except what I take out of the farm itself.

10777. *Mr Cameron.*—It has been suggested that when Buchanan mentioned sixty days' labour for the potato ground he intended to say sixteen?—*Michael Buchanan.* No, I said it on good authority, and I have witnesses here.

10778. *The Chairman.*—The calculation is sixty days' labour per acre?—*Dr M'Gillivray.* Well, the way I calculate is so much to plant a barrel of potatoes, and the people are quite willing to take it in that way.

10779. It is a mutual benefit?—Apparently so. They are better served; and when they are scarce of potato ground, they even come to me, and if I can give it I give it, and if not it is because there is a scarcity of it.

10780. What is the benefit it confers on your ground?—They say there are so many cottars and people of that description that potato ground is scarce among them.

10781. That is the benefit to them, but in what degree does it improve your ground?—It improves my ground so far, but it obliges me also to give it to them when they are in need of it. They work pieces of ground for me. They work, for instance, at drains, &c., and take this in lieu of money. This is far more beneficial than money. Suppose I gave 2s. or 1s. 6d. a day, this is far more beneficial to them than that.

10782. It is much better that they should be allowed to work at it?—Yes, and they would come for potato ground when they would not come for money, just because there are so many cottars and crofters together on so many places, and a scarcity of land, as it were, on account of the crofters getting so numerous. I hear the people talking about them. They are getting numerous, because they do not go away, and they intermarry amongst themselves, and just grow on the place where they are. I have not heard of any evictions, or anything of that sort for a long time; but so many of them remain about their parents, and intermarry, that they get numerous, and the cottars are just the sons and daughters of the tenants along with themselves. That is the way in which subdivisions and families go on.

10783. Since you were concerned with this farm, have there been any evictions?—Not on my farm. There were evictions before I got the place. I got it cleared.

10784. You have made no evictions?—No.

10785. And with reference to the cottars living on the farm, have you increased their rents or obligations?—No, I don't ask rents from them at all. When I give anything to any one it is just for work, such as helping with drains, dykes, or something of that sort. At this time of the year not a man would come to me for double the wages, and in the spring of the year they would not come; but I got them in the winter, in the short days, when they cannot go out to sea and fish. That is the way the wages appear small, because I have only short days of four or five hours.

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10786. Looking back to what you remember in your early years, do you think the condition of the cottar class has improved or deteriorated?—It has improved for the last few years, because I think they prosecute the fishing better. The fishing helps them on, and for the last few years I think they are on the improving side, particularly since Lady Cathcart has helped them on with boats, and the like of that.

18787. Do you think there is more money now coming into the country?—I think so. The fishing brings a great deal of money into the country. I benefit by that in several ways. I got part of my wool sold in the country, and before I had to send it to Leith.

10788. Did you sell it by the stone?—Yes, generally according to the market outside.

10789. What were you selling it at this year or last year?—About 14s. per stone.

10790. What sort of wool is it?—Blackfaced, not smeared.

10791. Is there a considerable demand for it in small parcels?—Yes, there is a considerable demand for it if the fishing is good. A good deal depends upon that. I have often given the wool upon credit to people who went and earned money in the east country, and they are very good at paying it. It is very seldom that I am at a loss for the money that I advance to them.

10792. Is it both spun and woven in the cottages?—Yes, they weave it themselves, and make it into cloth in different parts of the country.

10793. Do they use native dyes?—They buy some, and use native dyes too. They make dun of the lichen that grows on the rock, and they use the root of saggeus—rue—that grows on the low ground here, which makes a reddish colour.

10794. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Have you any cottars living on your farm?—I have no cottars at all, only herds, and so forth. There were no cottars on the farm when I got it.

10795. How long is it since you got it?—About thirty-five years.

10796. Has anything been added to the farm since you got it? Is it the same size?—The same size. I heard some one say it was added to, but it is the same size. I have had three leases of it.

10797. You think that the people have been improving in their condition since you first remember them?—They are improving. They were nearly as well off before the potato blight as they are now, but the potato blight put them far back. At that time there was an emigration promoted by Colonel Gordon, which relieved the property very well. The people of South Uist and Barra petitioned in a body to be helped away, and Colonel Gordon helped them away. He sent a vessel to South Uist and a vessel to Barra to take them. He also sent clothing for scores of families.

10798. Are those the people of whom we hear as having gone to Canada, and as having arrived there destitute?—Yes. I heard of a lot of people who went from South Uist and Barra, and some of them have done well, and some few have not done quite so well. They sometimes get apples and fruit there, which brings on disease of the howels, and they die in consequence of that.

10799. *Mr Cameron.*—But what we want to know is whether the people who emigrated at the time spoken of were those who were referred to as having landed in Canada in a state of destitution?—I don't know that. There was only one emigration that I recollect, but I did not hear of people being landed in a state of destitution. There was a person named M'Neilan, from Mull, who used to send a great many away on his own interest. That was before Colonel Gordon got the property, and it may have been some of these. That was a business which the man

followed for years. I recollect several vessels being sent away by M'Neilan.

10800. Was he an emigration agent?—He was.

10801. But you don't know whether it was under his auspices that these people were landed in a state of destitution?—No, but I think the people whom Colonel Gordon sent away did better than that.

10802. Do you know whether there is more or less disinclination to emigrate now?—Well, there is not the same feeling about it, because this M'Neilan made a business of it, and showed himself among them, and when a few signed with him to go, a number would go with their friends.

10803. I am referring to the petition you speak of as having been sent to Colonel Gordon. Do you think there is more disinclination to emigrate now than there was at that time?—Well, I think that if the people saw they were to be assisted they would go. The general impression now is that the population is getting thronged again.

10804. How is it getting thronged?—In the way I have mentioned, by their intermarrying, and not leaving the country.

10805. But no people have been brought here?—No; no person has been brought in since the last emigration, except a mere individual here and there.

10806. You stated, in regard to the bent, that it was no advantage to your farm to take away the bent, but rather the reverse. Would you rather that the people should have no bent at all and give you no labour?—No. Sometimes if I had anything particular to do, and the people wanted to get bent for their houses, they would come to me for bent when they would not come for money; and I would give it to them under these circumstances rather than forego the work that was going on.

10807. Would you rather continue the present system than give no bent and take no work?—Yes. I consider it is useful to both. They could not get the thatch so conveniently in any other way.

10808. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Would not that bent be the better of being cut at a certain stage?—Yes, and we cut the whole almost every second year. We begin one year, and cut it for a quarter of a mile, and then we cut another piece next year, and so keep it fresh.

10809. That is for your own purposes?—Yes, and for any purpose. It gets withered and dry, and is not worth anything.

10810. The witness Buchanan said that you frequently refused bent, is that correct?—Very seldom. I don't recollect refusing it. Sometimes I gave it, but gave it rather unwillingly, when they would tell me that their houses were blown away with the wind. There was scarcely a year but I gave it after a gale. The October gale did a vast deal of harm to the houses and crops, and had it not been for that gale the people would be twice as well off as they are now.

10811. Are you aware that Lady Gordon Cathcart sent some people to Canada from her estates?—Yes.

10812. And she presented them with a large sum of money?—Yes; I thought she was too liberal.

10813. About £100 each?—Yes; that was more liberality than we have seen at any other time.

10814. Don't you think she might have expended that £100 in improving their condition here?—I don't know she would, because they were crowded, and this gives them a chance in a place where they are not so crowded. If more of that was done it would be a benefit for all parties.

10815. Don't you think that if she had made an arrangement with you and settled these families, or given them £100 to settle them on nice crofts on Eoligary, that would have been as good as sending them to Canada?—

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Yes, for a time; but it would become just like the east side of Barra. From the fact of their being a fishing population, and the people not going away, they have scarcely room upon it; and, supposing my farm was cut up and them planted upon it, it would be crowded in a few years.

10816. You have stated correctly that several parts of the island of Barra are crowded, but are you not aware that the population of the island is a good deal less than it was in former years?—Yes, but there is not very much difference.

10817. Could Lady Gordon Cathcart raise as many men as the old Macneills did. We are told they could raise 250 to 300 fighting men?—I don't know, they are not so much inclined for that sort of thing now; they would rather go and fish.

10818. I should like, in consequence of the contradiction about the shell-fish, to come to a clear understanding about it. Buchanan states that the affair occurred six years ago, and he states in the most distinct manner that they were prevented from going down to the sea-shore, and that notices would have been posted up on the church door, but that the Roman Catholic clergyman declared it to be illegal?—I don't know about that at all, but this I can say, that the sand is part of my farm, and I never knew that anybody was prohibited. If anybody was prohibited it was entirely without my knowledge.

10819. Have you any relative or connection in the island?—No, except Roderick M'Lellan, my brother-in-law.

10820. Do you know whether he did this matter which is put down against you?—I don't know.

10821. Is he still living?—Yes.

10822. You stated that the extent of your farm was very much overrated, and that you had only about one-third of Barra. How many acres has it been computed to be?—Between 4000 and 5000.

10823. Does that include the numerous islands?—Yes.

10824. You say that you are now in your third lease?—Yes.

10825. Has your rent been increased much?—Yes. I laid out about £400 on repairs under the last lease, and I have had a great amount of work done.

10826. May I ask what the rent was when you entered thirty-five years ago?—£550.

10827. Your rent was not raised during the time, but you expended a considerable sum of money?—Yes, in order to get the lease I made that offer.

10828. How long has your lease yet to run?—Fourteen years.

10829. *Did the Macneill family live where you are for some time after* they left the castle?—Yes, and I was intimate with them for some time; and I was intimate with General Macneill.

10830. How long is it since they left the castle of Kisimal?—Five or six generations ago. I recollect an old gentleman whose mother was born in the castle.

10831. That was the last person?—Yes.

10832. Did they allow it to fall into decay?—They came ashore and came to Borv, and lived there for a time. They then went further north to a portion of what I have just now, Vaslin; and General Macneill's father got married there.

10833. Are there any Macneills remaining?—I don't know any one except distant relatives, nephews.

10834. Are they in a good position?—I don't know, but they were *inclined to do well when I saw them last.*

10835. Did you hear one of the delegates mention a statement about

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the officers of the Macneills coming and taking away his mother's cow almost by violence?—I have heard something of that sort, but I cannot speak with precision about it.

10836. Are you aware there were such extortions?—There were at the time of John Macneill, the fellow that lost his property.

10837. *Mr Cameron.*—And took other peoples?—There was a sort of confusion, and the officers went round.

10838. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Then the story which this man told about his sister meeting the officers with the cow and taking it home, you have no doubt is accurate?—I cannot say it is accurate. I heard of some parties taking liberties—not the factor or the laird—but some parties in the shape of ground officers, and there was no law. There is another thing I should like to mention, namely, that we would be very much the better of a Sheriff Circuit Court here. We find a little difficulty in consequence of disputes about trespass, and if we had a Sheriff Court it would be of great benefit. There never was a Circuit Court here.

10839. Were there no Small Debt Courts?—We had Small Debt Courts at one time, but they have been given up.

10840. Is there any justice resident in this district except yourself?—Yes; Roderick M'Lellan is a justice too.

10841. Are these the only two?—Yes, besides the factor. We used to have little courts for settling matters connected with trespass and injuring people's corn; we used to settle all that amongst ourselves.

10842. Why was all that given up?—The factors who were coming after that were not justices, and the thing broke down.

ALLAN M'INTYRE, Cottar and Fisherman, Castle Bay and Glen (nearly 60)—examined.

ALLAN M'INTYRE.

10843. *The Chairman.*—Have you been freely elected a delegate?—Yes.

10844. Have you got any statement to make on behalf of the people here?—Castle Bay in my first recollection was tenanted by ten families. They kept a stock of from two to seven cows each family, and their crofts provided them with food. Now they have only about the fourth part of that place, and there are twenty-two families paying rent in it. There are thirty families in addition to these, without land at all, located among them. They have no way of living unless they get a piece of land to assist them, whether it be great or small. They cannot do without land—those who can afford to take a larger portion to get a larger portion, and those who can only afford a small portion to get that portion. We were promised a piece of land this year, which was cleared for us and which we had before, and we got permission to prepare some of it for potatoes; but we did not get power to take possession of the land, only that we would get this potato ground in it and permission to graze a cow upon it, and to build a house outside its bounds upon the other land that was adjacent. We paid 10s. 6d. of rent for the site of that house. We have no way of living unless we get some of that land by which people were able to live formerly in comfort. Some additional land that was promised to the people they were speaking about to the factor, and they sent some of their number to Aberdeen to see what answer they would get about Vatersay. I am not quite certain of the details of what passed between them and the factor about that place, but there is one present here to say a few words on the subject in my stead, and he can tell all about it.

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Allan M'Intyre.

10845. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—How many crofters round Castle Bay do you represent?—Twenty-two.

10846. Are there cottars besides?—Thirty or thirty-two cottars in addition.

10847. What rent do you pay?—I have no land.

10848. What do you pay for your house?—Nothing; I have no house but one built between sea water and land, which is only habitable for six months of the year. It was dry when it was good weather.

10849. Do you get any ground to put potatoes in?—No, only I got a little this year to make potatoes in the place I have spoken of.

10850. Do the other cottars live in like manner?—They must needs do so.

10851. Do they not pay any rent either?—Some pay and some do not.

10852. How long have you been there?—I was born in this village. I am fourteen years in my present house.

10853. Had your father a croft?—Yes.

10854. In Castle Bay?—Yes.

10855. Who got the croft when he died?—I had it myself for a while.

10856. How did you lose it?—Another man was put down alongside of me on a portion of it, and then what was left to me was so small that it was not worth while to be looking after it.

10857. Did the other man get the whole of it?—No, he had not it himself for a long time, when other two were placed upon him.

10858. How many cottars have been added to the population of Castle Bay in your recollection?—The whole of them. When my father had the land I never saw a cottar—only the ten who held the land.

10859. Did any of them come from any other place, or are they all natives of Castle Bay?—Some of them were born here, others came from elsewhere.

10860. How do you make your living yourself?—By day's wages.

10861. What work do you get?—Curing fish with Mr Macneill for the last four years. Before that I was a fisherman.

10862. When you are not curing fish, what work do you get?—I am a fish-curer during the whole year.

10863. I suppose you buy all the meal and potatoes for yourself and your family?—It is six years since I ate anything that grew in Barra, whatever may happen with regard to the small patch that I planted this year.

10864. You have no cow?—No.

10865. Have any of the other cottars cows?—One or two of them have a cow.

10866. Where do you get milk if you get any?—I know no such thing as milk. I don't know what it means for a number of years. There is not a place here where milk can be had. Can I get it from the man who has it not?—who requires it as much as I do.

10867. Then of course you are obliged to take tea, sugar, treacle, and such things, instead of milk?—We are obliged to take gruel.

10868. Are things worse than they were when your father was alive?—We are just able to live.

10869. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—What family have you?—Four children.

10870. Are some of them young?—One of them is a lad of 16; then there is a girl of 12, a girl of 9, and lad of 6, besides my wife.

10871. Do your children know what milk is?—They are more ignorant of milk than I am, because I knew it once.

10872. *Mr Cameron.*—Do you know why the cottars were put into that place among the crofters as you have described?—Because there was no

other place for them to go to clearing the places in which people were before and putting them in here as into a fauk.

10873. Was it not for the purpose of following the fishing?—No, some of those who were sent here would be of no use for fishing.

10874. Have any of the cottars sheep?—I am not quite certain, but I believe two or three have a sheep or two.

10875. Have they any stirks?—Yes.

10876. And horses?—Yes.

10877. Then they have got some stock?—It is not known whose that stock is. It is really stock that is dying upon the place—they have nothing to support it.

10878. Then in that case there is no use inquiring?—Well, I believe it would be very difficult to determine accurately to whom it belongs.

10879. Where is it that this stock lives or starves as you describe it?—Upon the pasture of the place.

10880. Is any rent paid for that?—I believe a little is paid.

10881. To whom?—To the crofter that gives permission to them.

10882. Where does the wintering come from?—It is very difficult to tell—scouring the country to get a bit of fodder from one there and here as one can buy it.

10883. I understaud that what you want is more ground?—We cannot do without land anyhow.

10884. What was the ground you set your hearts upon?—We don't care except to get land that will yield crops.

10885. You mentioned first a piece of land which you had right to, and then you mentioned Vatersay. Which was it that you wanted to get?—It is the island of Vatersay that the crofters specially wanted. I don't know whether the crofters particularly wanted it.

10886. What stock does Vatersay carry?—I cannot say.

10887. Do you think that the Castle Bay tenants would be able to purchase the stock of Vatersay, or to put a full stock on Vatersay?—Yes, that was their opinion.

MURDOCH M'KINNON, Earsary (nearly 60)—examined.

10888. *The Chairman.*—Have you been freely elected a delegate?—Yes.

10889. About how many people were present when you were elected?—There are twenty-two paying rent in the place, and the greater part were present when I was elected.

10890. Have the twenty-two all got complete crofts, or are the crofts much subdivided?—There are four upon some, three upon others; two upon one croft, and seven undivided.

10891. Have you an undivided croft?—I have the fourth part of a croft.

10892. What stock do you keep yourself?—A horse, a cow, a heifer, and a stirk, but the croft cannot maintain these. I purchase fodder for them. I gave over £2 worth of meal to them last spring, and I must now sell one of these to pay the rent.

10893. What is your rent?—£2, 5s.

10894. Have you sold a stirk lately?—I have sold none for the last two years. I am keeping them in the expectation that we may get more land, and in the event of our getting it I would have some stock for it.

10895. How much did you get for the last stirk you sold?—£2. It was over twelve months old.

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10896. That was not a good price?—Very bad indeed. Unless beasts are well fed they will not fetch a good price.

10897. What did the stirks fetch last year?—Off and on, about £3.

10898. Do you think £2, 5s. is too dear a rent?—I have cultivated it for the last three years, and I have not taken £1 worth of meal out of it, and this last season I did not take out of it so much as would sow it. It was the factor who gave me seed.

10899. How many acres of arable have you got?—Between 1½ and 2 acres.

10900. How much would you consider a good croft fit for a family?—I am fifty years there, and my father had the whole croft of which I now occupy the fourth part. My father kept six cows upon the croft, and never had to buy any provisions. He was taking his living out of the land.

10901. How many horses and sheep?—Two horses and twenty ewes.

10902. How much rent did your father pay?—£5. Five families had the township at that time instead of twenty-two who are there to-day. There were no cottars. There are fourteen cottars to-day in addition to the twenty-two who hold land. The land is now exhausted. We till the same plot every year continuously, and the rain of winter washes the soil away. Although I took no crops out of it last year, I expect a better year this year, and it is necessary to turn it in order to provide some fodder for the cattle.

10903. Is there any good land near your place which might be used to make the crofts larger?—There is a tack beside us, but perhaps it is too small for the man who holds it.

10904. What tack is that?—Oleas. If I had land that would yield half as much the amount as I pay for meal I would endeavour to make a living out of it. For eighteen years I paid on an average £20 to the merchant for meal and things to support my weak family. I was thirty-five years ago going to the east coast fishing. I believe I brought over £500 home. I spent the whole of that in meal and other things to support the family, all for want of land. If I had a good croft I would have some of that to leave to those I leave behind. If it were not for the local merchant here, who keeps us all in provisions, no person would be alive in this place at all, and all the stock in the country side is his if he chose to take possession of it—between himself and the proprietor.

10905. Is there only one merchant in the place?—There are two in Castle Bay, but it is with Mr M'Neill we deal. He is the more liberal to us.

10906. Do you pay ready money?—He gives us provisions and everything we require. in the expectation that we will get money to pay him for it. Everybody in our place is exactly in the same position as I am.

10907. Do you know a place called Bentangaval?—Yes.

10908. Do you know that that farm was offered in small lots to crofters this year?—Yes, but I think it would not provide arable land; it would only provide pasture land.

10909. Was it taken up by the people?—I am not quite certain. I heard it was offered to them by the factor.

10910. If they had not taken it had they good grounds for not going into it?—I cannot tell the reason why they took it or why they did not take it.

10911. You yourself were not an offerer?—No, I did not live in the neighbourhood at all.

10912. If you were complaining of want of land, why did you not come forward and offer for a piece of it?—I don't think I could take my living out of it.

10913. Is that the reason why it was not taken up?—I believe it is not suitable to provide land that would yield crops; it would yield pasture.

Murdoch M'Kinnon.

10914. Was it made a condition that under certain contingencies the stock of Vatersay would be put upon them?—I heard that the stock was to be kept upon it if they were able to purchase it, but those who live in the neighbourhood know more than I do.

10915. But my question was whether, in the event of the weather being very dry, or there being a scarcity of water or the pasture of Vatersay running short, the tenant of Vatersay would have the power of putting his stock upon this land that was offered to the crofters?—I heard that as one of the conditions.

10916. *Mr Cameron.*—How far do you live from it?—About five miles.

10917. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Are you a fisher?—I always was a fisherman, but not of late.

10918. Whom did you fish for?—I used to fish for Mr M'Neill, and I fished for a long time for a curer down in our own neighbourhood named M'Caskill.

10919. How are you paid by these curers?—When we worked for M'Caskill we got 7d. for ling and 3d. for cod. This year ling is 11d. and cod 6d.

10920. Were you fishing for cod this year?—Not this year. I fished for lobsters.

10921. For whom did you fish lobsters?—Mr M'Neill.

10922. What are you getting for lobsters?—12s. per dozen.

10923. When do you get paid for these fish?—When we settle up, perhaps at Martinmas next. I don't ask a settlement till the work of the year is over.

10924. Does Mr M'Neill give you credit up to the settlement?—Yes, he always gives us credit till we make the settlement.

10925. Are you able to clear your account every year?—We can pay in a good year and in a bad year we cannot, but he allows matters to lie over in the expectation that a good year will come next.

10926. Do you always allow matters to lie over, or if there is a balance in your favour do you get it?—Yes, if we have to get money we get it.

10927. Do you get it in cash?—Ready money in our hands; but it is very seldom that the balance is upon our side. If our accounts were square we would only be glad. This year we are in great debt.

10928. When you take goods on credit do you know the price, or is the price left over till the settlement?—We know the price when we get it.

10929. Can you buy your commodities in any shop you like, or are you obliged to deal with Mr M'Neill?—We can buy where we like, if we can pay; Mr M'Neill cannot prevent us.

FARQUHAR M'NEILL, Crofter, Bravaig (61)—examined.

Farquhar M'Neill.

10930. *The Chairman.*—Were you freely elected by the people of Bravaig?—Yes.

10931. Have you any statement to make to us?—The people are badly off without land. In the place in which I am four crofters and nine cottars are now upon the place that was formerly occupied by one man—thirteen families in all. There are four families upon one croft, three

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upon another, two upon another, and so on; and it is but poor land at the best—it is exhausted, yielding no crops in consequence of being continuously turned. They got land for potato ground, and they pay dear enough for it I think—3s. for the planting of a barrel of potatoes—and carrying sea-ware to manure that ground for 12 miles in small boats which will carry only a ton and a half each, so that the people are in very sad plight, and if they could at all afford to get better lands they are much in need of them. The little stock that they keep upon the ground they have got is not their own, but belongs to the merchant who kept them in provisions.

10932. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Was there not an emigration from Bravaig some years ago?—Yes.

10933. Before that emigration took place, were there not more than thirteen families in Bravaig?—Yes. The township is but small. There are nineteen entered in the rent books, and there are sixteen cottars.

10934. When did this emigration take place?—Thirty-two or thirty-three years ago.

10935. Was there not a bigger population then than there is now?—I don't think there were many more.

10936. Is there land in the neighbourhood that would suit you?—Yes, but the land that is beside us is not suitable land for poor people to live upon. It is not suitable for cultivation; it would pasture sheep.

10937. And what they want is more arable land and not pasture?—Yes; that is the land that would suit poor people—that would yield crops after being worked.

RANALD MACDONALD, Aberdeen, Factor and Secretary to Lady Gordon Cathcart (48)—examined.

Ranald Macdonald.

10938. *The Chairman.*—Do you wish to make a statement in reference to what has passed here to-day?—I will be thankful for the indulgence. It was not my intention to trouble the Commissioners with any statement until they had gone over all the estates with which I am officially connected, but, in consequence of statements made here to-day, which, to use a mild expression, are of an exceedingly misleading character, I thought that Barra was the proper place to take notice of these statements, and that, if I postponed my reply till the Commissioners reached Benbecula, it would not have the same effect as if I stated it publicly in presence of the Barra people, who know I wish to state the whole truth in a kindly way towards the people themselves. I wish to guard against making any reflections whatever upon the parties who have come forward to-day to give evidence, but I must say—and I say it after taking a very great deal of trouble to make myself acquainted with the circumstances of the people of Barra, and after taking considerable trouble to find out the most reliable people in Barra to give me information regarding the general population—I must say that those who have appeared to-day are not the people on whom I would place the most reliance, and I have to explain to the Commissioners that, being desirous when they came to Barra to economise my time so far as practicable, I thought of asking the crofters in the different townships to meet openly and name three individuals among themselves who would give me full information regarding their circumstances, regarding anything which they thought it was possible or practicable to remedy, and that I should have the opportunity of making some short explanations to the crofters from the different townships who met me. They did elect

three persons in every township to give me information. I have a printed list of the names. I met them afterwards, and took all the convenient opportunities I had to meet those who were freely set apart by the people themselves to give me full information regarding anything they thought possible to be done—in the way of improving their condition. A printed statement of the names was sent out and circulated among the crofters generally, in order that they might speak to these representatives or delegates whom they selected themselves, and in order that any grievance they might have might be thoroughly investigated, and, if practicable and reasonable, remedied. Now, I expected when the Commissioners came round, that some of those whom the crofters themselves selected in the open and unrestricted manner I have stated would have been among those who would have come forward to the Commissioners to give evidence. I wished to avoid the possibility of any one saying that I interfered in the remotest way with the evidence that was brought forward, and I make no inquiry, and did not know who was to appear to-day. I confess I was a little disappointed—without reflecting in any way on those who came, because I wish to guard particularly against saying anything derogatory to them; but, at the same time, I must say really that they are not the representatives to give strangers an impression of the real state of matters in Barra. I say that in presence of Barra people, and they know that I am stating the truth. With that explanation I shall, as briefly as possible, refer to a few matters, reserving, with the indulgence of the Commissioners, any general statement I may wish to make until they have gone over the whole estates. I only wish on the present occasion to reply to certain statements which were made here to-day. Some of them I never heard of before, and some of them surprised me more than they could have surprised the Commissioners, because I should have naturally thought that if there had been certain grievances in Barra, when I came and met the people, and took special pains to investigate and inquire and make myself acquainted with those grievances, they should have been intimated to me. Several matters have been brought before you as if they were a sort of general practice or custom on the estate, of which I never heard the remotest whisper until I came into this room to-day. I shall refer to a few of these, and, in the first place, I shall refer to Michael Buchanan's statements. He asked, in the way in which he and others have been tutored to ask, whether anything would be done to him in consequence of his making certain statements; but no one knows better than Michael Buchanan that, though his main employment has been to go about and preach discontent among the people here, no one connected with the estate would take the very slightest notice of his doings. He knew very well that whatever he did say to the Commissioners no notice would be taken of it. I am sure the proper way to deal with a person of that kind is to take no notice of him, because in the long run statements which have no possible foundation in fact have no importance whatever, and to take any notice of them would be to attach an importance to the individual which sometimes is scarcely deserved. His first statement was about taking stirks and cows from the tenants, and giving no credit for them. It is well known, and I say it in presence of the Barra people, that such a custom does not exist on the estate. In 1844 I find that, in consequence of the destitute condition of the people of Barra, Dr M'Leod, who was one of the most sympathising factors they ever had on the estate, was obliged to take ponies and horses, and cows and stirks from the tenants in payment of arrears of rent. I never did hear until to-day that the people had any reasonable ground to suspect that either Dr M'Leod or any other local factor on the estate of Barra ever acted fraudulently or unjustly in connec-

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tion with these matters. I shall not occupy the time of the Commissioners by referring to the cattle that Dr M'Leod got from them, because I intend to include that in my general statement, but I just wish to say this, that if any tenant on the estate of Barra thought there was a mistake—because I don't think that any respectable people in Barra would think the gentleman who had charge of the estate could ever intentionally or fraudulently deal with the people here in the way which has been insinuated by Michael Buchanan—I should have thought that, coming here and being anxious to ascertain everything in the shape of grievance and anything that could possibly be remedied, some of the crofters themselves whom I had the opportunity of meeting, and some of the representatives whom they elected, and with whom I had conversation on more occasions than one, would have told me of these things. If they had done so, I would have considered it my duty to make every possible investigation, and if there was the slightest injustice done, even unintentionally, to any poor crofter in Barra, no stone would have been left unturned to have that remedied. Then he said that the system was carried on down to the present time. I don't wish to use strong language, but I must say that that is not the fact. With reference to receipts, he made a statement which would naturally convey the impression to strangers and persons who did not know the circumstances, that people were treated in such a way that they did not know how their account stood; that, in fact, the system was organised in such a way as to defraud the crofters. Now, I have found in Barra and in South Uist and in Benbecula, that now and then mistakes did occur in connection with payments made in cash by the crofters, but in most cases these mistakes did occur in consequence of the similarity of names. It will be found that in certain townships there were certain crofters of the same name. It was only the other day that a man came and said he had made a payment, and it was not put to his credit. I turned up the counterfoil,—because I may state that for many years the payment of rent has been conducted in this way, that not one penny is received from a crofter without granting a receipt for the payment, and the counterfoils of the receipts are preserved in the same way as those in a cheque book. The receipts are partly printed, and are numbered consecutively, so that from the counterfoils of the receipts it can be seen at any time whether any mistakes have taken place with regard to a sum being placed perhaps to the credit of John M'Kinnon in one township instead of John M'Kinnon in another township. Perhaps it may happen that there is a senior and a junior of the same name, or perhaps there is a Jonathan M'Kinnon, or perhaps they speak of the same person as Hugh M'Lean or Ewan M'Lean. It so happens that I have here all the counterfoils of the receipts, so that if any crofter should come forward and say that he has made a payment at such and such a time, and he does not find it to be his credit, it can be seen from the counterfoils whether a receipt has been granted for it, and it is not possible that the factor could receive the money without granting a receipt, and the crofters know that the receipts they get are upon these forms, and they are generally of the same colour. I don't think it is necessary for me to take up more of your time with regard to these matters. Buchanan also referred to the alleged injustice done to the people by prohibiting them taking shell-fish. Well, I never heard of such a thing till I came into this room, and certainly if I had heard of such a thing I should have been the first to say that the people should disregard out and out any such reports. He mentioned that if any one said a just word in favour of another crofter, the officials were down upon him. Now, I simply refer to himself as a man who is well known for several years as having no regular occupation, but going

about in a mysterious sort of way with pen and paper in his pocket to several houses, and if anybody had been taken notice of Michael Buchanan would have been the man, but he has not been taken notice of, and he is perfectly free to do anything he likes so long as he lives. No notice will be taken of his doings; and as to his statement that if any one said a just word for another the officials would be down upon him, I can only refer to himself as a striking instance of the want of foundation for such a statement. He said again that where matters were laid before her Ladyship, the factor stepped in and offered every possible objection. He said nothing in support of that allegation, and he could say nothing in support of that allegation. I don't wish to take any credit to myself for the interest I take in the people of Barra. I think the Commissioners have not at all seen a fair representation of the honesty, in point of character, of the general body of the inhabitants of Barra. They are people of whom I have a very high opinion indeed, and if I had never seen anything of them except what I have seen to-day, I should never have formed such a high opinion of the fishermen and crofters of Barra as I have done. I do not wish to take any special credit to myself for the natural pleasure I would have in seeing anything organised that would be the means of improving the condition of a people whom I like very much, and I certainly should be the last to step in and offer any possible opposition to any communication that might be made with the view of interesting Lady Gordon Cathcart in their behalf. I say that the statement is a reckless statement, without a shadow of foundation that can possibly be given in support of it. You have heard already about the cockles and shell-fish, and I need not say anything more about them, except that if anybody raised any report about people not being allowed to take them it must have been a mischievous report. The report may have been raised by somebody who really wished to make the people believe that those who were interested in them were acting in a way towards them which was irritating and unjust. I don't think that any one, even the meanest officials connected with the estate, would have been a party to the circulation of such a mischievous report, if such a report was ever circulated in Barra. He said there were no fences between the tenants and the tacksmen. One of the last things I did, when I was here about two years ago, was to have a meeting with one of Dr M'Gillivray's sons and the tenants bordering upon a portion of his farm, and make an arrangement for the repair of this fence. There is no doubt it is very difficult to get the crofters to keep up their share of the fences. One man goes and does a little bit, and his neighbour goes and perhaps does it more imperfectly, and it is well known that such a fence is of very little value—it is like a chain with a broken link—it is really of no use unless it is a proper fence from end to end. There is a difficulty in getting these fences kept in repair, and they are certainly not such fences as I should like to see, but they are fences which the Commissioners may see for themselves if they choose to take a walk for a mile or two. I don't think I should take up much time in making reference to general statements, because the Commissioners cannot fail to see how very contradictory these general statements were. Some came forward, and Michael Buchanan was one of them, who said that the inhabitants were reduced to poverty. He stated that in the strongest terms, and then there were others who came forward and said that the tenants of one of the townships are able to take a grazing requiring a capital of between £3000 and £4000 to stock it, so that these general statements neutralise one another, and it is not necessary for me to say very much beyond what I do now. I don't know what may be the amount of debts due to the merchants, but judging from all the information

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I have been able to get, and I have endeavoured to get the most reliable information available, my conviction is that the general body of the crofters are probably better off than they ever have been. It is well known, and it is a thing not common to Barra only, but to every other place, that you find old people speaking of the good old times; but if those good old times are looked into, and if there is any accurate history of the state of things at the period to which these old people refer, it is generally found—I don't mean to say that they deliberately and intentionally misrepresent the state of things in their day—that they exaggerate the advantageous condition in which they suppose themselves to have been when they were young. I shall state with reference to Barra that, knowing as I do the condition not only of crofters and small farmers, but of large farmers and fishermen on the east coast of Scotland, I don't know any place in Barra so highly rented as the east coast, if we compare the value of their stock and their crop and the effects belonging to them with their rent. It is well known on the mainland that if a farmer has a capital ten times the amount of rent he pays he is considered to be in very fair circumstances, but if we come to the estate of Barra we find that the circumstances are much more favourable than that. I have before me a very carefully prepared statement of the number of cows, stirks, calves, horses, colts, sheep, and lambs belonging to crofters and also to cottars in Barra, and I made a sort of calculation, which I consider a very moderate calculation, of the value of the stock. I find that there are 311 cows in Barra belonging to crofters, which, at £7 each, would amount to £2177; 188 six-quarter-old stirks, which I value at £5, £940; 184 stirks at £2, £368. Thus, the crofters have cattle stock on their crofts estimated at that moderate valuation to be worth £3485. They have 233 horses, which I take on an average at £8, £1864; colts 79, at £5, £395;—in all, £2259. They have 1721 sheep and 716 young sheep. As I wish to make a moderate estimate, I take the 1721 sheep as being worth £1000. Accordingly, we have £6744 worth of stock upon the crofts tenanted by the crofters in Barra.

10939. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Would you mention how many crofters there are?—About 205. The cottars have 52 cows, 29 six-quarter-olds, 19 animals between calves and stirks, 56 horses, 15 colts, 188 old sheep, and 140 young sheep. I value these at less than the crofters' animals, and I take £1320 as the value of the stock belonging to the cottars who pay no rent to the proprietor. These sums amount altogether to £8064. Mr Phillips, who is now in charge of this parish, has gone over every croft in Barra and inspected the extent of ground under potatoes, bere, black oats, white oats, and turnips, and I have an abstract of his report before me, which was very carefully prepared, and I find that the value of the crops is £1720, 12s. The total value of crops and stock is £9784, 12s. Of course the crofters have, besides, the roofs of the houses belonging to them, which would increase the value of the capital that may be said to belong to them. Now, the annual rent paid by the crofters at the time of this annual valuation was £551, 5s.; and if the rent is compared with the value of the stock and the crops which they have upon their crofts—to what extent it may be burdened by debts to the merchant I don't know—the stock is 30 or 40 per cent. more than can be got on the most prosperous places on the mainland with which I am acquainted.

10940. *The Chairman.*—Can you give us the gross amount of arrears?—£2899, 12s. 5½d. There are a few of the tenants who are not much in arrear, but there are others who are very deeply in arrear. Calculating the whole, and comparing the gross amount of arrears and the gross amount of rent, there are upwards of five years' rent in arrears, and some of them are upwards of ten; for instance at Mingalay, where, if there is Home Rule

at all, the inhabitants of that island enjoy it. The only other point I wish to refer to is the complaint made about the increase of rent and the land being taken from them. I happen to have before me the rental of the estate of Barra from Whitsunday 1836 to Whitsunday 1837. I believe it is the rental on which the estate was purchased.

10941. The gross rent?—Yes.

10942. Of both tacks and crofts?—Yes, the whole rental of the estate, and the value of the land then in the occupation of General Macneill. I find that the witnesses who have come before you have misrepresented the state of things, and have misrepresented it very greatly indeed. I may state first, generally, that the paper which I have here shows the total rental of the estate in 1836, and I have the details and names of all the crofters and tenants at that time. The total amount of the actual rental of land let to tenants and crofters in 1836 was £1948, 17s. 7d.

10943. How much of that was crofters' rental?—Almost the whole of it was crofters' rental, because it happened that General Macneill had most of the other places in his own occupation. The largest rent is £30, and there are some at £20, and a good many at £10. I have no rental here higher than £30.

10944. There were no large tacks then at all?—No.

10945. Was the area in General Macneill's occupation equivalent to the extent of the large tacks now?—Just about the same. I have here an abstract of the rental and valuation of the estate of Barra in 1838. The rental of possessions now let, as returned by the factor, was £1948, 17s. 7d.; add twelve and a half vacant crofts not occupied, formerly let at £97, £2045, 17s. 7d.; value of farms in Colonel Macneill's possession, offers for which were under consideration—home farm capable of grazing 4000 sheep; Vatersay, 1600 sheep; hill of Bentangaval, 1100 sheep; island of Sandray, 500 sheep; island of Flodda, 200 sheep; small islands, 200 sheep; number of sheep that the land in Colonel Macneill's possession was supposed to carry, 7600; which, at 2s. 6d. per head, would give £950. Therefore, the amount of the land rent of Barra at that time was £2995, 17s. 7d. There was added—kelp on the shores, £500; alkali works which were carried on with a view of extracting valuable materials from the kelp—no sum placed opposite to this; mansion-house, fishings, and other things, £200;—gross estimated rental, £3695; but there is £700 struck off as fanciful.

10946. What is the present rental?—The present rent is £551, and the crofters' rents have been very greatly reduced.

10947. What is the gross rental of the estate at present?—From the last valuation return in 1882, the total is £2172, 11s. 2d., but deducting schools, churches, and glebe, which were not included in the valuation, £122, it leaves £2050, 11s. 2d. as against £2995, 17s. 7d.

10948. *Professor Mackinnon.*—You receive £550 from crofters and £1500 from large farms at present, and in 1836 it was £1950 from crofters and £950 from large farms. Are the boundaries the same?—So far as I know. I wish to take the opportunity of stating that I never until to-day heard of any alteration of boundaries sixteen years ago. I took the opportunity of consulting Mr Phillips, who has been over all the crofts, and he never heard of anything of the kind.

10949. Then with regard to this great reduction of the crofters' rent from £1950 to £550, is that chiefly owing to the cessation of the kelp manufacture?—I suppose so; I suppose they were not able to pay the rent. They were deeply in arrear, and, in fact, are deeply in arrear still.

10950. *The Chairman.*—It would be satisfactory if you were able to state in a definitive way that the area of the crofts is the same as it was before, because the extent of the reduction on the crofters' portion is so

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extraordinary that it raises a sort of doubt as to whether it is the same?—I shall be very glad to make every investigation into the matter. I may state that certain places which were under crofters in 1836—Fuday and Hellisay—are now occupied by Dr M'Gillivray. Then Ollosdale was occupied by eighteen crofters, for which they paid £140, 9s., and it was let as a single farm until this year, when I thought it would be an advantage to try the system of increasing the crofts, so that there would be sufficient employment for a family all the year round on the crofts, and with Lady Cathcart's consent Ollosdale was divided; and instead of having it at £140, we proposed to have it at £110, or £30 less than it was in 1836.

10951. At any rate, making allowance for any areas withdrawn from crofts, there has been an enormous reduction in the crofting rents since 1836. Can you suggest any reason for that except the cessation of the kelp manufacture?—And some of these places being let to Dr M'Gillivray. I think that about £400 or £500 would be for land formerly in the hands of crofters, and now let to Dr M'Gillivray, and for Ollosdale.

10952. Still you are able to affirm at this moment that there has been a great reduction on crofters' rentals on the same area?—Yes, I have no doubt of that, because we have to deal with certain places where there can be no difference on the area, which did not lie contiguous to large farms. I shall give one or two instances to complete my statement. Glen, which is the place where we are now, the modern name of it being Castle Bay, was occupied in 1836 by twenty-five crofters, paying from £4 to £10, and the total rent was £169, 15s. The present rent of Glen is £52, 11s.

10953. On the same area?—So far as I know. Then on Cregston, in 1836, there were fifteen tenants paying £112, 17s. 7d., and now the rent of Cregston, including the priest's croft and the doctor's, is £65.

10954. These are very interesting views of the change and progress of the estate, and we should be very happy to have a statement in writing from you, only it would be very desirable to verify the extent of the change of area between the large farms and the crofts, and that can be done at any future time?—Yes. There are seventeen crofters now in Cregston, as against fifteen in 1836.

10955. When you stated to us these aggregate rentals at the time of the purchase of the estate, do you think that these rentals had been raised fictitiously by the M'Neills when they were about to sell?—I should not like to say so, but it is very difficult to account for the great reduction which it was absolutely necessary to make.

10956. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Do you know how many years' purchase of the rent Colonel Gordon paid?—I cannot state precisely, but I shall make it up. I find that Bentangaval was in possession of General M'Neill in 1836, and also the adjoining grazing of Vatersay.

10957. *The Chairman.*—You need not enter into details on that point at present. Have you any other statement upon the different heads of what I may call accusation as regards what occurred to-day?—There was a statement made to-day about the people being refused the island of Vatersay. Well, the people here petitioned for the island of Vatersay, and of course it is very difficult to know, even with the additional information I got since they made the application, whether they were really able to make good their application or not. I may say that the matter was very anxiously and carefully considered by Lady Cathcart, and that if she had believed it would have been a benefit to the crofters to get the island of Vatersay, she would have given it to them, but this being an island, the experience of other islands where people are located led us to think that it was most unsuitable for them. For instance, the island of Mingalay,

which was said to be a pretty good island, is found to be most unsuited for the people, if we judge by their circumstances and the amount of their arrears, which is not a bad indication of the condition of the tenants. They are upwards of ten years' rent in arrears, and in consequence of the difficulty of getting to the island, they have enjoyed for some considerable period a certain amount of Home Rule, and the result in Mingalay has certainly been most prejudicial. The man who was a sort of constable there met me when I was last in Barra, and told me of the state of the people, and I was really sorry that they should be left in such an island; but, in consequence of their attachment to the locality, and the difficulty of even recommending crofters to leave one place and go to another, they must just be left there. Latterly, however, they found the place so unsuitable for them that I had several applications from Mingalay people to come over to prosecute the fishing here. I told them that those who were good fishermen would certainly get a share of what was proposed to be a sort of club farm for Castle Bay, where the amount of ground they would get would not so easily interfere with what I considered to be absolutely necessary for successful fishing—that is, that it should be prosecuted not by fits and starts but as a business, the same as any other business is prosecuted. I don't know any business that is prosecuted not now and then, but thoroughly all the year round, that does not prosper, and I don't believe it is possible for fishermen, either in Barra or in any other place, to be as prosperous and successful as they might be, and as they ought to be, unless they disencumber themselves of what really interferes with the continuous prosecution of the fishing. On the east coast, with which I am most intimately acquainted—having to do I suppose with the largest fishing village in Scotland, namely Buckie, where there are between 400 and 500 fishermen—till within the last twenty-five or thirty years the fishermen had what were called fisher lots. They had three acres, and were a sort of crofters, and grew potatoes; but since they commenced to devote their attention to the fishing, every one of these lots, which were known and marked on the estate plan as fisher lots, is occupied by cottars or feuars or merchants. Not a single individual fisherman among all these hundreds would take the trouble of working a lot, because they found that it seriously interfered with the prosecution of the fishing, and probably very often, when it was absolutely necessary that they should either be prosecuting the fishing or making active preparations for fishing at home or at a distance, they would require to be at home tilling their ground or taking in their crops. I know how difficult it is to overcome local prejudices, and I know how difficult it is to interfere in a violent way with these prejudices even when they have no foundation whatever, and I should consider it injudicious to deprive the fishermen here of a small piece of ground, but I don't despair of seeing the time when the fishermen on this coast will exactly take the course which by experience the fishermen on the east coast have found to be best for the promotion of their interest.

10958. Have you any other statement to make with reference to the circumstances under which Lady Cathcart declined to grant Vatersay?—I was going to say that, instead of giving off crofts to those fishermen, Lady Cathcart thought it was probably better that they should get as much land as would be potato ground and enable them to provide provender to keep a cow to supply the children with milk. Accordingly, after considering the matter carefully, I made out a memorandum and submitted it to the fishermen, offering forty-five fishermen a portion of the grazing of Vatersay which lies contiguous to the anchorage here, because it was believed that if they had land, it should be in close proximity to the sea; and I find, as

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I have often to grant building sites on the east coast, that they must have the houses as near the sea as possible, because they may have to go out early in the morning; whereas, if they were to get crofts and have detached houses, not only would the cultivation of these crofts interfere with the prosecution of the fishing, but, having the houses dotted over the place, it would be practically impossible for them to adopt the only mode of fishing which is found to be successful where people have had longer experience than they have had upon the west coast.

10959. Then you have offered them a portion of Vatersay?—Not of Vatersay, but of what was formerly the grazing of Vatersay. We have offered them the whole of the portion of the grazing of Vatersay, which is on the mainland, and close to the port. We have offered it at a less rent than the agents of General Macneill valued it at in 1836, and at the same rent we could have let it to a tenant who would have given no trouble, but paid his rent across the table. The place is supposed to carry seven hundred sheep and forty cattle in a good season. I wanted them to take only seven sheep each and a cow, and I proposed that they should select a committee of five, so that they might manage the sheep in a way that would bring them some return. I was particularly anxious that, in giving them this piece of ground, arrangements should be made so that the sheep stock might be managed in a way which would be profitable to themselves, and would open the eyes of the other crofters on the other parts of the estate, so that they might be induced to adopt a somewhat similar mode of managing their stock. Latterly, Mr Phillips wrote to me that they were not able or not willing to buy the seven sheep, which is little more than one-third of the sheep stock on the grazing ground. The grazing ground offered to them was about 1700 acres.

10960. We understand that you are to meet us at our next station. Will you have the goodness to give a general view of the management of the estate on Monday?—I shall do so on Monday or Tuesday. I beg also to hand in the list of the committee appointed by the tenants to give information as to any grievance requiring remedy, if it was possible to do so.

The Rev. JAMES CHISHOLM, Roman Catholic Clergyman, Barra (29) —examined.

Rev. James Chisholm.

10961. *The Chairman.*—You desire to make a statement to the Commission?—I have a statement to make with regard to a certain grievance in Barra in reference to the teachers of the schools. We in Barra here are almost entirely Catholics, and still we have to submit to seeing our children taught by teachers who do not belong to our own denomination. I put in a pamphlet containing a full statement, and which your Lordship and the rest of the Commission may consult, and which explains the whole matter.

10962. We shall find the substance of the grievance in this document?—Yes.

10963. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Does it relate to Barra alone?—And also to South Uist.

10964. To this district?—Yes.

10965. *Professor Mackinnon.*—How many schools are there in Barra? There is one in Mingalay, and there are three in the island of Barra. At Mingalay all the children are Roman Catholic, and are taught by a Protestant.

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Rev. James Chisholm.

10966. Is there any Catholic teacher at all?—There is one in Barra, at North Bay, in one of the board schools.

10967. Are you a member of the school board?—Yes; I have been elected lately a member of the school board.

10968. How many members are there?—Five.

10969. *The Chairman.*—Is the teacher a female teacher?—Yes.

10970. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Would there be any difficulty in getting a male teacher?—No difficulty.

10971. We are told that the population is 2000. How many, speaking generally, of these are Protestants?—From inquiries I have made, I suppose there will be twenty Protestant children attending all the schools.

10972. *The Chairman.*—In conformity with the resolution of the school board, what religious instruction is given in the schools?—There is no religious instruction whatever given in the schools.

10973. Was there any discussion and resolution in the school board on the subject?—There was, about the appointment of a teacher.

10974. And not about religious instruction?—Not so far as I know. I am a new-comer, and you will find all the discussions fully explained in that book.

10975. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Your board is elected by the ratepayers of Barra?—Yes.

10976. Was there a poll?—There was no poll. I am not very well aware how they were chosen, but I think they were chosen more or less from the parochial board.

10977. Who chose them?—I cannot well speak to that.

10978. Well, you will have an opportunity at next election of rectifying the matter?—Yes, at next election we can rectify the matter; but we are more or less afraid of appealing to the people, because they might be affected by superior influence, owing to the factor not belonging to that denomination.

10979. *Mr Cameron.*—How many Catholic priests are there on the board?—Two.

10980. And you are not satisfied with two—you think it is not a right proportion?—It is a minority—two out of five.

10981. You would like to have three out of five?—Yes.

10982. *The Chairman.*—Or more?—A majority will do.

NORMAN M'LEAN, Free Church Catechist, Barra (48)—examined.

Norman M'Lean.

10983. *The Chairman.*—We shall be very happy to receive any written statement from you in regard to the people?—I have no written statement; I did not expect to speak here at all.

10984. Well, if you have anything to state to the Commission we shall be glad to hear it. Your communion is not a very large one?—No. All I have to say I can say in a few minutes. I find them very much improved from the time I came among them fourteen years ago. I find that the people whom I call my own especially are very much better off now than they were when I came among them. The most of them have far better houses. Some of them when I came among them had very miserable houses indeed—houses which I would not consider a good stable for my pony. But now it is very different. Some of them have got houses in which the proprietor might put up for a night. Their stock is better, their clothing better, and their feeding better. I have never yet heard

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any of our people coming to me and complaining of any grievances they had in regard to land or anything of that kind. With regard to other people of a different denomination, I have experienced very great kindness among them since I got acquainted with them. I once had as many as sixty or seventy of their children in my school, and some of these are now getting on very well, and some have sent most favourable accounts from New Zealand. They were at one of the Edinburgh ladies' schools. I still continue to experience very great kindness among the people. They live kindly and peaceably among each other, and there were no strivings or rows until very lately. As to the cause of that I don't like to say much.

10985. What do you think is the cause of these divisions or the bad feeling that exists?—Well, I may not fix on the right thing, and I am far safer not to say anything at all.

10986. You teach the Shorter Catechism?—Yes.

10987. Would you receive Roman Catholic children, and dispense with religious instruction in their case?—Not now. Since the public schools were opened I have not got any of them to my own school at all.

10988. Did you use to get them?—Yes. They all read the Bible and learned the Shorter Catechism when at my school.

10989. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—And they were not the worse of the latter?—I don't think it.

10990. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Would you have received them without insisting on the Bible and Catechism formerly?—Yes. I never insisted on it unless they were willing themselves.

[ADJOURNED.]

LOCH BOISDALE, SOUTH UIST, MONDAY, MAY 28, 1883.

SOUTH UIST

LOCH BOISDALE.

(*See Appendix A, XXVII., XXVIII., XXIX., XXX.*)

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.

In the examination of the Gaelic-speaking witnesses at Loch Boisdale and at Torlum, Dr Black, South Uist, acted as interpreter.

[*Mr Ranald Macdonald.*—I have the utmost readiness in repeating the assurance I gave before, that the people here may speak, freely and fully, anything they think proper without any fear of any kind.]

DONALD O'HENLEY, Crofter and Fisherman, North Loch Boisdale (about 56)—examined.

Donald O'Henley.

10991. *The Chairman.*—Have you been freely elected a delegate by the people of North Loch Boisdale?—Yes.

10992. How many people were present?—Over twenty.

10993. Have you got a statement to make on the part of the people?—It is about forty years since I was removed from the place where I was well off.

10994. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—What was the name of the place?—Frobost. I was sent out on a small holding to Loch Boisdale, which is not sufficient to support me. This was in the time of Dr Macleod, then factor. He planted us in this place in North Loch Boisdale, and sent a servant to mark out the land. It was then agreed or promised to us that we would get sufficient land on which to maintain one cow. Eight lots were put out here for those people who were removed from Frobost, and two of those from Frobost came here and got land sufficient to maintain one cow. These two had each two of these lots. There were four lots remaining upon which one tenant was squatted or laid down, and they did not seem to have sufficient land to keep even one cow. My father informed me that he gave to this Dr M'Leod, the former factor, a horse to pay up arrears of rent amounting to 15s., and that he was to return the residue of the price, but he never received it.

10995. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—It is forty years since you left Frobost. Were you yourself tenant at Frobost, or was your father tenant there?—My father.

10996. How long is it since you held a lot of land yourself at North Boisdale?—About thirty-six years.

10997. When you came to North Loch Boisdale, was the fishing good here?—Fourteen years ago there was very good fishing here for some years.

10998. Was that the reason Dr M'Leod moved them here?—No, that was not the reason. He was sending them here before the fishing was started at all.

10999. What was Dr M'Leod's reason for changing your place?—Clearings, to make up a tack for a Mr Chisholm that came from Moidart.

11000. Is that the tack of Frobost?—It is now incorporated in the tack of Milton.

11001. Have you got the same land you had when you came here?—Yes.

11002. No more?—No more.

11003. What is the extent of your croft?—About eight acres.

11004. Is it all arable?—We ourselves made it arable since we came.

11005. But it is all arable now?—Yes.

11006. Have you any out-run pasture for cattle?—No. Through the friendship of the neighbouring tacksman, we were allowed to send our cattle out to the moor, and we perform some service for this. Though I send my cattle out to this moor they are often chased with dogs, and they are often very much abused owing to stranger herds.

11007. What rent did you pay for the croft when you first succeeded to it?—27s. a lot.

11008. You paid 54s. for your two lots?—£2, 14s.

11009. What are you paying now for it?—£4, 10s. to-day for the same, the rent being raised on account of the good fishing that was obtained here.

11010. How long ago is it since it was raised?—About fourteen or fifteen years ago.

11011. How long is it since the fishing ceased at this place?—It is about five years since I provided anything by fishing—putting me to expense in gear.

11012. Is it that the fish have left the place?—I think that the Barra fishing has spoiled this loch.

11013. When the fishing was good, did you think your lot dear at £4, 10s.?—I think it was rather too dear when it would only maintain one cow. I think it was too dear a rent for it.

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LOCH BOISDALE.

Donald O Henley.

11014. How many days' labour do you pay for the pasture?—Nine days for one cow. Two years ago we spoke to the present tacksman complaining that we paid too much,—nine days' labour for the one cow. The arrangement now is that we give six days' labour for one cow, and three days for a two-year-old. I suppose, before, the two-year-old was a follower, and nothing was charged, but now we have three days' labour for a two-year-old.

11015. How many barrels of potatoes do you plant in your croft?—Some years seven or eight.

11016. What return do you get for that in an average year?—I cannot tell.

11017. Do you know how much return of oats or barley you get for your seed?—No, I cannot tell.

11018. Do you thresh the corn, or do you give it in the sheaf to the cow?—Generally I thresh it, and I give the rest to the cattle.

11019. Do you keep a horse?—I cannot keep a horse,—harrowing of land by our own labour without any horse. We tried a horse, and could not keep her.

11020. How do you plough your land?—With the *cas-chrom* or crooked spade. We might get a pair of horses to plough for us, if it was a good fishing season. Some of the crofters, perhaps, could afford to pay for them.

11021. How much of the croft do you turn over in a year?—Not the half. They are anxious to leave as much for the cattle grazing as possible. If I had room I would cultivate more.

11022. How long do you leave the land in grass, in that case?—Two years, three years, and sometimes over that. We cannot work with the crooked spade unless the land gets into a condition of lea.

11023. Do you think you get a less return now from your land than you used to get?—Last year nothing at all out of it. It is getting poorer. The longer it is in lea—the older the land is—the better will be the crop.

11024. But if you are able to leave part out two or three or four years, is that not sufficient to ensure a good crop?—Yes, much better; but the place is so small that I cannot leave much out.

11025. What stock do you actually keep? Do you keep only one cow?—I have three cows, one two-year-old and two stirks, and five or six sheep, but they are chiefly on the neighbouring tack.

11026. You are able to winter those from the produce of your croft?—Some years I could maintain these.

11027. Do you pay to the tacksman the summering of all this stock?—They are on the tack till the beginning of harvest, and then they have a little picking at home, but they must go on the tack some portions of each day.

11028. What I mean is: Is there one cow or one stirk kept wholly on the croft, or do they all go to the hill?—Portions of them.

11029. You are paying for them to the tacksman?—Yes, in labour.

11030. Do you know how much labour you have paid to the tacksman this last year?—I don't know. The females about the house oftener did the labour than I did—particularly looking after peats, drying them, and *so on*.

11031. Does the tacksman take a woman's labour the same as a man's?—The same.

11032. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—How many people do you represent here to-day?—Over forty families.

11033. I understand your complaint, and the complain of the particular township you are in, is this, that you have no positive right to the hill

ground. Is that so?—That is the principal complaint—want of hill pasture and larger holdings altogether.

11034. Do you want an increase of arable land also?—Yes, that is what we want.

11035. Is there ground upon the tacksman's land that could be taken in adjacent to your lots?—Yes.

11036. What is the name of the tacksman?—Mr Charles M'Lean.

11037. What is the name of the town?—Milton.

11038. Is that the famous Milton in South Uist—Flora Macdonald's place?—Yes.

11039. Going back to the place you came from, you stated you were put out in order to accommodate Mr Chisholm from Moidart. How many families were put away by Dr M'Leod on account of Chisholm?—I cannot give the number, but I know there were forty full crofts, and on some of these crofts there were two families.

11040. And were all these cleared off for the sake of Chisholm?—Every one.

11041. Were those people distributed on other parts of the estate, or were some of them obliged to emigrate?—He squatted them altogether upon other crofts.

11042. Who was the proprietor at the time? Was it Clanranald?—The late Colonel Gordon.

11043. It was not in Clanranald's time?—No. A few remained on the farm of Askernish, as servants of this Chisholm the tacksman, but they had no lands.

11044. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Was there ever a better factor than Dr M'Leod in the country?—He may have been a good man, but he did not do a gentlemanly turn in this matter.

11045. Was there ever a factor in these parts who was considered so kind to the people?—I cannot say. He was not long in it after that.

11046. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Perhaps it was as well for the country that he was not?—I think so.

11047. *The Chairman.*—Have you anything else to say?—What will we do if the neighbouring tacksman stands to-day on his own march, and prevents our cattle going on his own moor? That is the question. I think the man is so gentlemanly that he will not make any difference to-morrow more than any other day, in respect of allowing the cattle to graze upon his tack. I have no particular grievance myself, but I know Ronald Macdonald, Loch Boisdale, has something of the nature of a grievance, and I would like if you would favour him with a hearing.

11048. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Is it something especial to himself?—It belongs to his own family—some private wrong.

DONALD M'KINNON, Crofter, Garraheille (about 45)—examined.

11049. *The Chairman.*—Have you been freely elected a delegate by the people of Garraheille?—Yes.

11050. Do you wish to make a statement?—I was born at Dalebroge. I remember from the time people were settled down there,—at the time which the former delegate spoke of, the removals for the tack of Chisholm, and when the people were squatted here upon our lands. We have never

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experienced that we got any reduction of rents for those squatters. The lands upon which these people were squatted belonged to the township of Dalebroge. I am resident in Garraheille, but have been only seven years there. The complaint belongs to Dalebroge.

11051. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—How many people were placed upon Dalebroge?—The number which the former delegate gave.

11052. But there were only forty altogether. How many of the forty were put upon Dalebroge?—I cannot remember how many came, but they were coming from all quarters upon that land which belonged to Dalebroge I was only a young boy at the time.

11053. What rent were you paying before these people came? How much per croft?—We were paying £4 for the half of a croft.

11054. And although these people were put in and squatted upon you, you got no reduction of rent?—I never experienced that we got any reduction.

11055. There was no rise, I presume?—I am not aware there was.

11056. Did you get any increase of your hill land when these people were put on?—No.

11057. What rent are you paying for the place you are in at present?—I pay £2, 8s. of rent.

11058. Is it a croft or half a croft?—Half a croft.

11059. What stock do you keep upon that half croft?—A cow and a horse, and a yearling horse, and a calf, and a stirk.

11060. Have you any sheep?—One sheep.

11061. Have you any hill ground except at the will of the neighbouring tacksmen?—Small bits between lochs, between peat banks. That is supposed to belong to us. It will not support any animal, but we occasionally send them there.

11062. What are the people of Garraheille exactly complaining of? What would they like to have?—A few of them are satisfied with lots of land which have been recently increased.

11063. Some of the lots have been increased?—Yes; some of those in my township have recently acquired increased lots of land, and they are satisfied.

11064. Why did they not all get increased lots?—They were not able to stock them or pay rent for them.

11065. From what land did the people get the increased lots?—From the township.

11066. Where was it cut off from?—Two of them got pieces from the side of the tack off Askernish. Others had less than they had before, and others had more than they had before. Some got it by the reducing of their neighbours' lots.

11067. I suppose in consequence of inability to pay their rents?—Yes.

11068. How many families are there in Garraheille?—Ten families for a long time paying rent. One or two recently settled down there.

11069. *The Chairman.*—Are there any cottars?—The two families whom I mention now are cottars, and it is for those that the lands were taken off the neighbouring tack.

11070. What are the rent and stock of the crofters who have been enlarged and who appear to be satisfied? What is the biggest rent that is paid by any one?—I don't know the rent or the acreage.

11071. Or the stock?—I cannot speak with certainty.

11072. Have they got five cows?—One of the tenants of the large lots has just one cow, one stirk, a mare, and a year-old horse.

11073. *Professor Mackinnon.*—What stock has the other tenant?—I think the other has four cows and three or four followers.

11074. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—How many horses altogether?—Two horses and a year-old.

11075. Any sheep?—I don't know anything about sheep, but I know there are sheep.

11076. Have you any idea what the rent is these two brothers pay between them?—Perhaps they don't themselves know, as the lots were only cut out last harvest.

11077. Was the factor willing to give land to enlarge the crofts to the whole of the people if they were able to take them?—The factor was desirous to give according to their ability to take land.

11078. Do you go away and fish now, or endeavour to get a little money so as to improve your position?—I was not accustomed to fish, but I was accustomed to be a railway navvy or any other labour about quays and docks, and I think I will require to take to that labour this year.

11079. Don't you think it would be wise for you to go vigorously into it, when the factor is kind enough to offer additional land so as to earn a little money?—Our land is so small that we cannot live upon it. If the land we had was sufficiently large, as our parents had it, and from which our parents took their food, it would be then worth while to work upon it, and we would also take our food upon it, and we would not be necessitated to labour out of the country.

11080. But my question was, seeing you have the prospect of getting land, is it not worth while to go and labour in the south and gather money for the purpose?—Yes.

11081. And then, of course, when you got a larger croft, you would not require to leave home?—My forefathers were accustomed to be supported in the country; they were never obliged to go to earn money in the south, but had plenty of sheep, grain, meal, and food of all kinds. At home even at this time of the year, and after this time.

11082. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Was the size of your lot changed this year?—My lot was made less this year.

11083. Do you know if your rent has been reduced, or to what extent it has been reduced?—We don't know yet about these matters. Sufficient time has not elapsed to enable us to know whether our rents are reduced or not.

11084. Did you not expect, when the size of your lots was changed, to be told the amount of change that would take place in the rent?—I cannot tell. I believe that the rent will be less on account of the reduction.

11085. You say your forefathers were accustomed to have plenty of food. I suppose you allude to the time before the potato disease came into the country?—Yes, before the potato failure.

11086. Even the same land would not produce the same crop at the present day?—Yes, it would yield as much crop.

11087. Are you getting as good potato crops as you used to get in the old time?—Yes, with rare exceptions.

JOHN MACKAY, Crofter, Kilphedar (75)—examined.

11088. *The Chairman.*—Have you a paper to submit to the Commission?—Yes. 'The following is an exact statement of part of the grievances and hardships of us, the crofters of Kilphedar. We have suffered much injustice during upwards of the last forty years through having

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'been deprived of a great extent of hill pasturage by Dr M'Leod, the then 'factor of Colonel Gordon, for which he promised us compensation, 'meaning a reduction of our rent. At the following Whitsunday he was 'expelled from the office of factorship without fulfilling his promise. We 'claimed the compensation from the succeeding factor, but was refused, 'saying that he would not make any alteration in the books, but leave 'them in the same way in which he found them. We claimed the 'compensation from every succeeding factor, with the same result. There 'are over forty crofters and cottars located on the land, deprived from us 'as above mentioned upwards of forty years ago, while we pay the same 'rent yet, without any reduction whatever. There were twenty-three 'crofts in this township at first; the rent was raised on account of the 'ware being growing at both ends of our land suitable for making kelp; 'but kelp making has ceased, by which we paid our rent, but the rent 'remains as it was formerly. We have suffered many injustices while we 'were making the kelp, viz., we were every third year, for ten years, com-'pelled to leave our own kelp stance to others who were destroying our 'grass and corn, while we had to go to tacksmen's lands to make kelp; 'after being there all summer the case generally was that we would not 'make as much kelp as would pay the grazing of our horses, while nothing 'was allowed to ourselves for any loss we sustained through those who 'were making kelp on our own lands. We were not allowed to keep a 'dog, though we would pay licence for it. Our sheep were chased and 'gathered to a certain place called a fauk by the ground officer, constables, 'and other helpers, through the order of the factor, in order to see if any 'crofter had more than ten sheep, which was the number allowed for us 'to keep however high the rent of the croft might be; if it happened that 'any person had more than the above number he was obliged to buy 'grazing from a neighbour short of the above number; the reason for that 'was, and still is, that we were deprived of our former hill pasturage, 'which we claim and trust to get possession of yet. Ground officer and 'constables used to come two or three days before the market's day to our 'houses, marking our stock which was ready for the market, compelling 'us to drive them to the factor's house, so as to avoid us the freedom of 'selling them at the market ourselves. We were obliged to make potato 'parks to the proprietrix on our rented land; which we cultivated from 'mere wild moor with crooked and common spades, carrying the whole of 'the manure on our backs where horses could not walk, that being done 'without any abatement of rent. These parks are fenced, the grazing of 'which is let to the highest bidder. Our peats stance has been taken 'from us to make room for crofters and cottars, where they have a miser-'able living. If we complain of being overcrowded, the factor's answer 'is, "There is no room for the people in the country." Yes, there is 'plenty for twice or thrice as many, from where others were driven and 'compelled to emigrate to America; some of whom had been tied before 'our eyes, others hiding themselves in caves and crevices for fear of being 'caught by authorised officers. There is twice or thrice as much waste 'arable land in South Uist as there is under cultivation. Our land is so 'inferior in quality that it will not yield one-eighth part of a year's 'allowance for our families. We are thus under the necessity of buying 'from Glasgow seven-eigbths of a year's allowance of our victuals, and that 'of the most inferior quality, such as Indian meal, and the cheapest 'groceries; also our clothing, for want of sheep and competent holding. 'As there is plenty of arable land in the country not used or cultivated, 'we want as much of it (both of arable and hill pasturage) as will support 'our families comfortably, and that at a reasonable rent, with security that

'we shall not be removed from our holdings as long as we can pay rent 'for it. We never appealed to Lady Cathcart for the above grievances, 'but repeatedly to her representatives, without any result.'

11089. How many crofters and cottars are living on the township of Kilphedar?—Forty-two families.

11090. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Are they all paying rent to the proprietor?—They are all paying rent. John Mackay.

11091. *The Chairman.*—Is there any hill pasture?—No.

11092. No hill pasture at all?—None now.

11093. How long is it since the hill pasture was taken away?—Thirty-eight years ago.

11094. What has become of it? Whom was it given to?—It belongs to the crofters of North Loch Boisdale here.

11095. Have you got a whole croft, or part of a croft?—A whole croft.

11096. About what acreage is it?—I have no knowledge of acres at all.

11097. Then what is the stock you keep?—I have three cows, one two-year-old, three stirks, one horse, four sheep, one pig.

11098. What is your rent?—£10, 7s.

11099. Has that rent been increased since you got the croft?—No, not increased.

11100. Are the other crofters in the township much in the same position as you are?—In the same way.

11101. If you could get hill pasture, would you be satisfied?—If we get what was taken from us. Our peat banks were taken from us, and other parks that have been especially enclosed by the proprietrix have also been taken from us, and we have no common grazing.

11102. But have you got other grazing equally as good?—I can only answer for myself. I would be satisfied if I got an equal portion of land elsewhere, but I would prefer to get what belonged to us originally.

11103. Is there any land belonging to some tack which could be given to you for hill pasture?—No land lying suitably adjacent to our present holding.

11104. Do you take any grazing from tacksmen, or do you keep this stock upon your own crofts?—Perhaps a very few of them may for a few days obtain grazing from the tacksmen in order to put their cattle into a condition for market.

11105. Do they pay the tacksman in labour or pay him in money?—We give days of labour—making hay stacks in harvest time. He is not very hard upon us.

11106. You are an old man. Do you think the people were much better off in their clothing and food in your young days than they are now, or are they as well off now?—We were very much better off in food and clothing when I was young. When I was a young man, I would complain very much of the food I take to-day.

11107. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—What is the difference between the food you had in your youth and the food you have now?—We had butter, cheese, flesh, potatoes, and meal, of which we cannot to-day partake, and plenty of them, of which to-day there is very little.

11108. What is your ordinary food now?—I am almost ashamed to tell you. We have tea and eggs, and sometimes not sufficient milk to put into our tea, and sometimes not sufficient sugar.

11109. Have you not plenty of bread?—I will tell the truth. I have a little bread, but only a little. If I would take the advice of the ground officer, I would not have even that little food to-day.

11110. What is the advice of the ground officer?—The ground officer told me that if he had known I had applied to the local factor for seed

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corn, he would have prevented me getting it, because I trespassed in ploughing some bit of land beyond the orders of the ground officer.

11111. Have you ceased to make kelp here?—Yes.

11112. How long since?—About five years ago.

11113. What are you getting for it?—No value.

11114. You made a great deal of money by it when you were young?—Yes. I could make four or five tons of kelp myself, for which I would get from £2 to £2, 10s. a ton. That kept me from getting into arrears, and also helped me to buy food, but now that source of income has gone.

11115. I have heard in some other islands that the people are less cheerful and jovial than they used to be long ago. Is there any difference in that respect here?—They are not quite so foolish now-a-days as they were when I was young. The struggle for existence is too strong for them now.

11116. Then there is not much gaiety in their life?—No.

11117. But they have not given up singing songs, I hope?—Oh no, they have not given up songs.

11118. And they have not given up piping?—No.

11119. I suppose the ministers in South Uist are not against these things?—I do not think the Free Church clergyman near me is caring much about music or dancing or songs. He is an exception. I never heard any of my own priests object, if we behaved ourselves about it.

11120. And the parish minister?—No, I never heard that the parish minister objected to anything of the kind, and I don't know whether he is or is not present here to-day, but he is a good friend to the country.

11121. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You say there are forty-two crofters now on Kilphedar?—Yes.

11122. You also state in this paper that there were originally only twenty-three crofters?—Yes.

11123. How did that increase come?—Was it from the natural increase among the people themselves, or were there any outsiders placed among them?—Partly natural increase, and partly some of those that were dispossessed of the lands at Frobost, as already spoken of.

11124. Can you mention the numbers? Of the increase of nineteen, how many were from Frobost?—Nine.

11125. Could you pay your rents easily, or be in pretty good circumstances, if you had the hill ground as you originally had, and for the same rent?—Yes.

11126. I want to ask you about peats. It seems to be a great grievance that there are cottars placed among your peats. Is the result of that, that you have to go further away, or that the peats are getting scarcer?—The cottars spoil our peat moss.

11127. What do you mean by spoiling it?—They converted it into arable land, where we used to cut our peats.

11128. And you had to go elsewhere?—Yes.

11129. There is a grievance about parks? Do I understand that the people of Kilphedar reclaimed certain lands and enclosed them with walls, which are now in the possession of the landlord?—Yes.

11130. Is that let from year to year, or in whose hands are those parks?—They are valued, and that value is paid by those who are able to pay for it in the township.

11131. Do I understand you to say that besides the reclamation you built the dykes at your own cost?—No, we were paid for reclaiming it.

11132. What did you get?—We were receiving 14s. for reclaiming a space that was containing a barrel of seed potatoes.

11133. And you got that?—Yes.

11134. You mention a grievance that the ground officer was in the habit of ordering them to drive in their cattle for the purpose of taking them out for sale, and giving his own price?—It is two years since it ceased.

11135. Did the ground officer, or whoever went about in this way, name his own price to the people?—No, they were valued on the home farm at Askernish afterwards. The animals were carried away, and afterwards valued on the farm of Askernish.

11136. Whatever price was fixed upon had you a voice in the fixing of the price?—Some were marked by the proprietor, but left in the possession of the original holders, who went afterwards to market with them, and got better prices than for those that were delivered over and valued.

11137. Then it was no advantage to the crofter tenantry that these animals were taken from them?—If we got good value, it mattered not to us.

11138. The beast was taken off to the home farm of Askernish, and there priced. Had you any voice in the pricing of the animal at Askernish?—Two tacksmen—Mr M'Leod and Mr Ferguson—were the valuators.

11139. Did the tenants and the crofters generally complain of this system, which has now been happily done away with?—Yes, they did complain.

11140. Was it in consequence of their complaints that Mr Macdonald ordered it to be given up?—Mr Macdonald did nothing wrong to us since he became factor over us but what was wrong before. He merely followed out the old customs.

11141. I mentioned Mr Macdonald's name because I presume he was the person who gave orders to stop the system?—I believe that is right.

11142. You make a very serious charge in this paper which requires a little explanation. You say—'Others were driven and compelled to emigrate to America, some of whom had been tied before our eyes, others 'hiding themselves in caves and crevices, for fear of being caught by 'authorised officers,' will you explain those words?—I heard and saw portions of it.

11143. Will you relate what you heard and saw?—I saw a policeman chasing a man down the machar towards Askernish, with a view to catch him, in order to send him on board an emigrant ship lying in Loch Boisdale. I saw a man who lay down on his face and nose on a little island, hiding himself from the policeman, and the policeman getting a dog to search for this missing man in order to get him on board the emigrant ship.

11144. What was the name of the man?—Lachlan Macdonald.

11145. What was the name of the previous person you referred to?—Donald Smith.

11146. Did the dog find this unfortunate youth?—The dog did not discover him, but the man was afterwards discovered all the same. He had got into the trench of a lazy bed.

11147. What was done with him?—He was taken off.

11148. And really sent off like an animal that was going to the southern markets?—Just the same way.

11149. Did you hear that the same thing was done to others, although you did not see it?—A man named Angus Johnston, whose wife gave birth to three children, and another child was dead before, he was seized and tied upon the pier of Loch Boisdale; and it was by means of giving him a kick that he was put into the boat and knocked down. The old priest interfered, and said, 'What are you doing to this man? Let him alone. It

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'is against the law.' The four children were dead in the house when he was caught and tied, and knocked down by a kick, and put on board.

11150. Speaking generally, are you able to say from hearsay that you have no doubt in your own mind there were many other hardships and cruelties committed in the course of these evictions?—Yes, no doubt. I myself had charge of a squad of men working on a road when Mr Chisholm and Murdoch M'Lennan wished me to go to Loch Eynort to bring people out of their homes to be sent out in an emigrant ship.

11151. Who were these two people you named?—Just tacksmen in the country, with the view of clearing the country for themselves.

11152. What did you say to that?—'The office does not belong to me. 'I am in charge of a squad of men working upon these roads, paid by the 'proprietor. I have nothing to do with searching houses or taking 'men out of them. If you have constables send them.' They went away and sent other constables after that.

11153. *The Chairman.*—You speak of a man who hid himself, and was discovered and taken by force on board. Did that man belong to a family which was going away?—A brother also went away at the same time, and there is a nephew here to-day.

11154. What was the age of the man who was taken away?—Over twenty years.

11155. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Were his father and mother going that day?—His father and mother were both dead at that time.

11156. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Were they in the habit of sending away husbands without their wives?—No. I never heard any instance of that kind, unless a man voluntarily left his wife when they would disagree.

11157. But you understand that one man was put on board a vessel by force with four dead children in the house, where was the wife at that time?—She followed him on board.

11158. *Professor Mackinnon.*—The dead children would be buried before that?—The four dead bodies were buried before the mother went on board.

11159. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—I think you mentioned in Gaelic that that was a case you had heard of, but had not seen?—No, I did not see it, but I knew both the husband and the wife.

11160. How long is it since this happened?—In 1850 or 1851.

11161. Who was the factor at that time?—Mr Fleming; and this was the year the late Mr Birnie came to be factor.

11162. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Was that the last forcible eviction which occurred on these estates?—Yes. Five emigrant ships left Loch Boisdale, and that was the last occasion of any forcible eviction between this and Barra.

11163. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—You complain that the proprietor took possession of part of your lands—the reclaimed lands. What is the extent of the reclaimed lands of which you have been deprived?—There are three parks, and two of them contain about thirty acres. I cannot tell the acreage of the third.

11164. Were they valuable grazing ground?—Yes, they were cropping it.

11165. You get fair wages for the reclamations?—We did receive payment as already stated. We would have been much better pleased if they had left the ground to ourselves.

11166. You got no reduction of rent?—No. We don't complain of any of the present factors; they did not do the harm. They simply exact from us what former ones exacted.

11167 But this reclamation took place under the present factor, did it

not?—Yes, but I think it was against Mr Macdonald's wish that the late factor Mr Walker did make those parks in certain places. Mr Macdonald's intention was to reclaim land that had never before been cropped, and not to enclose land that was formerly cropped.

11168. And is Mr Macdonald aware that land which had been formerly cropped has been taken from you?—Yes.

11169. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You said that five ships went from Loch Boisdale. Were all the people who were on board sent from the Gordon estates?—From Benbecula to Barra Head.

11170. I want to ask you this general question. Were the lands from which these people were sent away at that time given to the crofters in any part, or were they added to tacks, or made into new tacks?—Some of them at the south end were given to crofters by doubling the crofts. But most of the lands were added to the tacks of Askernish and Milton. Frobost, of which we have heard to-day already, was cleared, and added to a neighbouring tack, and also Kildonan. Twenty-seven families were evicted from Kildonan, and also about twenty-four families from Bornish.

11171. And these were all added to the big farms?—Yes. There would be fully twelve in Lower Bornish.

11172. Are you on ground which formerly belonged to Clanranald?—Yes, the whole country there.

11173. Were there any removals in their times?—None but those who would voluntarily go.

JOHN WALKER, Crofter, North Boisdale (83)—examined.

11174. *The Chairman.* Were you freely elected a delegate?—Yes.

11175. You produce a written statement?—Yes.—'*North Boisdale.* 'We had a great reason to complain. About forty years ago there were 'twenty-four crofters in this village, and now it is situated on forty-eight, 'with heavy families. In the month of September the most of our crop 'will be destroyed with heavy floods, owing to the leading drains being 'closed up more than twenty years ago. Also the west side, that we called 'the Macher, are exhausted, and going with the wind, which cannot be 'made up without the help of the landlord. The hill pasture that we had 'for grazing our cattle, horses, and sheep, if we would have any, are now 'situated on six or seven tenants. And when we will go out to our graz-'ing place, they are drilling them back with their dogs. The property 'that we have does not belong to ourselves; it belongs to the men who 'supply us with food and clothing; and the reason that we are in the 'heavy debts is this, that our land is exhausted with the number of the 'people. And about forty-six years ago we used to sell plenty of grain and 'potatoes, besides keeping up our own families, and the place where that 'was growing is now filled up with Cheviot and oxen. We are now kept 'so far behind that we will no get leave to keep the littlest dog about our 'houses. Then we are paying so much taxes for poor-rates, school, and 'road taxes, and we never get an account of what they were doing with it, 'and therefore the new alteration that they are expecting to do on this 'village, instead of improving us, would make us worse than ever. When 'the kelp was at a high price, this land was rented according to that, and 'since a couple of years ago the kelp stopped, and the rent is as high as 'ever. About thirty years ago the late Colonel Gordon offered the third 'part of the rent down to them that would pay ready cash for it, and the

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'rest never got the same chance again. We are in great need of help, and 'wishing to get more land for the future.'

11176. *Mr Cameron.*—How many crofters are there in this township now?—Twenty-four.

11177. In this paper it is stated there are forty-eight?—Some making up the forty-eight do not belong to the township at all, but are squatted outside of it.

11178. When did they come there?—Some of them are five years and some four years there.

11179. Where did they come from?—From about Loch Boisdale here; some people who had no lands.

11180. What was their occupation before they came there?—One was a sailor, and he got lands there; another occupied a croft further out, and he was changed.

11181. Do these squatters pay rent, and if so, to whom?—Yes, they pay rent to the proprietor.

11182. Did the proprietor or factor put them in there?—Yes.

11183. Do you know why they were put there?—Because he had no lands elsewhere for them.

11184. Why had they a claim upon the factor for lands?—They were natives.

11185. Did they belong to the same township?—Not to the same township. Some of them had lands in South Loch Boisdale, and they were dispossessed and settled there. Others were natives, and had no lands at all: young people who set up house there.

11186. The descendants of original crofters?—Yes.

11187. Do you in any way complain of these cottars being amongst you?—We are complaining of their presence there, because our cattle when they are sent out are chased by dogs, and sent back again by those squatters.

11188. The squatters chase them with dogs?—Yes.

11189. What remedy can you suggest to prevent the squatters from chasing them with dogs?—To give them some other places, and clear them out of there.

11190. Give the cottars some other place?—Our township has no room for them.

11191. Did you remonstrate with the factor when the cottars were put there?—We were often complaining to the factor, but not at the particular time when these were squatted down.

11192. Are they relations of the crofters themselves who are on the place?—They are not relatives. They are not related to the people of the townsbip.

11193. What is your own rent?—The rent of my croft is £12, 12s. and 25s. of poor-rates.

11194. What stock have you?—My stock is not large. I have only two cows and a horse.

11195. Any sheep?—I have five or six sheep.

11196. Any young cattle?—I have one calf.

11197. Is that about the stock which your neighbours keep?—No.

11198. What do they keep?—They would keep four cows, two horses, three or four young cattle, and some six or seven sheep.

11199. Are you in very poor circumstances?—Yes.

11200. Is that why you keep so little stock?—Want of money is the cause. My children married and left me, and there is only my wife and myself.

11201. What hill pasture have you in common?—Very little. It would

not amount to an acre per family—all that is left of our hill pasture now.

11202. And where do the cows graze?—On our arable crofts.

11203. Where do they graze in summer?—On the crofts. [A man here stated that the witness had only one-fourth of a croft].—When I said £12, 12s. that was the rent of the croft.

11204. What is the summing of the croft?—Six cows, two horses, and a young horse.

11205. Are you quite sure the summing is only six cows?—Not much more, unless a few followers.

11206. How much more?—I don't know.

11207. How many sheep for the whole croft?—Ten.

11208. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Have you any family?—None, only my wife.

11209. What is her age?—Seventy-five or seventy-six.

11210. What has become of the children? Have they left this place?—They didn't leave the country. Some of them married in my own neighbourhood.

11211. Do you get any help from them?—No, I have never troubled any of them very much yet.

11212. I understand that all you complain of as representing North Boisdale is that the cottars trouble you?—That is their chief complaint.

11213. Have you any other?—The land is too dear, in consequence of the change of value in kelp.

11214. How long is it since your present rent was fixed? Was it fifty years ago?—Thirty-four or thirty-five years ago.

11215. Was the kelp remunerative at that time?—Yes.

11216. How long is it since the estate of Macdonald of Boisdale was sold?—About forty-three years ago.

11217. Did it fall into the hands of the Gordon family at once?—Yes.

11218. Were any of the people that were sent away in the five vessels that the previous witness spoke of taken from your neighbourhood?—Yes, some from my township.

11219. Did they go away of their own accord?—Some of them went of their own accord.

11220. Did those who were left behind get the crofts of those who went off?—I came to my present lands as one of those families who were evicted.

11221. Where were you before?—Frobost.

11222. Was there anybody in North Boisdale who benefited by the removal of the people?—I don't know of any in North Boisdale who, in consequence of the removal, got more land than they had.

11223. Do you pay rent and get receipts yourself?—I was paying it all formerly. I don't pay it in full now. I am unable to pay.

11224. Are the other people like yourself, in embarrassed circumstances? Are they poorer in consequence of the number of cottars?—All in North Boisdale are back in condition, on account of so many people being squatted upon them.

11225. What rent did your father pay?—My father was never in North Boisdale.

11226. Where?—In Frobost. He paid six guineas in Frobost.

11227. Was your father pretty well off in your younger days?—He was in a pretty good position.

11228. Had your father a large family?—Three sons and three daughters.

11229. Did they all grow up?—Yes.

11230. Did your father leave the land at all, to earn wages, or was the

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John Walker.

family of six supported out of the croft that they had?—Yes, maintaining the family, and paying more than that.

11231. And always selling?—Always selling, on account of the land.

11232. How old were you before you began to earn something away from the croft?—I was never engaged to labour outside of the country.

11233. But how did you start 'on your own hook,' according to the common expression? How old were you?—I had lands at Frobost before leaving, and had stock there, and paid rent before leaving Frobost.

11234. Where did you get the money to stock it?—I earned it through the country. While at Frobost I kept six or seven cows on my own account. One particular thing which I would like to receive assistance for is to make some improvements upon the parts of the shore where the sea-ware is gathered for the use of our lands. Improvements were formerly made, but these have now fallen through, and we would like assistance outside ourselves to improve this.

11235. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—What kind of improvements do you mean?—To place large stones here and there, so that drift ware would grow upon them.

11236. From whom do you wish assistance to do that?—We need it, from whatever source it comes—whether from the proprietrix or anybody else, but we cannot do it ourselves. There seems to be land near the shore separated by a narrow channel, and I could wish this channel blocked up, so that the sea ware would be caught in it.

DONALD MACDONALD, Crofter, South Boisdale (71)—examined.

Donald Macdonald.

11237. *The Chairman.*—Have you a statement to make to the Commission?—Yes. It is as follows:—'*Statement of the Tenants of South Boisdale.* Before two Frobost's and Kildonan's people were removed we were better off than we are at present, as we were overcrowded by them. We suffered by their coming among us, and they suffered as much by being forced to come, and their holdings given to tacksmen. There are nineteen crofts in South Boisdale, and there are twenty-nine families on the nineteen. Six cottars are on our common ground; two of them pay some rent to the factor, though we are under their damage. Four paupers have houses along with them, and they are very destructive to our crops, besides what they have of our land. The common ground was our best arable land; we took it in ourselves, and improved it. The rest of our land is very stony, excepting bits of machar we have. So it was from the common ground we would get the best of our crop in potatoes, and corn, and grazing, were it not for them aforesaid destroying it. About thirty years ago Boisdale was lotted longways; nine of our crofts was cut across, and put in a lot to Boisdale. We got a gusset of land for what we lost, though not half so good; but five or six years afterwards the ground officer came to us with a paper to sign, to clear ourselves of that gusset; and he said, "Any of you that will refuse to sign " will be removed." We were promised a reduction in rent. We signed for fear of being removed, but no reduction as yet. There is no fishing of any kind going on in our township. We all depend on the land, and in a bad year of this kind on Messrs D. Ferguson & Co.; and were it not for them, the most of us must have starved this year, and his account will show so. If all our debt was paid very few of us would be left a horse and a cow of his own. A few years ago we were forced to make potatoes

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'for the proprietor; for fear of vengeance we submitted. The people of 'four townships made them on our peat ground. That park is out of crop 'this year, and the grazing let to two men unknown to the rest; and we con- 'sider that unfair, as the whole township stands in need of it. Our rent 'was not raised, only we lost the good of our common ground; but we 'consider our rent too high by cash, as this place was rented when kelp was 'in demand; with a promise to reduce it if comes any failure in the kelp. 'Kelp is of no use now, and it is very little work of any kind that is 'going to pay anything. If South Boisdale was tenanted as formerly— 'one tenant on each croft and the common ground clear, as it was twenty- 'eight years ago—with the liberty our forefathers have had on the hill 'pasture, and the rent reduced, or the kelp raised to the price it was 'drawing when the land was rented according to the price of kelp, we 'would be better off than we are. At last Martinmas there was a general 'change to be on the crofters; but Mr Macdonald, the chief factor, gave 'us the situation we have. He said as the township was so small, and the 'people so numerous, and land so scarce, that he would let us be as we 'were, though there is land which our forefathers have had in Uist. But 'within five months afterwards the ground officer marked out a piece of 'our common ground to a cottar. When we saw the promise broken in 'such a short time, we gathered together, and told the cottar to stop work 'on our land for two days, till we would get the case settled at the factor's; 'but he did not heed us. That shows the cottars have more liberty than 'the tenants, but we know why, because they are only troubling the poor 'tenants. We pay very high for poor rates and school dues. We will 'get notice very clever now how much is to pay, but no account of how 'that money is used.'

11238. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—How long have you been in South Boisdale?—I came first from Kildonan to North Boisdale, and then I left that and went to South Boisdale. My father was evicted from Kildonan.

11239. When did you come to the place you are now in?—I have been in South Boisdale for thirty-three or thirty-four years.

11240. What is your rent?—£7, 9s.

11241. Has it been changed since you came first?—It has not been changed on me.

11242. Have you the same ground that you had?—Yes.

11243. What stock do you keep?—I wish to explain that my son is with me on the croft. I have two cows and a horse, and a two-year-old heifer, and my son has also a cow and a horse.

11244. How many is that altogether?—We have four cows between us, and two horses.

11245. Have you any sheep?—I have four sheep myself, and my son has none.

11246. What is the condition of the land compared with what it was thirty years ago?—By continuous cropping the land is getting so very thin and poor, and the ground being rocky, the soil is being gradually washed away from those rocks into the Atlantic. Our grazing is very much circumscribed now, owing to the settling of so many squatters upon these lands.

11247. Do these cottars pay rent to the proprietor?—I am told they pay £1 or 30s. to the proprietor.

11248. Do they keep any cattle?—They don't keep any cattle beasts unless they have a few sheep, but these are equally troublesome to us.

11249. Where do these sheep pasture?—Through our township.

11250. What was the extent of the gusset of land taken from you about twenty-five years ago?—Two crofts.

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11251. Was it two crofts that were cut away out of the land?—Only a small piece—about an acre each.

11252. Was that done without asking the people's leave?—Their consent was not asked.

11253. Was there a paper sent round for them to sign, agreeing to it?—No, I know nothing about it.

11254. But it is mentioned in this paper—'Afterwards the ground 'officer came to us with a paper to sign to clear ourselves of that gusset, 'and he said, "Any of you that will refuse to sign will be removed."' Is that not correct?—I have heard nothing about a paper.

11255. Who wrote this paper which you have presented?—Donald M'Phie. He is here to-day.

11256. After this paper was made out, was it explained to you what had been put in it?—I know it was the ground officer that pointed out that piece of land for this new settler. I know nothing about the paper.

11257. Who are Messrs D. Ferguson & Co. that have kept them from starving this year?—A merchant in South Loch Boisdale—the one who kept alive all the people in the country this year.

11258. What does he charge you for the meal?—The last boll of meal I took from there cost me 32s.

11259. Is that the old boll?—Yes, half of a big bag.

11260. Is it flour or oatmeal?—Flour.

11261. Was it good?—We could get better quality.

11262. Do you know the weight of a boll?—No, I don't know.

11263. Why do you take flour instead of oatmeal, which you were accustomed to before?—There is a portion of the people so poor that they must buy the cheapest food

11264. What is the difference in price between flour and oatmeal?—I believe only 2s. of difference between the one and the other.

11265. In what shape do you eat that flour?—Baking it with soda.

11266. Do you eat porridge at all?—Only when we have oatmeal. We take barley meal porridge also when we have it.

11267. What food do the children generally get?—The children get baked flour and tea.

11268. Why do you give tea to the children?—Because we have no milk or anything else to give them but tea; and it is with hen eggs that we are purchasing the tea, and sometimes the tea is black, without sugar or cream.

11269. You sell your eggs, I suppose, to Ferguson & Co.; what do you generally get for them a dozen?—Sixpence a dozen.

11270. What do you pay for the tea?—Three shillings a pound.

11271. When you want tea and have eggs, I suppose you just bring the eggs and get the tea and other things in exchange?—Yes; and often we are obliged to go for tea when we have no eggs to bring with us.

11272. Do you keep pass books with the merchant?—Yes.

11273. So that you always know exactly what you are owing?—Yes.

11274. They say—'A few years ago we were forced to make potatoes 'for the proprietor,' what does that mean?—I was myself engaged on that land, and carrying sea-ware on my back to it.

11275. What land is that?—In South Boisdale.

11276. Is it land in the possession of the proprietrix?—Land belonging to our own township.

11277. But were the potatoes made for Lady Cathcart?—Yes.

11278. Was it for herself to eat, or what?—It was on her behalf, so far as I know.

11279. Did she furnish the seed?—Yes.

11280. Did she pay for the labour?—Yes.

11281. What pay did you get?—We were paid for our work. I don't remember exactly to the penny what I got, but I was paid.

11282. How much land was occupied by these potatoes?—I believe it would be about eight acres.

11283. How many years did this continue?—Three years.

11284. Was there a crop taken in that way last year?—There was no crop last year.

11285. Why?—It was white crop the year before, and left out.

11286. What is to be done with it this year?—The grazing of it is given for money value to some people.

11287. But, according to the statement of the paper, the ground is part of the ground for which you are paying yourselves. Is that so?—Yes, it is part of the lands of our township.

11288. Then if it is let to any of you for grazing, and you pay for it, you are paying twice over?—Yes.

Rev. ALEXANDER MACKINTOSH (29)—examined.

(*See Appendix A, XXVIII.*)

11289. *The Chairman.*—You are Roman Catholic priest in the parish of South Uist, or does your cure extend further?—My cure extends to the Boisdale district and South Uist.

11290. How long have you held this cure?—Two years and nine months.

11291. Had you a previous cure in this part of Scotland?—In Wigtownshire and Ayrshire.

11292. Are you a native of the Western Islands?—I am a native of Lochaber.

11293. Let me ask you about the number of your people. What proportion of the population do the Roman Catholics form in the parish of South Uist?—I cannot speak for the whole parish, but I believe my congregation numbers 2000 and three or four souls.

11294. Of the various communions of Protestants, how many may there be?—According to the last census, a little over 400.

11295. Are the Roman Catholic population an ancient hereditary population, or are any of them of recent conversion?—There are a few of recent conversion, but the main bulk of the population are old hereditary Roman Catholics.

11296. They have never had any other religion?—Never.

11297. I ask that because we heard a story in Barra that the people there had been converted eighty or one hundred years ago to the Roman Catholic faith?—I don't think that is true.

11298. Did you ever hear that story in the country?—Never.

11299. However, to your knowledge, it is the old hereditary religion of the people here?—There are a few converts—a very few.

11300. Have you any statement to make with reference to the administration of the Education Act?—Well, I would prefer to be asked questions. I am not prepared with a statement about that.

11301. In the district to which you belong, how many public elementary schools are there?—There are three public schools in the district which I represent.

11302. In this district of South Uist there are three elementary schools under the direction of the same school board?—Yes.

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11303. How is the board composed?—The parish minister is chairman, and there are two priests, the factor, three farmers, and the doctor.

11304. How many altogether?—Seven.

11305. How many Roman Catholics?—Two.

11306. And in reference to these three schools, of what persuasion are the teachers in them?—All Protestants.

11307. Has there been any new election of teachers since you came here?—The island of Eriskay, since I came, is the only one where there has been a new election.

11308. Was there any effort made on the part of the people to obtain the selection or nomination of a Catholic teacher?—I believe the wish of the people was always pretty well understood; it was always pretty clear.

11309. But it was not stated in any petition or memorial?—I am not aware that since I came to the country there has been any memorial, and I don't know what happened before.

11310. When the nomination of this teacher took place, was there any discussion in the school board itself on the subject?—I am not a member of the school board, and I don't know if there was any other applicant at the time.

11311. You don't know whether any distinct effort was made on the part of the two Roman Catholic priests to obtain the nomination of a Roman Catholic?—I think when that election was made it was pretty plain there was not much use. There had been efforts made for another school, without any result, in the north part of the island.

11312. The same school board?—Yes.

11313. What was the nature of the effort made with reference to that school?—I believe it was strongly represented by the two Roman Catholic members of the board that it was fit and proper and reasonable that in a place like this, in which the majority of the people were Roman Catholics, the feelings of the people should be consulted in the choice of a teacher.

11314. But the Roman Catholic community have it in their power to have their wishes satisfied by electing their representatives on the school board?—Yes, but in the question of election, in a country like this, the wishes of the people are not very free.

11315. Has there been no systematic effort made up to the present time to get a majority of the school board elected by the people in conformity with their own wishes?—I don't know that the people themselves have made any such move, but I have repeatedly heard the rate-payers complain at this end of the country that they were not properly represented on the school board, and that their wishes were not sufficiently consulted.

11316. When does the next election take place?—I think it is in two years.

11317. Have you in contemplation to endeavour to get the people freely represented on that occasion?—It was in contemplation at the last election to do such a thing, but in consequence of some correspondence between our bishop and Lady Cathcart's representative the effort was not pursued, on account of a letter which implied a threat, and we, as representing the people, did not wish that the people should be in any way punished for our efforts.

11318. Do Roman Catholic children suffer any positive disadvantage by being under the tuition of competent Protestants?—Holding the views I do about education, I do not believe in education without religion.

11319. Then, in case the Roman Catholics had a majority on the board, and the means of seeing their wishes carried out, they would not only desire, probably, in case of vacancies, the election of a Roman Catholic

teacher, but they would desire to have Roman Catholic religious tuition in the schools?—Yes, without interfering with the work of the school.

11320. And applying the conscience clause of course, in reference to Protestants?—Yes.

11321. Do you think there would be a very great reluctance on the part of the children of Protestant parents to attend the secular teaching of a Roman Catholic master?—I don't think there would be in this district. I am not aware.

11322. Then, I understand there is no Roman Catholic teacher in this district in any of the public elementary schools?—There may be some monitors, but there is no certificated teacher.

11323. No head teacher?—No.

11324. Neither male nor female?—Neither male nor female.

11325. Do you know any case of a school in this part of Scotland where the majority of the people being Roman Catholic, there is distinct Roman Catholic teaching going on in the school?—Yes, I know of one case in the Lochaber district, in the parish of Kilmonivaig, in which there is a Roman Catholic teacher who teaches catechism at the hours allowed in the time table.

11326. In the schools here chiefly attended by Roman Catholic children, is there any religious teaching going on at all?—I am not aware there is.

11327. There is no Protestant religious teaching?—I have never heard that there is.

11328. How is the Roman Catholic religious teaching carried out? How are the children instructed in their religion?—We have to do it for ourselves.

11329. Do you do it at all in connection with the secular schools, or is it in the form of a Sunday school?—We do it ourselves, never in connection with the schools.

11330. *Professor Mackinnon.*—What is the name of your district?—Boisdale.

11331. In the north district is the proportion of Protestants and Catholics the same?—I believe that in proportion to the population the number of Protestants is greater than in this southern district.

11332. You were asked to appear as a delegate by the people of Dalebroge?—Yes.

11333. Have you anything to state?—There were three delegates appointed by the people of Dalebroge. I think I can briefly state the grievances of the Dalebroge people. I cannot go into dates, but I understand the general condition of the people, and the things they have to speak about just now. The people of Dalebroge principally complain that the land which was formerly occupied by twenty-four crofters is now occupied by something more than double the number. They had common land extending from Dalebroge to within one mile of this town here. This common land was taken from them. The people were sent out from Frobost and were put on this common land, and pieces of land have also been taken from the people and crofts taken—a croft for the schoolmaster, a croft for the policeman, a croft attached to the Free Church manse, and crofts occupied by the people called cottars; and they complain there has never been a reduction of rent for this land which was taken from them. Further, that land was taken from them to make into parks of potatoes, and that for this land which was taken from them for this and other purposes there was never any reduction of rent made. The rent remains the same, and they practically have no common land to-day.

11334. Would they be satisfied if they got a small reduction of rent proportionate to the land they lost?—With the land they have now they

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could not make a living. There are too many people on the land, and the land is not what it was, with over cultivation; it does not yield the crop it used to yield, and they have not enough land to leave part of it out for a year or two to enable it to gain strength.

11335. We had one man who said that he left part of the land out for two or three years in grass?—I suppose that man meant what he was saying, but I don't think you will get another case of that kind in the country.

11336. Do they look to legislation to remedy their grievances?—They certainly look to legislation now to remedy their grievances.

11337. What form of legislation do they look to?—The law. In this part of the country it was the factor.

11338. I mean, of course, imperial legislation, not an appeal to the proprietor. Beyond appealing to the proprietor, what else do they look for?—They look also for a settling of land at a fair rent and leases. They are looking out also for compensation for improvements which they may make, and encouragement to make these improvements, and no fear of their being sent out of those lands as long as they can pay their rents.

11339. When you speak of leases, what length of leases do you refer to?—I have seen people somewhat above the class of crofters in this country with nineteen years' leases.

11340. Would that satisfy the people of this country—nineteen years' leases?—I am not aware that it would altogether satisfy them. I believe there is a more radical change than that required before they would be satisfied.

11341. With regard to fair rents, do you think they would be prepared to pay the rent the tacksmen pay for their lands?—If they had the land in proportion to some of the tacks, they might consider themselves fortunate.

11342. You think the tacksmen's lands are rented more cheaply than the crofter's land?—Some of them.

11343. Are the tacksmen's lands let by competition here when there is a vacancy in a farm?—The last farm that was vacant there was competition, but I heard it said—I don't know whether it was true—that the person who got the farm had been settled upon before.

11344. And that the highest rent was not accepted?—That it had been known before the farm was let who was to get it.

11345. And did the person who got it pay the highest rent that was offered?—That, of course, we do not know.

11346. What is your proposal to remedy the state of matters with respect to the schools?—I think the school board might very reasonably be called upon to resign, as not representing the feelings of the rate-payers.

11347. You don't require a change in the law, but a change in its administration?—We are quite content with the law.

11348. Is not a new school board elected every three years?—Yes.

11349. Don't you think matters could hang on till next election, and remedy them then?—I think the longer they hang on the worse things are getting, and it will not be so easy to do things then.

11350. We have had ten years of this administration since the passing of the Act; would it not be rather a serious step, seeing that the administration of it in this parish has been uniform since that time, to call upon the school board in the middle of its term to resign, when you have the remedy in your own hands in one or one and a half years hence?—Hitherto we have not had the remedy in our own hands, but I believe that at next election we may have.

11351. Do you expect the board would resign voluntarily, if they were

called upon by the people of the parish?—I have no great reason to expect anything from the board, so far as the feelings of the rate-payers are concerned.

11352. Of course, so long as they administer the Act, can you expect any other external agency to call upon them to resign? I am not aware any other person has any right to call upon them to resign. I think if they had the wishes and feelings of the rate-payers at heart, they would see they are not acting in conformity with the wishes of the rate-payers, and they should as men of honour resign.

11353. Supposing you got the school board to give effect to the wishes of the people, I think you stated there was no religious education in the board schools at all, Protestant or Catholic?—I am not aware there is any religious education in the schools at all just now. I am not aware that in any board schools on the mainland, where a majority of the people are Catholics, there is religious education.

11354. Catholic?—Yes.

11355. But I mean, with respect to the schools of this parish, they are all taught by Protestants, unless there may be a monitor or so?—Yes.

11356. But with respect to religious education in these, there is no religious education so far as you are aware?—Not so far as I am aware.

11357. But your wish is that there should be religious education—Catholic education?—Yes, decidedly.

11358. And the Protestant children would be protected under the conscience clause?—Certainly.

11359. And be educated in the same way as Catholic children are where Protestant children are in the majority?—Yes, and even in the minority.

11360. With respect to secular education, I suppose you find it is conducted satisfactorily to your wishes?—Yes; I believe the inspectors are satisfied.

11361. With respect to school books, and all that?—Well, there are a great number of children who are too poor to get school books for themselves.

11362. But the class of books they are being provided with, would they be the class provided if you had control of the schools?—I believe it would be about the same class of books. In our schools there are always books such as are supplied for use in public schools.

11363. In the Catholic schools throughout the country the secular books are much the same as the secular books in board schools?—I believe so,—Nelson's books, and Collins's, and other books.

11364. Would there be any difficulty in getting a supply of good Catholic teachers?—I think just now the supply is considerably in excess of the demand.

11365. Suitable for the district?—All the teachers in this country do not speak Gaelic, and we could get a few who can speak Gaelic, and plenty who cannot.

11366. Do you think it an advantage that the teachers in this district should be able to speak Gaelic?—I think, on the whole, it is an advantage; but I know there are plenty cases where the teaching is conducted by teachers who do not know Gaelic.

11367. But, other things being equal, you consider it is an advantage?—Yes.

11368. Do you think Gaelic-speaking teachers are to be got?—Yes, some.

11369. Do you think they could hold their own in the market with respect to other qualifications and knowledge?—I am not aware they are in any way behind, so far as attainments are concerned.

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11370. Where are they trained?—Some at Hammersmith, some come from Ireland, and some at the Glasgow Free Normal School.

11371. What are the radical measures you spoke of in reference to the land and condition of the people?—The first, I believe, is more land. The people cannot now make a living as they used to do without land—grazing for sheep and for cattle. The people, I believe, can never be right until they have that. Then, further, I think this country will never be improved until the half crofts are done away with as much as possible.

11372. If you gave more land to some of the crofters, you would take crofters and put them upon that additional land, and make whole crofts for those who remained?—I believe, if the crofts were as they were formerly before the population was so crowded, the people would be able to make a living, having the common land they used to have.

11373. If the subdivision of the crofts had not gone on as it has done?—I believe there is another cure for the country too. In the different townships, from the number of people who would be able and willing to do some work at fishing, with a little land, as much as would keep two cows perhaps, and give them potato ground. On the east side of Uist there is sufficient land to suit those people, and sufficient fishing ground to enable them to make a living.

11374. And you would spread those that would give their attention exclusively to land, on the west shore?—The land on the east shore would not suit.

11375. Looking to the population of South Uist just now, and the amount of land suitable for crofts, do you think that there is a sufficient amount of land for the present population?—I believe there is sufficient for more than the present population without removing them very far.

11376. Of course, you would like to have some large farms still in the country?—Well, if it could be; but I don't believe in the good of the few at the expense of the many.

11377. But do you not think that a few farms of different sizes—some of them large, in this country, so far removed from other influences, would be an advantage in many respects to the community at large?—I believe it would, if large farms could exist in this country without in any way interfering with the benefit of the more numerous population. I believe there should be large crofts.

11378. Your objection to the farms in this country is that they are too many and too large?—Yes, and that the small holdings have been made smaller in order to increase the large farms.

11379. The complaint is not so much of the high rent as of the small holdings and bad ground?—Well, it does not come altogether to a question of rent. They do not complain that the rents were raised. That is not the complaint in this country. I don't suppose there have been cases in which rent was raised, in this township of North Loch Boisdale for instance, but the complaint about the amount of rent paid in this country rises through the way in which they were deprived of their common land.

11380. Without any abatement of rent at the same time?—Without any abatement of rent.

11381. One or two of the delegates spoke to-day complaining that the rent was too high in this country, that the rent was fixed when the crofts were valued, not so much for the value of the ground as for their proximity for kelp-manufacturing purposes?—Yes, at the time kelp was in demand, fetching a fair price, the people were rented according to the price of kelp; and Colonel Gordon promised the people to reduce the rent one-third when the kelp fell, and that promise was never redeemed. There were people who, at the time, engaged to pay in money and got crofts cheaper because they did so.

11382. Supposing the crofts were made larger in the way you suggest, what measures would you take to prevent their being made smaller again?—I don't think the ruling powers should in any way approve of subdividing crofts.

11383. But they have been subdivided?—Yes.

11384. What measures would you take to prevent a further subdivision, supposing they were now enlarged?—I would give a man the land conditionally, that it should not be sublet to his son or any other person.

11385. How would you provide for the overplus of people in such a case?—That is a very difficult question. If the people had sufficient land, and able to make a livelihood with it, I believe a great many of them would go away to other countries, and a great many of them when they saw they could do work and keep themselves better in other countries, would perhaps stay there, but what to do with the surplus population as a body I don't see.

11386. You think it is not a question just now?—Not yet. When that comes there will be means to meet it.

11387. Are people in the habit of going south to work just now?—A good many go in the summer and autumn.

11388. Do they invariably come back in winter?—Not all; the most of them do.

11389. *Mr Cameron.*—What is the nature of the arrangement with regard to the potato ground you speak of?—The arrangement was that there was some of the common land marked off—land which had been reclaimed by the people from mosses, and which they had as a common land, which they ploughed, and which was farmed as common land, and the products divided amongst them each year. This land was taken from them, and potatoes were planted in it by the proprietrix, which potatoes they were made to labour at, and so much was that the case that threats were made use of if they were unwilling.

11390. When it was reclaimed, at whose expense was it reclaimed?—By the working labour of the people of the township.

11391. They were not paid for it?—Not for the first reclamation.

11392. What do you call the second reclamation?—The planting of the potatoes.

11393. They were paid for that?—Yes.

11394. Did they get the seed?—Lady Cathcart supplied the seed, and the people worked it.

11395. And they were paid wages?—I never heard what they got, but they complained of it.

11296. But they were paid wages?—Yes.

11397. You don't know what these were?—No. But at that time any wages would be poor enough for them, because they lost their own work at the time it was most important for themselves—the time for sowing and planting potatoes and everything else, and they were obliged to go there and work.

11398. Do you know with what object the people were supplied with potato seed and paid for their labour?—I have heard it said that it was to teach them agriculture.

11399. Was there no demand on the part of the people for labour?—Was there no scarcity of work at the time which induced the proprietrix to do so?—There may possibly have been, but I don't know.

11400. Do the people here pay their rents pretty regularly?—I cannot say as to that.

11401. You don't know whether there are many arrears?—There are some arrears certainly.

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11402. Have you ever heard of any cases of eviction for non-payment of rent or of arrears?—Yes; I remember a tenant last year in Kilphedar who had fallen through, and was not able to pay for his land, and he was sent out to Kilphedar common, and the half croft given to another.

11403. Was he sent out with his own consent?—If he gave his consent then, he has often and often complained now.

11404. Did he see his way to continue on the croft at that rent?—I don't know. I don't think he was a man who could have continued.

11405. Do you believe, as a rule, there are many people in arrears of rent who remain on the property and are not evicted?—I believe there are a great many in arrears of rent.

11406. Don't you think that if they had this security of tenure you talk of, it might induce a more commercial spirit between landlord and tenant, and that more people might be evicted the moment they fell into arrears at all?—I cannot say as to that; I don't think, if they had fixity of tenure, with fair rent and sufficient land to make a living off, there would be many in arrears.

11407. But that would imply, as a necessary element, what you call a sufficiency of land?—Certainly.

11408. So if they did not get what they considered a sufficiency of land, they might possibly be in a worse position with fixity of tenure than they are now?—They might be as bad, but I don't think they would be worse.

11409. But with reference to eviction?—Of eviction I cannot speak.

11410. My point is whether, if you adopted a purely commercial basis, instead of the kindly feeling which exists or ought to exist between landlord and tenant, when the tenant fell into arrears he would not be more likely to be evicted than under the present system?—I believe there is no property in Scotland where there are more arrears than on this.

11411. And yet they are not evicted as a rule?—I don't hear they are evicted. When a man falls helplessly into arrears he has to go.

11412. I suppose that is the case on most properties?—I suppose it is.

11413. One of the witnesses spoke of summering his cattle on the ground of the neighbouring tacksman, for which he paid by means of labour, and he admitted the labour given was not only his own labour but that of the women of his family, and he gave that labour in lieu of the pasture of three cows, two stirks, and five or six sheep. Is that system one that is approved of by the people, or the reverse?—I don't think they are very fond of doing any labour for grazing; but as things are, they are obliged to make the most of it.

11414. They would prefer having hill grazing of their own?—Certainly.

11415. Is it a custom which prevails largely, or is this man an exception?—In this part of Loch Boisdale it prevails largely on account of the smallness of the land the people hold, and it prevails also in Dalebroge. I am not sure about Kilphedar.

11416. If they had the land in their own hand, and the rent amounted to the same sum they would get for their labour, would not this system be better, in so far as it furnished the crofter with labour instead of forcing him to go south, which might be more disagreeable to him?—Practically it comes to the same. If he has to work for the grazing of his cattle, he would think as much of it as if he had to pay for it.

11417. But is it agreeable for the crofter to go away and be long away from his family in the south?—It depends on the remuneration.

11418. He would rather take less remuneration in the north than go?—I believe if he got remuneration that would enable him to make a living, he would rather stay than go.

11419. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You stated there are about 2000

Roman Catholics in the population in your district. How many children are there that should be going to school?—Some hundreds.

11420. Have you any land?—Half a croft.

11421. Is that attached to your office?—Not necessarily. It is practically since the church was put there.

11422. Do you know some work has been given by the proprietrix to the people within the last year or two?—Yes.

11423. And they have earned money?—Yes.

11424. Are you aware of your own knowledge or by report, that there are certain people who had money at their credit for work?—Yes, I am aware. I have been told it repeatedly by some of the people.

11425. Are you also aware that people who had money at their credit have been refused payment of it?—People have reported so to me.

11426. At the same time, there is great poverty among the people generally?—Yes. I have heard people saying they had money to their credit at the office, and had gone wanting to buy a bag of meal, and the local factor told them he could not give them the money.

11427. What was his name?—Mr Walker.

11428. And they had to fall back upon the shop?—Yes.

11429. Referring for a moment to the schools, you stated that the people, at the time the last school board was elected, wished to put forward candidates, but in consequence of threats, the bishop thought it advisable that no contest should take place?—He did not say he did not think it advisable, and he never reverted to anything he said before. He had spoken to us about the advisability of having an election, and after this letter there was no further word said about it.

11430. Do you see any reason whatever why there should not be a representation of the crofter element upon the school board?—I think it would be a great matter if there was a represention of the crofters.

11431. It would seem at present that there are five members who may be said to represent 400 people, and two members representing 2000?—Well, from a religious point of view, that is so.

11432. With regard to the people getting more land, are you aware or do you believe there are several people in a position to take those increased holdings and stock them?—I believe there are several people who have sufficient money to stock holdings, but that money has not been made by land.

11433. But still they could do it?—Yes.

11434. Do you also think there may be others who might get assistance from friends for so desirable an object?—I believe there are many who might get assistance.

11435. Are the people here not generally strong and active—those who go to the south, for instance,—and good workers when they get there?—I believe they are good workers at labouring work.

11436. I believe you have in this district the tallest man in Her Majesty's dominions. Do you know his height?—I saw him measured in Mingalay. I believe he is 6 feet 8 inches in his stocking soles.

11437. Do you think the people are generally of a peaceful and well behaved character?—Yes, they are.

11438. And there is very little crime?—I don't think there is much crime of any serious charactor beyond a slight breach of the peace.

11439. And concurrent with that, a deal of poverty?—Yes, a deal of poverty.

11440. Do you agree in the views you have heard expressed by the people that it would be a very beneficial solution of the question if the people got their holdings increased?—Well, I cannot take upon myself to

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say what would be the best solution, but without some such solution, I believe it is not possible for them to live.

11441. But do you concur with those who make that recommendation? Do you concur in the propriety of it?—I do.

11442. You mentioned one case in which, in the parish of Kilmonivaig, the bulk of the population being Roman Catholics, the whole thing has been left in their hands?—Yes, practically the Roman Catholics are masters of the school.

11443. You have never heard of this proving disadvantageous to the Protestants who are there?—I never heard any complaint.

11444. What is the name of that school?—Bunroy Public School.

11445. *The Chairman.*—You mentioned that you thought it would be an equitable thing on the part of the members of the existing school board, inasmuch as they don't represent the wishes of the constituency, that they should retire. Now, supposing they did so, I presume they would be succeeded by Roman Catholic delegates?—A fair representation.

11446. Which would be a majority?—Yes.

11447. You have also stated that one of your objects is the introduction of religious teaching into the schools?—Not necessarily that either, but there is another important thing attached to that. If we had, in this country, teachers who were qualified—certificated teachers of the Roman Catholic religion—they would be able to teach our children singing and other things which would be of use for our churches.

11448. I quite understand that, but you also said you thought it would be a desirable thing that there should be religious teaching in connection with the secular education?—Certainly.

11449. Well, supposing the school board to be reformed and composed of Roman Catholic members, you could not introduce religious teaching at present without a change of teachers. Do you think a Roman Catholic school board would be inclined to discharge Protestant teachers for the purpose of introducing religious teaching?—I don't believe they would inflict any hardship upon the present teachers.

11450. In fact, they would wait until, in the course of events, a vacancy took place?—Yes.

11451. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—That is your own conviction?—That is my own impression.

11452. That is what would you do if you were a member?—I would not inflict a hardship upon other teachers who had come from other schools.

11453. *The Chairman.*—Do you know whether, in connection with the recent distress, there has been any considerable distribution of seed potatoes and corn seed among the people by the proprietors?—There has been a distribution of seed potatoes, and of corn too, but I really cannot say whether the people are to pay or not.

11454. You don't know whether it is gratuitous or not?—I don't think they know themselves.

11455. Has there been labour appointed for them to do for the purpose of giving them wages and support?—The only labour that has been going on since the distress became crying, was blasting for the foundation of the hotel and working at the pier.

11456. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—In Barra we were informed that the proprietrix had begun to do something in the way people are pointing to here, by letting out portions of Ollosdale at rents varying from £15 to £20. Has anything of the kind been done here?—There was a talk for the last few years of redivision of the lands here, in order to give every one a lot. This was generally understood to be the wish of the proprietrix for the benefit of the people; but from what I know of the people, they think this

proposed redistribution would not improve them,—that there was not enough of land to distribute among the number of people who would require land.

11457. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Have you ever occasion to buy meal here?—Sometimes.

11458. Can you tell what the price of meal is?—I cannot tell, but I don't think it is what was stated. I think it is pretty reasonable.

11459. *The Chairman.*—You think it may be some old-fashioned measure that was referred to?—The people generally don't understand the different weights now in use, and probably the witness had misunderstood.

11460. Have you any other statement to make?—I was asked by the people of South Boisdale to state that the delegate who came forward here had misunderstood or misrepresented their case about a certain thing which was in that paper. Reference was made to a piece of land, and the witness misunderstood it. He referred to a piece of land that had been formerly taken frem the people, and they have another delegate able and willing to explain the statement in the paper. I may, however, state that the people of the township I was in, or the different townships—because I was asked to represent them all as a delegate if I could—complained they are not allowed to keep as many dogs as they require. They allow the dogs are a nuisance when too numerous, but they say they are not allowed to keep as many dogs as will preserve their crofts. The land is so divided into plots here and there, that it is impossible to preserve it without a dog, and they have a complaint ahout the poor rates and school rates, and they particularly urge that the rate-payers shonld get a proper understanding of how the schools are paying, and how the money is spent.

11461. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Was there not alleged to be some defalcatious or deficiency on the part of the officer connected with some of these?—There are rumours in the country to that effect, but I cannot say.

11462. Are the accounts of the parochial board not printed?—I have never seen anybody who has seen a copy. They may be, but the rate-payers in this part have not seen them.

11463. *The Chairman.*—In fact, you want a published return of the revenue and expenditure?—Yes.

11464. For the parochial board and the school board?—Yes.

11465. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Is there any complaint about roads?—Well, the roads in this country are certainly inferior to what they are elsewhere, hut I am not aware there is anything further to be said about them.

11466. *The Chairman.*—Are the meetings of the parochial board held in public?—I don't know that any one from this district attends them, and the meeting is a long way—twelve miles away, in the vestry of the parish church.

11467. Where is the school board meeting held?—It is also held in the vestry of the parish church. I have nothing further to say, except that the South Boisdale delegate may have an opportunity of explaining what is stated in the paper.

Rev. RODERICK MACDONALD, Minister of the Parish of South Uist (60)—examined.

11468. *The Chairman.*—How long have you been incnmbent here?—I was inducted into this parish in the year 1854.

11469. Do you belong to this part of the country by birth and extraction?—I belong to the neighbouring island of North Uist. I was brought up there.

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11470. You have been acquainted with the condition and habits of the people from your earliest years?—Yes.

11471. Will you have the kindness to make a general statement as to what you think the condition of the people now is compared with what you remember in your early life?—I have jotted down a few notes on the subject. Having observed in one of the Inverness newspapers that it is the desire of the Royal Commission on Highland Crofters to get from the northern clergy a statement of their opinion regarding the matters which form the subject of the Commission's present investigation, it occurred to me that I should jot down a few remarks giving my views, whatever they may be worth, on this important but difficult question. It is, I may state, with considerable hesitation, arising from very great distrust in my own competency, that I venture to undertake this task. This reluctance does not, however, result from want of familiarity with the subject, for I had ample opportunities for the last forty years of being acquainted with the state of the crofter population of the Long Island district of the county of Inverness. Before entering on the subject proper of this paper, let me remark, that I have come long ago to the deliberate conclusion, and that it is now a settled conviction with me, that the Highland crofter in days gone by, as a rule, was not in that condition of ease and comfort in which sentimental enthusiasts often portray him. True, I have heard old men, as far back as forty-five years ago, talk of the days of their youth fifty years or more previously than these, and with the propensity of all old men, to say that the former days were better, and depicting those bygone days in strains which almost rivalled the poetic description of the golden age of the world; yet in the course of the narrative gleams of stern historic truth showed the true state of matters; the expressive terms, a hard year, a hard summer, when men lived on fish, whelk, shell-fish, roots of the ground, lean mutton, to the almost compete exclusion of bread, told truly how much the imagination of those men had to do with the rose-coloured descriptions of the years of their youth. But the present state of matters is the difficulty which requires to be dealt with. Let us first consider the character of the Highland crofter. From the amount of sympathy expressed for the crofter, and the tones of pity in which he is spoken of, a stranger to the facts would be apt to believe that he is a poor, wretched, babyish weakling, a savage of a low type requiring to be treated like the natives of Tasmania or Australia, for fear they perish from inaction and want of vitality off the face of the earth—people who ought to be cherished and nursed like children during the period of their nonage. A hundred fields of battle cry aloud with indignation in condemnation of such absurd ideas. Their noble qualities as soldiers, their endurance under want and hardship, their unsurpassed bravery, their noble deeds, deeds of heroism, their self-devotion to duty, need not be dwelt upon here; are they not written in the chronicles of every campaign where Britons have most distinguished themselves? Moreover, everybody who knows them will admit that they are a sharp-witted, keen, shrewd, intelligent race. Inspectors of schools tell us that Highland school boys, under the disadvantage of having to cultivate their intelligence through the medium of a foreign language, compare favourably with boys in other parts of the country who are not so handicapped; and let me add, and I trust with pardonable pride, that hitherto Highlanders have been a decent, honest, well-behaved, contented and loyal people. But, admitting all this, what about their industrial habits? It is allowed that, in strength and activity, the Highlanders are inferior to few, if any, of the other races of the nation, and that they are capable in certain circumstances of powerful and strenuous exertion. But the virtue of perseverance in their undertaking is denied them; and while

it is granted that they can put on a violent spurt, and can work at a pinch with any, yet it is said that they are not given to constant continuous work, and that by the very constitution of their nature, they are not fitted for the strain of long-enduring and sustained labour. That this allegation has any foundation in fact, I could never bring myself to believe, and for any grain of apparent truth there may be in it their circumstances may account. During the season of spring and harvest, no people work harder or more continuous; they are at it late and early; but in the inclement season of a long winter, with the short, dark days, with almost constant storms and blinding rain, one can easily understand how little can be done during that time in such adverse circumstances. But place them under more favourable conditions, and with more adequate inducements, and I am very much mistaken if they will fail to work steadily, industriously, and continuously all the year round. Then what is the quality of the land on which they have to work? I believe it is a common opinion, founded on the dear-bought experience of farmers, that agricultural farms have not been paying for the last few years even on the best of lands, and I have no doubt it will be conceded that on the majority of West Highland estates, with few if any exceptions, crop-making does not pay. The land is poor, hungry, and ungratefnl, and even if well cultivated, which often it is not, it would give but a poor return for the labour bestowed upon it. The system that seems to succeed best is to have some cropping land, with an outrun of grazing attached. This complex system is the only one suited to the Highlands. The grazing land enables a man to keep a few sheep; the crop, besides feeding his family for a certain period, enables him to winter his cattle and keep more of them,—to keep a pair of ponies, which are indispensable, especially to an Uist farmer who attempts to raise a crop. In short, it is difficult to see how a man without a certain amount of grazing land can subsist within the four corners of even a large croft. But how much land should support a family? What should be the size of a croft? There can be no hesitation, I think, in asserting that a small croft of four, five, or even six acres, cannot support a family, independent of any other resources. Nay, I heard it stated, and I partly believe it, that such a croft would not support a family even if it were rent free. There was a time within the recollection of living men, when an ordinary-sized croft would suffice for a family. But that was a time when a population that supported only three or four shops, now supports forty or fifty, and their men and women manufactured their own linen and cloth, when the men, instead of paying 20s. or upwards for boots (there are no shoes used), made their own shoes of their own home-tanned leather, and when there was no kind of tea. I do not wish to speak in a censorious or sarcastic manner of my Highland fellow-countrymen; I do not wish to call them extravagant or luxurious; they are not so. But I want to call attention to the broad palpable fact of the incompatibility between the small crofter's income and his expenditure on things which have before now become necessaries of life. I do not envy the man who would grudge the crofter and his family their tea and sugar, with their bread and butter. That they use more tea than is good for them, and that of an inferior quality, is alleged. I do not know as to this, but it is believable. Moreover, I fancy that there are few, except stringent total abstainers, that would grudge the Highlander living in this moist climate an occasional dram, but they are not drinkers of whisky. Young men may occasionally take what is vulgarly called a 'spree' at weddings, markets, and formerly (but not now) at funerals, and, like all men of Celtic idiosyncrasies, get very much excited, and make a great noise. But as a class Highland crofters, to my certain knowledge, are a sober lot. Under this head, it is obvious to remark, that in

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many cases the present size of crofts is not what they were at one time, or at all events, what they were intended to be. Whether they were, as is alleged, encroached upon by the ruling powers of a property, or whether subdivided by the crofters themselves, the practical result is the same. The great wit Sidney Smith is said to have stated, that there is one precept in the New Testament which the clergy on the north of the Tweed literally obeyed—'Take no thought for your raiment.' The working classes of all countries, and Highlanders in particular, are said to be in the habit of giving implicit obedience to a much older command, 'Be fruitful, and multiply, 'and replenish the earth, and subdue it;' the latter clause, however, not being so strictly complied with. The subject of early and imprudent marriages is an old theme frequently commented on. But, as it was in the days before the flood, men were marrying and given in marriage, so it is likely to continue to the end of time; and no doubt it is for the good of the world and mankind that it should be so; but it is but a common-place remark to say, that when a man enters into that state without a fair prospect of being able to provide for his family—or when, as is said, it results in squatting down as a cottar, or leads to the subdivision of crofts; from that point of view it is an admitted evil. Whether proprietors might and should have a quantity of reserved land, out of which to slice croft after croft for young married couples as they required them, is, I fear, a Utopian idea, and whether such a scheme, if adopted, would eventually succeed in benefiting the country is, I fear, also more than problematical. The condition of the crofter has been always, in a great many instances, a hard one. The history of many an honest hard-working man is as follows. A man marries a wife, enters upon a croft, stocks it to a certain extent, begins to cultivate it single-handed (for a croft cannot bear the burden of hired labour at the present rate of wages), but, like a brave man, he struggles on alone, keeping a stout heart against a steep brae, tries to pay his rent, and keep the wolf from the door, until after a while his family grow up about him, begin to get strong, and very materially to help him. He finds himself now in comparatively easy circumstances, and continues to be so until his family begin to leave him one after the other, until the last one goes, and the old couple are left alone in the feebleness of their old age, they begin to get poor again. So that, if he has not had the ability or prudence to lay up something for a rainy day, the last state of that man is worse than the first. This is not an imaginary case, but one of frequent occurrence. The great question is, where is the remedy for the evil? Whatever may be the extent of the evil complained of by crofters, there is no doubt of its being a crying evil. I forgot who said, 'For every evil 'under the sun, there is a remedy or there is none. If there is a remedy, try 'to find it; if there is none, never mind it.' But this evil of poverty, about which there is such an outcry, cannot be let alone, and cannot be ignored. There appears to be a felt need; and to meet this need, more lands must be given to the crofters, according to their own unanimous verdict; and this no doubt seems a very feasible way of meeting the difficulty, but this cure, like every other cure, requires means and appliances, and the means in this case must be money, and in the great majority of cases money given *ab extra*, for the crofters declare they have none, and in a vast number of cases their declaration is true, so that without this external aid, the giving of more lands would seem a good purpose in the case of those only who are pretty well-to-do already, and those most in need of help are left where they were. The giving of more lands then entails the indispensable concomitant of giving money to stock and work it. How to obtain this money for the use of crofters is a problem, the solution of which has not been hinted at in any suggestion of a practical nature which has come

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within my knowledge. I am of opinion, speaking of the Long Island and especially of the two Uists, with which I am better acquainted, that the most is not made of the land which the crofters already hold. There is no attempt at cropping by rotation, and consequently the land has ceased to yield the returns which under a better system of tillage might be fairly expected. There is scarcely an attempt at improving their crofts by clearing or draining, or in any way whatsoever, the excuse given being the uncertainty of their tennre as tenants from year to year, which excuse should be removed by giving the crofters leases of their holdings. Late sowing is another evil, which is a great loss to crofters, and this is caused by the unfenced state of the crofts. Many of them allege that they would sow earlier, but what would be the use, as long as the horses and cattle of a whole township have free access to roam over the tilled land, trampling and poaching the ground, and even cropping the young braird after it has fairly sprung? Tillage is thns continued till far on in June, the crops consequently have no time to ripen—must often be cut green—is exposed to the storms at the end of harvest; of course the yield of meal in unripe corn is inconsiderable, is scarcely fit for anything better than provender for cattle, and such as it is, is exposed at this stage also, in its unprotected state, to the ravages of cattle badly herded, and hungry horses (of which too many are often kept), which no tethering can effectually secure. The value of those lands would be vastly increased by being properly enclosed. Then their grazing lands are but poorly utilised for the common good. According to the present system, every man is his own shepherd—every man has his own lug-mark; each man his own collie dog, with which he goes to the hill any idle day he has to spare, and for little or no purpose except to disturb, not only his own sheep, but those of his neighbours. The consequence is that one may have forty or fifty sheep, while others have few or none. A club stock—with one lug-mark, one shepherd, one uniform system of management—would secure even-handed iustice to those concerned; the stock of sheep would undoubtedly thrive better, and would be a snre source of income to every man concerned. Lands so managed would no doubt resnlt in increase of means, and lead to improvement of comfort. Already there is a taste for finer clothing, and what is thought to be a more comfortable way of living in general; and along with other improvements, the black thatched cottage (which by the way is not always the comfortless abode a stranger may fancy), would soon give way to a more civilised-looking dwelling. But after all that can be said or done, land being a limited quantity, and the increase of population proceeding with rapid strides, it is evident that a time must come when people will see the necessity of moving of their own accord from a country which must eventually become crowded, to some place where there is more ample room and better scope and better remuneration for energy and persevering industry. And if they should resolve to sever the tie which knits them to their native land, let them not be advised to migrate to the south country, and settle down in large towns, when although many a north country man has thriven and succeeded in life, yet where many a poor Highland family had to deseend to an underground cellar, a sad change to those accustomed to the free air of heaven, and when the surroundings are anything but favourable to the growth of the higher and better nature of their offspring. Let it be emigration then, but even to emigration one feels many objections; it deprives the land of its best inhabitants—we lose the bone and sinew of the conntry; and considering the violent wrench required to enable a Highlander to tear himself from his native rocks, one has not the heart to advise them to leave. Yet there is a conflict between one's feeling and judgment—between the head and

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the heart; and what I state here publicly is, what I have told my Highland fellow-countrymen in private—that however unwilling to part with them, I should rather hear of their comfort and happiness and welfare in a far country, than to see them poor and complaining in their native homes; and whether they are to leave now, or a distant date, depends upon what may be done now to better their condition.

11472. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You have heard a number of statements made to-day. Have you anything in the way of criticism to mention?—I am not sure I could remember every statement so as to criticise it, and what I would have to say in regard to them is contained in that paper.

11473. We have received a number of written statements from other clergymen?—Yes, I saw that; and I thought I would just jot down a few remarks.

11474. *The Chairman.*—As a general statement, would you state whether you think, in your personal experience, the moral and physical condition of the people is improving, or the contrary?—I think they partake in the general progress of the country, and that compared with the former state of the Highland tenantry, they are not as a rule worse off, excepting such years as this when there is destitution, or some particular cause for their not being so well off as they normally are.

11475. But you have heard a very general allegation to-day, and you will probably have seen it in the newspapers, that their condition is becoming worse in reference to the smallness of their holdings and the exhaustion of their soil?—Yes, that is true in many cases. I have no doubt that their holdings are very often too small, and that the land gets exhausted in consequence of their being obliged to turn it over every year.

11476. And looking back upon all you have seen and heard, is it your opinion now, upon reflection, that the policy of removal and consolidation has in past times been carried too far by the proprietors?—Yes; I have not the slightest doubt in giving an affirmative answer to that.

11477. And you would gladly see some change in the opposite direction?—Yes.

11478. Do you think that that could be effected without doing violence to the rights of property and to existing interests?—Well, that is a very difficult thing to say. No doubt many of the crofters require more lands, but those who require more lands are those who are least able to take larger crofts.

11479. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Do you think that if a substantial effort were made to benefit the condition of some here, others would be more inclined to emigrate,—that being satisfied with the good intentions of the Government or the proprietor, they would be more inclined to leave their friends and go?—I think it would be very difficult to bring influence upon them to emigrate.

11480. We have had it often stated before us in Skye, that people did not like to go and leave their relatives, especially the older people, destitute and unprotected. But if they had more confidence in the future of their friends here, do you think they would be more inclined to seek their fortunes?—I think that such is the good feeling between the Highland crofters and their children, that children would have less objection to emigrate, provided they thought they would have a chance of leaving their parents comfortable.

11481 What do you think with reference to the very imperfect house accommodation? Do you think it has any prejudicial effect upon health and morals?—I don't think it has very much. I think they are just as healthy and moral as people who are better housed.

11482. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Have you any farm of your own?—Yes.

11483. Do you find on your farm you can raise good crops?—Yes, excellent crops.

11484. Do you sow earlier than the crofters?—Yes.

11485. I saw a man yesterday at Barra who said if he were to sow his ground with barley, it would be time enough in a fortnight, and that it would not do to sow it earlier, or they would get no straw?—I believe Barra is an earlier part of the country, and I believe if there was one year left lea it would not do to sow it very early; but of course, twenty days after this, I would consider out of the question altogether.

11486. But you sow earlier than the people of the country and you get better crops?—Yes.

11487. Don't they follow your example, when they see you have better crops?—Well, they are very conservative in their way, and not apt to change their mode of tillage.

11488. Then how do you propose to induce them to adopt a better system of cultivation?—I have stated in that paper a few things which would be improvements. It has been often asked of a man who is a good farmer, 'Why don't you sow earlier?' 'I cannot 'sow earlier,' he says, until a certain time; the cattle and horses are not removed.'

11489. They would sow earlier if the ground were fenced?—I believe some would sow earlier, and I believe when the rest saw that good example they would be apt to follow.

11490. And you think the want of grain of which they complain is due to the want of early sowing?—I believe so, to a very great extent.

11491. Are you a member of the parochial board?—Yes.

11492. And of the school board?—Yes.

11493. You have heard complaints that the parochial board do not publish their accounts?—That is so, but we had an auditing of the accounts every year, and if anybody wanted a sight of them we would give them the MS.

11494. Of course, in an island of this sort it is very difficult for people to travel a long way to see a manuscript?—Yes, of course we did not circulate copies.

11495. Might it not be satisfactory to the rate-payers if you printed and circulated a few copies?—Yes, it would be an improvement, and I suppose we shall adopt it.

11496. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You said, in answer to the Chairman, that you did not think the poor dwellings had anything to do with morality or even health. On the ground of morality, I quite agree with you, but in regard to health, in the case of sickness, for instance, do you think they are proper places for a sick person to be in?—No, I don't think them so at all. I think in a case of sickness there ought to be some means of isolating the sick person from the other members of the family, which is not always easily done in the case of many of these huts.

11497. *Mr Cameron.*—What is the amount of the poor-rate?—2s. 6d. between landlord and tenant.

11498. And the school rate?—8d. and 4d. each.

11499. Do you know what the road-rate is?—No.

11500. Has the poor-rate been increasing or diminishing of late years?—No, not very perceptibly; not to any great extent.

11501. Not diminishing or increasing?—It has been much about the same thing for the last few years.

11502. Do you notice much evidence of money being expended on

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the spot by the proprietor?—My understanding is that this property has been of very little use to the present proprietrix, that she was paying nearly the whole rent and laying it out in work, and that the returns from it to Lady Gordon Cathcart had been very trifling indeed.

11503. Do you consider that the money she so spent has been well laid out?—Perhaps I am not a judge of that, but there have been roads and steam boats piers, and hotels such as this and the one in Barra, which are calculated to improve the property.

11504. Has any money been expended in any way directly for the benefit of the crofters?—Well, of course the crofters were employed at all those public works, and of course it was for their benefit that it should be so.

11505. I suppose this property would not have paid any other proprietor who had not other sources of income?—I would pity the proprietor who had to do with this property under its present circumstances, that is to say, if he was a poor proprietor, and I think it is very fortunate for the people that they have a rich proprietor, who, I believe, is very anxious to improve their condition.

11506. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Was this country not prosperous once?—Well, what might be called prosperity, fifty or a hundred years ago.

11507. Going back a hundred or more than a hundred years ago, was it not prosperous then by all accounts?—I believe the people were comfortable and contented.

11508. Did not Clanranald draw a lot of his men from here?—Yes. We were not so celebrated as Skye for that, but we sent a lot of good soldiers.

11509. Are you aware the wealthiest and greatest proprietors in the county of Inverness two hundred years ago were the men of the west,—that Macleod, Macdonald, and Clanranald were the greatest men?—Yes, we considered them so.

11510. Then their greatness must have consisted in rental, or the number of men they could bring into the field?—Yes, especially the number of men.

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11511. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—How long have you lived here?—Upwards of six years.

11512. You came from Mull to this country?—Yes, from Bunessan.

11513. And, as we have seen to-day, you know the language of the people well and can converse freely with them in it?—Yes.

11514. *What do you think of the condition of the people here compared* with Mull, where you lived before?—The crofters of Mull are better off as regards their house accommodation than they are here, but I don't know if they are better off as regards stock.

11515. Are the houses of the people here generally poor in accommodation?—I think so.

11516. Is the custom of having cattle under the same roof with human beings still prevalent?—It is to a large extent.

11517. Do you think that has had any prejudicial effect on the health of the people?—Owing to their being constantly in the fresh air, I don't think it has the injurious effect it would otherwise have, but when fevers occur it always intensifies the illness.

11518. Of course, it makes it very difficult to keep a house clean when you have to go first through the place of the cattle?—Very difficult.

11519. Have you noticed any improvement in their houses in that respect during the short time you have been here?—I cannot say I have noticed much.

11520. You have not noticed any signs of progress?—I believe, on the whole, they are cleaner.

11521. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—And that is growing?—Yes, growing.

11522. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—As to their health generally, what have you to say?—The public health is pretty good, except in winter and spring, spring especially. A good many chest complaints are prevalent in spring, pneumonia and some bronchitic affections, which I attribute to people working continually upon the land with the crooked spade, poorly fed, and in that way reducing the body, and making it very liable to chills.

11523. What are the diseases most prevalent among them?—Pulmonary complaints in winter and spring, affections of the joints and rheumatism, which are very common in the chronic form here. Scrofulous affections are not common here.

11524. It is supposed that at one time consumption was very rare in these islands?—It is not my experience.

11525. Was it not rarer in former times than it is at present?—I believe that was the fault of their not being able to diagnose properly.

11526. They used to be liable also to fevers to a very great extent?—They are considerably liable to fever still in this parish.

11527. What kind of fever?—Typhus fever.

11528. And I suppose the accommodation of their houses, and their proximity to each other, make it very difficult to resist the spread of these diseases?—Very difficult, along with bad drainage.

11529. Do you find that the children are properly clothed generally?—Well, upon the whole they are. You meet with exceptions, but upon the whole, they are fairly well clad. Of course there are cases where clothing is pretty scanty.

11530. You don't think they are so badly clothed that it has any generally injurious effect upon their growth or health?—I don't think so. It is insufficient feeding that has to do with their health, as I find, especially tea-drinking.

11531. A man to-day spoke about giving tea to the children. Is it common?—Quite prevalent.

11532. I suppose you don't consider that good for children?—I think it most injurious.

11533. In the absence of milk, what would you recommend them to drink?—Beer, if they had cheap beer; certainly anything but tea. I think it is doing a great deal of harm to the people, especially to the rising generation.

11534. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—At what age would you begin to give beer to the children?—At a year or two or three years of age. I think if there was cheap beer made it would be much healthier than living upon tea.

11535. You stated that the use of the *cas-chrom* had a prejudicial effect upon the system?—I did not mean there was any specialty connected with the *cas-chrom* more than any other kind of spade. I mean the general labour of spring weakens the bodies of these labouring men, and renders them, on that account, much more liable to receive chills and colds.

11536. Do I understand from you then that some of that spring labour, as a rule, ought to be done by animals?—A good deal ought to be done by

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animals. I have never seen so many lazy beds as I have seen in this country—that particular method of planting potatoes.

11537. Are you aware there are an unusual number of deaths among children?—Yes, a good many before five years of age.

11538. We are also told that children up to the age of twelve to fourteen or fifteen look pallid and gaunt, but then such of them as live grow up to be strong people. Have you observed that?—I have.

11539. I mean that they do not look very healthy up to that age, but when they come to that age, in many cases, they spring up into strong men and women?—That is true.

11540. Can you account for that?—It is very difficult for me at the present moment to give you a reason to account for that.

11541. Is it not really because the weakest all die off?—I don't think so.

11542. You won't say that?—No.

11543. *The Chairman.*—Have you had any experience of the population in manufacturing towns?—I have not. I have had no practice in cities or towns.

11544. Do you think as many children are reared in proportion to the births here as in the Lowlands or in towns?—Yes; I think so.

11545. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—And come to maturity?—And come to maturity. The difference in their looks can be accounted for more on the ground of their food.

11546. *The Chairman.*—Do you think it is owing at all to the smoky atmosphere of the cottages?—I don't think it is owing to that.

11547. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—In the greater part of Skye women are subject to a great deal of laborious work unsuitable to them, of which they complain in many places as being positively one of their grievances. Are the women here also subjected to that laborious kind of work?—Yes, they are subjected to considerable labour.

11548. Carrying creels on their back?—Yes, loading carts, drawing barrows, and carrying sea-ware.

11549. Most of the people have horses here?—Yes, too many horses, I think, in proportion to the rest of their stock.

11550. Do they harrow with the hand?—I have not seen much of that in this country, but they dig with the hand. They prefer to grow their potatoes in lazy beds. They believe the potatoes flourish best in that way.

11551. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Is it not because the land is too wet to work with the plough?—It may be so.

11552. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Do you think any of the women actually suffer in their constitution through the hard labour to which they are subjected?—I have no doubt they do.

11553. I suppose you have known instances of its affecting them very injuriously?—Yes, I have known instances.

11554. *The Chairman.*—Do you think that the labour of the women is in any degree imposed upon them by idleness on the part of the men, or do you think it is entirely in the nature of things?—It is in the nature of things. They are obliged to labour.

11555. *Mr Cameron.*—How do they manage to look after their children when they are working?—They are under the charge of perhaps an older girl or boy, or perhaps the grandmother.

11556. Do the women do much labour up to near the time of their confinement?—I should say so.

11557. Too near?—I have never known any mishap occur on that account among them.

11558. How long do they remain at home after that?—They generally do little house work for fourteen days or so.

11559. For fourteen days they do nothing?—I believe they do, in some cases.

11560. You don't think they work too hard, either just before or after their confinement?—I don't think they do.

11561. Are there many illegitimate births here?—Very few; not more than 2 per cent.

11562. Do you think less than in other parts of the Highlands?—I think so.

11563. To what do you attribute that?—They marry very young here, and the men are very chaste; probably their church has to do with that.

11564. Do you think it belongs more to the religion of the people here to discourage illegitimacy or bad behaviour in that respect?—I believe so.

11565. Are you a Roman Catholic yourself?—No.

11566. What happens in your experience to these men and women who marry early? What do they do when they marry?—They either live in the house in which they marry, or they squat outside somewhere.

11567. Which do they do generally—live in the house with their parents or squat outside?—I suppose they live with the parents.

11568. If they squat outside, do they build houses?—They do.

11569. Do they obtain the consent of the proprietor or factor before squatting?—I am not quite sure of that, but I presume they do.

11570. You are not aware there is any rule on the estate against it?—I am not aware.

11571. Which do you consider the most injurious—the two families living in one house, or one family leaving it and squatting outside?—The latter, I think.

11572. You would rather they lived in the one house?—I would rather they all lived in one house. A young husband and wife are very often associated with either parent who is getting old, and who would much prefer that they should have their hereditary descendants in the croft rather than squatting outside.

11573. But you see no inconvenience from two families in one of these small houses?—Most certainly it is inconvenient.

11574. How many rooms do they consist of?—Most of them have three rooms.

11575. Of equal size, or two rooms and a closet?—There is a sleeping place set apart, and a middle place which is used as a kitchen, and another end which is generally occupied by their cattle.

11576. Then two families don't use the same sleeping place?—I believe they do in many cases.

11577. How many people have you known sleeping in one room of all sorts and sexes?—Of one family I have seen eight sick in one room, lying in fever.

11578. You mean you have been attending them?—Yes, the whole family.

11579. And, in health, how many have you known to be commonly occupying one room?—As many as seven or eight people.

11580. Of all sorts and ages?—All sorts and ages.

11581. And both sexes?—Both sexes.

11582. Do you attribute much of the poverty we have heard of in this island to the difficulty of disposing of these younger branches of the family when they marry—their remaining in the house or squatting?—Most certainly.

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11583. Marrying young, and not leaving the country?—Yes, I do. No doubt, the poverty is owing to over-population.

11584. Have you had any conversation with these people as to whether they would like to emigrate, or whether they would prefer living on the croft where they were born?—They would much prefer to remain at home.

11585. Have you ever urged on them the advantages of seeking their fortune abroad?—I have certainly mentioned it to many.

11586. But they don't seem to do so?—They prefer to remain at home, and they would very much wish to increase their holdings by sharing in some of the tacks in the country. That is the general opinion, so far as I can glean.

11587. As there must be obvious difficulties in the way of doing that all at once, does it never occur to them to go and seek their fortunes elsewhere? They would prefer to remain as they are?—Yes, but I have no doubt, if they received assistance, and entire families were taken out, many would take advantage of it and emigrate.

11588. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—You think, if Government adopted a good scheme of emigration, it would be of advantage to this country?—As an alternative scheme.

11589. And the people would like it?—I think some of them would.

11590. The people here build their own houses?—They do.

11591. You say they are not nearly so good as the houses in Mull. Do the people of Mull build their own houses?—They do.

11592. If the people had leases here, do you think they would be encouraged to improve their buildings, and have as good houses as those in Mull?—They often say so, and they give it as a reason for being so backward that they have no pleasure in improving their houses and surroundings when they have no security of holding the land.

11593. Have you any idea what security the people in Mull have?—They have no security, but I don't suppose if they pay their rent they will be disturbed.

11594. They have no promise of compensation if they are disturbed?—No promise.

11595. You say there is a good deal of consumption in the spring of the year from over-working and under-feeding. Do you think, if it were not that the people are under-fed, they are over-worked?—Not at all. I don't think they are over-worked if they were properly fed. I have hardly seen any cases among tacksmen or their servants, because they are well clothed, well fed, and well housed.

11596. In books written about this country one hundred years ago, you will see it stated that from poverty the people suffered every spring from a very great deal of fever. Is that the case now?—Yes, it is typhus fever which is the disease of the poor, and it is associated with under-feeding.

11597. It also arises from bad drainage?—Yes, and over-crowding.

11598. But particularly under-feeding?—Under-feeding, with the other conditions of house accommodation.

11599. You stated that the people here have as much stock as the people in Mull. In what respect are they placed in an inferior position as compared with the people of Mull?—As regards their houses.

11600. But as regards their earnings, the people of Mull are able to feed better than people here. They have no fever?—They have no fever now. They have better houses, and probably they are better fed.

11601. Why are they better fed, if they have less stock?—I say they have less stock in proportion to the rent they pay.

11602. The people here don't pay a high rent for their stock, but they have not enough of it?—They have not enough of it.

11603. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—With regard to crofters crowding and young people marrying, suppose a man has a croft and has six of a family—three sons and three daughters. The eldest son probably will succeed to the croft, but what becomes of the other two sons and three daughters? Don't the daughters generally go out to service unless they get married?—Yes.

11604. And the younger sons go away, I presume, and earn their living?—In many cases they do.

11605. That is generally what may happen to each crofter having a family?—Yes.

11606. Of course, if a crofter's wife dies, probably one daughter will stay at home?—Yes.

11607. You also stated you did not think the people were over-worked. Is not that a thing they should complain of, that they have not enough of work, and that there is no regular employment?—That they have no regular employment at home.

JOHN M'CASKILL, Crofter and Fisherman, Eriskay (38)—examined.

11608. *The Chairman.*—Have you been freely elected a delegate?—Yes.

11609. *Professor Mackinnon.*—How many are there paying rent in Eriskay?—There are eighty-four paying rent in our island. Three occupied it formerly.

11610. Is there any that does not pay rent?—Yes.

11611. How many?—There will be about a dozen families who pay no rent—chiefly paupers.

11612. Of those who do pay rent, what is the largest and what is the smallest rent?—So far as I know, the biggest rent is £5, and the lowest is as low as 10s.

11613. What is the stock that a man who pays £5 has?—Four or five cows, two or three small cattle, two horses, and between ten and twelve sheep.

11614. What land or stock has a man who pays 10s.?—He may have a cow; I don't know of any more.

11615. What is your complaint then? Is it that there are too many people upon that island?—Yes, that is my complaint. There are three times the number on that island that should be on it.

11616. You don't complain that the rents are too high?—Yes, people complain that they pay too high rent.

11617. But the larger complaint is that there are too many of them?—Yes, generally there are two families residing upon each small bit of croft.

11618. You said that three had the island once; how long is that ago?—About thirty-five or thirty-six years ago.

11619. Where did all the others come from?—They came from the opposite side of the ground. They were sent across to the island.

11620. From Barra or Uist?—From Uist.

11621. And you would wish to send a good number of them back again?—If they had any livelihood, it is that which should be done. The place which they left is still there under cattle and sheep, where they were making a good living.

11622. Who occupies that place now?—Mr Robert Fergusson.

11623. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—What is the name of the place?—Kilbride.

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11624. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Is the place there very suitable for crofters?—It is very suitable for fishing and crofting. A share of the present population of the island came from as far north as Benmore and as far south as the island of Boreray.

11625. How many families do you think should be left upon the island to occupy it now?—The soil has become exhausted through continuous cropping, and where we are now working is nothing but rock, and the other places are bogs, ditches, and big rocks. I think we might make a livelihood if one crofter to-day had the land of three.

11626. Are you able to pay your rents?—They are doing their best generally.

11627. If the crofts generally were trebled, as you say, and one man put in the place of three, are there men in the island who would be able to take the stock of their two neighbours?—No, if the arrears or debt upon the island were paid it would take all its present stock to do so.

11628. Supposing you had the people reduced to one-third of the present population would they all be crofting the land, or would they be fishing as well?—If we had means to enable us to stock the land, as I suggested, people would prefer working on the land to fishing. The fish has deserted the place.

11629. But supposing the fish came back again, would fishing not be more profitable than crofting? What remedy would you propose, or what was the remedy the people of Eriskay asked you to propose here, to improve their condition?—The people think if they had plenty of land, and means of stocking it, that they would be well.

11630. Whom do they expect to provide the means of stocking the land?—We don't know anything about that.

11631. Have you a school?—Yes.

11632. Is there a church?—Yes.

11633. Are the people Roman Catholics?—Except two or three families.

11634. I suppose the church there is a Roman Catholic church?—Yes.

11635. Do some of the people of Eriskay go south?—They always go to the east coast fishing.

11636. But I suppose they always come home again?—They mostly return back next winter, except a few young men who go abroad in ships.

11637. Do any of the young women go away?—Yes, young women go south to work.

11638. Do they remain away?—Some of them remain away and some of them return.

11639. I suppose there are no families who go away and leave the place?—I don't know of any family who left our place at all.

11640. If the people are so poor as you say they are, how is it that some of the families don't go to some other place, where they would be better off?—I don't know what is their reason for not going.

11641. Are you a crofter?—I have half a croft.

11642. Could you not better yourself in another place than Eriskay?—I don't know.

11643. You were often abroad?—I was often abroad, and if I had scope to work at home in a way that would be satisfactory, I would prefer being at home to being abroad.

11644. What places were you away abroad in?—I was round the coast of Scotland generally, and in England, Ireland, and America.

11645. As a sailor?—As a sailor.

11646. And you think that in none of these places you could make for yourself a home more comfortable than in Eriskay?—If I had means

of satisfactorily keeping the place at home, there is no other place where I would be so healthy and happy.

11647. I quite believe that, but when evidently the people have not that means, how is it they don't go to some other place?—We don't know where that place is.

11648. And you have been in all the countries you have mentioned?—Yes.

11649. What is the total population of this island?—I believe it is between 400 and 500.

11650. Have you any idea of the total rent of the island?—I don't know.

11651. Do you know the names of the three people who occupied the island?—There was one Macdonald, one Fergusson, and one Cameron.

11652. What might be the population of the island then?—I am not aware. The population just consisted of the families of those three tenants, with a few shepherds and herds.

11653. Then it would probably amount to thirty or forty people?—I don't think there would be so many.

11654. You have said nothing about peats? Where do you get your peats?—The peats are well-nigh exhausted altogether. In two or three years more there will be none.

11655. Was there some pasture upon the top of the peat moss which they have been cutting?—In some places.

11656. Did you or did any of the people on the island make any representation to the proprietor or to the factor to relieve the island of this large population, by removal abroad or in any other way?—They were often complaining that there was such a surplus population on the island that they could not live.

11657. But did you make any formal application?—I am not aware there was any special request made by the people to remove the surplus population.

11658. You have heard, no doubt, that since the present Lady Cathcart became proprietrix, she has been doing a good deal upon the estate, and giving promises of more?—I did hear so, and we are very much in need of her assistance.

11659. Why then did not you and the other heads of families put your heads together and make a petition to her to relieve your condition?—We did not do so, we are but a poor lot of people without any scholar among us to do that much for us, although we have got a school.

11660. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—You have a school at Eriskay?—Yes.

11661. One of the public schools?—Yes.

11662. You have always had a school there?—No, not always. There was a Free Church school in the island before they built the public school.

11663. Are there many people in the island who cannot read or write?—Almost all the population, except the young children who are at school, cannot read nor write. A few about my own time of life perhaps got a little education, but very few.

11664. Do the children attend the school regularly?—They are compelled to do so.

11665. Is there an officer who looks after them?—Yes.

11666. Does he threaten them if they don't attend?—Yes.

11667. Do the people complain of the rates they have to pay for the school?—Yes, they think it dear.

11668. How much do they pay in the pound?—8d. in the pound—4d. on the landlord and 4d. on the tenant.

11669. Don't you think it a very good pennyworth?—We know that

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it is. The great majority are fishermen. Fishing has been very backward for a few years back, and people are now in great debt.

11670. Are they not also in great arrears?—I don't know the amount of arrears, but I am sure they are deep in debt to the merchant with whom they deal for their food. The one who has been keeping them up for a number of years, if he chose to force paymant, the most of the present stock would belong to him.

11671. Is he a merchant there or here?—He is a merchant both there and on this side, Mr Fergusson.

11672. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Suppose the offer were made to you to emigrate to America under favourable conditions in families, would the people be disposed to accept that?—They would not care about going abroad if they could live at home, and get restored to the places where they came from.

11673. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—I suppose the other men from Eriskay have nothing different to tell us from what you have told us?—I am not aware there is anything different from what I have said.

DONALD M'LELLAN, Crofter, Garra-na-mony (about 52)—examined.

Donald M'Lellan.

11674. *The Chairman.*—Have you been freely elected a delegate?—Yes.

11675. You have a written statement to lay before the Commission?—Yes.—[*Reads.*] '*Garra-na-mony, South Uist, May* 28, 1883. My Lord and Gentlemen, in the first place, Garra-na-mony crofters try their best 'to work their land, but it is impossible for them to take their supply out 'of it. Now the only thing we want is to get more land, if we could get 'it. We have seen Garra-na-mony with sixteen crofters, and it is now 'divided among twenty-six. Some of them possess about two acres just 'now, and taxes are rising higher every year. It is impossible for us to 'work the small piece of land we have got, because we have never got a 'road made through the town. The land was rented first when the kelp 'was as high as £3, 10s. per ton. There is no kelp made in this conntry 'since several years—but little of it last year—and the rent is as high as 'it was before. The people here are keeping little of stock, but the most 'of it belongs to Mr Donald Fergusson, merchant, who keeps food to the 'people since the famine came. There is plenty of land in the country 'that was cultivated and brought to use by crofters once. Now this land 'is settled on farmers. Likely this country was made for themselves, for the 'poor crofters were thrown to the worst part of the country. If we had 'plenty of land, as it is possible for you to give us, our stock would be 'our own. There is a person here, who goes as one of the three witnesses, 'says that his grandfather kept 600 sheep and 30 head of cattle. The 'farmer took this stock by catching them on the grass, and locked them 'up in a fold till the greatest part of them became his own stock. The 'father of the witness was put out of this place, and a place was given to 'him three miles distant from the first place. He was in this place for 'six years, and he was then thrown out of this place by the order of 'Colonel Gordon, to give room to the stock of the farmer who got the 'place, and other seven besides him. We then went away with boats to 'a place twelve miles from the first, where there were no people, no 'houses, but heavy heather; sleeping in shore dens, with frost and snow 'covering our beds for five days and five nights, until they made turf

'cottages. We then made better houses in summer; and six years after 'that my father and other thirteen families were thrown out of that, and a 'place was given to us in Eriskay, on the south side of the island, that 'was never cultivated. My father and his neighbour got eight acres 'between them—four acres each. It is no wonder that this country is so 'poor, for I took thirty-seven years between Ireland, England, and Scotland 'on the sea. It is a poor thing for me after all my troubles, and keeping 'myself clear and my land paid. My two sons are gone away, because they 'have no land to make their living upon; and just now, for to let you know 'that I and my father was selling food as long as we had plenty of land, 'and it is the want of land that is making the people so poor. Now I 'hope that you will give land to us, if you please, that we can make our 'living upon. Another of the witnesses says that he was put out of his 'land. The ground officer took spite to us because we did not kill the 'dog we had. I took three years' paying twenty-five shillings for every 'year for the house, because it was on the land of another person, until I 'got a small piece of land. Although this was cruel, it was more cruel 'when my brother was bound, and put out of this country without any 'fault, with a weak family. Some of the witnesses are here that saw this 'sight. You see that now before you, whether that was good or not. If 'they are going to keep up that law in this country, this country will be 'very poor. The third witness says that he was put out of his land, 'without any fault, by the ground officer; and a place was given to me 'near the hill, with a weak family, to give place to another person, with 'about two acres of land and nothing else. I am in this condition yet 'since sixteen years ago; and it was Mr Ferguson, farmer, Kilbride, who 'was giving me place, and the rest of the crofters in Garra-na-mony, for to 'make the potatoes. All my sons, as they grew, went away to make their 'living, and to help me as best they could, because they had no place to 'live upon. The most of the crofters in Garra-na-mony suffered nearly as 'much as we suffered. If they get plenty of land, and lease upon it, we 'will pay great attention to it in draining the land, instead of being in 'danger every year in throwing me out of my land without the least fault. '—GARRA-NA-MONY CROFTERS.'

11676. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—How many families are in Garra-na-mony?—Twenty-six.

11677. What is the population?—Over 200.

11678. Are you on the island of Eriskay?—No.

11679. Where is Garra-na-mony?—It is a township to the south of this.

11680. How much of the increase of the crofters came from among themselves, and how much was caused by outsiders planted among them?—The larger number present in the township to-day have been shifted from other places cleared for tacks.

11681. Is it your own grandfather who is mentioned in the paper who kept 600 sheep, and 30 head of cattle?—My grandfather.

11682. Where was he?—In Glen Corriedale.

11683. Where is that?—On the tack presently occupied by the Rev. Mr Macdonald, who is here to-day.

11684. Who was the farmer that took hold of the stock by catching them on the grass, and locking them up?—Murdoch M'Lennan, who came from Harris to Milton.

11685. You spoke about your own father being put out of the place, what rent was your father paying?—I was about eight years of age when my father left, but I don't recollect very well. I think, however, it would be between £6 and £7 a year.

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11686. What rent do you pay?—£2, 7s. 6d. for a half croft.

11687. Do you know what rent your grandfather was paying, who had the 600 sheep?—I believe he would be paying about £8 or £9.

11688. There is a complaint here which I would like you to explain. You say, 'We then went away with boats to a place twelve miles from 'the first, where there were no people, no houses, but heavy heather, 'sleeping in shore dens, with frost and snow covering our beds for five 'days and five nights.' How long is it since that occurred?—I believe it will be thirty-seven years ago.

11689. Where was the place they built those houses?—In Bay Harstabrach, to the south of Loch Boisdale.

11690. How long were you following the sea?—I was sometimes on British coasters, and also fishing.

11691. With regard to the man who was found and put out of this country without any fault, with a weak family; what was the name of that man?—I cannot tell; the man himself is here.

11692. What is your complaint now? is it that you are overcrowded?—What I have specially to say is that I want land.

11693. Is there any land close by in your neighbourhood that could be eventually given?—There is no land in the country that we can get until we go and break up the tacks.

11694. What is the nearest tack to you?—The nearest tack is Kilbride, tenanted by Mr Robert Fergusson. But it was not from that tack that my father was turned out.

11695. Do I understand then, that when you are wanting more land, you want to get an extension where you now are, or to go back where you formerly were?—I would return to-morrow if I were permitted to the land my father had. I would not give a snuff for the land which I presently occupy, if I were permitted to return to the land which my father tenanted.

11696. Where?—Uishnish or Glen Corriedale.

11697. And where your grandfather was also?—My grandfather also, and my predecessors from time immemorial.

11698. And that land is in possession of a tacksman, and is very suitable for you? That is the land you want?—The land of my birth I would prefer to any, where there was no want of food, and no debt. The chief of Clanranald sometimes spent nights in my grandfather's house.

11699. And very naturally you are sorry you have come down in the world, compared with the position of your grandfather?—I am.

11700. And you would like to get an opportunity of restoring yourself to the position your grandfather had?—If I got an opportunity, I would take it even without anything except what you see on me here, and I would not be long in going on. I am not afraid, but I would become a very good farmer in a very short time. I wish the Royal Commissioners to understand that the whole people of the country have been blocked up like sheep in a fauk, huddled together so that it is impossible for them to live.

11701. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Are you able to pay your present rent?—I am clear. I have no arrears, and I never was in arrears. I not only can pay debts, but I can take land as well if I can get it.

11702. What is your stock?—I have four cows and three horses; but I wish it to be understood that these are not kept upon the croft which is worth £2, 7s. 6d. in the year, but they are fed upon lands belonging to some other persons.

ALEXANDER M'NEIL, Crofter, Smercleit (80)—examined.

11703. *The Chairman.*—You have a croft?—I have half a croft.

11704. You have a written statement?—Yes.—'*Smercleit, South Uist, May* 28, 1883. My Lords and Gentlemen, The troubles that we are 'getting here are just the want of land. The land that our fathers had is 'divided among two or three persons. The way that our fathers were pay-'ing the land was working on cut kelp, but these are gone away now, and 'there is nothing now wanting on us but the money; although the cut kelp 'stopped, the rent is still the same, it is not getting low, but still rising 'higher. It is not a wonder that we are poor, although we would be 'working, the pay would be 1s. 3d. a day till two or three years, when it 'rose higher. The land that our fathers and grandfathers had for the 'cattle we cannot now let them on, or else they are locked up and pounded 'by farmers. Some two or three years before the people from her Lady-'ship would come, and they would take away the cattle that we would be 'going to sell, and would give to us for these what would please them-'selves, and we would not know what they did. Although we have cattle, 'it is not our own, but it belongs to the person who is giving us food. This 'person is Mr Donald Fergusson; and if he will it till he is paid, and the 'rest of it to the governor, we will have nothing. The bad way that they 'were governing us before this, were the governor took some meal to this 'country, and a person had to work for a whole day on roads and trenches 'with spades for one pound of meal. Poor-rate money and school money 'are taken from us along with the rent every year, and we do know what 'they are doing with it, and they are still getting higher. We have very 'bad land here, but it is worse just now, as the water of the mill is making 'a great damage to it, and the rent is still the same. After all things if 'we would get plenty of land, and the rent as they shall see better at any 'price, but not on the price of a factor or a governor.—SMERCLEIT CROFTERS.

11705. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—How many crofters are there in Smercleit?—Twelve crofts.

11706. And how many families?—There are two families for each of these crofts, and one or two outside on the moor.

11707. Were they all agreed to send you here?—Yes. I have been freely elected a representative to appear here.

11708. Did they all hear this paper read?—Yes.

11709. Used you to pay your rent in labour, cutting kelp?—My father always paid his rent by kelp, and he never had any occasion to buy any meal for food.

11710. Did you make kelp yourselves, or did you merely cut the sea-weed for the proprietor?—We ourselves manufactured the kelp.

11711. Did you yourselves sell the kelp or merely get paid by the proprietor for your labour?—We never sold a pound but to the proprietor.

11712. Were you paid by the labour or by the quantity of kelp?—According to the weight delivered over to the proprietor, so much per ton.

11713. How much per ton?—£2, 10s., £2, and sometimes £3 per ton for kelp.

11714. Why is that system discontinued?—I think the proprietrix does not care to continue this kelp manufacture, because it does not pay.

11715. Can she not get more money for the kelp than she has to pay for it?—I believe that latterly the price fell very much, so that she was realising little if anything for the sale of kelp, and therefore it was discontinued.

11716. You say the pay you used to get was 1s. 3d. a day till two or

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three years back, when it rose higher. What pay do you now get?—I have been working some days, and receiving 2s. 6d.

11717. How many people were there at Smercleit when you first remember?—I remember when there were only twelve crofts and twelve crofters' families in the whole township of Smercleit, and they were then well off.

11718. Do you remember when Colonel Gordon bought the property?—Yes.

11719. Do you remember how many crofters were on Smercleit at the time when Colonel Gordon bought the property?—Only twelve.

11720. Are you sure?—Perfectly sure.

11721. And there are now twenty-four, and some odd ones outside on the moor?—Yes.

11722. Has the factor ever taken away any cattle from you at a less price than you could have got for them elsewhere?—There are lads along with me here from whom cattle were taken the other year, and they ought to tell what they got for them.

11723. What are their names?—John M'Millan and Roderick M'Caskill.

11724. Is there a system of valuation when the cattle are taken?—They were valued at Askernish.

11725. And do you think the value was insufficient?—I don't think it was much under the market price.

11726. Who appoints the valuators?—The proprietor.

11727. Does he appoint both valuators?—Yes, both.

11728. How long is it since the people had to work a whole day on the roads for a pound of meal?—In the year of the potato failure.

11729. You complain that the mill stream is damaging your lands. Have you complained of that to the farmer?—I spoke to Mr Macdonald last spring.

11730. What satisfaction did you get from Mr Macdonald?—He said he would do his best to put that right, and he has helped us to some extent since he promised.

11731. You say you are willing if you get more land to pay a fair rent for it, but not on the price of a factor or a governor. How do you want the rent settled?—If that is mentioned in the paper the paper is not right. Who can or will settle it except the factor? I am sure the Royal Commission will not assist me in fixing the rent, and therefore we must go to the factor.

11732. What rent do you yourself now pay?—£3, 10s.

11733. What stock have you on the land?—Three cows and two horses.

11734. Have you any young beasts?—I have one stirk and a calf.

11735. Any sheep?—One.

11736. Do you know the extent of your croft?—I believe my half share of the croft is about 6 or 7 acres.

11737. Is it all cultivated, or is part of it in grass?—Very little can be afforded to be left. We are constantly turning it.

11738. How many barrels of potatoes do you plant usually?—I plant nine or ten barrels and take none out.

11739. That was last season, but in an ordinary season what return do you get?—In a very good year I might take out forty barrels as the result of planting nine or ten.

11740. How much oats and barley do you sow?—I sow about four or five barrels of seed oats and I don't fill these barrels again at the end of the season when threshing them out.

11741. And barley?—I get hold of a little of the barley. A storm

carried off the land altogether, but in ordinary years I have more return from the barley than from the oats.

11742. What barley do you sow?—Three or four bushels.

11743. And what return do you get?—About two bags of grain.

11744. Do you make meal of the barley?—Yes.

11745. Do you make meal of the oats?—No.

11746. Is it for the sake of the straw you sow oats?—Altogether for the sake of the straw.

11747. Would it not be better to sow grass and get hay?—I believe it could not be worse.

11748. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Have you been all your days in the same town?—Yes, always; over sixty years in the same township.

11749. In your younger days were the people more comfortable in their circumstances or more cheerful in their dispositions than they are now?—We are constantly growing poorer—three times poorer than in my earliest recollection. I have nothing to eat unless I get it from these merchants at Loch Boisdale.

11750. Is it a fact that in your younger days you produced most of the meal that was required from your own crofts?—Yes, when my father had a croft for himself he never bought a pound of meal, and in those days the potatoes would be in heaps.

11751. Are the people as cheerful in their minds and dispositions now as they were then?—No, not half. They cannot be very happy when they are hungry.

11752. Are you aware there is a very considerable scarcity of milk for the children compared with what existed in your younger days?—When I was young I would get more milk than I would drink. To-day we cannot get a mouthful at all, many of us.

11753. That is not, I presume, on account of the milk being sold or sent out of the country by the people themselves?—They don't sell milk here at all.

11754. Is it because they haven't it?—Because they haven't it. The few eggs they have they sell for tea, and that is the substitute for milk.

11755. Will you say, when the charge is made against you and others that you consume so much tea, that it is a substitute now for milk?—That is my answer.

11756. And does it apply to your class generally?—Yes, it is quite true of those in my position. I am certain that it is.

11757. Was it common for the people to go to the south and other places in search of wages to support those at home?—When I was young no one had to leave the country to labour. Instead of going south they used to labour at kelp at home; but now, in the absence of that industry, they are obliged to run away to the east country or wherever they can get employment.

11758. Taking this parish of South Uist, was it more populous in your young days than it is now?—Not so numerous as to-day. They are much more numerous to-day than they were then.

11759. That is your opinion?—Yes.

11760. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Do the calves get more milk than they used to get?—The prices are decidedly better than they used to be. I don't think the milk is even so plentiful to give to calves as it was in those days.

11761. Is that because the grass is less?—Just so—just on account of the want of grass—no grass at all.

11762. Do you mean the lands you have are over stocked?—Yes.

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DonaldCurrie.

DONALD CURRIE, South Loch Boisdale, Crofter and sometimes Fisherman (47)—examined.

11763. *The Chairman.*—Have you a written statement?—No.

11764. Have you any verbal statement to make?—The great complaint on our side is that the land is very scarce and very poor in quality. There were five crofts, and formerly these crofts were tenanted by five tenants, but now there are fifteen tenants. As a general rule, they purchase eight bags of meal annually—this year twelve bags per family—and I think if the land had been sufficiently good, it would have been amalgamated long ago by tacks, but it is not good enough to make a tack and therefore it has escaped. We wish that we could get a proper croft—a croft sufficient to support a family, and that the croft be valued—the rent to be fixed by valuators, and any draining or trenching or improving of the land we should get compensation for, and a promise not to remove us, which we were too much accustomed to.

11765. What do you regard as a proper croft? What area of arable land, and what number of cows and horses, &c.?—We would require a croft to hold six cows and two horses, and as many sheep as would keep a family in clothing—that is from forty to fifty head.

11766. How many acres arable?—I cannot state acres—as much arable land as would supply a family with food.

11767. How many bolls of oats and how many barrels potatoes would you want to sow?—I would like to plant an average of twenty barrels a year.

11768. How many barrels of oats?—Eight barrels of oat seed and twenty pecks of barley or bere.

11769. What would you think a proper rent for a croft of that kind?—A valuator would be the most just to both sides.

11770. Do you know of any croft of that kind at present in the island here?—I know some such crofts upon the west side of the island, and in all these cases the occupants of them make a livelihood of it.

11771. What sort of rent do they pay now?—For those crofts which I have already specified, I think the rent is from £8 to £10 a year. I don't know whether there are any sheep upon those crofts I have mentioned. *There may be sheep, or there may not be.*

11772. What stock do you keep on your own croft?—I have half a croft. I have three cows and two horses, two sheep and three stirks—that is year-olds—but that is more than my proper summing.

11773. How much rent do you pay?—£3 of rent.

11774. But you hire land to feed them upon?—No, but when fodder is scarce for them we often have to purchase meal for them, which we had to do this year.

11775. Does the half croft ever produce, in a good season, enough to keep all that stock?—There were years when the half croft did produce what sufficed.

11776. Do you complain of your rent being too high?—It is not the dearness of the rent we complain of, but the scarcity of the land. We would be poor without paying any rent at all on these small patches.

11777. If one of the tacks were cut up, and made into good crofts, would you be able to take one yourself?—A few would. I would attempt myself to take one of these crofts, and a few would also manage it; and if we were placed on a good part of a tack we would soon get on.

11778. But supposing you got such a tack, with a lease of thirty years, at a fair rent, what sort of improvements would you make?—I would be

quite willing to pay interest on outlay for the purpose of improving the land. I don't want a lease of thirty years or one hundred years, but simply that I should have the land as long as I am able to pay its rent.

11779. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Have you ever seen any person lose his croft on account of his arrears?—There are none upon my side of the loch, because no one is in arrears; but I heard of people being put out.

11780. Did you ever hear of the succeeding man paying the original tenant's arrears?—If a son were taking a croft after his father, he would have to pay his father's arrears.

11781. But when there is a change of tenancy?—I did not pay any arrears.

11782. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Were there arrears on the croft when you went in?—I don't think that there were arrears on my father's croft, and my father got another croft which he still occupies. I did not hear from him that he paid the arrears of the out-going tenant.

11783. What is the value of the beasts you sell upon your own croft? What was the last beast you sold?—I sold one stirk at the last market in July.

11784. What did you get for it?—I got £4, 15s.

11785. Was that considered a good price?—Yes, it was considered a good price.

11786. Are you ever able to sell more than one beast?—Some years I am able to sell two.

11787. But that is from the additional stock you keep, not from what the crop would keep?—The year before last I sold two.

11788. Were they properly brought up and fed on the croft?—They were all brought up and reared on the croft.

11789. What did you get for these two?—About 10 guineas for the pair.

11790. What is the summing of your croft?—I don't know. I never saw it; I don't know what the summing should be.

11791. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Have all the crofters as much stock as you?—Some have one cow and some two.

11792. Do you pay anything for the summer grazing of them?—Nothing.

11793. Then you have only your own summing?—Only my own summing.

11794. And you only pay £3 for two horses, three cows, and three stirks?—Yes.

DONALD GILLIES, Crofter and Fisherman, Caolas-an-eilean (36)—examined.

11795. *The Chairman.*—You have been freely elected by your people?—Freely elected.

11796. Have you any statement to make?—No statement.

11797. What is the complaint of the people of Caolas-an-eilean?—I am about eleven years married, and, when I did marry about three acres of mossland was marked out for me. I have several of a family since. I have been obliged to knock about, and serve here and there to earn food for my wife and family, which could not grow upon my three acres of moss. I have been for seven years asking for more land, and I cannot get a yard of land more than I have now. I am quite able to stock more land.

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DonaldGillies.

11798. Then your complaint is the want of land?—Yes.

11799. Anything else?—I have no other statement to make.

11800. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Where is Caolas-an-eilean?—Two or three miles from here.

11801. How many families are there in the place?—Five families altogether, and each of these has the same complaint to make.

11802. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Is there any land near that they can get?—There is land suitable near it. I have been often asking it, but could not get it.

11803. Where is the suitable land?—Down in the direction of where Lady Cathcart made the park. In that direction there is suitable land. There is an island that would also keep a few of us.

11804. What is the name of the island?—Eilean More, and if a portion of the five were removed elsewhere and a portion left, they would both be better.

11805. What rent do you pay?—33s.

11806. What stock do you keep?—Two cows and a heifer—that is the summing.

11807. Where do you feed them?—Over the hills. I buy fodder for them, and at present I buy meal for them to keep them alive. I have to go over the wave to earn money to keep those cows in winter.

11808. Are the other families in the place in the same condition?—In the same way.

11809. Paying the same rent?—The same rent.

11810. Do they keep cows also?—Some of them have two cows, and thers have one cow and a heifer.

11811. Is there any fishing near you?—There is none.

11812. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Where did you come from?—I do not know where my great grandfather came from, but I was born in South Loch Boisdale.

11813. Had you brothers?—My father is living, and I have a brother living.

11814. Is your brother living with your father?—Yes.

11815. And when you married, was there no room for you on your father's croft?—There was no room on my father's croft.

11816. And so you got this piece of land as a place to take your wife to?—Yes.

11817. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—How old were you when you married?—About twenty-seven.

DONALD MACFIE, Crofter, South Boisdale (39)—examined.

Donald Macfie.

11818. *The Chairman.*—Do you wish to explain some statements in the paper presented for South Loch Boisdale?—Yes.

11819. What is the explanation? Is that statement true as to the gusset?—The statement is quite true.

11820. Where did you see the paper?—In my own father's house; the ground officer met the people with the paper.

11821. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—And they signed upon the understanding that they would get equal value for the gusset?—We signed the paper on the understanding that we ourselves would receive some compensation for the loss of this gusset, but against our will, for we would have much preferred the gusset to any consideration we might receive, and the man

who was formerly examined is an occupier of the same gusset, though he said he knew nothing about it.

11822. Did he get it at the expense of his co-crofters?—He is paying rent for it. We got no reduction.

11823. How long is it since this man came in?—About five or six years ago.

11824. How long is it since you signed this paper in your father's house?—Twenty-five years ago.

JOHN M'KINNON, Cottar, Kilphedar (47)—examined.

11825. *The Chairman.*—What have you to say?—I have been evicted and put out of my land, and sustained much damage and injustice. Another tenant took my place and paid my arrears. They would not accept my arrears from myself. I and my weak family have been sent out on the peat bogs, so that we are here almost exhausted.

11826. How much were you in arrear?—I believe I would be owing £10 or £12.

11827. Did the incoming tenant who followed you pay that?—I offered the factor the best horse I had in payment of these arrears, which animal subsequently fetched £12 at the market. The tenant who succeeded me, I heard, has paid £5 of my arrears.

11828. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—What was the name of the man who paid the £5?—Roderick Steele.

11829. Is he still in possession?—He is in possession now, and I have been cast out on the bare hill—on the bog.

11830. Who was the factor to whom the horse was tendered?—Mr Walker, the late factor, two years ago.

[ADJOURNED.]

TORLUM, BENBECULA, TUESDAY, MAY 29, 1883.

(*See Appendix A, XXXI.*)

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.

ANGUS M'FIE, Crofter, Island of Flodda (70)—examined.

11831. *The Chairman.*—Have you been freely elected a delegate?—Freely elected.

11832. Have you got a statement to make?—I have no written statement.

11833. Then you will make your statement verbally; what have you got to say?—It has become impossible for us to live where we are. I have

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been settled in heather land for the last twenty-one years. I have been reclaiming this heather land as well as I can. Now I have been rented by the ground officers, and before I went there this same land belonged to the people of Island Flodda. I was settled there along with three others, and there was another family there before we were settled there, and the land we occupied was rented at £9 before we were settled there. The ground officer cut off crofts for the three, but the people of the Island of Flodda who formerly possessed this ground received in compensation, or as favour, a road to their peat mosses and also to water their cattle. The people of Island Flodda had formerly the right to the land upon which we were settled. The people of Island Flodda were rented on account of this road which was made to their peat mosses. They had to pay £1 a piece on account of this road to their peat mosses. Instead of the £9 which was the original rent paid for this particular piece of ground—formerly possessed by people who emigrated to America—their rents were raised to £18 when we were settled upon it. Our lands were lotted by order of the proprietor. The whole of the island of Benbecula was alloted in this way except Island Flodda and a portion of land occupied by us. A poor man from the district of Uachdar, who had no land in his own particular neighbourhood, was removed from the said district, and four acres of my lands taken from me and given to this poor man, as also a portion of road to the peat mosses formerly mentioned. I am of opinion that a proper valuation would fix the value of this same outroad at something like 30s. annually, instead of £1 per family according to the present charge. On account of this removal from my own holding of four acres, I desire to get an equivalent of reduction in my rent, but I have been refused, and the former rent is still existing.

11834. *Mr Cameron.*—You have explained to us your own grievance; we want to know what the people who have sent you here complain of, and what remedy they wish?—We are all afflicted with the same disease.

11835. Are they all in the same position as yourself?—All in the same position. The country is not lotted in proper proportions, and a few people may be better off than the general, but only a few.

11836. Have the crofters whom you represent any hill pasture?—Only heather.

11837. What stock do they keep on this common grazing?—I have two cows and a two-year-old.

11838. Is that the ordinary quantity belouging to the other crofters?—No, that is not the usual summing.

11839. What is the usual summing?—According as they are able to maintain them.

11840. What does it practically amount to as a rule?—Some have three cows and some have four cows, but it is rare to have four.

11841. What is the rent you yourself pay?—I am paying £3, 15s. of rent including taxes. The rent itself is £3, 10s.

11842. Have you any other stock besides cattle?—I have seven ewes this year.

11843. Any horses?—I have one horse.

11844. Have the other crofters got a horse each?—Yes.

11845. Do the other crofters pay about the same as you pay?—Some pay £6, some pay £5, and some £4, 10s.

11846. Do they want more arable land, or do they want more pasture land, or both?—I want both, but, though increased, how could I stock it when I am empty?

11847. Is there any land in the neighbourhood that is available for you and your neighbours?—Only heather ground.

11848. What do you propose if there is no land suitable for the crofters, and, even if there were, if they have no stock to put upon it? What remedy should you suggest?—I will tell you that if it can be done. We have a big tack at Benbecula, and I consider it the cream of the island. This one tack would improve every poor family in Benbecula, and still leave enough to support in comfort the one family that presently occupies it.

11849. Do you propose that the whole body of the crofters whom you represent should be moved bodily on to this tack?—I mean that the one who cannot live upon his present holding should get an increase. If two or three of the present crofters on Island Flodda were removed, it would relieve the pressure on those families remaining.

11850. But I understood the land of Island Flodda was so bad that it was of no use for any one to cultivate. Is that so?—It is so, being cropped during the last eighty years, continuous cropping has exhausted it.

11851. Do you think nothing would remedy the condition of the crofters but what you have suggested?—I know no other remedy.

11852. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Where did you come from twenty-one years ago?—I was born in this township, and lived in it for twenty-seven years.

11853. What is the name of the township?—Torlum. I married when I was twenty-seven years of age.

11854. Was there no room for you in the place where you were?—I myself with a friend had purchased a croft in Liniclate; we remained twelve years upon that croft; but we were compelled, when our families increased, to separate the one of us from the other, and look out for some other part.

11855. What do you mean by purchasing a croft?—We purchased the houses with the land. They call that a possession.

11856. Is it the custom to pay the outgoing tenant for houses?—It was the custom at the time I refer to.

11857. When you left did you sell your house again?—I did not. I received nothing for the house which I left behind me.

11858. If it was the custom of the country, why did not you sell your house?—It was promised to us, but the promise was not implemented.

11859. Who promised it?—Mr Birnie, the late factor, promised that I should receive the value of these houses from the incoming tenant, but the incoming tenant proved to be so poor that he was unable to implement his promise.

11860. Was the factor always aware that money was paid by the incoming tenant for houses?—He was aware of it.

11861. Does that custom still continue?—No, except by private agreement.

11862. The factor has nothing to do with it?—If we come to a private arrangement, the factor takes nothing to do with it.

11863. The land you have at Flodda you improved entirely yourself?—Every inch of it.

11864. What was the rent you paid when you went there?—£3, 10s. When I removed to Island Flodda two ground officers were ordered to measure out my piece of land, and also to value it. These two ground officers valued it at £4; but a different factor, Mr Rule, said he considered it really too dear himself, being a piece of wild moorland, and that he would take 10s. off, leaving it £3, 10s.

11865. Then the £3, 10s. included the right to graze these cattle of which you have spoken?—It includes the grazing of the cattle on the heather.

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11866. Has your rent ever been raised?—No, but portions of my land were taken and let to others, and I still pay the former rent.

11867. Was that land improved that was taken from you?—It was improved.

11868. Did four acres come off?—Yes.

11869. Was that improved and reclaimed land?—Every inch of it.

11870. And how much reclaimed land have you now left?—I believe I am left with 12 acres of improvable land at present.

11871. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—How many souls are there upon the island of Flodda?—It is composed of six crofts.

11872. How many cottars?—Nearly as many more cottars.

11873. How many heads of families are there?—There are at least ten heads of families, but there are crofts which have three families upon them and crofts that have two.

11874. What is the name of the place where there is a big tack on the island?—Nunton.

11875. Is that the only large tack in Benbecula?—The only one.

11876. You are an old man. Has the farm of Nunton been added to, in your own time, at the expense of land once held by crofters?—No.

11877. Was it at any time?—Yes; it will be about thirty years since there was an addition to this tack of Nunton.

11878. Then, of course, you must recollect it quite well?—I remember it perfectly well.

11879. Can you mention the names of any townships in your own lifetime that have been diminished and added to Nunton?—Yes; some land was taken off Balvannich and the township of Aird. I may also say Uachdar.

11880. Any more?—I am not aware of any more.

11881. Was it all done at one time, or at different times?—When the tack was originally cut by the late Dr M'Leod, the Balvannich people were promised compensation for a piece of moorland which belonged to them before that year, and which was added to the tack of Nunton.

11882. Who was the factor at the time that the whole was done?—Dr M'Leod.

11883. Was Dr M'Leod factor for Clanranald or factor for Colonel Gordon at that time?—For Colonel Gordon.

11884. Have many people been entirely put out of the island, in your recollection, against their will?—Yes.

11885. Mention the townships from which people were put against their will?—I cannot mention the townships, but I can mention the moor.

11886. What moor was it?—They were hiding themselves in caves and dens for fear of being removed.

11887. Where from?—Scarraleod. I remember of no other place in Benbecula.

11888. Is there any other witness that knows about these matters better than you do?—I have no doubt but there may be.

DONALD M'KINNON, Crofter, Balvannich (66)—examined.

Donald M'Kinnon.

11889. *The Chairman.*—Have you been freely elected a delegate?—Yes.

11890. Will you explain what the people who have elected you complain of?—We have been reduced to poverty by their taking from us land which we ought to have. When our crofts were originally marked out,

grazing ground was also marked out for us, as well as stances for building houses upon; but the rents were fixed at this time when kelp was selling at a high price. Part of our hill grazings and portions of macher pasture were taken from us, and we received no compensation therefor.

11891. How long is it since the grazing was taken from you?—In the year 1847.

11892. And what was done with it?—Our hill pasture for pasturing our cattle was added to a tack.

11893. What tack?—The tack of Nunton.

11894. When they took away the hill pasture, did they reduce the rent?—No, our rent was not reduced.

11895. What is the size of your present croft? How many acres?—About 22 acres, and sixteen souls feed upon this, composed of two families.

11896. Do you mean the whole croft is 22 acres, or the part you occupy?—The whole croft.

11897. How much do you occupy?—One half.

11898. Then you have 11 acres?—Yes.

11899. Have you still some hill pasture left?—No, nothing, but only the big commonty of the country, and our cattle will not go on it.

11900. What stock do you keep?—I have two cows and a stirk, and a horse and five or six sheep.

11901. What is your rent?—£3, 15s.

11902. What do you want now?—More land, to make us up and help us to live.

11903. If you had a whole croft, would your family be comfortable?—I would undoubtedly be better off. I have ten of a family. In proof of my statement, I am willing to produce a map showing the old march.

11904. And your complaint is that your crofts are too small, and your wish is to get some hill pasture?—Yes.

11905. Would you be satisfied if you got some hill pasture?—Sure enough, that is the one thing that would help us best.

11906. When the hill pasture was taken away and given to the tack, how many sheep would it carry?—Over 200 sheep.

11907. Is what you have stated to-day the general wish and opinion of the crofters whom you represent?—Yes.

RANALD MACDONALD, Crofter, Aird (65)—examined.

11908. *The Chairman.*—Have you been freely elected a delegate?—Yes.

11909. How many people elected you?—About thirty or thirty-two families.

11910. What statement have you to make to the Commissioners?—The smallness of the land, the dearness of the land, the poor quality of the land, and the difficulty of having access to pure water, are the chief grievances of our township. A considerable proportion has been taken from our township. In the time of Clanranald a large proportion of the moorland was reclaimed by our forefathers, on understanding that it should remain their own land; but this same ground has since been taken from us and added to the tack of Nunton, both on the hill and at the macher high ground and low ground. On the portion of macher which has been cut away from us we feel more, as we have to erect a dyke to keep it in proper

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Ranald Macdonald.

order, and to prevent our cattle straying, and to keep cattle on the other side from straying on ourselves. There was a large portion of the hill ground to which we used to drive our cattle, after the spring work was finished, and keep them there in shielings until the time of the year when there was sufficient pasture on the old machers to support our cattle. Some of the people of their own accord, on account of the exhaustion of the macher lands, left those and voluntarily took up stances on their hill grounds. The land reclaimed by those settled upon the moorland was added to the tack as already mentioned, and those people who had settled upon it were emigrated. The portion of the hill ground which was reclaimed, and which was not added to the neighbouring tack of Nunton, was peopled by about fourteen cottars, who now pay a small rent. On the machers, where we have built our houses, we have no pure water. It is extremely brackish, and exceedingly injurious to cattle.

11911. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—I suppose there never was any better water?—No, not of the same quality to-day. There was a loch which has been drained, but this good water is a considerable distance from our houses; the portion of land which I have already stated is occupied by a small class of cottars or tenants, who pay a small rent, and we find it very difficult to get access to the water.

11912. You say the land is dear. What rent do you pay?—£7, 10s.

11913. How many acres do you cultivate?—9 or 10 acres under crop.

11914. What stock do you keep?—Two cows, two horses and a year-old horse, two stirks, and five or six sheep.

11915. Has your rent ever been raised?—The rent is lower than it was at one time.

11916. What was your rent at one time?—£10, when the valuation was based upon kelp sales.

11917. How long is it since it was reduced?—About four years ago it was reduced to £7, 10s.

11918. How long is it since you lost the land?—Before Colonel Gordon bought this estate—forty-two years ago.

11919. The piece that was added to Nunton was added forty years ago?—I believe so.

11920. Before Colonel Gordon bought the property?—Yes.

11921. Was any reduction given at that time?—No.

11922. Has there been a piece of land taken from you since then?—A piece of land which we also reclaimed has been settled upon a small class of tenantry who now pay rent. This piece of land was taken from my own township, also a piece of our macher ground has been given to that small class of tenants in order to make potatoes.

11923. Was that given to them at the time the rents were reduced?—Yes, about four years ago.

11924. Where did these cottars come from?—Some from Balvannich; some from different townships.

11925. None from your own township?—Very few.

11926. What is it you now desire?—More land for pasturing and for cropping.

11927. And where do you propose to take it from?—We have not had it at all events. We expect it where it is.

11928. Have the people of your township the means to stock a larger farm?—Some have, and some have not, but even those who have not expend as much money in buying meal and food for their cattle as would enable them to stock a larger farm.

11929. The money they expend on meal they gain by their labour outside Benbecula, I suppose?—Some earn it outside Benbecula. There

are some militia men; others go abroad and earn money, and bring it home to help their parents.

11930. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Has the style of living of the people here become worse since your earliest recollection?—Yes, a great deal worse.

11931. Have they worse food or less food?—Both.

11932. Have they not plenty of food?—A large proportion of them have not.

11933. Do you mean to say there are a large number of the inhabitants of Benbecula who are occasionally suffering from want of food?—I believe they are so suffering at this present time.

11934. Is that ordinary or is it peculiar to this season after a bad year?—For many years hunger has not been so heavy in the country as at the present time.

11935. Are any of them able to live upon the corn and potatoes that they raise themselves?—There may be some of that class in Benbecula, but I cannot at present recollect any.

11936. They chiefly live upon meal that comes from the south?—Yes, in summer time.

11937. Do you use flour or oatmeal most?—It is flour or Indian meal, or any meal which they can most cheaply purchase, that is the common food of the people.

11938. What are you paying now for wheat flour?—We receive our meal from humane merchants, but there is no doubt they charge a pretty smart price for it, because some cannot recover portions of their prices.

11939. What has the price of a boll of flour been this season?—From 35s. to £2 a bag or load overhead.

11940. And how much is the oatmeal?—The price of oatmeal is 50s. per bag, and if purchased in stones, the price of a bag will amount to about £3.

11941. What quantity have you used yourself since last harvest?—For the use of my family I have only ground about twenty bags of meal. All that I used beyond that I had to buy.

11942. And how many bolls did you use?—I don't quite remember.

11943. How did the potato crop do last year?—It was very backward. I only made twenty-seven barrels of it.

11944. Did you apply for any of the money that was subscribed for the destitution in London and Glasgow and Edinburgh?—I heard of people in other localities receiving portions of this money, but we heard nothing about it, and received none of it, and we had none to enlighten us on the subject.

11945. Is there any fishing in this island?—The west coast is so very rough that there is no fishing, and on the east side the fishing has been changed to Barra Head.

11946. None of your own boats go to a distance to fish?—No, not any distance.

11947. But I suppose many of the men go to Barra and Stornoway and the east coast?—A good few of the young men of Benbecula go there, as well as recruits to the militia.

[*Dr Black.*—I may mention I passed eighteen this year for the Gordon Highlanders.]

11948. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—How many heads of families are there in Aird that you represent? Is it thirty or thirty-two?—There may be thirty-three, but that is pretty much about it.

11949. You stated that when thirteen families or so were put in upon you from some other place, others of the people emigrated. Where did

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those come from that were sent abroad?—They were upon a portion of the land which was added to the tack of Nunton.

11950. How many families?—Nine or ten families.

11951. Are there any works by the proprietor going on of late in this island?—Yes, they were draining lochs that required drainage. They were reclaiming parks for the proprietor, which afforded them work, and they also manufactured some brick and tile, and also a little kelp.

11952. Are there any of those works going on at this moment?—A clay work is still in operation, but there are not many employed about it.

11953. And is the representative of the proprietrix resident on this island—the factor or ground officer, or whoever he is?—There is no resident factor at the present time. There is a ground officer.

11954. More than one?—I don't think so.

11955. Do the people suffer from scarcity of milk for their children?—Yes; and also wanting everything that would strengthen along with the present food which they eat—meaning no beef, or fish, or butter, or cheese.

ANGUS MACDONALD, Crofter and Joiner, Griminish (55)—examined.

Angus Macdonald.

11956. *The Chairman.*—You have a written statement to submit to the Commission?—Yes. 'We the crofters of Griminish, Benbecula, complain '—(1) That our crofts are too small insomuch that we have to provide for 'both ourselves and our cattle for fully six months of every year; that all 'the expenses necessary to meet this demand must be secured from 'external sources; that these expenses are secured from the hard earnings 'of young men and women both at home and abroad; and that were it 'not for said assistance their friends at home would inevitably come to 'pauperism. As a proof of said complaint, our annual expenses, exclusive 'of rent, amount to from £7 to £15, as the case may be, which expenses 'necessitate great economy in every family, reducing the constitution of 'our children almost to a minimum. (2) We state that our present 'crofts are too dear, which is evident from the following account of the 'rise and fall of rent relations which are as follows:—Before Colonel 'Gordon purchased the estate in 1839, the rents were raised, not accord-'ing to the intrinsic value of the croft, but according to the price of kelp 'which then yielded to the worker £3 per ton, while it yielded to the 'proprietor, who was the purchaser, the handsome sum of £20. The 'rents were fixed then independent of the changes that might, and in fact 'were taking place. When Colonel Gordon came in he got the rents at 'the old figure, which were so very high that the people could neither 'live upon nor pay their crofts. This secured a plausible reason for the 'most unscrupulous clearances that ever was effected in the Western Isles. 'The price for kelp was gradually on the decline until it ceased altogether 'five years ago. The people then had either to pay the rent by their 'daily wage or betake themselves to large towns. The people at that time 'had both a common and hill grazing. This common was given first for 'cattle grazing, which consisted of heather and peat moss. A few years 'afterwards the people began to complain of the smallness of their hold-'ings and the hardships which consequently followed. The proprietor 'then gave the people full liberty to reclaim as much as they could of the 'common at their own expenses, with a promise that it would become a 'pendicle of the croft. The people wrought like slaves reclaiming this

'land by carrying manure a distance of two to three miles, first in carts 'and again on their backs in creels, together with the severe labour of 'trenching it. The Gordons proposed the work for the people with the 'full desire, as we believe, of bettering the condition of their tenants. 'In a short time, however, circulars began to come round asking the 'people to pledge themselves to any alterations that the proprietrix might 'see fit as long as she had the interest of the people in view. This the 'people did, with the result that they were deprived of the common for 'which they had wrought so hard and given to others, the people thereby 'being confined on smaller crofts than they had even before the common 'was given to them; it is now plain that some change must take place 'either to the better or worse. The only remedy now is increased hold-'ings, which would enable a family to live upon; a guarantee against 'removal, either at proprietor's or factor's will, as long as we pay reasonable 'rent, which we wish fixed by neutral parties; compensation for improve-'ments, and when any of us would have to leave the croft from reasonable 'causes that the proprietor would take all our effects at valuation. That 'the arrears incurred by the outgoing tenant should not be levied upon 'the incoming tenant as heretofore. That drainage and fencing could be 'effected with the little expenses. adding greatly to the value of the land, 'we earnestly desire that Her Majesty's Government would be pleased to 'lend us cash for said purpose. These, with minor arrangements, would 'avert the pending calamities. Destitution, which is now staring us in 'the face, would, we believe, be then unknown. If these plains could be 'given to the people, the Highlands would once more become the home of 'a people who would not consider their lives too sacred for the defence of 'their queen and country. To the Royal Commission.—ANGUS MACDONALD 'and DONALD MACRAE, delegates.'

11957. Were you freely elected a delegate?—Yes.

11958. How many persons were present at your election?—There were a great many in the church over here.

11959. How many heads of families are there in Griminish?—I believe there are only thirty-two heads of families in the rental.

11960. Does that include cottars and all kinds?—I suppose it is just mixed altogether.

11961. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—What rent do you pay?—£3.

11962. Is that the ordinary rent of the people at Griminish?—No, there are some higher and some smaller, according to the quality of the lands they have.

11963. What stock are you allowed?—I keep two cows and a horse. I have no sheep. I cannot graze the horse. I must buy the grazing for the horse elsewhere.

11964. Have you sufficient grazing for the cows?—Not on the croft, because there are only about five acres of it arable, and the rest of it peat moss and heather.

11965. What sort of ground is the arable ground?—It is light mossy soil. Peats were cut there before, and the bottom is left there, and very little surface on it; there is a solid bottom that retains the water, and it is very shallow soil.

11966. What corn crop do you chiefly raise?—The general corn crop in this country is barley or small oats.

11967. What sort of yield does it give?—A very poor yield indeed in our mossy ground. Last year I knew a neighbour who sowed sixteen bushels of large oats, and he only raised four bushels. It all depends on the season. If the season is dry, we will have some yield; but if it is wet, the roots get into a mess, and the corn is gone.

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11968. Then so far as arable ground is concerned, you have not enough to live upon?—No. I have been there three years. I was one of the parties who were put out upon common; but I was fourteen years on another croft in the centre of the township, and a very bad croft it was. I was very glad to get out of it.

11969. Do you find regular occupation as a carpenter?—No, sometimes very seldom.

11970. What are the regular wages of carpenters here?—4s. and 4s. 6d. a day is the highest I have seen here for a good tradesman.

11971. *Mr Cameron.*—It is stated here that the kelp manufacture ceased here about five years ago, but the previous witness told us it ceased only two years ago?—That is what I was told; perhaps there was a little of it done, but it ceased to a great extent. I have seen it sometimes when all the people would turn out to the east and to the west for the cast kelp, and for cutting kelp on the east side.

11972. Since when has this poverty begun to make itself felt in the island?—I daresay it has been always with some of them. I have seen some worse than others every year.

11973. The hill grazing of which the people complain as having been taken from them was taken from them a great many years ago. When did the effects of that begin to make themselves manifest? Is it only lately, or ten years ago, or how long?—It is only lately. They complain lately of what has been done to them.

11974. I want to get your opinion about why it is only lately that the effects began to be felt when the cause occurred so long ago as forty or fifty years. To what do you attribute that?—I think the people were always on the decrease as to means. They have been coming down every year. From my own recollection, and it is twenty-six years since I came here, they are getting worse every year.

11975. But if that began so long ago, by this time they could have got so bad that they would hardly be in the condition in which one sees them. To what, in your opinion, may be attributed the cause of people getting so bad of late years?—There is a great deal of that owing to the want of kelp making. I may say kelp was the sole support of the people here; and, although they had not a great deal of wages for doing it, still the whole were turned out doing it, and there were stores of meal in the country, and no destitution while the kelp was going on. They would get plenty meal when they were at the kelp.

11976. Supposing the kelp ceased five years ago, as I understand it, the poverty of the people has increased in a far greater ratio than it did between the date when the hill pasture was taken away five years ago, when the kelp ceased?—It did.

11977. So that cessation of the kelp manufacture has had a more injurious effect upon the condition of the people than the taking away of the hill pasture?—Yes.

11978. There is something said in this paper about the practice which exists of the incoming tenant paying the arrears of the outgoing tenant. Is that commonly the case?—Well, I am not sure as to the son following his father in that respect. I believe the arrears stand, but one of our tenants tells me here to-day that he is in possession that way.

11979. But it is not an ordinary practice?—Oh, no; it is not an ordinary practice.

11980. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Did the tenant who spoke to you to-day follow his father?—No, I don't refer to him at all. I refer to another person.

11981. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You state in your paper that 'when

'Colonel Gordon came in he got the rents at the old figure, which were so 'very high that the people could neither live upon nor pay their crofts. 'This secured a plausible reason for the most unscrupulous clearances 'which were ever effected in the Western islands?'—There are delegates here who were eye-witnesses.

Angus Macdonald.

11982. What are their names?—I think Angus M'Kinnon is one of them.

11983. Were you born in the island?—No, I was born on the estate of Major Fraser, Kilmuir, Skye.

11984. *The Chairman.*—Do these improved houses which are now being built give you any work at your trade?—Yes, sometimes.

11985. Are you obliged to go away from the island sometimes, or do you find a living here?—I find a living here; I find a living sometimes. I have sons who work away from the island. They are tradesmen too.

11986. Have you got any apprentices?—No.

11987. You work alone?—Yes, I work with others at jobs that may come in the way.

11988. Do you find more work at the present moment than you used to do?—No, there is not so much demand for carpenter work as there used to be.

11989. But I see a good number of new houses built in the place all round?—Yes. There was a great deal of joiner work done upon these new houses.

11990. There is more joiner work done in the new than in the old houses?—Yes.

11991. Then how is it you have not more work now than you used to have?—At the time of the erection we have it, but that will not continue very long.

11992. You said a carpenter got about 4s. or 4s. 6d. a day. Do you charge by the hour or by the day?—By the hour.

11993. How much by the hour?—Running between $5\frac{1}{2}$d. and $5\frac{3}{4}$d. or thereabouts, according to the rate, working ten hours a day.

11994. But the rate is $5\frac{1}{2}$d. an hour?—I suppose that will be about the figure.

11995. What was it when you were a young man—when you first came to the island?—4s. a day.

11996. What was it by the hour?—It was by the day—working ten hours for 4s.

11997. How many years ago is that?—About twenty-seven years ago.

11998. Has there been no change in the rate of carpenters' wages during the last twenty-seven years?—Yes, they have been gradually increasing.

11999. You said it was 4s. a day twenty-seven years ago and it is 4s. 6d. now?—Though I got that wage I had some charge of people at the time, and the others were getting 2s. 6d. That was the wages generally.

12000. And now 4s. 6d.?—Yes.

DONALD M'DONALD, Crofter, Torlum (71)—examined.

Donald M'Donald.

12001. *The Chairman.*—Have you a statement to make to the Commissioners? What is the complaint of the people here?—I have to complain that in the days of Clanranald there were two large crofts which belonged in those days to the townships of Torlum and Griminish, and that when the present crofts of these two townships were allotted to the

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holders of them, these two large crofts were taken from them and added to the neighbouring tack of Nunton, and this has conduced to greatly press us for room in these two townships. On account of this we are behind in food and in fodder.

12002. When the two large crofts were added to Nunton, what became of the crofters who lived on the two large crofts?—There were no crofters upon that particular strip of land, but it did belong to the townships already mentioned.

12003. *Professor Mackinnon.*—How many crofters are there in Torlum now?—Twenty-two crofts. There are eighteen crofts in Torlum, and one tenant has four crofts besides those eighteen.

12004. There would have been twenty-two full crofts, only eighteen have eighteen full crofts and one has four?—Exactly.

12005. What is the rent of a full croft?—There are some at £7, 10s. some at £6, some at £5, and some at £4.

12006. And what is the stock?—I pay a rent of £6, 4s.

12007. What stock are you allowed to keep?—I have four cows and three little heifers, and I have also three stirks, a horse, a mare, a year-old, eight sheep, and a few hoggs.

12008. How long have you been paying rent in Torlum?—My father was paying rent for seventy years, and I myself have paid rent upwards of forty years.

12009. You were then in the township when these two crofts were taken from it?—Yes.

12010. Do you remember if the rent was reduced when the parks were taken away? Was it made less?—It was a common before the township was lotted, and then the common was taken away from them, and a new valuation made of the rents at that date, and these two were valued as well, and those two were joined to the neighbouring tack of Nunton.

12011. Does your township march with Nunton?—Very nearly so.

12012. Who is between you?—The turner.

12013. Is the turner in the township?—Griminish.

12014. Who occupies that farm of Nunton?—It was occupied by the late Norman M'Donald, and is now occupied by his widow.

12015. Then, about this large piece or common, are you marching with that piece of common?—Very near it.

12016. But I presume that all the crofters in the island have a right to graze upon that common, whether they march with it or not?—Every one may send his stock as he pleases to the big common.

12017. Is it not regulated at all how many each is allowed to send there?—There is no regulation as to numbers.

12018. Is it occupied in winter as well in summer?—It will not support any creature in winter.

12019. It is only used as summer pasture?—Just so.

12020. Do you send cows there as well as horses and sheep?—No horses at all are sent there. It is chiefly sheep, and occasionally we send our cattle there also.

12021. Are milk cows ever sent there?—Yes, for portions of each day, some days.

12022. That is, I suppose, by those who are near it, but do those crofters that are far away send their milk cows there?—No, not those far away.

12023. Only those who are near?—Only those that are near

12024. So that they can easily milk them there without staying out on the common themselves?—Yes.

12025. Then what is it that the people of Torlum complain of?—The smallness of the land.

12026. You don't complain that your own rent is too dear?—Yes, I do complain that it is too high. I stated to the factor that he valued the eight crofts in my neighbourhood too highly, my own croft being among the eight.

12027. But your complaint is more against the size of the croft than against your rent?—Yes; much more.

12028. How many suitable crofts would Torlum make?—One man has a fourth part of the township, and he complains that he cannot make a living on it.

12029. So that even if you had four crofts, you have scarcely much hope that you would be very comfortable?—If I even had two I think I would be better off than I am.

12030. But the man that has four complains very hard?—Yes, so he does.

12031. His complaint, I suppose, must be that the rent is too high, not that the croft is too small?—He complains of both.

12032. Except this farm of Nunton, of which almost all the delegates have spoken, is there any other large farm in the island suitable for subdivision into crofts?—Yes, there are.

12033. What are their names?—The island of Wia.

12034. Who occupies it?—It belongs to the farm of Nunton.

12035. I was asking, except the farm of Nunton?—I don't know of any.

12036. That is to say, Nunton takes up all the good land except what the crofters have?—Nunton is the best land.

12037. Do you think that that farm, broken up, would be able to give reasonable crofts to all the people of the place?—It would not supply the half.

12038. Then how do you propose to deal with the people?—The island of Wia is now a portion of Nunton farm, formerly part of the two townships of Torlum and Griminish. This island maintained a stock of three hundred sheep, fifty heifers, and thirty horses. From that stock you can conceive the island is good. So that if those two townships already mentioned received the island back, along with the original strip of ground adjoining Nunton, our difficulty might be solved.

12039. Perhaps that might do for these two townships, but what of all the other townships that have been asking for a piece of Nunton?—The proprietrix at present has in her own occupancy two vacant tacks called Ledistrom and Cregston. If the crofters who are burdening Linicleit should be removed there, this would remove the pressure upon Linicleit.

12040. Do you think there are other places on the estate to accommodate all the people that are burdening the other townships as well?—I believe there are plenty of places.

12041. So that the whole population, and not merely the half, could be accommodated?—Plenty of places.

12042. How could you provide stock for those who would have to be removed to those two tacks, if you say they are already so destitute?—That is a large case. They have no stock.

12043. You would not like that the estate should be without large farms altogether here and there, would you?—I would not wish them to possess so very much as they do now.

12044. But you would like that there should be some few large holdings in the place?—That would require to be in every country—a difference in the size of the holdings.

12045. The people would be all the better off by the large farms as

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well as the crofts, some of them being larger and some smaller?—Yes, a poor man cannot go to a big holding.

12046. A previous delegate stated, about the price of meal here, that the price of oatmeal was 50s. to £3 per load. Is that the case?—I believe it costs about 50s.

12047. If you got it from Glasgow direct, what do you pay for a bag of oatmeal in Glasgow?—£2, 4s.

12048. What is the freight of the steamer to this place?—2s. 6d. per bag altogether. It costs 3s. 6d. for the carriage of it to my house; so that the total cost of a bag of meal, when it reaches my house, is £2, 8s.

12049. Do you pay 44s. in Glasgow for a bag of oatmeal?—I paid 22s. to a Glasgow merchant for one boll of oatmeal.

12050. I suppose the merchant is a family grocer that supplies meal, as well as other things, on credit?—No credit longer than fourteen days, or over three weeks.

12051. I suppose you are quite sure that is the case about the meal?—I am perfectly certain.

RANALD MACDONALD, *Factor on the Estate—examined.*

Ranald Macdonald.

12052. *The Chairman.*—You have a statement to make to us?—I may mention that this island of Benbecula is my native place, and I am better acquainted with the people here than with any of the people in the Western Islands; and I am quite certain, though they may have been led to make mis-statements, that arises not from any deliberate intention to mislead the Commissioners, but from want of information, and probably relying upon inaccurate reports and rumours which have been circulated from one to another. I shall endeavour in dealing with the matters brought before the Commissioners to be as brief as possible; and in order to do so, I shall classify the complaints which have been made by those who have come forward, who, I may say, are known to me, and who, I believe, are truthful men, although I have distinct evidence here to the contrary effect, having collected information regarding some of the points which they have stated to your Lordship and to the other Commissioners. The complaints made divide themselves mainly into land being taken from them and increase of rent. I shall deal with these first, and I have no doubt that in instances here and there changes may have taken place in regard to the boundaries of townships from time to time, and some of them may be perfectly correct in saying that pieces have been taken from them. But, in order to look at the question in the shortest and most satisfactory way, we should consider what the extent of the farm of Nunton was when the estate of Benbecula was sold, and what the present acreage of that farm is. Now, without entering into details or dealing with individual statements made, I have before me the particulars of the sale of the estate by Clanranald, dated 1836, and I find in these parts that the farm of Nunton is described as follows:—There is part of the farm of Nunton—41 acres arable, 500·64 acres pasture, and 12·15 lochs = 554·29 acres Scotch. Another detached part of Nunton consisted of 275·74 acres and 3·40 of lochs = 279·14. Another part of the Nunton consisted of 519·97 acres arable, 164·96 pasture, 2448·15 hill pasture, 373·56 lochs = 3506·64. Balfinlay, which was then, and is now, part of Nunton, 117·60 acres. The total acreage, excluding the lochs, is 4067 acres Scotch, and in a rough way that is equal to 5200 acres imperial. Now, from the survey of Nunton, which I got

from the surveyor, I find the total acreage is entered as 4077 acres in 1882, so that when the sum total corresponding to the one period, and the sum total corresponding to the other period are taken into account, though I don't doubt that here and there in several townships there may have been changes of marches and pieces taken off, still, upon the whole, the farm of Nunton is less now than it was when the estate of Clanranald was sold. And as it is well known that the whole of the estate of Benbecula may be said to be in the hands of the crofters except Nunton, the rest of the estate must necessarily be in the hands of the crofters. I may mention that Ledistrom and Cregton are places which were offered to the tenants, provided they could pay a certain proportion of the stock upon the place. I had a twofold object in offering it in that way—the first being to give an opportunity to the crofters to put the management of their sheep stock upon what I considered a proper and a profitable footing. In the meantime, the whole of that general commonty is open, not only to the crofters from all parts of the island, but open even to strangers,—open to cottars, open to anybody. They may put their stock there at any time, and there is nobody to regulate or protect it in any way. I am perfectly satisfied, and I have told the crofters in the different townships from time to time, that I was sure and certain that if they would take a little trouble to put that common pasturage upon a proper footing, and have their sheep stock put under the management of some person who would look after the stock, and manage the sheep the same as sheep belonging to large tacksmen are managed, the profit would be very largely increased. An attempt was made to do so, and Mr Walker, the factor, went the length, with the consent, I understand, of some of the leading crofters in the different townships, of encouraging the men, with a view to adopting these new regulations, and getting a better class of sheep in order to improve the stock; but, on account of some misunderstanding or neglect, or indifference, it has not been carried out. I may take this opportunity of again urging in the strongest possible term upon the crofters of Benbecula that they should lose no time in taking steps for the more profitable management of their sheep stock. While making these few remarks about the sheep stock, I may again say with regard to Ledistrom and Cregston that the offer is still open to them. If any of them come forward and offer the old rent for these places, they will get the preference before any one. Offers have been sent in by individuals for that piece of ground, but the consideration of them was postponed in order to give an opportunity to the crofters of acquiring that piece of ground for themselves. Having, as I think your Lordship will be satisfied, disposed of the complaints about 'land being cut off the townships,' and being desirous not to encroach too much upon your time, I shall now deal shortly with the rents. One after another has come forward complaining that the rents have been increased, or, in other words, that the rents have not been reduced while portions of the land have been taken off them. From time to time slight alterations may be made in individual cases, but I presume the Commissioners, instead of basing any kind of opinions upon what may turn out to be an exceptional case, would like to know generally how these changes affected the whole body of the crofters, and I will again refer to the rental of the estate of Benbecula at the time the purchase was made by the late Colonel Gordon of Cluny. I find that some changes have been made in the boundaries of some of the townships, but when the whole are taken together, and a comparison is made between the whole of the townships then and now, we can see how a fair and just comparison can be made. But in some other townships the changes in the boundaries are not so great. Uachdar and Eramisdale, and what is called the inn at the ford, were entered into the

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particulars at £236. I find that the present rental is £180. That is a reduction, as compared with the time of Clanranald, of £56. Uachdar remains very much as it did before, but Gramisdale was let in connection with the inn, and could not be said to be, as people understood it to be, a croft. But, in order to give an opportunity to increase the holdings of some of the people in the other townships, when the changes were made a few years ago, the grazing of Gramisdale attached to the inn was set apart for the crofters. Crofters were removed from other townships and got crofts at Gramisdale, and the crofts from which they were removed were added to those of some of the neighbours; and thus, I have no doubt, a benefit was conferred. I come now to Dungannichy, and I have very great pleasure in stating that the crofters in this township are among not only the most prosperous but most enterprising and most pushing crofters, not only of this island, but, I hold, of the estates belonging to Lady Cathcart in this part of the country. The rental of Dungannichy in 1836 was £153, 6s., and now the rent is £81, and the tenants pay an average of about £10; and I was pleased, when I was here last year, to see the stock at the market, for they would almost compare with the stock of any tacksman. I think it is not out of place to mention that they were so pushing that they joined with a neighbouring township to buy a bull for the improvement of their stock, which cost £40. I trust some of the other crofters, seeing the effect of this in improving the stock of these people, will be encouraged to do what they can to improve their stock also. I now come to Balvannich. Balvannich does not lie contiguous to Nunton farm, and there could not be very much taken off Balvannich at any time. The rent of Balvannich in 1836 was £207, 5s., and the rent of Balvannich now is £133, 5s. I come to Aird. I know very considerable changes were made on the township of Aird. When the emigration took place in 1851, a portion of the moor of Aird, which was certainly the worst part of the township, and under small crofters, was added to the farm of Nunton, and the rents paid by these people vanished when they removed. The rental of Aird in 1836 was £294, 14s. 2½d., and the rent at the present moment is £156, 5s. I find in the old particulars that the township of Griminish is not mentioned at all. It is all included in the general term of Torlum, and the rent entered for Torlum is £370, 1s. The rent of Torlum now is £134, 12s., but Griminish is £146, and I have no doubt what is now Griminish and Torlum are included under the general description in the old particulars. Again, Liniclelt, which in 1836 was £319, 8s., is now £180, 6s. There were other places which were made into crofts after the new road was made through the island. Hacleit is now under crofters, and the rent is £67, 3s., and Flodda is £34, 10s. I find that the rental of the townships entered in the particulars of the estate in 1836 amount altogether to £1580, 15s. 2½d.; while the rent of these townships now, including certain pendicles which were then commonty, and are now let to tenants near the new road and near the sea up at Hacleit and Flodda, amounts to £1176, showing a reduction of something not far from 50 per cent. While the rent payable by the crofters has diminished in this respect, it is a very striking and noticeable fact that the rent of Nunton has increased from £213, 12s. 2d. to £405. But even after taking into account the very large increase, amounting almost to 100 per cent., upon the farm of Nunton, there is a reduction upon the rental of Benbecula now as compared with what it was in 1836. I don't think it is necessary that I should take up your time in referring to some of the other complaints, such as about bad water. In fact, I think any complaints about bad water should be less now than they were a few years ago, for a very large sum of money has been expended in recent years in putting the flood gates

into as perfect order as it was possible to do, improving the drainage, and at the same time preventing the salt water from coming in and doing any injury to the stock, and I don't think any crofter got more benefit from these changes than the crofter who brought the matter under your Lordship's notice. It is quite true that the rents in 1836 may have been, to a certain extent, based upon kelp. I have heard it said that some of the rents were what were called kelp rents; and I have little doubt the tenants could not have been able, in those times, to pay the rent entered in these printed particulars unless they had such a profitable industry as the kelp; but I may, without unduly detaining you, apply another test to the rents paid by the crofters in the island of Benbecula. I find that the whole of the rents payable by crofters amount to £1176, and I mean to compare that with the stock which these crofters keep upon the land for which they pay this sum. I may mention I have not to speak of the outside pendicles, and in comparing the rent I would be obliged to take £1191, because that is the rent of the crofts on which the stock is. The rental being £1191, 10s., the stock is as follows:—687 cows and heifers at £6 = £4122; 326 stirks at £4, though I may say some of them sold at £6, 10s. at last market = £1304; 1529 sheep, which ought to be worth upwards of £2000, if properly managed, but I have put them down, and I know they are miserably bad, at £1200. I regret to say the number of aged horses amounts to £305. I put them down at £8 = £2440.

12053. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Why do you say you regret?—Because I am confident that the number of horses kept by the crofters is very much against their interest. Even if they have only half a croft, they are in the habit of keeping two horses and perhaps a colt; and keeping up so many horses eats up a very large proportion of the produce of the croft, and it is therefore impossible for them to keep their ordinary stock of cows and heifers and stirks in the condition in which they might be, in consequence of the quantity of straw and other provender that these horses require. I have been urging them as often as I had an opportunity of doing so, to do their utmost to reduce the number of horses, and explaining to them how, in other places, where the system of agriculture is admitted to be carried on in a satisfactory way, the tenants of small holdings are careful not to keep more horses than they absolutely require. There are 105 colts or young horses which I put down at £5 = £525. The total value of the stock is, then, £9291. I have here an estimate of the value of the crops on the crofts of Benbecula, which is got up with very considerable care. The extent under potatoes, turnips, oats, barley, rye, mixed grain, and pasture upon every lot in Benbecula is entered in it as accurately as possible. The abstract shows the totals. There were 148·219 acres under potatoes, valued at £1422, 19s.; turnips, 22·235 acres (but I may say to the credit of the crofters that that is a great deal more than the extent of land under turnips by crofters in either South Uist or Barra, and I trust that, in a short time, they will find the profit arising from having land under turnips in order to provide winter food for their cattle) value about £6; oats, 612·258 acres, valued at £956,15s; bere, 563·660 acres = £1515, 1s. 6d.; rye, 3·500 acres = £2; mixed grain, 45·450 acres = £60, 5s. The arable pasture is put down, but nothing is placed opposite it, and the total value is £4084, 9s. 6d., adding the value of the crops to the value of the stock, the amount is £13,375, 9s. 6d., and when compared with the rent of these townships, excluding the outside pendicles, which are not taken into account in this calculation, it will be seen that it is a very large proportion indeed, and a very satisfactory result in one way, but it is also, I take it, a proof that the rents are not excessive. Indeed, I may say from my own personal knowledge of the rents paid in other

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parts of Scotland, that whatever may be the cause of any grievances the tenants may have in the island of Benbecula, it is not the rents. I shall not say a single word more on this point further than to state that if arrangements were made for increasing the holding as far as it were possible.

12054. May I ask what are the arrears at this present moment upon the crofters?—I will give in a note of them afterwards. I may state that before these modifications were made, with a view of benefiting the crofters of Benbecula, a very careful report was presented on each township in the island, and the report has a printed heading, showing, first, a social and industrial census of the inhabitants within the township, and distinguishing families who pay rent and those who do not pay rent. Secondly, a statement of the acreage formerly let as crofts, and I may explain that that embraces the portions of ground which were exclusively and absolutely the holding of the tenants. The tenants have, besides the croft proper, very often a share of common upon the macher, that is the sandy portion of the island on the west side, and also a share of commonty belonging to each particular township, and besides the commonty that belong to each particular township, there is that large piece which is a general commonty, to which the crofters from one end of the island to the other may go when they please. The extent used as common ground for cultivation and pasture connected with the crofts was considered common land for general pasturage for sheep and cattle. The statement was illustrated by plans, showing not only the present crofts, but also the boundaries of the proposed new lots, and accompanied by a classified report on the quality and capabilities of the soil. Thirdly, a report of the summing of the stock belonging to the tenants, taking an average of years, and comparing one period with another, and the varieties and quantities the crops produced annually within the township, and there was an expression of opinion as to the improvement of the stock, the possible increase of the crops by improved cultivation, drainage, and fences, and general observations applicable to any townships not embraced in any one of these heads. Careful reports of each township were made, and an accurate survey, and then the whole townships were very carefully considered, and as far as possible, according to the circumstances of the tenants, in regard to means and likewise the extent of the families, the lots were given off. There may be a few who are not satisfied, and I find that the most of those are persons who, probably from no fault of their own, but in consequence of having weak families or otherwise, or not being so healthy or so able to work as their neighbours, had not been in a position to take large holdings. These have probably less ground now than they would wish to get, and these may feel that they are not in the position in which they would wish to be, and in the position in which we would wish to see them. But I can only say this, that after the most careful investigation—the most minute investigation—I may say, of the points bearing upon the land capable of division among them, and the capabilities of the tenants, the distribution of the lots was made and given to the tenants of Benbecula. Your Lordship and the other Commissioners have found in other places which you have visited that the crofters there refused to take leases. I am proud that the crofters of my native isle have had more intelligence than to refuse what was calculated to bring such a boon to them, and what has been a boon to the tenantry of Scotland. Notwithstanding the climate, and I may say the comparatively poor soil of Scotland, the cultivation of Scotland is on a level with, if not above, the cultivation of any part of the known world. And I do hope and trust, and I don't at all despair of saying, that the crofters of Benbecula, taking advantage of the security a lease gives them, by first fencing

their land, which I consider to be one of the most important things they can do, and which must be done before they can enter upon any other improvements, will very soon double the amount of produce they get from their soil. I have been often grieved when I have visited the lands to find the unskilful way in which the ground was tilled, and added to that the want of fences, and the young cattle and sheep and colts driving through the little crops they had, and reducing them in many cases by half, while with more skilful cultivation and protection by fences they would have double the produce for winter keep which they have now. I am glad to find that, especially in Dunginnachy, some of the crofters have already seen the benefit of these improvements, and I trust that others may follow their example. I have only one other observation to make, and it is this, that after the lots were as carefully divided and considered as it was possible to do, instead of the proprietor's representatives putting the rent upon these crofts, Mr Macdonald, Newton, North Uist, who is known not only as a man of very great experience, but as a man of thorough fairness and impartiality, and a man who, if he erred at all would err in the way of making the rent such as the industrious crofter would be able to pay, was asked, with the full consent and approval of the crofters of Benbecula, to inspect the whole of the crofts, after the boundaries were marked off upon the ground. I hold in my hand his valuation, which, I may state, reduced the former rent by something like £200. Lady Cathcart was willing, and did not grudge at all, that the tenants should get the benefit of the rise, as she felt that, especially when they were commencing to make improvements in the way of draining and fencing, and improving their houses, it was right and proper that their rents should be moderate, in order that they might have encouragement, and have the means of devoting a portion of what they might save to these permanent improvements, which, though they might not come in immediately, would be a great pleasure to any landlord to see, and would ultimately, no doubt, add to the value of the estate. It may be interesting to the Commissioners if I mentioned the acreage of some of these crofts. Beginning with Gramisdale, which I stated before was the portion of land attached to the inn, and let to nine tenants, the extent of the crofts was—I shall read a few: 16 acres, rent £4, 5s.; 31·7 acres, rent £6, 5s.; 27 acres, rent £3, 5s.; 28 acres, rent £4. And we then come to the place which I believe was the dearest place in the island of Benbecula, namely Aird. The acreage of a croft there is 14 acres, £6; 21 acres, £9; 18 acres, £7, 15s.; 18 acres, £7, 4s. The total acreage of the township of Aird—of the crofts—is 605 acres, divided among thirty-seven crofts, and the total rent £156, 5s.

12055. *Mr Cameron.*—Is that all arable land?—Yes, and in addition to that was their share of the common. I have only to refer now, and I do so with very great pleasure, to the improvements made by the tenants of Benbecula since they got these leases.

12056. *Mr Fraser Mackintosh.*—When was that?—1880,—from April 1880 up to this time. The list is so long that I shall summarise it. 'In 'Gramisdale built new dwelling house,' 'built new byre,' 'built new 'dwelling house and byre,' 'building new dwelling house.' In Uachdar there are nine who built new dwelling houses and byres, and some of them made drains, some turf drains, and some open drains. In Dungannichy I find a tenant there made turf dykes and open ditches; another built stone dykes and improved and drained land near a lake; another put up a wire fence; another made some drains; another built as much of a stone dyke as enclosed his tack; another made open drains; another built a new dwelling house and byre, and made a turf dyke and ditch. In Aird some excellent new houses have been built. There is a long list. At Griminish

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there were new houses built; 'turf dyke built;' 'built new house and re-'claimed land;' 'built new house and made some open drains;' 'new houses 'and byre built,' Linnicleit:—Some houses and stone dykes built there, and one slated house, and fifty yards of a stone dyke, and so on. So that though the work of improvement has not gone on in Benbecula so fast as I think it ought, still there is so much done as to afford very great encouragement; and I am satisfied from what has been done that the people will find the benefit of it, and that they will go on increasing it year by year.

12057. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—What assistance was given by the proprietrix in these improvements?—The proprietrix offered wood to some and slates. There is a general clause in the estate regulations, which are attached to every one of those crofters' leases, applicable to fences. The clause is as follows:—'The ground thus set apart is to be enclosed by ring 'fences of dry stone dykes, where practicable, or of wire, or of a ditch and 'earthen fence in low situations where dykes are impracticable or unsuit-'able. These fences are to be paid for at the mutual expense of proprietrix 'and tenants after the lines, specifications, and estimates are approved of, 'and the work completed to the satisfaction of the factor. The tenants are 'to pay interest at £3 sterling per cent. per annum on the moiety of the 'expense paid by the proprietrix, and to keep the fences throughout the 'lease in good condition; and if not kept in good order the proprietrix 'reserves power to repair them at the tenants' expense.' There have not been claims made under this clause, but we shall be only too glad when they come in. I may observe that the rate of interest was made unusually low, with the view of inducing what was believed to be a sort of improvement that was most needed, and was calculated to effect the maximum of good to the crofters. As regards drainage, the clause in the lease is to this effect:—'The tenants shall be bound to improve 'and drain efficiently every year one-tenth part at least of the lands 'let requiring such improvment, and remove from said lands and lay 'down the stones suitable for dykes in lines marked out by the 'factor, and use the smaller stones for drains. The expense of these im-'provements is to be paid mutually by the proprietrix and the tenants; 'but in no case shall the moiety payable by the proprietrix exceed '£8 sterling per imperial acre; and for the sum which may be thus 'advanced by the proprietrix after the improvements are completed and 'approved of by the factor, the tenants shall pay interest at the rate of £4 'sterling per cent. per annum.' As to houses, they are to be kept in repair; and with the view of encouraging the tenants to erect good houses, or to give substantial assistance in erecting and maintaining farm houses and garden fences in good condition, it is stipulated that 'meliorations will be 'allowed to the extent of the amount of two years' rents, the one half being 'payable at the end of the first five years of the lease, and the remaining 'half at the expiry of the lease, provided the houses and garden fences are 'found, by valuation of arbiters mutually chosen, to be of that extra value, 'exclusive of carriages, quarrying, and excavations for foundations, over and 'above the amount of the heritor's inventory, the tenants to pay interest 'at £4 sterling per cent. per annum on the meliorations advanced at the 'end of the first five years of the leases. The tenants shall be bound to 'insure the buildings against fire to the extent of two-thirds of their value, 'and exhibit to the factor the receipts for the premiums when asked to 'do so.'

12058. What is the length of the lease?—Ten years. Then there are clauses referring to the way-going crop, over-stocking, rates, and so on. There is another clause which is a little unusual in leases, but I think it

is a very useful clause. It provides that improvements should be registered. It often happens that when there is no registration of improvements made, nothing is said about them till the end of the lease, when sometimes the outgoing tenant may not be inclined to look at things so favourably or so fairly as when he is an occupying tenant, and, in order to prevent misunderstandings, there was a clause put into the leases as follows:—'The amount of the cost of the improvements for fences, drainage, and houses shall be fixed by the factor, who will register these improvements from time to time as the work is done in a book kept for the purpose, and send a statement to the tenant within six months after the work is done, and the tenant will be held as approving of the same, unless he intimate his objections within one month after receiving the statement; but should any tenant intimate within one month that he is dissatisfied with the statement as made out by the factor, an arbiter, mutually chosen, will be appointed, whose decision shall be final, the expense of such arbitration to be divided equally between proprietrix and tenant.' There is another clause providing that nothing shall prevent the tenants from being paid for substantial improvements made under any of the clauses in the leases. Energetic tenants get leases confirmed at the end of the first five years. This clause was put in to reserve a certain amount of power if it should be found that some of the tenants were not improving tenants, and were not fulfilling the conditions of the lease; and power was reserved, in short, and there should be a break in the lease at the end of the first five years. But there was a clause put in to give every possible encouragement to the tenants to go on with these improvements, so that even if a break in the lease should be taken advantage of, he might be perfectly sure he would be paid for improvements effected by himself. The clause is—'As the foregoing conditions are framed specially with the view of benefiting the tenants, by giving them reasonable security that they will reap the benefit of their own industry, and giving facilities for the introduction of a better system of agriculture, and more comfortable farm buildings, it must be provided that those who do not exert themselves to take advantage of these privileges shall forfeit their leases; and so as to encourage the energetic and industrious, and distinguish between them and those who fail to act up to the conditions of lease relating to the improvement of the land and houses, it is stipulated that there will be a break in every lease, at the option of the proprietrix, at the end of the first five years;—but even in the case of those who forfeit their leases, an equitable settlement will be made with them, based on a report by arbiters mutually chosen, but only those permanent improvements are to be taken into account as shall appear from the arbiter's report to have added to the letting value of the subject. The expenses of valuation and arbitration are to be paid by the tenant, and all expenses of every kind connected with the settlement shall form a preferable claim against the sum which may be awarded to the tenant.' These are the special clauses in the leases. Before leaving Benbecula, I may state that when the extent of land capable of distribution into crofts was being considered, it was found with regret that it was necessary to make the crofts of a smaller size than we would like. It was quite impossible to accommodate the number of people who would require to be accommodated in the best way it was possible or practicable to do so. The only way in which we could think the crofts could be enlarged was by getting some of the people voluntarily to remove to some other place. Mr Gordon of Clnny was then alive, and he and Lady Cathcart were desirous to do the most they could for the people; but they were most careful and guarded not to do anything to convey the impression that they wished any one to leave the island against

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his will, but they would have been pleased if some of them had seen their way spontaneously to remove to some other place, in order that it might be practicable to make the crofts larger. Accordingly, when the matter was considered, two men from Benbecula were set apart by the people themselves—at all events they were not selected by any person connected with the proprietor—and they proposed to go out to the north-west territory to see the place for themselves, and come back and report truthfully to their friends what their opinion was as to the prospects of some of the Benbecula people if they spontaneously made up their minds to go there. An offer was made to them then that their arrears and current rents would be cancelled, and that substantial assistanee would be given to them to enable them to enter at once upon lands in Canada if they thought of going. They kuew that Government offered 160 acres of good arable land free, and that an equal extent would be given at a very moderate price, and in such a way that they could pay the price by convenient instalments. But none of them thought proper at the time to take advantage of this offer, and consequently there was no alternative except to divide these crofts the best way we could, distinguishing those who were considered able in regard to their families or in regard to their stock, &c.—giving them the larger crofts—and taking care not to remove people and put them to extra expense in building new houses except in cases where it was impossible this could be avoided. I think it is due to the crofters in Benbecula that I should publicly refer to the manner in which they settled among themselves all the little questions that arose in regard to the houses received and houses sold by those who shifted—where two crofts were put into one, and where others had to take lots upon what was formerly the common. I was very much afraid there would be considerable difficulty in settling these matters between them, but I was pleased and relieved to find that the whole matter was settled without any difficulty at all, and I think it proper I should testify to that on this public occasion. Before leaving Benbecula it may be interesting, if I should in a word refer to the valuation of the effects of the emigrants who came forward this year, and asked that the offer which had been made and rejected should be repeated, and who left for the north-west territory. I was very glad the day before I came away to the west coast, to receive a letter confirming the intelligence which had previously come by telegram announcing their safe arrival on the other side of the Atlantic, and intimating that they were in very excellent spirits—that they were just proceeding upon their journey to their destination. Ten families in all left, but three of them were young people who had no effects, except perhaps money. There were seven crofters who had houses, furniture, implements, stock, and crop, and who had other things which were taken over from them under the arbitration of men mutually chosen. The value of the houses belonging to these seven crofters amounted to £116, 9s. 1½d.; furniture and farming implements, £158, 2s. 0½d.; stock and crop, £406, 4s. 7d. Some of those, I may explain, were tenants who had got leases a few years ago, and who had made substantial permanent improvements on their crofts, for which they got £29, 12s. 7½d. Some of them had made preparation for this year's crop, and they got for unexhausted manures £56, 6s. There was also allowed for timber £17, 11s. 6d.; total sum paid to them by Lady Cathcart, £754, 5s. 10½d.; and the advance of £100 each makes the total sum £1456, 3s. 4½d. Having had the pleasure of accompanying them on board the steamer, I may say they seemed in very good spirits, and very anxious that their houses should be as near to each other as possible. When it was explained to them that the extent of land which each one would get would be nearly as large as the township

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from which they came, their only regret was that their dwelling-houses would be so far apart, and that they would not have the opportunity of visiting each other so regularly as they had had in their old homes, but they were still planning that they should make their houses near the corner of their lands, so that there should be four houses not very far from each other. I shall now refer in a general way to the other estates, and I may mention that they were purchased between 1839 and 1841 by the late Colonel Gordon of Cluny from Clanranald, from Macdonald of Bornish, Macdonald of Boisdale, and Macdonald of Barra, the price being £173,729. Up to the time in 1865 when these estates were exposed for sale the permanent improvements effected amounted to £32,000. These mainly consisted of the formation of the leading line of road from the Sound of Barra to the Sound of North Uist, with branch roads, and also openings for draining portions of the land already under water; and some of these having become filled up, a considerable amount has been expended by Lady Cathcart lately in opening up and putting these drains in proper order. She has expended upon piers, hotels, cottages, farm buildings, and the expense of materials given to crofters to assist them to put up houses, the sum of £19,000.

12059. In how many years?—In about five years—amounting in all to upwards of £51,000. The rental of the estate of Clanranald in 1836 was £4531, 6s. 4d.; of the estate of Bornish £235, 4s.; and of Boisdale, £1053, 1s. 4d.;—total, £5819. The rental now of the same lands, taking the valuation roll of 1882, is £6587, 3s. 4d. There is thus an increase over all since 1836 of £767, 11s. 8d. I may explain that there has been a very large increase of rent on the grazings, equal in some cases to from 30 to 80 per cent. But for upwards of thirty years there has been no material alteration upon the extent of land under crofters. In 1872 the rents payable by crofters—by 516 crofters—amounted to £2002, 6s. 1d.; in 1882 the same number of crofters were upon the land, and the rent was substantially the same, the difference being only £2. The stock held by the crofters in 1882 is as follows.

12060. Can you give us the increase from 1872?—No; I have only the stock for 1882. I am giving the totals for the whole island of South Uist. There are 3661 inhabitants, 1098 horses, 1841 cattle above one year old, 1010 cattle under one year old, 4624 sheep, and 404 swine. This stock represents what belongs to crofters and cottars, the amount in all being £30,503, 10s. I may mention that the stock belonging to cottars on the island of South Uist consists of 92 horses, 140 cattle above one year old, 84 under one year old, 518 sheep, and 46 swine. The horses owned by crofters are 1006. The value of the stock belonging to cottars in South Uist amounts of £2556, 10s., and the value of the stock belonging to crofters amounts to £27,947. This is on what is considered to be a moderate valuation. The horses are valued at £8, the aged cattle at £7, 10s., the young cattle at £4, the sheep at 15s., and the swine at 20s. I shall very briefly refer to the rental paid by the tenants. The rental of the tenants who have this stock is as follows:—Under £3, £502, 14s. 7d.; between £3 and £5, £539, 14s.; between £5 and £10, £873, 18s. 9d.; between £10 and £20, £224, 2s.; over £20, £60; total, £2200; so that if the value of the stock is compared with the amount of the rent paid, it will be found that the tenants of South Uist have a much larger value in stock than the tenants of either Benbecula or Barra; in fact, they have a larger value in stock compared with their rent than any class of tenants that I know in any place whatever.

12061. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Does the stock which you have given in South Uist include that of large farmers?—No, merely crofters.

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12062. Does the population you gave include large farmers?—No.

12063. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Is there a crofter population of 3661?—With cottars.

12064. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Have you taken the acreage and stock of the large farmers?—No. The number of persons who are connected with the crofter class is 2948, and with the families of the cottars 713, making 3661. I am sorry I cannot give the value of the crop in South Uist, but I am safe to say that it will be less than the crop in Benbecula relatively to the amount of rent, for I am satisfied that the Benbecula tenants cultivate their land better than those in South Uist, and that the value of the crop is greater in proportion to the rent than in South Uist, though I have come to the conclusion that the South Uist tenants are cheaper rented than the Beubecula tenants are. I shall now compare the rentals of some of the townships in South Uist at the present time with the rentals when the estate was purchased. There are some changes in the names. There is more included, for instance, under certain names than was included in 1836. Certain places were entered under one general name, which are now entered under two names, so that it is very difficult for me to make a very distinct comparison between individual townships. However, I shall select some of those townships which stand out by themselves at a distance from the other grazings, and which may be supposed to be now substantially the same as they were in 1836. I may refer first to Stilligarry. The rent of Stilligarry is the only one in which I find an increase, and it is remarkable that Stilligarry may be said to be one of the most prosperous townships in South Uist. In 1831 the retals was £55, and the rent now payable by eleven tenants is £69, 15s. I take these figures from the printed particulars of the estate in 1866, an I do not think there is any substantial difference on the place since that time. I may give the rate per acre of the different townships. Garabsillie, 87 acres in the crofts, 84 macher, 100 arable—271 acres altogether; rent, £29, 5s. 9d. = 2s. 1¾d. per acre;—Daliborge, 460 acres in the crofts, 258 macher, 200 common arable—total, 918 acres; rent, £171, 7s. 6d.; rate per acre, 3s. 8¾d.;—Kilphedar, 402 acres in the crofts, 280 macher, 200 common arable,—total, 882 acres; rent, £210, 6s.; rate per acre, 4s. 9d.;—North Boisdale, 746 acres in the crofts, 124 common arable,—total, 870 acres; rent, £220, 7s. 4d.; rate per acre, 5s. 0¾d.

12065. *The Chairman.*—As you have given us a few specimen cases, it is not necessary to go over all?—I think that those I have given may be held as specimen cases. There is a class which I find to be striking and of some importance, and I may bring it under the notice of the Commissioners. It shows very clearly the classification of the arrears, and that as the rents decrease beneath £10, and especially beneath £5, the arrears proportionally increase, except in the case of the small rents payable be fishermen at such a place as Castle Bay, or tradesmen who have small lots for the convenience of supplying themselves with milk and potato ground. But in the case of all those tenants who depend mainly upon their crofts for their livelihood, it is very manifest that when the rents, which may be taken as an index of the size of the croft, are below £10, and especially below £7 or £5, their circumstances are such that their arrears do increase. Their arrears may be taken as an index of their circumstances, and they show that if there was any possible means of increasing the crofts to such a size as would provide work for an ordinary family, and also provide them with food so that they would not have to purchase meal, then they would be in the position not only of being comfortable themselves, but of being able to pay their rents to the proprietor. It is perfectly evident to crofters and others that it must by

the interest of proprietors and those acting for proprietors to do everything in their power to increase the crofts to this extent, where it is possible to do so. I find that in the case of those who hold land in South Uist from £10 to £20 the arrears per £1 are about 9s; in the case of tenants paying from £5 to £10, the proportion is 30s. per £1; in the case of those from £3 to £5, the arrears are about two and a half years' rent; and although I know that there are a number who pay small rents, and who pay these small rents regularly—and some of those are included in the amount I have here for tenants under £3—yet, when these are included, the proportion of arrears due by tenants under £3 is equal to four years' rents; so it is perfectly manifest that the interests of proprietors and tenants are promoted by increasing the crofts when it is possible to do so. It also shows that it is exceedingly short-sighted and foolish on the part of crofters to settle down with their families upon very small pieces of land, which, notwithstanding all their industry and diligence, cannot possibly either provide them with work or provide them with food. It would be very much better for those people to do something else than to settle down upon a very small piece of ground which is manifestly too little to provide them with food. It is also against the interests of the families that they should be situated in a position where the families cannot have steady employment. It leads the family to form habits which cannot be for their interest in after life. If people are well, there is nothing better for them than to have steady employment. If they are placed in circumstances so that they cannot have steady employment, the formation of the habits which necessarily attach to such a position must be very much against those families; and I have no hesitation in saying that crofters who have insignificant and small pieces of land, and who are so placed that their own means and the circumstances of the locality prevent the crofts from being made of a proper size, should in the interests of their family get into some position whereby they would get steady and continuous employment for themselves and their families. I was very much struck by a remark made by Dr Black yesterday, when he gave evidence before your Lordship and the other Commissioners, to the effect that their condition in regard to food and clothing acted upon the health of some of the crofters, and he said what appeared to me to be very remarkable and very striking, that not only those upon the larger farms, the farmers themselves and the members of their families, but their servants, were exempt from what he attributed to the circumstances which necessarily attach to the condition of the crofters who are of the poorer class. It is perfectly evident therefore that even being in service, as regards their health, as regards their position, and as regards the interests of their families, is very much better for the crofters than to remain in a condition in which there is really no hope for them. I wish to refer to a few of the complaints which were made by the tenants in South Uist, and the first one to which I wish to refer is the complaint made by some of the Kilphedar people, and as the tenants from the other townships merely re-echoed what the Kilphedar delegate said, I shall allow the remarks which I make with reference to Kilphedar to apply generally to other townships. The only point to which I think it necessary to make a very brief reference is that as to the reclamation fields in South Uist. The changes which were made forty years ago or longer are really matters regarding which I have no personal knowledge, and it is not necessary I should take up time in referring to these matters. But as the reclamation fields relate to a matter regarding which I must take upon my own head any blame that may attach, I think it necessary I should say a few words in regard to this matter. When the kelp industry failed, it became a very

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severe question what should be done to provide employment for some of the people who were accustomed to pay a considerable portion of the land by the work they got in making kelp; and after carefully considering this matter, I could not think of any sort of work that would bring in any return whatever unless we could reclaim some of the waste ground which was in peat bogs and on the roadside near the public road. I was very anxious that those places which were an eye-sore near the public road should be the places selected for this purpose. I consulted people in whom I had most confidence as to the time an ordinary workman should take to do such work, and fixed the rates accordingly, and I endeavoured to get the work done by the contract system. Without entering into details, I shall refer to a statement which I have in my hand, and give the totals in the abstract. It shows that in 1882 at eight different places there were fields extending to 79½ acres. The amount paid by Lady Cathcart for the work in connection with these fields was £951, 5s. 10d. Mr Walker sent in an estimate which is dated 1882. That must be the one referring to last year. The income was £385, and it shows a loss of £565, 14s. 10d. This was submitted to Lady Cathcart, and though it would be always more satisfactory that any work done, even of the nature of relief work, should be made as near self-supporting as possible, yet she did not grudge to go on with the work, being satisfied that it was a benefit to the people, and being also satisfied that it would produce an area of the estate in which not only the proprietrix but the tenants must be interested. I have only further to say that instead of sending the produce of these fields out of the island, the people this spring, in consequence of the scarcity of provender, petitioned to get the stacks of corn fodder and hay which were taken off these fields last year. As is well known, this spring the scarcity of seed potatoes was such that most proprietors had to buy them from a distance. Lady Cathcart provided her tenants with 2554 barrels of potatoes for seed, which were given out at the moderate rate of 5s. At places on the mainland 10s., 12s., and even more was charged for a barrel of potatoes. In addition to that there was a large quantity of seed—wheat and oats—and a large quantity of strong corn unthrashed in spring, so that the amount of the produce of these fields given to the crofters this spring exceeded £1000. I ask the indulgence of the Commissioners when I take the liberty of mentioning that it was I who suggested the whole scheme, and I was willing to take the responsibility of it, and I must say I regret that the tenants should convert into a ground of complaint what was intended, and what I believe really was, a beneficial work for themselves, in first giving them employment, and then giving what was very necessary for them this spring,—namely, fodder for their cattle and seed for their ground. I regret that the feeling of ingratitude shown may have a tendency to discourage Lady Cathcart from repeating anything of the same kind, and I should regret extremely that the tenants should be led inadvertently to do anything adverse to what was intended to be, and which could be seen by any person looking at it from an impartial point of view, to be decidedly for their own benefit. As I may have another opportunity of submitting in detail certain statements to your Lordship and the Commissioners, and as it would probably be convenient that I should hear the other delegates in this island, it will be easy for me to supplement what I have said on another occasion. Therefore, though there are several points which I wish to bring under your Lordship's notice, I think it expedient that the people here should feel I make room for them, and therefore I shall cut short my statement at present.

12066. I think it is my duty to thank you for the very full statement which you have commenced to make, and which has contained a great

deal that is extremely interesting with reference to the re-partitioning of the land of this estate between the different classes of tenants, with reference to the resources of the small tenantry, and with reference to the system practised by Lady Cathcart in promoting improvements by the crofters themselves. We regret we have not been able to hear you at greater length on this occasion. There are many questions which we would have liked to put, and which we are obliged to defer to another time, but before we part I should like you to give us in general terms a statement on one head, and that is—can you state in presence of the Commission and of this assembly what has been the annual proportion of the gross rental of this estate expended in works of public utility and benevolence during the last four or five years?—I feel a difficulty in stating definitely in figures what the amount may be, but I may state genrally that Lady Cathcart has expended out of her own private pocket several thousand pounds beyond the rental of the property since she succeeded, and that has all been expended on the estate. She has annually drawn from the estates of South Uist, Benbecula, and Barra about £2500 since she succeeded, and though I could not state definitely just now what she has drawn on her own private bank account for expenditure here, I am safe to say it is double the amount she drew from the estate account for other purposes. I am safe in saying that the whole rental of the estates has been expended on the estates since Lady Cathcart succeeded, and about £2500 more. The sum expended includes the additions made to the house at Grogary, which may be said to partake of the nature of personal expenditure, but the great proportion of the money expended was on what may be termed general estate improvements.

ANGUS M'KINNON, Crofter, Linicleit (60)—examined.

12067. *The Chairman.*—Have you been freely elected a delegate?—Yes.

12068. Have you a statement to make to the Commission?—Yes. 'We, the tenants of Linicleit, Benbecula, complain—That our crofts 'are now too little, being much less than what they formerly were, which 'may be seen from the fact that twenty additional crofters are placed 'among us; that our rents are too high for two reasons—(1) That con-'tinual cropping has reduced the land so much that it now yields almost 'nothing without double quantity of manure, and that that manure cannot 'be had, being divided among the increased tenants. (2) That we have to 'pay, besides rent, for food for our families and provender for our cattle 'an average of, for the last six years, from £12 to £33, as the case may 'be, which, added to our rents, will show what we are, properly speaking, 'paying for our holdings. If all our effects were sold and the proprietrix 'and local merchants put in their own, very little would be left. (3) That 'we have to meet these demands either from the earnings of ourselves or 'our families who must go to other places to earn that money, as there is 'no work at home. (4) That the common and hill grazing are taken 'from us, except a nominal stripe of black moss more fit for peats than for 'grazing. Before we could be somewhat comfortable we would require 'a guarantee from the Government (*a*) that our crofts be made large 'enough to support our families, (*b*) that we shall not be at the mercy of 'either proprietor or his agents to remove us at will, (*c*) that we shall get 'compensation for improvements.'

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12069. How many crofters are there in that place?—There are forty tenants to-day.

12070. Does that include cottars?—No, crofters.

12071. How many were there when you first recollect?—Twenty-seven.

12072. Where have the thirteen additional crofters come from? Is it the natural increase of the people?—The natural increase of the country.

12073. Have you got a full croft?—No, I have about nine acres of land.

12074. Is it half a croft?—It is the size according to the re-apportionment of the land five years ago.

12075. There is a little hill grazing?—Yes.

12076. And you have the right of sending your cattle to the general hill grazing ground?—Yes.

12077. What stock do you keep?—Two cows, one horse, two stirks, and five or six sheep.

12078. What is your rent?—£3. I wish to state that my nine acres would not support all these animals. The nine acres would barely support one of these cows. I must expend £3 in purchasing summer grazing for them and also wintering.

12079. Then your complaint and the complaint of your people is that your holdings are too small?—Yes, too small.

12080. What else?—Also that our land should be valued by Government valuators, and that we should have a reasonable guarantee that we would not be disturbed from these revalued holdings so long as we paid that reasonable rent.

12081. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—We understand that you are able to tell us about some evictions that took place from this island. Will you tell us what occurred in your observation?—I saw them at Loch Boisdale. I saw, down at Loch Boisdale, people sent to the emigrant ships by violence—by policemen and strong men.

12082. Will you mention the names of any you knew there?—I knew especially one man who was forced by four men to the waterside in order to put him on board this ship.

12083. What was his name?—William Macpherson.

12084. Where was he living?—A few yards from this house.

12085. Was Macpherson a young man?—A young, strong man.

12086. Were there any others of his family sent at the same time?—Every one of the family was sent away, with the father, who was blind.

12087. Can you give any other instance of any able-bodied man taken away by violence that you saw yourself?—I have not seen that, but there are many here who did see such.

12088. Then tell us what you know by report?—There was one other person on the moor of Benbecula here who was removed, himself and his wife and children, from his house. They were lifted away from their dwelling, and put into a cart till they were sent in the boat to Loch Boisdale.

12089. What was the name of that man?—Donald M'Lennan.

12090. Have you any other cases?—There were many other cases at the time when these events occurred.

12091. When did they occur?—Well, up to forty years ago.

12092. Was it in Colonel Gordon's time?—Yes.

12093. Have there been any such scenes since then, or was it the last?—Not so forcible as that.

12094. What do you mean by that?—That they were not sent away against their will altogether after that.

12095. We heard yesterday that five ships went away from Loch Bois-

dale at one time. How many people would there be?—I do not know the number. Another man states that there were about 1700.

12096. Where did they go from?—From the North Ford to Barra Head.

12097. Were these all upon what are now called the Gordon estates?—They were all belonging to the Gordon estates.

12098. Were some of them crofters in good circumstances?—They were crofters at all events.

12099. And cottars among them?—Yes.

12100. What became of the lands which those people occupied?—There were as many people after them as filled up the land which these occupied.

12101. Was any part of the lands occupied by these people added to the farm of Nunton?—I am not aware.

12102. Were the people at the time of these great evictions as well off as they are now, or were they better off then?—The people to-day are in a condition as poor as I have ever known them to be.

12103. Were they very poor at that time after the potato famine?—They were poor enough at that time; what could they do but cut their fingers taking shell-fish off the rocks, pretty much as they are doing to-day for food?

12104. Had you any friends or relatives among those who were sent away?—None.

12105. Have you heard that when they landed in Upper Canada they were so very ill off, many of them, that they were dependent upon the public charity of the inhabitants?—I heard that they were so poor after landing, without food or clothing, that they died upon the roadside, and were buried into holes where they died.

12106. Were you also aware that many of the children who accompanied them died of starvation in Canada?—I heard that also.

12107. Have accounts come of the survivors as to how they got on in Canada, and whether any of them are alive and doing well?—We have heard accounts from some of them, but we have heard no accounts from many of them, because they were not living to give accounts.

12108. Can you say that anybody who was sent away at that time, and who may have left relations behind them, sent back any money to those whom they left behind?—I don't remember of any such cases.

12109. Did any of them ever come back here to visit their native island?—They may have done so, but I have no recollection.

12110. You yourself, I presume, did not see anybody that came back?—No.

12111. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—You complain of not having a lease? have you ever been offered a lease by Mr Macdonald?—He offered a lease, but I have never seen it.

Rev. DONALD M'COLL, Roman Catholic Priest, Iochdar (47)—examined.

12112. *The Chairman.*—You desire to present a statement on behalf of the crofters whom you represent?—Yes.—'*Headings of the principal* '*Grievances of the Crofters of this District*, to be laid before the Royal 'Commission in Benecula, on the 29th May 1883. 1. There is no tenure 'of land. The crofters hold their lands from term to term. Leases have 'been hitherto unknown in this country among crofters. We want leases, 'provided adequate lands are given, sufficient to support a family and pay a fair rent. We ask lands adapted to the means and circumstances of

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'individual families. By leases we could improve the land, and a certain 'stability given us. 2. Rack rent, or such high rent on the land, insuffi- 'cient towards the support of a family, and pay a reasonable rent. There 'is kelp rent on the land, and kelp manufacturing ceased. Formerly the 'price of kelp was high, and lands were rented to crofters according to the 'price of kelp. 3. The crofters have too little land, and that of inferior 'quality. The best arable and grazing lands are in the hands of the tacks- 'men, and at a low rent. Crofters have been sent to inferior lands un- 'suitable for large farms. This is not a grain-producing country. The 'return is from three to four at best, while from exhausted and light 'soil corn is raised solely for the purpose of feeding cattle. The crofters 'depend more on their cattle than on the grain return. This is more a 'pastoral country. 4. Spoiliation of common and reclaimed moor. The 'common was cut up, divided into crofts, and rented to the incoming 'tenant, and the rent on the original crofts were never lowered; in other 'words, the crofters never got compensation for the loss of their lands. 'The spoliation of the common commenced after 1840, under the factor 'Clark, carried out with a strong hand by Dr M'Leod and all subsequent 'factors down to the present day. There were formerly seventy-one 'crofts in this district, and there are now eighty-eight, exclusive of hill 'pendicles. During the great clearances for sheep walks in 1849 and 1851, 'many families of the evicted population were sent to Lochcarnan, forming 'then our hill grazing ground, and our lands rented to them. There are 'now over fifty (fifty-six) families in Lochcarnan, Rughasernish, and Ard- 'more. Some of them pay rent, and some of them are cottars. There are 'now over seventy cottars in this district. 5. Overcrowding this district 'from surplus population and dismissed servants from the large farm. The 'crofters complain, as they have every reason to complain, of this glaring 'act of injustice. 6. Depriving crofters of hill grazing, and giving it to 'aliens, while the crofters have to pay rent and assessment for the same. 'At the present day nearly all the hill grazings have been taken from the 'crofters. The last place for which they pay a rent of £20 or upwards is 'Rughasernish. This place was used in summer for grazing and change 'of water, and in winter for grazing. In 1870 four families were sent to 'this place from Dremisdale farm, and lands cut out for them at a rent of '25s. for each family. To the full knowledge of the local officials, cottars 'from all quarters settled there within the last six years, and the crofters 'are deprived of the benefit of the place. The rent is the same as before. 'This is a serious grievance, and the crofters have a right to complain of 'it. Change of grass and water is absolutely necessary to the crofters on 'the sandy soil and west side of the island. Saline and stagnant water 'detrimental and fatal to cattle. Owing to the unwholesome water, few 'crofters in the townships of Ardvacher and Killanlay can rear young 'cattle. Former factors gave sites of houses to individuals, and rented 'the same without any compensation to the crofter. 7. No public works 'towards improving the property or the lands of the crofters. Neglect to 'repair county road facing the Atlantic, and sluices, in consequence of 'which the sea encroaches on our lands and grass. This was laid before 'the former factors, but the road and the sluices remained unrepaired. 'The want of a public road to Lochcarnan, to meet the steamer, is greatly 'felt. All our traffic in connection with the steamers is done by sea for 'want of a road. Besides paying for boating, our goods are often damaged. 'The distance to Lochcarnan is about three miles. 8. Frequent changes 'of factors detrimental to the interest of proprietor and crofters. 9. Neglect 'to enter parliamentary voters on the roll. 10. One of the greatest 'grievances is the number of cottars from all quarters of the country.

'They are a heavy burden on the lands of the crofters. Many of these cottars have more cattle and sheep, and are in every way more prosperous, than the crofters paying rent and assessment. 11. As regards emigration, we may frankly tell our minds to the members of the Royal Commission that we are in no way inclined to emigrate, while there are plenty lands in the country for us, for the next hundred years. Every one is at liberty to remain or emigrate. We desire not to see revived the cruel and forced evictions, as carried out in 1849 and 1851, when many were bound hand and feet, and packed off like cattle on board the vessel to America. The recollections of ill-treatment and cruel evictions towards many in those days operates unfavourably on the minds of the present generation towards emigration. We are more inclined to migrate. We want more lands, for which we are willing to pay a reasonable and fair rent. We want the land valued by impartial judges, knowing the nature and unproductiveness of our soil. We want that equal justice be done to rich and poor, to tacksman and crofter. 12. Poverty of the crofters. We are yearly getting poorer. We are hemmed in on all sides. Deprived of the common, we are confined to our original crofts, and yearly plough the same exhausted and unproductive ground, in many instances for the last sixty years. Many of us have not got a boll of meal from our own grain this year. The produce of crofts supports ourselves and families only for the half year, and we have to buy meal from Glasgow for the rest of the year. Our dwelling houses are of a very inferior kind, and in many instances cattle in the end of the same. Our part of the country is in a state of transition. Six years ago, a movement was made on the part of the proprietor to have the lands divided into lots. Uncertain of our present tenure, and kept in suspense, we have improved neither houses nor lands. We may be removed to some other part of the country or district. This state of suspense has proved injurious to our general interest. We applied to our proprietrix for redress of our grievances; our petition remained unanswered, and our grievances unredressed. The above dictated by crofters, written and read to them, approved and ordered by them to be signed by the members of the committee appointed. By order, with consent, and concurrence of all the crofters of the district.—RODERICK MACKAY, Ardvachar; FRANCIS MACPHIE, Balgavra.—*Iochdar District, May* 28, 1883.'

12113. This memorial has reference to the particular district or township of Iochdar?—It has reference to the whole district in the north end of South Uist.

12114. How long have you been in that place?—Since 1862.

12115. So you have had twenty years' experience?—With the exception of three years at Badenoch.

12116. You can therefore look back to the condition of the country about twenty years ago. Will you state whether you think the condition of the people, having reference to their moral and physical condition, has deteriorated or improved during that time?—Deteriorated.

12117. In their physical condition?—Yes.

12118. In what respect is that particularly the case?—In their worldly means, in their clothes, and in their food.

12119. I saw it stated in an old statistical account of that country in the year 1841, that the people were frequently in a destitute condition with reference to blankets and night clothes. Do you think the people are in that case now?—I have seen many families without a blanket.

12120. What about the clothing of the children?—Many of them are very badly clad, but the generality of them are pretty fairly clad.

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12121. To what do you attribute the deterioration which you believe to exist?—Want of sheep and the cutting off of the hill grazing.

12122. Do you know of any case of cutting off of the hill grazing since 1862?—Yes.

12123. Without any compensation to the tenants?—Yes, within the last six years.

12124. Can you state some instances?—There was the post, Lauchlan Macdonald, for whom a croft was cut out without any compensation to the crofter, and a lot was cut out for widow Finlay Mackay from the crofters, and they got no compensation, unless they would take part of the macher and part of man's croft.

12125. Were the lands of these people cut out off hill grazing?—No. These were sent down from Gramisdale farm, from Loch Eynort, or from Tyree, or North Uist, or Benbecula. They came and squatted on the hill grazing that was used for sheilings in summer, and for grazing sheep—about twenty families.

12126. Do they pay any rent?—No rent.

12127. They just squatted there?—They just squatted there.

12128. They came there without authority, settled there, and paid no rent. What do you think the factor or administrator of the estate ought to have done?—The factor should have kept every one in his own place until such times as lands were cut out or compensation given to the tenants for the loss of the grazing ground.

12129. There are a great number of cottars who have settled on various lands, and who occupy them without paying rent. What do you think should now be done with these people?—If the cottars were lifted off, the crofters would be prosperous enough. As the crofters have borne the burden for a long time, let the large farms have a share of it for a time.

12130. How would you provide them with the means of stocking crofts on those large farms?—They are better provided, many of them, than crofters who are paying rent.

12131. Have you any statement to make with reference to the schools?—No. I have been only about one year on the school board and on the parochial board, and I have nothing particular to state, but that I find them in working order. I find the public schools are being taught here according to the Government Education Act.

12132. Who are the members of the school board?—There are seven members between Benbecula and South Uist,—Mr Mackintosh and I, Dr Black, the parish minister of Uist; Mr John Ferguson, tacksman of Bornish; Mr Charles M'Lean, tacksman of Borv; and the factor.

12133. Are there any Roman Catholic teachers?—Not in the whole island.

12134. Have you any other statement you wish to make with reference particularly to your own communion?—None whatever that would tend in any way to improving their condition.

12135. Has the proprietrix contributed in your district to the erection of new houses or to any useful work?—Not a house that I know of, and not a stick to roof a house that I know of, unless a little fence that was put up, and they have to pay so much to the proprietrix for that.

12136. We have had a statement to-day from the factor that the proprietrix has expeuded more than the whole rental of her estate on the estate during the last five years. Has noue of that expenditure reached your district?—Not a penny.

12137. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Were you present when Mr Macdonald made that statement?—Yes. The only public work that is being carried out is erecting a wing to an inn at Carinish.

12138. I understand that the grievance of the people of Iochdar is this, that so many cottar families with a lot of stock are eating up their grazings without paying anything whatever?—That is the case.

12139. Have you ever applied to them for rent?—Yes, to the factor. They pay neither poor-rates nor school-rates, and the same cottars again are determined if possible to keep their children from school. They are quite independent. They are sent here the same as penal servitude. That is the great burden and grievance of the tenants.

12140. What is the largest amount of stock any one of these cottars not paying rent possesses?—I see them with two or three cattle, as many young beasts, and may be twenty, thirty, or forty sheep, and some of them two horses.

12141. *The Chairman.*—And they pay no rent?—None.

12142. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Do they pay nothing in the way of days' labour?—They neither pay me my fees, nor the factor, nor the schools, nor the parochial board, nor assessments, nor the doctor.

12143. How many souls, men, women and children, are in this position among the cottars?—Three years ago there were seventy-one families. The population in my district is about 1000. There are 880 Catholics and hardly 200 Protestants, including crofters and cottars.

12144. But how many men, women, and children, are in the position of not paying rent or doing anything else?—I should say 250 or 300.

12145. Do the younger members of these families go out to labour and earn wages for themselves?—They crop our crofts as they please, and graze on our grass, and respect not our crofts. Some of them leave for the militia, and some of them for the Lowlands, and some of them take a trip sailing, and that is the whole.

12146. Is this still going on?—The number of cottars is increasing yearly from large farms. I have seen one poor woman who was told to be out off a place the day after her husband's death, not to be a burden on the tenant.

12147. Should you not have gone with a deputation to see the proprietrix, and make a representation to her to take the matter into consideration?—It is very difficult to get at her, we so seldom see her in the country.

12148. *The Chairman.*—Do you think that many of those cottars are the children of crofters in the neighbourhood who have not been provided with land?—Many of them are not. Some of them are from Tyree and others from Skye, North Uist, and Loch Eynort.

12149. But all those places except the last two are not Gordon places at all?—No.

12150. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Did these people receive any authority from anybody to settle where they have settled?—No.

12151. If they attempted to settle upon a tacksman's land, say upon the farm of Nunton, what would be done?—That was in my mind; if twenty cottars were to scatter down on Nunton, with all their cattle and horses, what would he say?

12152. Don't you think the tenant farmer would be the first to take steps to remove them?—We have abstained from violence or agitation against them.

12153. But it is the tenant's business to remove people who come and settle on their lands in such a way?—But the individuals were ordered down by factors.

12154. I asked if they were ordered, and you said they were there without authority?—Individuals came, such as from Loch Eynort.

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12155. Then I suppose the tenants could prevent these from settling there?—They could not go against the factor.

12156. So far as the factor has authorised it, you have a ground of complaint; but so far as he has not authorised it, has he not a ground of complaint against the tenants?—We have spoken often to him on the point, and I have spoken to him personally.

12157. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Do you know that the proper legal process would be for the tenants to raise a process of removing against the cottars, but they could not do that without the consent of the proprietrix? Would she give her consent?—Where could she put them? She would not remove them to large farms.

12158. You think it doubtful whether she would give her consent to the crofters taking out legal process against them?—Yes, in my opinion it is doubtful. I wish specially to call attention to the parliamentary voters' roll, so that the crofters could have their names entered upon it.

12159. *The Chairman.*—I am afraid we cannot help you with that matter; it is the assessor's duty. Are any of your crofters paying £12?—Yes; we pay as high as £16.

12160. *Mr Cameron.*—What rent have you paid?—£16 in cash.

12161. How long had you paid it before last election?—I came here in 1867.

12162. Have you always been entered at £16 in the book?—Yes.

12163. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Has the number of crofters increased very much since you came to Iochdar?—Yes, greatly.

12164. Have you any idea how many of them have settled down there since you came?—About twenty from different quarters.

12165. Have they built houses for themselves?—Kind of huts, the best way they could.

12166. Do they behave themselves differently from the rest of the population?—Very questionably.

12167. They seem at any rate to have no great respect for other people's rights or for the law?—I am the loser by it.

12168. Are many of them members of your congregation?—Many of them are and many are not.

12169. *The Chairman.*—Are you personally aware, within the last twenty years, of any cases of hill pasture being taken from a crofter in a township and given to a tacksman?—Not in this district since the time of Mr Birnie, when he sliced up Ormicleit Hill and Grinnisdale.

12170. But not within the last twenty years?—Hardly within that time.

12171. Have you been witness of any cases of harsh eviction of crofters from their holdings?—Net with my own eyes. It has not been carried out since 1849 and 1851.

12172. Is it your opinion that the scale of rental is too high or oppressive upon the people, or is it rather the want of larger crofts?—It is too high, and the plots are too small. It is exhausted land, that produces nothing but ox-eye or thistles or weeds in general. I desire, however, to make this statement, that Colonel Gordon wished crofters whoever was anxious to pay ready cash down for his lands, to get one-third reduction, but no kelp—no work.

12173. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—The parish minister told us yesterday that on his land he was able to grow very good crops, and he thought by a better system of cultivation the crofters too might grow very good crops. Don't you think that the exhaustion is in part due to a bad system of cultivation?—It is not due to bad cultivation, but to the exhausted soil. The minister can allow ground to lie there for years and years before he ploughs it, but the crofter must plough it every year.

12174. What success have you achieved for yourself in forming a garden in this part?—Well, I manage it better than the crofters, but it is not a paying affair to me, because I work it with servants; but I get better returns by drainage. BEN-BECULA. TORLUM.

12175. Do you get flowers to grow in the place you occupy?—Yes. Rev. Donald M'Coll.

JOHN M'LEOD, Crofter, Iochdar (61)—examined.

12176. *The Chairman.*—You know that a written statement has been sent in from Iochdar?—Yes. John M'Leod.

12177. Do you agree with that statement?—We agree that it is right.

12178. Have you yourself anything to state?—I complain of the scarcity of the land, of its bad quality, and its dearness. The land is not growing more plenty, but more scarce. A good deal of the moor for which we are paying rent is occupied by others, and is useless to us. We are deprived of the good of it, and we are still paying it—a portion of it for the last thirteen years and a portion during the last four years occupied by outside cottars. We are completely deprived of it during the last three years, and without any of its use. I have no more to say different from what you have heard, except that I occupy a piece of very poor moorland myself, upon which I am not able to make a livelihood.

JOHN M'KELLAG, Crofter, Hacleit (57)—examined.

12179. *The Chairman.*—Were you freely elected a delegate by the people of your place?—Yes. John M'Kellag.

12180. What do you wish to say on the part of these whom you represent?—Since my own recollection, a part of the land which I occupy had only six occupants, but there are now twenty-seven. We have become so poor through the smallness of our holdings. I have also to complain that we are too far from the schoolhouse.

12181. How many crofters are there in the township?—Twenty-seven.

12182. How many were there when you were young?—Six.

12183. Where has the surplus come from? Are they owing to the natural increase of the people, or have strangers been brought in upon them?—They are the natural increase of the country.

12184. Has any hill pasture been taken away from them?—A good many of those have squatted upon what constituted our moorland grazing.

12185. What stock do you keep?—I own no beast whatever. I lost a cow and a stirk and a calf this year, because I was so poor that I was not able to buy food for them.

12186. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—What rent do you pay?—£2.

12187. *The Chairman.*—Are there other crofters in your place who are doing well?—Oh, yes.

12188. Then their complaint generally is that they have not land enough?—Yes, that is their complaint.

12189. Have you heard what has been said to-day generally?—Yes.

12190. Do you agree with it?—Yes.

JOHN M'DONALD, Gramisdale (75)—examined.

BENBECULA. TORLUM. John M'Donald.

12191. *The Chairman.*—Have you been freely elected by your people?—Yes.

12192. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—How many crofters are living in your township?—I am of opinion that there are seventeen or eighteen.

12193. Are there any cottars?—I am not aware that there are any.

12194. What are they complaining of in your township?—We are complaining of the smallness of our holdings.

12195. Anything else?—The kelp with which we used to pay our rent is not now manufactured by us.

12196. Do you mean your rent is too dear?—Yes.

12197. Was any of your grazing land taken from you?—Yes.

12198. What became of it?—It was added to the tack of Nunton.

12199. How long was this ago?—Some forty years ago.

12200. Did you get any reduction of rent in consequence?—No.

12201. How many crofters were in Gramisdale in your younger days?—I am not quite sure of that, because I was brought up in the town of Griminish.

12202. But at the time you first knew it?—Only three or four when I first recollect the place.

12203. How did this great increase arise, from three or four to seventeen or eighteen? Were there people put in upon you from other places?—They were in this country at first.

12204. Did any come from any other township?—Yes.

12205. How many came from any other township apart from the natural increase?—I am not quite sure.

12206. Would half of them come from the outside?—No, not the half.

12207. How long have you been in this township itself?—Twelve years.

12208. Were the people better off then than they are now?—Yes, they were better off than they are now.

12209. Is the township generally poor?—The vast majority of them are as poor as it is possible for them to be. The children of school age who ought to be attending school are sent out to the north ford to gather cockles for food.

12210. Were you aware there was some money collected by charitable people in the large cities for behoof of the people in destitute circumstances?—We did not hear a word of it.

12211. And I presume therefore, you did not get any?—I am not aware we got any of it.

12212. Do any newspapers come to any of the people or to any public place?—There is no one in my township sufficiently well off to pay for a newspaper.

12213. Do you often travel from your own township, or do you just hear what is passing in your own township?—It is very seldom indeed that I go on any journey from home.

12214. Do you go to hear Father M'Coll or any other Roman Catholic clergyman?—I don't belong to the Catholic communion. I know perfectly well there is a large portion of the population of Benbecula who are unable to attend church, either Protestant or Catholic, for want of proper clothing and shoes.

12215. Do you go to church?—Occasionally.

12216. What clergyman do you attend?—The minister of the parish, Mr Roderick Macdonald.

BEN-BECULA.

TORLUM.

John M'Donald.

12217. How often does he come to Benbecula?—Once a fortnight or once in three weeks.

12218. Is there any catechist regularly resident in the island?—I am not aware that there is.

12219. *Mr Cameron.*—Is there any work going on at the place where you live?—None.

12220. How long is it since there was any?—I am not aware that there was any work since four years ago, except some little that is done about the tile work.

12221. Do your neighbours sell any of their stirks?—I don't know.

12222. Do you not sell any cattle at all?—Not this year.

12223. But you do so in other years?—I sold last year.

12224. Who buys them?—Ordinary drovers on the market.

12225. Do they come round here once or twice a year?—They come about the summer market and also the September market.

12226. Where is the market held?—About one mile north of this—in the island.

12227. Is there any competition for your cattle, or do you depend only on one or two drovers?—Plenty of drovers come.

[ADJOURNED.]

LOCH EPORT, NORTH UIST, WEDNESDAY, MAY 30, 1883.

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(See Appendix A. XXXIII.)

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.

MALCOLM M'INNES, Crofter, Tighary (48)—examined.

Malcolm M'Innes.

12228. *The Chairman.*—Have you been freely elected a delegate by your people?—Yes.

12229. Have you a written statement to put in?—Yes, this is my statement. 'Unto the Royal Commissioners on Highland Crofters. *The 'Memorial of the Crofters in the Township of Tighary, Parish of North 'Uist,*—Humbly sheweth, that at a meeting of the crofters it was unanim-'ously resolved and agreed upon, that the following statement of the causes 'of their complaints should be handed to the Commissioners by one of the 'selected delegates, as a preliminary remark, that each and all of them 'have no cause of complaint against their present proprietor, because in his 'time he neither increased their rents nor evicted any person for arrears; 'nor have they any fault whatever to find with his judicious factor. In 'common with others on the estate, they complain that drainage money is 'still continued to be charged against them since 1848. Their principal 'grievance, however, is the smallness of their holdings, which are quite 'inadequate to support themselves and families in comfort; therefore, they 'would prefer that each of them should possess three crofts instead of one, 'which would enable them to have a regular rotation in cropping, because

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'the tillage land is getting poor year by year from incessant cultivation, 'consequently is less productive, the chief manure used being sea-ware. 'Their horses then would be reduced by half the present number, which 'are weak in strength to carry cart-loads of sea-ware from the shore to the 'tillage land—a distance of two miles. To point out the scarcity and 'inferiority of grazing, a cow's grass only costs eight shillings a year. 'With respect to their rent, it was originally fixed in connection with the 'annual manufacture of kelp, which was fetching a high price at market by 'means of this labour. Rents were paid regularly, and sometimes a supply 'of meal was given by the proprietor in advance, besides grazing was 'allowed to the horses employed till 1st August. In common with other 'townships on the west side of the island, Tighary had the privilege and 'right to the hill pendicle of Langash, for which, if restored, they would 'willingly pay a reasonable rent to the proprietor, for it would be of con-'siderable benefit for the purpose of improving the condition of their young 'stock of cattle previous to the July cattle market held at Lochmaddy. 'With respect to the Education Act, they find that the school fees are too 'high and difficult for some of them to pay quarterly. They would con-'sider it expedient and proper that Gaelic should be taught in the public 'schools, in order that the children might be able to read the Bible in their 'mother tongue. Without the least doubt, there is plenty of arable and 'hill land in North Uist for the whole population, if properly and equitably 'divided; for by reference to the map of the island, as well as to the 'valuation roll, it can be clearly seen that the greater part of the best 'tillage and grazing land is occupied by a few tacksmen. We repeat the 'chief reform we stand in need of, viz., a larger holding of land, fixity of 'tenure, and remuneration for improvements. There are fifteen cottars in 'the township. They are certainly a great burden in various ways, and 'the sooner they get holdings for themselves the better for our interest. 'The delegates can corroborate the above statements.—Your memorialists 'will ever pray. We subscribe this document for ourselves and by 'authority of the rest of the crofters in this township.—*Tighary, North 'Uist, 25th May* 1883.—JOHN M'LEAN, JOHN M'INTYRE, JOHN 'M'QUEEN.'

12230. Was this document read to and understood by the rest of the crofters who do not sign it?—Yes, it was read both in Gaelic and English.

12231. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You have stated in this paper that Gaelic should be taught in the schools. I presume, therefore, there is no Gaelic taught in the schools of North Uist?—Not in our place anyhow.

12232. Has the teacher any Gaelic?—Plenty of it.

12233. Would there be any difficulty do you think in getting teachers that could teach Gaelic in the whole of North Uist?—I don't think there would be any difficulty.

12234. You state that there are fifteen cottars upon this place. How many crofters are there altogether?—There are twenty crofts, but a few are double.

12235. How did that arise?—Was it from vacancy or eviction, or how did people manage to get more than one?—Some of them went voluntarily to America.

12236. Would you explain about this drainage money which you say has been going on since 1848?—Were you told at the time it was first put that it would cease after a number of years?—There was talk to that effect any way—that it would cease at the end of twenty years, but I am not certain about that.

12237. Did you make any representation to the factor that it should

now cease after the twenty years were over?—I never spoke to him myself, but some told me that they did speak to him.

12238. What was the answer?—His reply was that he himself was paying it yet to the Government.

12239. Which factor was that?—Mr Macdonald, the present factor.

12240. You complain that the whole pendicle of Langash has been taken from your town, and if restored you would willingly pay rent for it. To whom was Langash given?—It was taken away long ago, before I was of much sense, but I am not very sure that the crofters ever had it, but it was attached to this township. I believe it was taken away before the place was divided into crofts.

12241. Who has it just now?—Mr Macrae, tenant of Langash.

12242. Is that a large farm?—No, it is not large.

12243. What rent would you be willing to give for it if you got it back?—We cannot say, but a reasonable rent.

12244. You are willing to pay a reasonable rent?—Yes.

12245. Do you know what the total rent of Mr Macrae's possession is?—No, I don't know.

12246. You say here that there is plenty arable and hill land in North Uist for the whole population if properly and equitably divided, and that the best part of the tillage and grazing is occupied by a few tacksmen. Would you mention the names of some of these tacks?—The place where I was born, on the other side of the country, is under sheep by a non-resident tenant.

12247. What is the name of it?—The tenant is Widow Macdonald. There are two farms—Grenetote and Dramanen. In these two places there were twenty-four crofters.

12248. What became of these twenty-four crofters?—They were sent away to America, the whole of them except one, and my father.

12249. Who sent them away?—Mr Shaw, the factor.

12250. Was the property then Lord Macdonald's?—Yes.

12251. How long is it since this happened?—Forty-two years.

12252. Did these people go of their own will, or was pressure brought upon them to go to America?—The proprietor sent them away.

12253. Now, can you name another suitable place?—Upon the other side of it again there are Arisa and Avore.

12254. Who possesses them now?—Balranald.

12255. Were there any people put out of them?—Every one of them.

12256. How many?—I cannot tell how many.

12257. Were they considerable?—Yes.

12258. What became of them?—They went to America, the most of them.

12259. In the same way, under pressure?—In the same way.

12260. About the same time?—Yes, about the same time, or perhaps before it.

12261. Can you name any other places?—Remisgarry, Clachan, Scoloba, Balmaconnon, Caolas, Bal-vic-pheall.

12262. Who now possesses Remisgarry?—Balranald.

12263. Clachan?—Balranald.

12264. Scoloba?—Balranald.

12265. Caolas?—The factor has it.

12266. You have mentioned three places—Remisgarry, Clachan, and Scoloba. Is there any other place from which people have been dispossessed and of which Balranald is the tenant?—I am not certain about others, but I am certain about those I have named.

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12267. How many were put out of Remisgarry?—I cannot say. There are some here who know these matters better than I do.

12268. And out of Clachan?—I cannot tell.

12269. Scoloba?—I cannot tell how many were sent out of any of these places.

12270. Would you mention the name of any one who knows?—John Morrison, who was brought up in that place.

12271. Do you know any particulars about Caolas? Is that a farm that would be suitable for crofters?—I know Caolas would be a suitable place for crofters. They were there before.

12272. How many were turned out of that place?—I cannot say, but John Morrison knows.

12273. And Bal-vic-pheall?—I cannot tell you how many were sent away from that.

12274. Who has got Bal-vic-pheall now?—The factor has it.

12275. Can you mention any other large tacks besides those you have named that would be suitable?—Yes, Sollas.

12276. Can you tell us about the Sollas evictions?—I can give some account of them, but there are delegates here who could tell more about them than I can. John Morrison is one and Donald M'Queen is another.

12277. *Mr Cameron.*—What rent do you pay for your croft?—£6, and perhaps a few shillings more.

12278. How many acres of arable ground have you?—I cannot tell how many acres. It is not very large. Perhaps there should be from seven to eight acres.

12279. How many cows have you?—We are not able to keep stock at all, although we have them. They are really dying of hunger. Our summing is four cows.

12280. How many cows have you got?—I have four.

12281. How many young cattle?—Three small stirks.

12282. How many horses?—Two.

12283. How many sheep?—I smeared twenty-eight sheep, but probably a good number of them are dead by this time.

12284. Has this been a bad winter for them?—Yes, it was a bad season, and there is a great scarcity of grass. It was sea-ware that kept them alive.

12285. Is that the ordinary size of croft that your neighbours have?—Yes, it is the average size; some larger and some smaller.

12286. Is the rent about the average rent?—Yes, the rent is also the average; some greater and some smaller.

12287. Do the crofters complain of the rent being too high?—The rent of the croft must be large when we are not able to make our living out of it.

12288. Do all the crofters in your township have sheep?—Yes, more or less.

12289. And all of them have horses?—Yes, every one has a horse.

12290. There is no such thing as what we have heard of in some of the other islands—women drawing the harrow, or that sort of thing?—No.

12291. Have there been any evictions since the present proprietor came into possession?—I never saw any one sent away from our township, but one who was very far back in arrears of rent.

12292. Is there any general feeling of alarm lest the people should be removed as they were in former times?—I never experienced any such feeling.

12293. I see in this paper that the crofters ask for fixity of tenure—do

you know what that means?—We mean by the phrase fixity of tenure that in the event of our getting more land, as we ask for, we would be able to work upon it, and we would be settled down upon it without any fear that we would be removed from it.

12294. Do you wish fixity of tenure in your present holding, or would you restrict that to the possibility of getting a larger holding?—I don't ask for it for my present holding; we never thought of that.

12295. Have you never considered whether a long lease might not answer your purpose, provided you got larger holdings?—We would like fully better that the tenure should be as long as we would pay the rent, and as long as people would behave themselves properly. We would fully prefer that to any lease.

12296. Is there any work going on in the island?—I am not aware of anything but repairing roads, and a little kelp made out of the drift weed since the other kelp ceased to be made.

12297. Do the people fish at all?—Not in our place, unless there may be a few who fish lobsters now and again. Our coast is so wild and exposed that it is not suitable for fishing.

12298. Then what I understand is that though you are not dissatisfied with your present holdings, you wish to have such large holdings as would enable you to live as farmers on a farm, and not be dependent upon labour to maintain your families?—That is it exactly—the very thing we want—that we could make a living out of our crofts by our own labour. We don't want to be gentlemen.

12299. Is there any land suitable for the purpose of enlarging your holdings which is adjacent to the township you represent?—No, crofters surround us on every hand.

12300. Then how would you propose to enlarge your holdings without shifting the crofters altogether to these large tacks?—The big tacks are there ready for us getting a share of them.

12301. Would half of the people be ready to migrate altogether to the big tacks, so as to leave the present township to be divided among the remainder?—Yes, quite willing.

12302. Have many of the people in your township got sufficient money to stock these larger holdings?—I believe there are not many. They could not very well be in such a position, but if justice was done to the present stock we have, we could perfectly well take up larger holdings, for the stock really would require twice the amount of croft in order to support it properly. The cows have no milk, and they are not properly fed.

12303. In other places we have had a request made for Government aid to stock the larger holdings they ask for, but as I understand from you the people here would not require that—they would be able to do it themselves?—Oh yes, they would be glad to get it. Although their own stock would increase in a few years so as to stock the place completely, still they would have a hard struggle for these few years without such aid.

12304. Would they be able to build houses for themselves, provided that at the end of the lease, or whatever term their occupation lasted, they got compensation for their houses?—They would be very glad to do so.

12305. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Where do you get the cow's grass?—In order to keep up our stock we always require to keep young beasts. It sometimes happens that one may have a cow over-much and another may have a cow short, in which case the man who is short of a cow is able to rent out a cow's grass to the one who has a cow over-much.

12306. When was it that Tighary was divided among crofters and Langash taken from it?—I am not perfectly certain. We came to it our-

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selves forty-two years ago, but I believe it is nearly sixty years since it was laid out.

LOCH EPORT.

12307. *Who held Tighary and Langash before it was lotted?*—The parish ministers had it.

Malcolm M'Innes.

12308. *As a glebe?*—They rented it; it was not part of the glebe.

12309. Do you know where Balmaconnon is situated?—It lies between Bal-vic-pheall and Clachan, but though I know the district, there are so many names that perhaps I could not describe the particular locality.

12310. Have you been discussing these names lately?—No.

12311. From whom did you hear about Balmaconnon?—Ever since I was born I used to hear tell of that district as having been occupied by crofters, and of the people having been evicted from the whole country side there.

12312. *Professor Mackinnon.*—To what school do the children of Tighary go?—There is a school in Tighary itself.

12313. Is there no Gaelic taught in that school?—No.

12314. I happen to know that the children are remarkably good Gaelic scholars. Where do they learn to read their Gaelic?—They learn their Gaelic from their mothers. I don't know how they learn to read it. There was, and is still, a Gaelic schoolmaster at Houghary, where some of them may have learned it, but the present children don't go there now.

12315. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Is there a great scarcity of milk in your town?—It is scarce enough at present.

12316. I ask that, because in other places it is given as a reason for consuming a lot of tea. Does that apply to your township?—There will be tea at all hazards.

JAMES M'CORQUIDALE, Crofter, Carinish (77)—examined.

James M'Corquidale.

12317. *The Chairman.*—Have you been freely elected a delegate?—Yes.

12318. How many people were present at the meeting when you were elected?—Every one of them—twenty-two in number.

12319. You have a statement to submit to the Commission?—Yes. 'The following statement has been agreed to by the crofters of Carinish, 'at a meeting held on the 25th May. In the year 1814, I, James 'M'Corquidale, remember the whole township of Carinish being in the 'hands of eight tenants, paying £7, 10s. each; now there are twenty-two 'tenants, paying upwards of £140. Twelve crofts are divided into half 'crofts, with two families on each. Besides the crofters, there are twenty-'two cottars, making fifty-five or fifty-six families. The place is greatly 'over-crowded. Carinish is the highest rented farm in North Uist. The 'rent was fixed when the kelp was in great demand; the crofters were 'manufacturing the kelp at £1, 15s. per ton, and the proprietor selling 'it at £21 per ton; but as there is no kelp made now, the rent should 'be reduced. Our hill pasture is the poorest on the estate; and although 'we keep some sheep, we generally lose them in winter for the want of 'proper grazing for them. We have still some cattle and horses left, but 'they are reduced to skin and bone, and they will not sell at the July 'market owing to their miserable condition. Our liabilities are so great, 'that supposing we sold all our cattle we would still be left in debt. We 'are deeply in arrears to the proprietor, and in debt to Glasgow merchants 'for meal and seed this year; and also heavy in debt to local merchants,

'tailors, shoemakers, &c. Another cause of complaint is the drainage 'money; we are still paying the interest as part of our rent. Poor-rates 'and school-rates, &c., are charged on this drainage money, which has been 'refunded to Government a long time ago. All the drains made with that 'money are now quite useless, and require to be re-opened at once, as they 'do more harm than good to the ground. What is absolutely required 'is more land, with an assurance that the land is ours as long as we pay 'fair rent for fair value. The Government must interfere to guarantee 'each crofter in his holding. We will be glad to answer any questions 'the Commissioners like to ask us as far as we know.—JAMES M'CORQUI-'DALE, ROBERT FERGUSON.'

12320. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Was your father one of the eight tenants in Carinish in 1814?—Yes.

12321. Were your circumstances then much more comfortable than they are now?—Yes, very much.

12322. How many cows did you keep at that time?—Each had eight cows with their followers.

12323. How many horses and sheep?—Two horses and about twenty sheep.

12324. Were you buying any meal from Glasgow then?—No, we did not require it. There was plenty meal growing out of the ground, and potatoes as well.

12325. Did you ever use to sell meal and potatoes at that time?—Yes, we did, at 20d. per barrel for potatoes.

12326. Do you ever sell meal or potatoes now?—No, we are always buying them.

12327. How long does your own meal last you generally?—This year all the meal that was made in Carinish would not supply the people for a month.

12328. And how long did the potatoes last?—They lasted this year till the middle of spring.

12329. Did you buy potatoes after that, or did you do without potatoes?—We buy potatoes when our own supply is done.

12330. Where do you get potatoes for seed?—We got them this year from the factor.

12331. You had to pay for them, of course?—We were glad to get them even for payment.

12332. Did you get a present of them this season?—I don't know. They were not promised to us for nothing. It may be that they will not be charged for.

12333. Then did you get seed for your corn, or had you to buy seed?—We had no oats. We got them from the factor. We got a great deal from him both of barley and oats.

12334. What is your principal crop here? Is it barley?—Partly barley.

12335. Do you plant any other green crop than potatoes? Do you plant turnips or any of these roots?—No.

12336. Is your ground not suitable for them?—The ground is suitable enough, but people would steal the turnips.

12337. What is your summing?—Five cows and a two-year-old; two horses; eight sheep. That is what I am allowed to keep.

12338. What is your present rent?—£8, 10s.

12339. Do you consider that rent too high?—Certainly I do. I consider it twice as much as the croft is worth.

12340. You have cottars among you?—Yes.

12341. Have they lands also?—No, they have no lands.

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James M'Corquidale.

12342. Do they not get a bit to plant potatoes or a little oats?—Yes; they get some potato ground from the crofters.

12343. Don't they pay rent for their houses to the laird?—I am not certain, but it is said they are charged 10s. for peat ground and houses.

12344. Did any of the increased number of tenants since 1814 come from other quarters, or did they all grow upon the place?—Some came in upon us from other places.

12345. But I suppose a good many of them were the sons of former crofters, who would get half of the father's croft?—Yes, there are some in that way whose fathers' crofts were divided among their children. It was from the other side of the country that some of the people of Carinish came who have increased the population of the place.

12346. What place did they come from?—They came from various townships.

12347. Did some of them come from places from which people were sent away?—Baile-mhic-phail, Grenitote, Bernera, and Caolas.

12348. Where did the cottars come from?—Some who lost their lands, and widows. There have been always cottars, but their number was increased by those who fell into arrear and had to give up their land.

12349. Are they allowed to come there by the laird and factor, or have they come without leave?—It was neither the present proprietor nor factor that brought things to this pass. We are perfectly satisfied with our present factor. He never oppressed us in any way.

12350. I know they came long ago, but I want to know whether they came with the will of the laird and factor when they did come?—I believe some of them may have come into the place with his permission, but most of them were born in the place.

12351. Do any of them keep cattle and sheep?—Yes; two at any rate have cattle and sheep.

12352. But I suppose a good many of them have no cow?—Yes, most of them are without a cow.

12353. Or sheep?—They have all sheep.

12354. Where do these sheep feed?—Upon the crofters' ground.

12355. Do they pay anything to the crofters for that?—Not a penny.

12356. Do they give them any recompense in the shape of labour?—Not a bit.

12357. Then these cottars, of course, are a great burden to the crofters?—Yes, a very great burden.

12358. Has the pasture of the crofters at Carinish been diminished since 1814?—No, only diminished in the sense of people being thrown in upon them. There were only eight to begin with.

12359. Was there any prohibition on the estate, so far as you know, of subdividing crofts?—Not at that time.

12360. Is there now?—Yes, there is an estate regulation against it just now, but it is not observed.

12361. How many crofters do you think could now live comfortably upon that same place?—Twelve.

12362. How many cows would you give to each of them?—I would give each of them seven cows.

12363. How many sheep?—Twenty.

12364. And horses?—Two.

12365. What rent would you consider fair?—I am not able to say what would be considered a reasonable rent.

12366. Do you think the present total rent of £140 is too high?—Yes, *much too high.*

12367. Would you think £10 each too high a rent for these twelve men?—It would be quite reasonable.

12368. Are you aware of any potatoes having been sold out of North Uist this year?—Yes; they were sending potatoes to Glasgow. Those who have *machair* land—that is on the west side—sent the potatoes to purchase meal.

12369. Do you think they sold all their potatoes?—I think they sold them all. I was in search of potatoes, and I could not get a single barrel.

12370. Where?—Balemore, Knock-an-torran, Knock-an-lin, and Paiblesgarry.

12371. Do you make kelp now at all?—No; that was our great misfortune. When the kelp was going on people were getting their living. They would get meal to support their families, and also some money that would pay their rents.

12372. When did it cease to be manufactured?—Seven or eight years ago—perhaps ten.

12373. Why did it cease?—It was not remunerative. It was not worth the proprietor's while to keep it on.

12374. What was the price?—The people who worked it got 35s. per ton for manufacturing it.

12375. Did they not get much more than that long ago?—Yes, when it fetched a high price they got £2 and £2, 10s.

12376. What would the proprietor get?—I cannot tell that.

12377. It is said in the paper that you were manufacturing kelp at £1, 15s. and the proprietor was selling it at £21?—That was long ago, when there were only eight people in Carinish—in the year 1814 or thereabout.

12378. How many men would be working altogether in making the kelp?—There may have been four in a family that worked together, and that family would make about ten tons in the summer season.

12379. They paid the rent and something more with the kelp in those times?—They would take their feeding out of it first of all, and then what remained would go to pay the rent. In some cases they could pay the whole rent, in others the half, and so on.

12380. At your place do most of the people wear clothes of their own wool or cloth bought in shops?—At present we buy out of the shops, but in those times we did not require to go to the shop; we had wool of our own, and women to make cloth of it.

12381. But do not some of them get their cloth made by their own wives?—Yes, if they have the wool.

12382. How many weavers are there in Carinish?—There are three weavers, all women.

12383. Are they constantly employed?—They get plenty of work if they got payment for it.

12384. Is there a good deal of knitting of stockings and hose done by the women?—Yes, they can do that very well.

12385. Do they get a good sale for them?—Yes; sixpence for a pair of socks. We send them to the shops, but we sell them of course to everybody who buys.

12386. How much for hose?—They don't make hose. I remember the time when hose were made.

12387. Do they make long stockings?—Yes; they ask 1s. 6d. for long stockings that come up to the knee.

12388. Do they provide the wool themselves for these prices?—Yes. To those who are hard up and without food, even that is considered a great benefit.

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James M'Corquidale.

12389. Has there been any attempt made to get up a scheme to provide the women of this and surrounding places with regular occupation at a better price than that?—Yes.

12390. Who did it?—Lady Cathcart. They were making home-made clothes and stockings. I am not certain what price they got for them, but I heard them say they got a good price, and could make a good living out of it.

12391. Has that ceased?—I have not heard of it for the last few years.

12392. Why?—I don't know why. The scheme worked only on Lady Cathcart's own estate.

12393. There was nothing of the sort here?—No.

12394. Do you think it would be a benefit if somebody would undertake it?—Certainly it would he a benefit.

12395. Do you think the women would really produce a steady supply of hosiery that would be profitable to themselves and to the person taking it off their hands?—Yes, certainly it would.

12396. *The Chairman.*—From what source is the rent usually paid? Is it paid from wages earned elsewhere, or from the sale of animals?—Some from the sale of stock; others out of the proceeds of the east coast fishing.

12397. How is the stock sold? Is it sent to market, or do dealers come round?—Dealers come round us here.

12398. Was there ever any complaint in this island of stock being compulsorily bought by factors or proprietors?—There was nothing of that sort with the present proprietor or factor, but I saw the day when that was done—when the stock was taken away, and they would not tell the price that would be given for it.

12399. At what age do you sell the young cattle?—The stots are sold at a year old.

12400. Your memory must extend fifty years back?—Yes.

12401. What was the price given for a one-year-old animal fifty years ago?—£2.

12402. What is the average price for such an animal now?—£6 or £7 last year, which was an exceptional year.

12403. Is the quality of the animals better now than it used to be?—No, it is worse.

12404. Has there been no effort made to improve the breed by the introduction of good bulls?—Yes.

12405. Has that not produced any good effect?—Yes, it was of great service. We got a bull from Balranald, and we believe it was the means of adding £200 to the township within three years' time.

12406. Then is the present deterioration of the character of the cattle owing to the want of food?—The want of grass and provender. The ground does not yield fruit either in the shape of seed or of straw as it used to do.

12407. You have stated that you had on your croft five cows?—That is my summing.

12408. How many do you actually keep?—Three cows and three stirks.

12409. Can you count upon being able to sell a stirk every year?—Yes. I have at least one every year.

12410. You said that the cottars were a great burden to you. How do the cottars earn their subsistence?—I cannot well tell, but in some way or another. They must needs live upon the crofters, and by shell-fish, and in other ways.

12411. You said that the cottars paid no rent, and gave no labour. Are they of no use to you in time of harvest, or in cutting peats, or any other

small labour?—They help us in casting peats now and again, but we pay them for it.

12412. You said that the people were afraid to sow turnips, because the turnips might possibly be stolen. Is anything else ever stolen? Do sheep sometimes disappear in the country?—Yes, such things are known as sheep disappearing.

12413. Do you think it would be very useful if there were more enclosures and fences round the hill pasture?—Yes, that would be of service.

12414. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You stated in answer to a question that if the number of families was reduced to twelve, £10 would not be an unreasonable rent?—Yes.

12415. I presume you mean along with that that all the cottars should be taken off them?—Every one of them.

12416. Do you buy any fodder or any provision for the animals?—Yes, we do. There are some in Carinish that paid £30 this last year for provender for themselves and their stock, others paid £10, and others £5.

12417. You said, in answer to Lord Napier, that you could on an average sell a beast every year. In point of fact, the money you get for that would not be all profit, because you must make a certain deduction for what you paid for the wintering?—Yes.

12418. Have you been in Uist all your life?—Yes, ever since I was born.

12419. Will you state your opinion as to the condition of people like yourself in your younger days compared with what it is now?—The difference is very great. I remember when I was a young man fifty years ago, there used to be cargoes of barley and cargoes of potatoes exported from North Uist. They did not require to go to the militia or elsewhere. They would get plenty of work at home, plenty of food and clothes.

12420. Have their circumstances of late years been getting worse and worse?—Certainly they have. For the last fifty-four years I have been continuously cropping the same ground, and how can you expect good crops out of such ground as that?

12421. Do you know by repute or otherwise that people who have held large tacks in North Uist have made large sums of money, and left the country?—I am not aware. I cannot charge my memory with any one that left the country after having made money in such a way.

12422. Were the big tacksmen thriving then or not thriving, so far as repute went?—They themselves would know their own circumstances best, but the general opinion was that they throve well.

12423. You stated that under the present factor, and under the present proprietor, there was no such thing as animals being taken away by ground officers or others without a price being fixed, but you have heard of it in former times. Will you name the proprietor and factor under whom the thing was done?—The practice prevailed under Lord Macdonald's proprietorship, and when Allan Cameron was factor.

12424. Was Allan Cameron a stranger?—He came from Mull.

12425. How long was he factor, and how long since?—I believe he was factor for about thirty years. His factorship came to an end about forty years ago, but I cannot give accurate dates.

12426. Was any beast taken from yourself?—Yes.

12427. Will you explain how the thing was done?—The ground officer, Angus Macdonald, came and gathered all the cattle in the place. Any animal he himself would choose to mark out he would carry away. He would send it off to market, and we would not hear any price fixed for it till after it was sold.

12428. What was his object in taking it in this manner?—For the rent.

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12429. Did you always get credit for the beast sold in settling for the rent?—Yes.

12430. Did you get the market price for it?—We did not know what price it would fetch at the market. They would just give us any price it pleased them to give.

12431. They put whatever price they thought proper to your credit in the rent?—Yes, exactly.

12432. Was that considered by yourself and the people at the time a very great hardship?—Yes, and it was very unjust as well.

12433. Was there the shadow of a doubt in your mind that more was got for it at the market than was credited?—That was our belief, but of course we could not tell. I wish to state that for the last twelve years we are taking our meal home from Glasgow, and though we have stock, it is not our own. A merchant of the name of Thomas Martin, Glasgow, has provided for a large number of the inhabitants. Donald M'Lean, a local merchant in Carinish, also deals. Twelve bags of meal come with every steamer, and I don't think he gets a penny for it, but distributes it among the poor people of the place. He has not a house, and we thought it exceedingly desirable that he should just get forty feet of that ground that we pay rent for, if the proprietor or factor would see fit to give it to him, in order to provide a suitable store, for such a man is very much required, and ought to be encouraged.

12434. Have you spoken to the factor about it?—No, never.

12435. Do you complain of the prices of the local merchants?—We do not ask the price until we are paying for it, if indeed we can pay for it. Indian meal is 27s. or 28s. per bag over head; flour 35s., and oatmeal about £2 per bag.

12436. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Is that at Glasgow or here?—In Carinish

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JOHN MORRISON, Crofter, Loch Eport (60)—examined.

John Morrison.

12437. *The Chairman.*—You have a statement to lay before the Commission?—Yes. 'We, the crofters of Loch Eport, beg respectfully to take 'advantage of this opportunity which is now afforded us of laying the sub-'stance of our grievances before the Royal Commission, which may be 'briefly stated as follows:—Among the many clearances which took place 'in the West Highlands, the "Sollas evictions" rank so prominently, both 'for cruelty and injustice, and are so well known to the public, that we need 'hardly now refer to them; but perhaps as the remnant of the sufferers of 'those cruelties are now living in the country, it may not be out of place to 'mention some of the hardships and privations to which we were exposed 'in consequence. About thirty-two years ago we were evicted from the 'district of Sollas, a fertile part of this parish. There we lived in ease and 'plenty, in a happy and prosperous condition, until we became the objects 'of the covetous eyes of the land-grabbing and aggrandising powers that 'be, and we soon realised that might was right. The first indication of this 'was the depriving us of a large portion of our grazing and arable land, 'which was added to another farm, as well as other hardships, which 'reduced us in our circumstances, until at last we were finally evicted about 'thirty-two years ago, as we have mentioned. Those evictions rank among 'the most notorious which have taken place in the Highlands, being now 'handed by posterity under the appellation of "Blar Shollash," or the

'"Battle of Sollas." To this engagement was attributed the death of at least 'one individual, the permanent disablement of others, the imprisonment of 'some, and the great loss to many of their personal property. It resulted of 'course in a victory for the nobles, and the defeat and utter discomfiture 'of the peasantry. As is always the case, this battle was fruitful of 'immense sufferings, hardships, and loss to the defeated. Many of them 'were compelled to emigrate to the colonies, but fresh trials awaited them 'before getting to their destination. A deadly case of fever broke out in 'the "Hercules" (the vessel which conveyed them), to which the most of 'them succumbed. Some were buried in Ireland, others were committed to a 'watery grave; thus the survivors had, together with all their hardships, to 'mourn the loss and untimely end of some of their nearest and dearest 'relations. Others who remained got corners in other parts of the country, 'whilst the remainder, who have now the honour to address you, were pitied 'by the "Highland Committee," and were supplied with labour to keep them 'alive, until finally sent to Loch Eport, where they still struggle to exist. 'The hardships to which we were exposed in the interval between our being 'evicted and our translation here are beyond description. The severities 'of a winter, living in rude turf huts, and without fuel except what we had 'to carry twelve miles, told on the health of many. The inferiority of the 'soil of the place we live in, and its unsuitableness for human existence, is 'indescribable. When we were sent here, it was, with the exception of two 'spots, a wild, bleak, barren, mossy heath, numerously intersected by rain-'furrows. There we had to build huts in which to live, and try and 'improve the waste as well as we could; and notwithstanding that we have 'laboured for the last thirty years, our crofts will not yield us to-day as 'much food on an average as will support our families for two months of 'the year. The ground is of such a nature that it can scarcely be improved, 'and the soil so much reduced by continual cropping that it is almost use-'less. The place is overcrowded; there being thirty-four crofts, on which 'live forty families, where formerly there were only three. Our common 'pasture (if it can be called by that name) is extremely bad, so much so 'that in winter, those of us who have cattle must keep constant watch else 'they will stick in the bogs. Human beings cannot travel over portions of 'our crofts in winter. There is no fishing or industry of any other kind 'in the country, from which we can derive any support. Formerly we 'derived some benefit from the manufacturing of kelp, but now we are 'deprived of even that. All who are able leave in the beginning of 'summer to earn their livelihood as best they may by sea and land, and 'thus help to improve the condition of their families whom they leave 'behind. Finally, we must admit that we are in poverty, and suffering 'privations and inconveniences of a nature to which the bulk of our 'countrymen are strangers. We most earnestly pray that the Commission 'will recommend our removal from this place to some other, where we can 'live by the productions of our labours in the soil.' Signed by thirty-two persons.

12438. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Do you recollect the circumstances that are detailed in this paper about the Sollas evictions?—Yes, perfectly well.

12439. Is the statement you have given in here, signed by the people, perfectly correct?—Yes, it is perfectly correct; and even supposing there were additional statements, they would be perfectly correct as well.

12440. Who was the person who principally directed the removal?—The factor, Balranald—James Macdonald.

12441. He is not alive now?—No.

12442. Were the Macdonald estates under trust at the time?—I am not perfectly certain, but I think they were.

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12443. Was there any head factor under the Macdonald trustees at that time?—Yes; we saw Mr Cook coming. It was Mr James Macdonald that was before him. He succeeded, but they were together there when we were put out of the place.

12444. What became of the lands from which the people were evicted? Who got them?—The factor. It was he who got them first.

12445. The greater part of Sollas?—The whole of Sollas.

12446. Can you mention the number of families that were evicted at that time out of Sollas?—There were two townships. Thirty families were evicted.

12447. Do you recollect soldiers being sent from Inverness about the matter?—I saw them.

12448. Were their houses knocked down about the people's ears and the people taken out?—Yes.

12449. Did they get any compensation for the value of their houses at all or for the crop that was on the ground?—No, nothing.

12450. Did they get any assistance in building the new houses, such as those who went to Loch Eport side?—No, not a penny.

12451. Some of them remained in after Whitsunday. At what time of the year did they actually remove?—It was in autumn they were pulling down the houses.

12452. Was it well on in the year at the time they were building their temporary houses at Loch Eport?—It was well on in the year. It was during the winter that the first houses were built.

12453. Were you charged rent or anything for the land you got?—Yes, we were charged rent.

12454. At once or shortly afterwards?—During the first winter we worked for wages and during the following summer, but when the work ceased we commeuced to pay rent.

12455. Did you get any assistance, otherwise except in the nature of this work from the proprietor, for the removal?—No, nothing.

12456. Did you get any assistance in materials from the proprietor?—Nothing whatever in the way of material. We only built turf houses at first.

12457. But for the subsequent houses, did you get help?—No, nothing in the shape of wood or anything.

12458. Were all the nice houses we saw coming up the side of the loch to-day on the left side entirely built at the expense of the people themselves?—Every one of them at our own expense.

12459. Did you get any assistance from the landlord for the reclamation of the crofts which are now under cultivation, or did you all reclaim them with your own hands?—We reclaimed them all ourselves without any assistance so far as I know.

12460. Is there any proper road to your place where the road terminates at the pier where we landed?—There is no road going past that, and we cannot get down at all at night time when the tide is high.

12461. Had you any relatives among those who were sent away to America?—Yes, many of them.

12462. Did they ever reach America?—Several of them reached America. Very few are alive to-day.

12463. In regard to those who reached America, have accounts come as to whether they got on well, or the reverse?—We heard of those who have survived.

12464. How have they got on?—Some are well off and some otherwise.

12465. Did any of them ever come back to revisit Uist?—There was

one who left at that time, and who came back on a visit a year or two ago. He went away from the west side, not from our side.

12466. Is that the only person who came back?—Yes; he was not one of the evicted men.

12467. Do you know a place called Bal-vic-pheall?—Yes.

12468. Where is that place?—Upon the north side of North Uist.

12469. How many of the families at Loch Eport are people who were evicted from Sollas, or children of those who were evicted from Sollas?—There are thirty-four families there altogether. It was thirty who were evicted, but there are other people in Loch Eport who were sent from elsewhere. The greater number are children of those who were evicted at Sollas.

12470. How many families were in Bal-vic-pheall?—I cannot tell.

12471. Can you not give us a rough approximation?—They were sent out of there before I was born, and I am not able to say. There is an old man at Loch Eport who knows of it, but I never asked him, and I don't remember having heard the exact number.

12472. Have you ever been upon the place?—Yes.

12473. Have you seen the remains of numerous houses about?—No, they had made fences of the ruins of the houses before I saw them.

12474. Who has got the place now?—The factor.

12475. Who had it before him?—We had Mr Cumming there before him, and Sheriff M'Lachlan before him.

12476. Do you know a place called Caolas?—Yes, very well.

12477. Do you know there were people there once?—I remember them being there.

12478. How many families were put out of Caolas?—Eight, I believe.

12479. Who has got Caolas now?—It is joined to the factor's tack.

12480. Are these two townships of Caolas and Bal-vic-pheall good land?—Yes. There are other places as good, though.

12481. What places?—The places we were evicted from.

12482. Was Sollas as good as any place in Uist?—I think it is.

12483. Was it not reported in the old times that it exported a considerable quantity of corn?—Yes, it used to do so.

12484. You want to be removed from your present place altogether; have you any place in view in your own mind where you and your co-crofters would like to go to?—The place we were evicted from is about as desirable a place to go back to as any that could be got.

12485. According to your statement, all the families that were taken out of Sollas are in a worse condition and sent to a worse place. Who benefited by these evictions?—The tacksman; we could not gain any way.

12486. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Did you all build your own houses down there?—Every one of them.

12487. What did yours cost?—If I had had another man putting it into the very condition in which it was, I believe it would have come to about £13 or £14.

12488. I suppose there are plenty stones there?—No; we had to quarry them out of a hill.

12489. Is there any one now living, so far as you are aware, who was responsible for or connected with those evictions in any way, from the proprietor down to the ground officer?—I am not aware there is. The proprietor and the factor of the present day are in no way responsible for what was done to us.

ANGUS MACAULAY, Middle Quarter (30)—examined.

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Angus Macaulay.

12490. *The Chairman.*—Are you a crofter?—I am a crofter's son. I have a written statement here:—'Unto the Royal Commission (Highlands 'and Islands). The following statement is humbly submitted by Angus 'Macaulay, crofter's son, on behalf of the crofters of Middle Quarter 'I am thirty years of age, and was born in the neighbouring township of 'Sollas, where my father and grandfather were crofters. I live now in 'Middle Quarter, where my father has been crofter for fourteen years. 'Prior to 1815, there had been only six crofters in Middle Quarter, paying 'a rental of £3 each. Now there are nine crofters, paying a rental of £6, '10s., or nearly £8 including burdens, and six crofters having only half 'lots, paying a rental of £3, 5s., or nearly £4 including burdens; and six 'cottars. Those having a full croft keep three or four cows and two 'horses, and those having half lots keep one or two cows and a horse; but 'the place is considerably overstocked; so that cows as a rule have calves 'only every alternate year; yet our stirks and stots, which are all that 'we sell of the produce of the land for payment of rent and to meet other 'requirements, are generally the worst in the island. The ground is again 'so exhausted by continual cultivation that it will yield little or nothing 'more than sufficient provender for the cattle and horses, nor will it yield 'even that without being well manured every year; and the holdings are so 'small that we can't leave more than from $\frac{1}{8}$ to $\frac{1}{10}$ of the arable land in 'fallow annually, and the best part of the land is never in fallow, but 'under cultivation every year, otherwise we can't have sufficient provender 'for our cattle and horses. We begin to manure the ground in the 'beginning of November, and continue till the beginning of June. We 'have to cart the sea-ware a distance of three or four miles of a soft sandy 'beach, where we require a pair of horses in each cart. We also bring 'part of the sea-ware five or six miles in boats, which we have to keep for 'the purpose, and which we can only use for a short period in spring, 'when the day is long and the weather good, and which are of little or 'no use to us for fishing purposes. If we had more land, so that we could 'leave about a third of it in fallow every year, we would not require so 'much manure, and the land would be more productive. Potatoes have 'been a failure for a number of years on our crofts, and we are obliged 'to buy ground from the neighbouring farmers, in a white sandy ground, 'in which it has been found that potatoes resist the disease better than in 'the barren and shallow grounds we have on our crofts. We pay five 'days' labour for every four hundred square yards which we buy thus; 'and besides we have to level and improve that ground, which costs us a 'further labour of from six to ten days for the same area. The following 'spring we have to manure the same ground over again, then plough, 'sow, and harrow it, reap and bind it in autumn, and then give half of 'the corn to the farmer. Yet we are glad to get ground even on these 'conditions, otherwise we would have little or no potatoes, which, with 'south country meal, is our main support. The crofters of Middle Quarter 'have since last Martinmas on an average bought twelve bolls of south 'country meal; some bought as much as twenty bolls, and they will require 'half as much again before the latter end of August. They all complain 'of their poverty, and to their being indebted to south country merchants, 'and say that the cause is the small size of their holdings. If they had 'double or triple the area of arable land, they feel sure it would support 'them, for they could manage it without any increase of expense in keep-'ing horses, carts, and boats, if they had a few more cattle and sheep. On

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'account of the distance we have to cart the sea-ware to the crofts, two 'horses are absolutely indispensable, and they consume fully half of the 'corn crop. The cause of the crofters being examined here and elsewhere 'in North Uist were the repeated evictions from the neighbouring town- 'ships, which were carried on while Lord Macdonald was proprietor. 'These evictions commenced more than sixty years ago, while Mr Cameron 'was factor, and were carried on by Mr Shaw afterwards; and finally, while 'Mr Macdonald, Balranald, was factor, the people of Sollas, Dunskellar, 'Middle Quarter, and Malaglet were ruthlessly evicted. When the sheriff 'officers met with more or less resistance in serving notices of removal, a 'large body of constabulary were brought from Inverness, and in a 'pamphlet written two years ago by Mr Patrick Cooper, advocate, Aberdeen, 'who was then baron-bailie of the estate, and was present to see the 'eviction of the people effected, we read that Lord Macdonald telegraphed 'to Earl Grey for a regiment of soldiers—not to protect the sheriff officers 'in serving notices of removal, as this had already been effected, but to 'protect along with the constabulary the ground officers and other minions 'of the factor's while pulling down the houses over the people's heads, 'and that his Lordship's request was granted, and that a regiment was in 'readiness in Fort George, but fortunately, as the men offered no resistance, 'their services were dispensed with. With the exception of a slight 'skirmish between the women and the constabulary, the officers were not 'molested while carrying on their cruel and destructive work. However, 'four men were brought to Inverness, and sentenced to four months 'imprisonment. Some of them never recovered from the ill-usage they 'got from the police, and the subsequent starvation they got in the prison 'of Inverness, where they were glad to chew and swallow the juice of the 'oakum to assuage the cravings of hunger. One of them died shortly 'after his return, leaving a widow with posthumous child, and four young 'orphans. As there are other delegates who were eye-witnesses of those 'evictions, I will not trouble your Lordship with further details, but state 'briefly the demands of the crofters, viz.—(1) More land at a fair rent to 'be fixed by a land court; (2) fixity of tenure, and compensation for 'improvements. There are only two ways by which the present condition 'of the crofters can be ameliorated, first, emigration, which is most repugnant 'to the feelings of the people, and of which they had a bitter experience. 'It is only thirty years since an emigrant ship was brought to Lochmaddy, 'on board of which twelve or fourteen families from the district in which 'I reside were prevailed upon or forced to embark for Australia. Emi- 'grants who had been previously on board the vessel were discovered to 'be infected with two deadly epidemics, viz., smallpox and fever. The 'passage was a most disastrous one to the wretched emigrants, most of 'whom became victims of the epidemics; some of them died, and were 'thrown overboard; others were landed in Ireland, where a number of 'them are buried. The survivors were sent over in different batches as 'they recovered; families were broken up, some of them never to meet 'again; and their sufferings on landing in Australia were not much better, 'as they had to sell their blankets and part of their clothing before they 'got to the settlement. What we have against emigration also are the 'different difficulties with which we would have to contend, such as the 'extremes of climate, our ignorance of the mode of farming in foreign 'countries, and our inability through poverty to get stock and farming 'implements on our arrival there, &c. The second and by far the more 'congenial way to ameliorate the condition of the Highland crofters is to 'give them sufficient of that land which gave them birth, and while there is plenty of land in our native country under sheep and deer, we see no

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'reason why we should emigrate, and we are determined to resist a forced 'emigration to the bitter end. The forgoing statement is certified to be 'true by the undersigned crofters of Middle Quarter.' Signed by fifteen persons.

12491. Is your father living in the possession of the croft just now?—Yes.

12492. Have you yourself worked on the croft, or have you received your education and been in other places?—I have been working on the croft.

12493. We do not think it necessary to examine you on the particulars of these old evictions, because they have already been published, and they are fully stated in this paper, bnt we should like to know something about the present state of the township itself. How many families are there in the township?—There are fifteen crofters' families and six cottars —twenty-one families.

12494. Has the number of crofters increased of late years? How many were there twenty or thirty years ago?—I am not aware they have increased. I think they are just about the same, only there were sixteen crofters about ten years ago.

12495. And now there are fifteen?—Yes.

12496. Then no people have been brought in from other quarters and placed upon the land of your township?—None since the evictions of Sollas.

12497. Except the cottars?—Not even the cottars.

12498. They are all hereditary cottars belongiug to the place?—Yes.

12499. The demand is for increased holdings. Is there any land adjacent to you belonging to tacks which might be conveniently given to your people?—Yes, there are farms on both sides. Of course, there is another crofter township on the one side and farmers' tacks on the other.

12500. Has any hill pasture been taken away from your township of late years?—None.

12501. Have you anything to complain of in the conduct of the tacksmen about your stock or about their treatment of the crofters generally? —Well, we would be the better of having fences between us and the neighbouriug tacksman, for we are complaining of the tacksman's cattle, and he complains of us.

12502. Have you any difficulty about getting thatch for the houses?—We have to buy thatch from the tacksman.

12503. Do you pay for that in labour or in money?—Sometimes in labour and sometimes in money.

12504. Is there any complaint about it, or do you live on good terms with the tacksman?—Generally we live on good terms.

12505. Have you any complaint about sea-ware? How far have you to bring the sea-weed for manure?—We have to bring it a distance of from two to four miles iu carts, but we don't get it near the crofts even when we take it with boats. We cannot get nearer the crofts of Middle Quarter than a mile.

12506. How is it brought from the road or the sea?—In carts.

12507. Do you pay anythiug for it on tbe shore?—We have right to get part of it ourselves, and sometimes we pay labour for other parts of it.

12508. If it is gathered on the shore of the tacksman, do you pay in labour?—Yes, we pay in labour for that; but we have right to part of the sea-ware even on the shores of the tacksman, and the tacksman has right to a part that comes on our shore.

12509. Then there is no part of your arable or of your pasture which has been of recent years taken and given to a tack?—None.

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ANGUS MACAULAY.

12510. What rent does your father pay?—My father has only a half lot, and he pays £3, 5s.

11511. What is the stock he usually keeps?—Two cows, a horse, and about half-a-dozen sheep.

12512. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Your father was removed from Sollas?—Yes, in 1849 or 1850.

12513. Has the land which he was removed to at Middle Quarter been entirely improved by himself?—No; he did not come immediately afterwards to Middle Quarter; he was sent in common with the other crofters to Loch Eport.

12514. How long has he been at Middle Quarter?—Fourteen years.

12515. Did he find a house ready built for him when he went to Middle Quarter?—Yes.

12516. Did he pay anything for it to the other tenant?—We had the walls built, but we had to buy the timber and roof the house.

12517. What did you pay to the man who preceded you at Middle Quarter?—When we went there we paid his arrears of rent. I think we paid about £4 when we entered into possession on the first half croft we had there.

12518. What did you get for that besides possession of the croft?—Nothing.

12519. Did you not get the roof of the house?—No. We only got a half croft first from the man who had a full croft, and there was only one house on the croft and the walls of another, and we roofed these walls ourselves.

12520. And that man was in arrears?—He was in arrears.

12521. And he took you in order to pay his arrears?—Yes.

12522. Did the factor know he took you in?—Yes, it was with the factor's permission.

12523. Did you pay that £4 to the other tenant, or did you pay it to the factor?—I think my father paid it to the factor.

12524. Of course you don't know that of your own knowledge?—I am sure it was paid, and I think it was to the factor it was paid.

12525. Are you aware whether it is common in the country to pay arrears of rent in that way?—I believe it was customary then, but I don't believe it is customary now.

12526. Then you gave that £4 in order to get possession of a better place than where you were?—Yes.

12527. You have heard it stated to-day that potatoes were sold this year and sent to Glasgow for the sake of buying meal. Have you had any potatoes yourself to spare?—I had a few, but I did not send them to Glasgow. I had not them to spare.

12528. But it was said that some people sold potatoes in order to buy meal. Do they prefer to live on meal rather than potatoes?—The potatoes were exceedingly dear this year, and consequently they would get more meal.

DONALD M'QUEEN, Crofter, Middle Quarter (about 60)—examined.

DONALD M'QUEEN.

12529. *The Chairman.*—You are appointed to speak for Maliglate?—Yes.

12530. Have you a paper to present to us?—There is no separate paper for Maliglate.

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Donald M'Queen.

12531. Then you will make a verbal statement?—It is all in the paper.

12532. *Mr Cameron.*—Do the complaints in the paper which has been read refer equally to the district with which you are connected?—The same complaint.

12533. How many crofters are in Maliglate?—Twelve full crofts.

12534. Any half crofts?—Yes, four crofts are divided, making sixteen families in all of crofters.

12535. Any cottars?—Five.

12536. Do you know when the crofts were subdivided?—I cannot remember the number of years; it is a long while ago.

12537. When did the crofters go there?—A long time ago also.

12538. What are the people of Maliglate wishing for?—They wish for a great deal. Rent is high, and we have to buy largely, and we are burdened down with it all.

12539. Do you wish to leave Maliglate and go elsewhere?—I do not hear them express that wish. What I heard them say was just what has been expressed in the paper already—that they are hemmed in for want of land, and that the land they have is exhausted by continuous cropping.

12540. What is the summing of each croft?—Two horses, five cows with their followers, and twelve sheep, is the summing of a full croft in Maliglate.

12541. What rent?—£7.

12542. Do you think that is too high a rent for that stock?—Yes, much too high—the proceeds being nothing but the outcome of the stock, which is in poor condition.

12543. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Do we understand you to concur in the paper and with what your co-delegate has expressed?—Yes, and I would concur with even more than is in the paper

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ANGUS MACDONALD, Crofter, Island of Boreray (57)—examined.

Angus Macdonald.

12544. *The Chairman.*—Were you freely elected a delegate?—Yes.

12545. Have you got a statement to make to us?—Yes.—'*Island of Boreray, North Uist, 29th May* 1883. To the Right Hon. Lord Napier, Chairman of the Royal Commission Highlands and Islands.—Sir, The following are a few of the grievances of which we complain, viz., the smallness and dearness of our holdings, the overcrowding of the people, and the unproductiveness of the soil. The island on which we live is not a square mile in extent, including a brackish loch covering more than 30 acres of land. The population is about 150. The most of the arable land is ploughed every year for the last one hundred, which renders it so light that in spring the winds generally carry away the corn seed. There are twenty horses working the arable land. Each crofter sows on an average five bushels of barley, and even in a productive year they only grind ten bushels. The cattle are almost starving in the winter for want of fodder, which leaves them in a wretched condition during the whole year. In former years we used to pay our rent by draining the fore-mentioned loch and securing and sloping sandbanks, but since the present proprietor bought the island no such work exists. We generally pay our rent now by cash and some kelp. We have to carry our peats eight or nine miles by sea from the factor's ground for which we pay. We are paying school rates for the last ten or eleven years, and as yet the school board has not taken any steps to build a schoolhouse for us. The Ladies'

Association kind by supply us with a teacher. The appointed delegates will answer any question which your Lordship may deem desirable to ask them.—We are your Lordship's humble servants, Crofters of the Island of Boreray, per ANGUS MACDONALD.

12546. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Were you born in the island of Boreray?—Yes.

12547. How many people were there in your younger days?—Twenty crofters.

12548. Were there cottars also?—Yes, eight cottars as well.

12549. Has the population increased very considerably since your time?—Yes, it has considerably increased. There are 150 now, including cottars.

12550. And, I suppose, as the island is limited in extent, this increase of population presses upon you?—Yes. There are twenty crofters just now and eight cottar families. The eight cottar families have thirty-two people among them; the rest are made up of the crofter families.

12551. You stated here that you used to pay your rent by draining the fore-mentioned loch and securing and sloping sandbanks, but since the present proprietor bought the island no such work exists. Why did the proprietor give up that work?—I do not know why the present proprietor ceased.

12552. Did he carry it on at all from the time of getting the property?—I am not aware he did any work of that kind.

12553. Could the sea be stopped from getting into the place?—It would not be very easy. It enters it every spring tide of the year.

12554. But is it possible to do it?—The former proprietors were keeping it out before the present proprietor.

12555. Have you got any reduction of rent in consequence of losing the value of this loch to a great extent?—No, the rent has been left as it was with the former proprietors. There has been no change during the present proprietor's time, only there are now taxes which make the rent higher.

12556. It seems incredible that the poor people are obliged to bring their peats eight or nine miles by sea from the factor's ground. How long have they been obliged to carry them all that distance?—They have been taking them from the same place ever since I remember.

12557. Then I presume you want a great number of the surplus population to be removed from the island? Is that the only way to put them right?—The cottars upon the island would require it all for themselves, to put them in proper condition.

12558. Did you ever represent your very serious condition to the proprietor or the factor?—No.

12559. Why did you not do it?—The factor is very kind to us.

12560. That was all the more reason you should do so?—We did not know where he could send us.

12561. You have been here all day?—Yes.

12562. Did you hear some of the previous delegates say that there was plenty of land in Uist?—Yes.

12563. Do you approve of that?—Yes, to provide for all the people, if only they got it.

12564. Where did the people come from originally? Has the island been inhabited from time immemorial by a certain number of people?—The proprietor of Boreray held it once.

12565. And there were no people on it then?—Only himself and his servant.

12566. Who was he?—John M'Lean, laird of Boreray.

12567. What time was this?—Was it one hundred years ago or so?—I

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think it is short of one hundred years, but I do not remember the time within a large number of years.

12568. When it fell into Lord Macdonald's hands, was it then that the people began to settle in it?—Lord Macdonald never had it. It was not part of the estate of North Uist at all. The M'Leans possessed it all along. My father was alive when tenants were sent to Boreray.

12569. From where?—Some portions of it were given to his own servants, and others came by his orders from other places. One came from Bernera, and others from adjacent places in the sound of North Uist.

12570. Are you much in arrear with your rent?—I am not aware that we were ever so much in arrear as this year, since the present proprietor got the property.

12571. Are the people generally very poor?—The greater number of them are very poor indeed.

12572. Do you derive no benefit from the board schools?—There is no board school, but there is a Ladies' Committee in Edinburgh that supplies us with a school. That is the Free Church Ladies' Association.

12573. In point of fact, you are paying school rates, and have positively no school accommodation?—That is the case. We pay school rates, and get no return for them.

12574. How far is Boreray from the mainland?—The ferry is three miles broad.

12575. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Have you made representations to the school board about getting a board school?—We never made any such representation.

12576. How many children are there generally attending the Ladies' Association School?—There are about thirty children of school age, but I cannot exactly say what the attendance is.

12577. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—How long would it take you to reach the nearest board school?—It would not take them very long if they could walk it; but the ferry is three miles.

12578. Are the children brought in at the inspection of the nearest board school?—No, but Miss Rainy of Edinburgh comes every second year to examine the school.

12579. Do your children pay fees at the Ladies' school?—No; the only fee is to provide the schoolmaster with peats, and that is not very easy for those who have no boats to ferry the peats. It is not easy for them to do their share of that work.

12580. How do those who have no boats manage to get peats for themselves?—They pay the others for ferrying the peats across.

12581. Are there no peats nearer than nine miles from them?—I am not aware, perhaps the distance is not exactly nine miles, but it must be about eight at least.

12582. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Where did the schoolmaster come from?—From Islay.

12583. *Mr Cameron.*—For whose benefit was the loch drained that you talked of?—For the benefit of the people of the place.

12584. *The Chairman.*—Was there a sluice in the loch?—Yes, there was such an arrangement once upon a time.

12585. Was that to keep the sea out?—Yes

12586. And then to let the fresh water out at low water?—Yes; when there was one to look after it, the sluice raised at low water to let out the fresh water of the loch.

12587. And that increased the amount of cultivable land?—Yes; we remember the time when places that are never dry now were cultivated.

12588. Do you still pay the same rent?—The present proprietor has

not increased the rent, but kept it as it was left by the former proprietors

12589. *Mr Cameron.*—Did you get wages for draining this loch?—Yes, when the former proprietors had it.

12590. And there was no interest charged upon the expenditure by the proprietor?—No.

12591. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—What amount of wages were they in the habit of expending annually on this loch?—I cannot tell that.

12592. Were they paying as much as the rent you were paying?—I do not think they were, in draining the loch.

12593. Did the people generally make their rent by their work?—With the addition of kelp, they were able to pay their rent—by these works and kelp in addition. The cultivatable ground is just now as white as if it were covered with snow by the drift of the sand. About Whitsunday it is peculiarly bad, and it is not oats that grow there but weeds, that are not good for fodder or anything else.

Rev. DONALD M'LEAN, Free Church Minister, Carinish (60)—examined.

12594. *The Chairman.*—Were you born in this country?—No, I was born in Skye.

12595. You have been here about eleven years?—Yes.

12596. We have heard a great deal about the recent destitution of the people and the deterioration of their circumstances. Have you observed that of late years?—Well, of course this year has been worse with them than any previous year since I came to this place, on account of the storms and tides and the failure of the harvest.

12597. Are you aware that any part of the poorer people are actually in want of clothing and of bedding in their houses?—They are in need of clothing and of food—many of tbe poorer people.

12598. Do you think that any of the poorer people have had recourse to shell-fish and substitutes of that sort for food?—Many of the poorer people are always in the way of going to the ebb for shell-fish. That is always the case.

12599. Do you find a great difference between the crofters and cottars? Are the cottars much more liable to destitution?—In the nature of things, the cottars must be so. There must be some difference, for the cottars have less to depend upon.

12600. How do you find the parochial board in their dealings with the poor? Do you find they pay atteution to their duty, or that there is a proper distribution of relief to paupers?—I am not a member of the parochial board. I hear many of the paupers complaining, but I am not member of the board.

12601. But, not being a member of the board, you are the more capable of giving an opinion on their conduct. Do you think the allowances made are defective or sufficient?—I know the allowance is bare enough. At the same time, a number of the rate-payers find the expenditure enough.

12602. Do you find that the destitute circumstances of families are such that the children are prevented from going to church or school by want of clothing?—I am fully aware of that; many of them being so destitute that they can not really attend church or school for want of clothing.

12603. You have not been engaged in farming yourself?—Not much. I have one small park.

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12604. **But you are not, in fact, personally very conversant with their agricultural condition?**—I cannot say that I am.

12605. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—You said they were in the habit of going to the ebb for food?—Yes, I think so.

12606. **Was that also the custom in Skye where you came from?**—It was.

12607. **And that custom here has never ceased?**—I should think not.

12608. Will they get wholesome food in that way?—It is a help. They do not depend upon it by any means.

12609. What do they get?—They get cockles for the most part here.

12610. Do they get sand eels?—I am not aware of their getting them. They may, but I cannot say.

12611. The island of Boreray is not in your parish?—No.

12612. Do you think the schools are properly administered here, so far as you have seen?—Well, we have a good deal to do with both schools.

12613. One of the witnesses to-day complained that the children were not taught to read their Bible in Gaelic. Have you anything to complain of on that score?—We try to supplement that. We have Gaelic schoolmasters; we have Sabbath schools, and we supplement what is not attended to in the board schools the best way we can.

12614. Are you able to do so satisfactorily?—Well, so far; perhaps not satisfactorily, but so far as we can we try to overtake the thing.

12615. Would you like to see Gaelic reading taught more largely than it is in the board schools, or are there Gaelic-speaking teachers to do it?—We have a number of teachers who have not Gaelic. I am always pleading for the Gaelic in our schools. I pleaded for it with the school board, and I should like to see it in all our board schools.

12616. To what extent would you like to see it?—To the extent of every child being able to read the Bible.

12617. Gaelic is still the chief language of the country here?—Yes.

12618. Do they understand English?—They do.

12619. Do you find the young people able to attend the English sermon?—Most of them understand the English sermon.

12620. And able to read their English Bible?—Yes.

12621. Except in this one year, you do not think the circumstances of the people are getting worse from what you first remember?—There is a general complaint of the land being so much exhausted that in the nature of things the crofts cannot be so sufficient as they were in former times.

12622. Do you remember the time when that complaint was not made?—Not in this island, of course; being so long in the island, I know it as matter of fact.

12623. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Do you preach in English?—Very little.

12624. You don't preach steadily in English?—No.

12625. What is the number of people who generally attend your congregation?—Well, this meeting house is generally about full, and at the communion season it cannot hold the people by any means. The parish is made up so much of detached islands that we must have service in various places besides here.

12626. How many will this building contain?—When full, about 300 people.

12627. Is there another Free Church clergyman in North Uist?—Not just now. There is a vacant congregation.

12628. What is the name of the place?—Paible.

12629. How many people are in your parish?—In the statement which

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I gave in to the presbytery I had Benbecula, but that is now made a separate parish. I had between 600 and 700 people including Benbecula. I should say there are now between 400 and 500.

12630. How many are there in Paible?—Some 800 or 900 or more.

12631. Is there temporary supply at Paible?—We have been trying to get ministers there, but they have been refusing our calls.

12632. Are you a member or the school board?—Yes.

12633. And you have been as yet unable to get Gaelic taught regularly?—I am not aware of Gaelic being taught in any of our board schools, but we have Gaelic teachers apart from our board schools, and Sabbath schools besides.

12634. Suppose Gaelic were ordered to be made a special subject, would there be any difficulty in the Western Islands of getting competent teachers?—No, there would not.

12635. And you are perfectly clear that the Gaelic-speaking children are entitled at the hands of the Government to be taught to read the Bible in their mother tongue?—I think so.

12636. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—We have heard something of the persecution of Free Church people in this district, not within recent times, but in former times, though not very long ago. Do you know anything about it?—I have heard of it, but really from my own observation I cannot say. There has been nothing of the kind since I came here.

12637. Are there any of the delegates here who know or have experienced anything of it?—I am sure they should know.

12638. Was there any place in particular?—The evictions of course took place in former times, but I cannot say they were entirely for the Church. It is possible, but I am not in a position to say that.

Free 639. But now-a-days I suppose there is no difference made in the
l?ons of landlord and tenant and of neighbours between each other,
relati count of the church they belong to?—No, we are on the very best
on ac in that respect.
terms

Rev. JOHN ALEXANDER MACRAE, Minister of the Parish of North Uist (51)—examined.

Rev. John Alex. Macrae.

12640. *The Chairman.*—You were born here, I believe?—Yes.

12641. And your father was minister here before you?—Yes, for forty-three years.

12642. How long have you been minister here yourself?—Twenty-four years.

12643. Did you immediately succeed your father?—Yes.

12644. Your father was the author of the paper respecting this parish in the Statistical Account of 1842?—Yes.

12645. With which you are well acquainted?—I have read it more than once.

12646. Do you think the account—I may say the pleasing and flattering account—which your father gives of the manners and habits and condition of the people at that time applies to the present day?—To a very great extent it does. The circumstances of the people have changed less or more since that account was written, but as a whole I think that they can bear out the character that was given them at that date with regard to their circumstances and their manners. I may state, that the manufacture of kelp at that time and years before then made up for everything,

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Rev. John Alex. Macrae.

—paid the rents of the tenants in full, and not only that, but kept the manufacturers of the kelp in a comfortable way so far as food was concerned for seven or eight weeks of the year, and all the benefits of their crofts and farms accumulated to themselves. The manufacture of kelp has now ceased, and of course there is less or more change in that respect. But the price of stock has risen considerably since then for a number of years back, and continues till now, which I think to a very extent great makes up the loss they have sustained by the giving up of the manufacture of kelp; at least that is my idea.

12647. You think that the increase in the price of stock forms to a certain degree a compensation for the cessation of the kelp industry?—Yes.

12648. But if there is any change in the circumstances of the people, do you think it is in the direction of deterioration or improvement all over?—I should say it is in the direction of improvement.

12649. You think it is rather in the direction of improvement?—It is.

12650. Where do you find the evidence of improvement?—They are improving themselves in their circumstances and a good deal in their manners, and also in their mode of dress. I may state certainly that they do not live now so much upon the produce of the land as they did forty or fifty or sixty years ago, and farther back than that. They lived wholly upon the produce of the land then, which consisted of barley, meal, potatoes, mutton, beef, and also pork and eggs. As for the exportation of these things from the country at that date, it was a thing that was not known.

12651. From what you say, they must have had some share of animal food at that time?—More so than they have now. I would say this, that they lived more substantially then, and they live more extravagantly now, —that is in the shape of getting tea and various other things from the south that they never dreamt of then.

12652. If they live less substantially now—if they have a smaller supply of animal food, eggs, milk, and so on—do you attribute that decline to the smallness of their holdings, and the multiplication of persons upon them, and the exhaustion of the soil?—Yes, I would say so. The soil is taken in year after year, and naturally gets exhausted, and cannot yield the same amount of crop as it used to do.

12653. When you say there has been an improvement in the condition of the people, you mean rather a superficial improvement—an appearance of greater refinement and luxury, but not a substantial improvement?—Yes, that is the meaning I want to convey.

12654. Your father in his account speaks very highly of the saudy land on your side of the island, and of the crops of barley that were raised upon that soil at that time. Is that still the case?—Where the land is taken in by rotation, and gets a considerable amount of rest, it yields as good crops now as it did then, so far as my observation can go; and the crop of potatoes, when it is a successful year, is every bit as great as it was in his time.

12655. Is there still a certain amount of that good sandy land in the possession of crofters, or is it incorporated with large farms?—There is a very large extent of it in the possession of crofters.

12656. Is it divided permanently among them, or do they cultivate it together, or have they a rotation in the possession of certain parts of it?—It is partly divided amongst crofting farms, and there are other farms called club farms, where the land is equally divided at the time of laying down the crop, but we have not many of that sort of farms in the country. I think there are only three club farms, which was the old system of divid-

ing the farms amongst tenants in the Highlands—not only here, but in various other parts of the Western Islands.

12657. Do they divide it year by year, or does the same person hold the same portion for three years?—They divide it year by year when they are putting down the crop. It is regularly measured, and when the land is measured an equal number of tenants cast lots, and they only possess it for one year. This is gone through year after year in club farms; but it is different in what we call the crofting farms, because their crofts are regularly divided.

12658. Do you find the people just as sensible of the advantage of religious exercises and as attentive to their duties as they were in past years?—Yes, equally so.

12659. Do you believe there are any members of your congregation, young or old, who are prevented by want of clothing from going to church?—No, I am perfectly confident of that. There may have been some instances in which parents gave as an excuse that the children could not attend school for want of clothing, but that has been taken away by the parochial board supplying them with that article.

12660. Do you believe there is a greater or less amount of intemperance than there was in former times?—I think it is much about the same; I do not think it is on the decrease.

12661. But not on the increase?—No, I think not.

12662. Has the recent temperance movement made any progress here?—It has not made much in this quarter yet.

12663. Have you any public houses on your side of the island?—There was one, but it has been given up at this term. There are only two licenced houses in the island, at Lochmaddy and Carinish.

12664. So there is no unnecessary temptation thrown in the way of the people?—No, not so far as that is concerned. I may state there was another wholesale licence at Lochmaddy, which has been given up also.

12665. *Professor Mackinnon.*—I suppose, as matter of fact, the people really don't drink unless they come the way of Carinish and Lochmaddy?—No.

12666. And that was always the case?—Yes, so far as I know. There is one statement I would like to make to the Commissioners in regard to the honesty and truthfulness of the people. I was rather annoyed to hear a statement made by one of the delegates, I think from Cariuish. There was a question put to him about the raising of turnips in the district, and so far as my memory serves me he stated that they could not raise them there with any degree of safety, because they would be stolen. Now, any wandering boy may go into a field, and take up a turnip occasionally—I daresay we all did it occasionally when we were boys,—but as to the general character of the people, I must say that they stand very high in that respect, with regard to pilfering or stooping so very low. I think it is just and right in me to contradict a statement of that kind which has no foundation.

12667. *The Chairman.*—In fact, you think that if they took any trifling object of that sort it would be from thoughtlessness?—Just thoughtlessness and carelessness—certainly not with the intention of thieving.

12668. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Is there any sheep stealing?—Well, sheep stealing was a matter that created a very great deal of excitement at one time throughout the whole of the West Highlands, and very much in the Western Islands here. I may say it is a thing that is hardly known now, or, I am glad to say, for a number of years back.

12669. *The Chairman.*—Do the sheep and the stock generally in a bad

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season run all through each other very much? Do not they get mixed, and may they not stray a good deal?—That is quite a likely thing.

12670. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Do you know whether in those townships that hold their land under the run-rig system there is a less tendency to an increase of population?—I think as a rule there is.

12671. Do you know if in the rest of the parish the young people are apt to settle down on the croft where there is only room for one?—Yes, there is a tendency to that.

12672. Do you think the tendency is less where the run-rig system prevails, where there is a club-farm?—Yes I think, as a rule it is.

12673. The other tenants don't allow that to happen?—No.

12674. You said you found that where a proper rotation was observed and proper rest given, the crops were as good as they used to be. What do you consider the proper rest for land in this country?—Two years in grass.

12675. Do you farm yourself?—I hold a glebe, and I used to farm it, but it turned out that I was a very bad farmer, and I let it out to a tenant; and I find myself more benefited by letting to a tenant at a rent than by farming it myself, because I did not know very well how to superintend farming operations, and those who worked it took advantage of me.

12676. Is your tenant a good farmer?—He is a very thriving one.

12677. Have you observed what rotation he adopts?—I think it is about two years,—from two to three years; it depends very much on the quality of the soil. There are certain crofts in this country that have been cultivated at least for a period of sixty years, year after year, and it is perfectly impossible that they could yield the same crop. In regard to the raising of potatoes, when the potatoes do succeed they have a very abundant crop.

12678. Have you any idea what the return of potato seed is in the light sandy soil here?—I have seen two barrels of potatoes planted, certainly in a very good piece of soil, and they yielded sixteen returns; but as a rule I should say there are eight returns on the average in a good year.

12679. Do you know what the returns of seed are in the case of grain?—I should say that the usual return is a boll to the peck. There are sixteen pecks to the boll.

12680. You speak of barley?—Yes, but that is a very large return; I should say ten returns is the average.

12681. Do you know how many pecks of barley they sow to the acre?—No.

12682. Do you know what the returns of oats are?—No. It is only small black oats that we raise; there are a few places where there are white oats, but as a rule we don't raise them.

12683. You have heard of sixteen returns of barley in your time?—I have seen it.

12684. That is exceptional?—Yes, in a very good growing year and with very good soil.

12685. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Are you a member of the school board of the parish?—I am not now.

12686. How did that happen?—They said I was very stringent in exacting the regulations of the school board, and they put in two members instead of myself and one of my co-presbyters. However, I know a good deal of the working of the school board.

12687. You heard the statement in regard to Boreray?—Yes, I am quite aware of that.

12688. Do you think anything could or should have been done by the school board to establish a school there?—I certainly think there should have been something done, because I always considered it a great hardship for the people to pay school rates and not get the benefit they were entitled to on that account; but the statement which the man made was perfectly correct with respect to the supply of education by the Free Church Ladies' Society in Edinburgh, which is continued now. There was a school connected with the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge for a good many years, and when that was given up, the ladies' association took it up. So far as I remember the school board had in view the erection of buildings there, but it so happens that that has never been accomplished.

12689. In point of fact, if it were not for the Ladies' Association, the children of Boreray would not be educated at all?—No, the attendance was very small; the number attending was about thirty.

12690. I suppose the existence of that Ladies' Association school relieves the mind of the school board of the parish from any anxiety on the subject?—I do not know what they think now, but when I was a member of the board we very often had it under consideration, but it was never decided to erect buildings. As I have said, I think they had it in view to erect buildings there.

12691. Do you know what is the school rate in the parish?—I think it was 1s. 3d. last year.

12692. *Mr Cameron.*—Is that between landlord and tenant?—No, it is 2s. 6d. between landlord and tenant; the poor rate is the same.

12693. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—In regard to the returns of seed which you mentioned, did they grow upon crofters' land or large farmers' land?—Upon large farmers' land—land that was taken in by regular rotation.

12694. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Has the population increased or decreased within the last forty years, or is it stationary?—It has increased but not very much.

12695. What was it in 1841?—I don't think it was 4000.

12696. What is it now?—4264, and since the census of 1871 it has increased 158.

12697. With reference to the pleasing and satisfactory account which your father gave of the people of the parish at the time, as being all in good circumstances, can you account for the forcible eviction from the estate of so many people ten years afterwards?—I can hardly account for that except in the way of clearing the land for others. That is all I can say.

12698. Now, having been born in the parish, and having been connected with it all your days, you have probably traversed every bit of the parish?—I have.

12699. When you are going your rounds, don't you see the remains of of scores if not hundreds of houses that are now in ruins?—The only district in which I can see that is in the district of Sollas—not in any of the other districts which have been cleared.

12700. Can you state of your own knowledge or observation that there is a great deal of land once under cultivation that has now run out into pasture?—Yes.

12701. Can you put it into acres?—I cannot do that at all.

12702. You have heard it stated that a considerable time ago no corn was imported?—Yes, and I remember that myself.

12703. And you have heard it stated, and probably know from your own knowledge, that a great deal is now imported from other quarters?—Yes, a great quantity.

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12704. Don't you think that arises to a great extent from allowing some of the lands to run out from cultivation into pasture?—I do.

12705. In regard to the clothing of the children, I think you said that you did not think that there were any children prevented attending public worship in consequence of the state of their clothing?—I am perfectly well aware of that.

12706. There is no such thing?—No

12707. *Sir Kenneth Mackenize.*—You speak only of your own congregation?—I speak of the whole island.

12708. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—It has been alleged in other places that that is the cause, and a very good cause, but that is not consistent with your observation?—It is not.

12709. With regard to the observation you made as to the delegate who spoke about the turnips, don't you think that what he meant was that the people are so poor at present, and so bothered with cottars who paid no rent, that there was a danger of their perhaps taking a little more of his turnips than ought to have been the case?—Well, he may have meant that, but I may state that turnips are rather a new thing among the tenants, and they would go rather more from curiosity than bad feeling. That is my impression.

12710. We have heard a great deal in other places about the consumption of tea, and the answer we got was that it has come very much to supplant the want of milk?—It has.

12711. That is consistent with your own observation?—It is.

12712. Can you give us an enumeration of the large tacks that are now in your parish? I suppose there are not above half a dozen altogether?—I do not think there are more than half a dozen in the whole island.

12713. Will you name them?—Newton, Clachan, Avore, Grenitote, Sollas, Vallay, Ballylone, Balranald.

12714. Do these eight tacks comprehend the great bulk of the rich land of North Uist, both arable and pasture?—They do.

12715. Are all these tacks held by separate people?—No. Newton is held by one. Clachan and Avore go with Balranald. Grenitote is a separate one, Sollas is a separate one; Vallay is held by Mrs Macdonald, and Ballylone by Mr Stewart of Scorrybreck.

12716. Of these then there are apparently two non-resident tenants?—That is all—Mrs Macdonald and Mr Stewart.

12717. Has the proprietor any land in his own hands?—He has the two hills of Lea above Lochmaddy.

12718. Are these grazings?—Yes, sheep grazings.

12719. Is there a resident proprietor?—No.

12720. Has he a residence on the island?—No.

12721. We have heard that there are in certain places in North Uist a very considerable number of people in the position of cottars, who pay no rent to the crofters on whose lands they are squatted, but who are still in possession of a considerable quantity of stock. Is that consistent with your knowledge?—Yes.

12722. Is that a great grievance to the crofters?—I seldom heard them complain about it. They do complain of it now to a considerable extent, but that is a recent thing. The cottars pay rent to the proprietor At any rate they are charged rent by the proprietor, which is a recent thing too.

12723. Do you know any glaring instances of cottars having several head of stock who are really living upon the crofters' lands?—I do not think the amount of stock of any of them comes to several. Some of them have a horse and cart, a cow, and a few sheep. I do not think it goes over that.

12724. Would it be an exaggeration to say that there are two hundred people living upon the crofters with stock of various kinds?—I would say there is that at least.

12725. And you as an outsider, and a minister looking after the interests of the people, would say that is a very great hardship to the crofters?—I would say so—a very great hardship indeed.

12726. How might that have arisen originally?—It may have arisen from intermarriages. I think that was the origin of it, and they got a hold upon the croft, got the stance of a house, and continued until they became resident there, and with nothing in their possession but what the crofter gave them. That is the only way I can account for it.

12727. You are aware that in all parts of the island there is a great demand for additional land and to get their holdings increased. Are you generally in favour of their getting that?—I am.

12728. And supposing that that were done, would you recommend that, so far as the hill is concerned, it should be a common stock?—I should say so.

12729. Managed as a club farm?—So far as the hill is concerned.

12730. With one herd?—Yes.

12731. They would have, of course, exclusive rights to the low arable land?—Yes.

12732. Are you aware that has worked very well in some other parts of the country?—That is the way they generally work their stock in this country. They have one herd for the stock they graze on the hill, and keep the arable land exclusively in their own hands.

12733. Is there any reason why a well-managed club farm of this kind in the hands of several crofters with enlarged holdings should not as sellers hold their own in the market with the big tenants?—There is no reason why it should not.

12734. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—In regard to the Sollas affair, what was the reason given at the time by the representatives of the landlord for removing the people?—This island was in the possession of Lord Macdonald at the time, and all his estates were under trust. There was a commissioner appointed to manage the affairs named Mr Cooper, an Aberdeen advocate, and he visited this island in March 1848. He found that the people of this district of Sollas were very much in arrears of rent indeed, but the principal reason of that was that they had not recovered from the very great shock of the destitution of 1846, 1847, and 1848. When this commissioner saw they were so very much in arrears, he proposed an emigration, that he would send them to Canada. This offer was accepted by the people of the district, but when he came back in the month of June to make preparations for their removal he found them of quite a different opinion. A feeling had got up amongst themselves that they were singled out from the whole district of the country, not with a very amiable disposition, and they resisted, and hence the evictions. I may also state that a very great feeling got up in the south in favour of the people, and there was a large fund of money collected in order to better their condition here. The managers of this sum, which was put together, offered or at least guaranteed the rental of the farm of Sollas—the whole district of Sollas—which consists of four different farms—Sollas, Duine, Middlequarter, and Maligiate. This offer by the managers of that fund was not accepted, and it was then that they got possession of this black moor of Langash and Loch Eport, which did not last more than a period of two years, I should say. The eviction took place in the summer of 1849, and they were allowed to remain in their houses until the following year, and the most of them emigrated in that unfortunate transport the 'Hercules'

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in 1852. They all went except those who remained at Loch Eport, and are still there. These are all the circumstances that I know about it.

12735. The Lord Macdonald of the time had nothing personally to do with that unfortunate eviction, and I was told that he was very sorry for it when he knew what was being done?—He was powerless in it. His estates were under trust, and were altogether committed to the management of Mr Cooper.

12736. You know the land very well. There was some evidence given by one of the Loch Eport people. Do you consider that their land is in any way comparable to that from which they were evicted as a place to live upon and get a living with any degree of comfort?—There is no comparison in the world so far as my experience of land goes. There are thirty-four crofters at Loch Eport, and I should say ten would be quite enough for it.

12737. With regard to the feelings of the people here and the grievances they represent, there is a belief on the part of some people that those feelings have been excited very much by influences outside of themselves, and that they are not altogether spontaneous. Do you think any such external influences have had any considerable effect upon them in leading to the statements we have heard to-day?—Less or more.

12738. Have there been any agents at work among them from other quarters?—There were, but I don't think they have had any great effect upon them so far as the people of this island are concerned, so far as I know.

12739. I suppose they read the newspapers now a great deal more than they did twenty years ago?—They do.

12740. Have you any knowledge what kind of papers are most popular amongst them, or to what extent they read compared with what they did at that time?—I circulate a great deal of the public news among them, and I read a very carefully and well conducted paper, the *Glasgow Herald*.

12741. You have no Irish papers here?—No.

12742. Or the *Glasgow Daily Mail*?—It comes here occasionally.

JOHN MACDONALD, Newton, Factor on the Estate of North Uist (56) —examined

John Macdonald.

12743. *The Chairman.*—Have you a farm?—Yes.

12744. *Professor Mackinnon.*—How long have you had charge of this property as factor?—Since Sir John Orde purchased it at Whitsunday 1855.

12745. That is twenty-eight years ago?—Yes, but I was only sub-factor at first.

12746. But you have been upon this property continuously since that time?—I was born and brought up on the estate.

12747. You were born here?—Yes, on this side of the island.

12748. What is the total rent of the island?—£4872, 16s. 10d.

12749. Do you think you would be able to say in a rough way to what extent that rental is made up from large holdings, from crofters, and from cottars?—To the best of my recollection, the crofters pay £1900 of the rent.

12750. Of course the rents of these crofters vary considerably among themselves?—Yes.

12751. How high do some of them go?—There are very few as high as £10.

12752. And some of them go as low as what?—£1 or 25s.

12753. Then there is a large number of cottars who don't pay any rent?—Yes.

12754. Do they pay to the proprietor, or are they charged any rent?—They have been charged rent, and a few of them pay, but not many.

12755. Does that rent cover any stock they may have?—No; it is merely for the stance of the house, and for the privilege of fuel.

12756. You heard the complaint of the crofters to-day, that not merely were those cottars squatted there, but that they had some stock for which they paid nothing to them, which the crofters consider a hardship and a grievance. Is there any regulation upon the estate to prevent such a practice as that?—We do not tolerate it when we can prevent it, but it is the doing of the tenants themselves and not of the proprietor.

12757. Taking the small holdings upon the average, you have heard the statements of the people to-day, that while the rents were on the whole higher than they could have wished, still their chief complaint was not so much the rent as the smallness of the croft. From your well-known knowledge of what rents for crofts ought to be in such a place as this, do you consider the crofts upon this estate over-rented as compared with other estates more or less similar?—I believe they are lower.

12758. You would agree in the main, however, with the statements of the crofters that it would be greatly to their advantage if their crofts were larger than they are?—Yes, it would be to the thrifty crofters.

12759. There was a very important statement made to us, and I should like to know in your experience whether those who are in arrear are chiefly from the smaller class of crofters or from those who have better crofts and pay higher rents?—They are principally from the smaller holdings.

12760. I suppose if it could be conveniently done you would be very glad to see the crofts of the thrifty crofters enlarged?—I would.

12761. Then in a township with enlarged crofts of that sort you would of course fence off the whole pasture from the arable ground?—Yes.

12762. Would you have the stock managed according to the club system upon the hill pasture, or each one looking after his own?—The club system would answer better if they could winter their hoggs, but the custom on this island is to winter the hoggs in their houses, and the club system would not suit very well.

12763. Then, as to the arable ground, would you consider it an advantage that each separate croft should be fenced off if the crofts were a little larger than they are?—That would depend upon whose expense it was to be done at.

12764. Apart from that, would it be an advantage?—It would be an advantage to have a ring fence round each township.

12765. Would you not think it necessary that there should be a separate fence round the arable ground on each croft?—No doubt, every fence is an advantage.

12766. At present I suppose the arable ground is free to the stock of the whole place during the winter?—Yes.

12767. And in that way it is not so easy to put any portion of it under grass?—No. That is partly the reason why grass seeds are not sown by the crofters.

12768. That is the chief reason?—Yes.

12769. But the great difficulty of putting up fences would be the expense?—Yes.

12770. I think it was stated upon your authority that there were two

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or three townships in which not only the whole of the pasture but the arable land was on the club system?—Yes, run-rig.

12771. It was stated as one advantage of that system that there was not the same tendency to overcrowding, but rather that the neighbours would prevent overcrowding if possible. Is there any disadvantage, however, in the way of cultivation?—There is no disadvantage in the way of cultivation; but there is this disadvantage in the case of squatting, that if you wanted to turn out a squatter you would have to summon the whole tenants of the farm, because you don't know who owns the ground on which he squats.

12772. As matter of fact, are those places that are cultivated in that way, where one has the ground for a year and his neighbour has it for another year, and so on, as well cultivated as where every one has his own?—I believe they are better.

12773. It is good for the lazy man, but is it good for the thrifty man?—Yes, the thrifty man carries the lazy man with him.

12774. Then you think it would be an advantage?—In a small township, but not in a large township. If you have only six you can get these pieces equally divided, but if you divide it among twenty you can hardly get them of equal value.

12775. And when the holdings are very small, you would consider it better the other way?—They are the most tidy we have on the estate.

12776. And part of that you attribute to the mode of cultivation?—Yes, I think so. There are various other causes, of course; the farms are moderately rented.

12777. Having been born and brought up on this estate, I suppose you had and always have had plenty opportunity of knowing not only about the condition of the people, but about their ways, habits, and mode of life. Do you agree generally with the statements they make themselves that they were more comfortably off before the potato disease than they are now?—I concur with Mr Macrae's statement.

12778. His statement was that they now live less substantially, but more extravagantly—and that perhaps there was more of rude comfort and less finery formerly?—There was not the facility which there is now of sending their produce away to market, which is a great inducement to send away things that were useful to them in those days. For instance, they could not send sheep away in those days. There was no steam communication.

12779. And you are quite certain that the crofting population of North Uist in those days actually ate more mutton than they do now?—Yes, that is my belief.

12780. Of course, there was more milk and less tea?—Less tea, no doubt.

12781. They were less finely clothed, but were they comfortably clothed in those days?—Yes.

12782. About as comfortably as now-a-days, but less expensively?—Yes, they were clothed in clothes of their own making.

12783. With respect to their general habits now and then, are the people as hearty and cheerful as they were then?—I am sure that I see no difference. Of course, this is not a cheerful year, but previous to this year I could see no difference.

12784. At gatherings and merry makings, is there as much singing and amusement as ever there was?—No, I do not suppose there is.

12785. Is there any special cause for that?—Well, the evidence which you have been taking in other places would bear the same way here.

12786. It was stated in some places that some of the clergy discouraged amusements of that sort?—I believe it is the case.

12787. Have you any local bards of note now?—No.

12788. Have you been a member of the school board since the introduction of the new Act?—Yes.

12789. And you were perfectly acquainted with the education of the people long before that?—Yes.

12790. I suppose there is no doubt that the common school education of the people of the place has improved very much within the last forty years?—Yes, very much improved indeed.

12791. And within the last ten years it has still more improved?—Still more improved.

12792. I suppose, were it not for this voluntary school first kept up by the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge, and now by the committee of the Free Church, at Boreray, you would feel almost bound to erect a school at Boreray?—Yes, I must confess it was an error of the school board that we mentioned another place instead of Boreray.

12793. There was a statement made by some of the people here with respect to teaching the children Gaelic. Has the school board any educational views on that question? Other things being equal, would they consider that an advantage in the education of the children?—I do not think they would.

12794. The great object is to endeavour to get as much English as possible?—As much English as possible.

12795. And the belief of the board is that anything done in the way of teaching the children Gaelic rather stands in the way of teaching English?—Well, if the teacher had plenty of time it would not do the children any harm to be taught their native language.

12796. Is there any complaint of late years, and under the new system that clever boys are not able to make their way so well as they used to do, when perhaps the teacher gave them more time than he gave to the rest of the children of the school?—The teachers cannot devote as much time to technical subjects now as they could before, because when I attended school there were no small children at all.

12797. And of course the big boys, especially if clever, got all the time?—Yes.

12798. And there was a large number of clever boys who went from Uist and made their way in the world?—Yes, a great many.

12799. Of course, you would consider that a great advantage to the general community as well as to Uist?—Of course it was.

12800. Do you think of late years the supply of good scholars who go away from the country has been kept up, or is it going back under the new system?—Under the new system they are not so far advanced, but we have as many clever boys who can earn bursaries.

12801. But they are not able to get the same amount of attention in school, because of the strain upon the teachers in supplying common school education to the whole people?—That is what I say.

12802. Would you consider it a very great advantage if both could be kept up?—Yes.

12803. *Mr Cameron.*—It was stated by a previous witness, and also referred to by Mr Macrae, that turnips were not sown here for fear of people stealing them. Have you had any experience of that, or do you share in the apprehension of that delegate?—Foolish boys may take a turnip, but the complaint of the crofters used to be that if I compelled every crofter in the township to sow turnips it would be an advantage, and then if anybody lost everybody would lose.

12804. Is it not the custom of the crofters to sow turnips?—No.

12805. Very few of them do that?—Very few.

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12806. But you would endeavour to encourage them to do so as much as possible?—Certainly.

12807. Do all the crofters on this estate have sheep more or less?—I am not aware of any that have not sheep.

12808. What class of sheep are they?—Principally ewes.

12809. Of the blackfaced breed?—Yes.

12810. Do they sell their wedder lambs?—Yes.

12811. And keep there ewe lambs?—Yes.

12812. Do they sell their slack ewes?—Yes; they send them away, principally to Glasgow.

12813. How do they winter their young sheep?—Most of their hoggs are wintered in the houses.

12814. Turnips then would be of considerable advantage to them in wintering those sheep if they grew a few?—Yes.

12815. Have there been any cases lately of sheep stealing in the island?—I cannot bring any case to my mind. There has not been a conviction for a great many years.

12816. You can corroborate the statement made by Mr Macrae that sheep stealing is of very rare occurrence?—Very rare indeed.

12817. What hill pasture do the crofters of this estate possess?—I cannot state it in acres, because I have only the Ordnance map on the 25 inch scale.

12818. Is it very considerable?—Yes.

12819. Does it lie adjacent to each township, or is there a great deal of it together in one patch?—They do not keep their stock separate. This island is a roundish island, and their common is very much in the middle part of the island, and the whole tenantry have liberty to send their sheep in there.

12820. Do the crofts surround this common hill?—On the one side.

12821. Where is the hill grazing of the other crofters who are not on the side of the hill?—They extend all over the island from one end to the other.

12822. Is each hill grazing adjacent to the township whose sheep it pastures?—Yes, I believe every tenant on the estate has grazing for twelve sheep.

12823. It has been stated that in former times the people did not require to buy food from the south, but now they do. Can you account for that at all?—I remember when there was none brought into the country—when there was no meal sold except the produce of the country. In a great measure, I think it is due to the change of the seasons—the winter or spring weather goes so far into summer and the autumn weather goes into the winter.

12824. Does it not possibly happen that it pays the people better to rear more cattle and sheep, and with the produce of these cattle and sheep to buy meal in the south, rather than to grow it in a climate like this?—It is principally grown now to provide fodder for cattle and horses, and they keep more cattle than they did in former times.

12825. And you agree with what was said, that the price of cattle is very much above what it was in former times?—Very much indeed.

12826. Do you find it pays better to raise cattle, and with the produce of those cattle to buy meal in the south?—Yes, that is the general practice in the island.

12827. In the observation you made on the subject of the climate, do you attribute the fact that less corn is grown more to the change in climate than to the exhaustion of the soil?—The produce is less.

12828. But we have heard a good deal about the soil being supposed to

be exhausted by frequent cropping. Is that your belief and experience?—Well, I can hardly speak on that subject, because there are some here whose grandfathers have been cultivating a piece of ground, and their great-grandfathers, and still in a good season I do not see any difference on the crop.

12829. Is the arable ground of the crofters sufficently large to enable them to give part of their land a rest occasionally?—On most of the farms it is.

12830. You said they did not give it that rest in the shape of taking turnips. Do they do so in the shape of laying down grass for two or three years?—They do not lay down any grass seeds.

12831. Would that not be desirable?—Very desirable indeed.

12832. It would require more fencing?—It would require a great deal more fencing.

12833. Have you had any application on the part of the crofters that you should erect fences, and that they should pay interest?—Yes, there is one application in the meantime.

12834. Is the proprietor inclined to favour such applications?—He is.

12835. And you would be inclined to recommend that fences should be erected at the proprietor's expense, if the tenant would pay the interest on the cost?—Well, they prefer building them themselves to paying interest.

12836. Will you state the amount of school rates, poor rates, and road money payable in this island?—School rate, 3s.; parochial, rate, 2s. 7d.; road money, 7d.—making a total of 6s. 2d., divisible between landlord and tenant.

12837. I suppose those rates have increased very little of late?—Yes, very little.

12838. You stated it was in contemplation to build a school on Boreray, and instead of that you built it on another island?—Yes; it was a mistake on the part of the school board. They mentioned the one island instead of the other at the time of applying for the grant.

12839. Which island is it?—Heiskar.

12840. Was there a ladies' school there?—A Gaelic ladies' school.

12841. That was done away with?—We have given them the use of the house, and they keep a teacher.

12842. How do you manage to keep a school in the island of Boreray? Was the teacher not withdrawn when the Education Act was passed?—They have not withdrawn that yet.

12843. It was stated by Mr Macdonald, the factor in South Uist, that he attributed the want of milk which the people experienced now to their keeping fewer cows, in consequence of keeping too many horses. Is it your experience that the people here keep too many horses?—When they exceed two horses they have too many, but they all require two horses. They have a long way to carry sea-weed, and again in spring they plough with a pair of ponies.

12844. Do they make much profit by selling young horses?—They do now.

12845. What do they get for a young colt?—Prices are low at present. I have seen a year-old fetch £17.

12846. Is there a good supply of stallions in the country?—Sir John used to supply us. He sent us three.

12847. I suppose there are none of the old Highland ponies?—They are dying out fast. The last I got was a Welsh pony, which I took from the Duke of Sutherland.

12848. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—What will the average crofter be able to sell off his croft in a year—say a man who is paying £5?—The produce

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of his cattle, and if he keeps two mares instead of horses he must sell a colt every year.

12849. Of the value of £17?—No; at the present time I should say that for a year-old a good average price would be between £7 and £8.

12850. Could he sell one young animal—a stirk?—Any crofter having four cows ought to be able to sell two every year. Some have four stirks, others have none, in a year.

12851. But could an average croftor sell two in a year?—Yes, I think he could.

12852. What would be the value of them?—Up to £7 each, the best of them—generally from £5 to £6.

12853. Then that is all he really could sell, because the corn produced is nothing at all?—In favourable seasons they could sell more—that is, in the next year after a favourable season, because all their cows are in calf; but a season like this puts them back very much indeed.

12854. You said something which I consider very heterodox about Gaelic. You speak Gaelic yourself?—Yes.

12855. And have done so all your life?—Yes.

12856. You read it?—Yes.

12857. And write it?—I cannot say I can write it well.

12858. You would not wish that you never had Gaelic?—No, I would not.

12859. Then why is it that you discourage the teaching of it in schools, and therefore prevent Gaelic scholars from having that proper knowledge of the language which could be so easily given?—Without an additional staff of teachers, it could not be done. It would take up too much of their time.

12860. It is only a question of expense?—It is only a question of expense.

12861. You would not go to the length of saying that Gaelic is of no importance in the Highlands?—I believe the importance is getting less every day.

12862. You have stated that in your younger days no meal was brought into the country. You know that?—Yes.

12863. And now a great deal is brought in?—Yes.

12864. How do you account for that? You have mentioned the weather, to some extent?—The ground in some cases may be getting exhausted, but it is remarkable that ground which is not in grass produces the best crop of potatoes.

12865. Will you say it is not to some extent in consequence of a great deal of land which was once under cultivation being now out of cultivation and under permanent pasture?—I cannot say that, because all the holdings are of the same size as when I first remember. I myself am now obliged to give a six-course shift. I found that with a five-course shift the crops were not so good as they used to be, and I gave it up.

12866. For instance, in Sollas, you don't see so much land cultivated as there used to be?—Oh, no.

12867. Then would you not attribute the greater necessity there is now to bring meal from the south to the fact that a good deal of land, which was once under cultivation by crofters at some period or other, is now under sheep?—I cannot agree with that.

12868. How many acres do you suppose there are in North Uist that are under sheep and not crop?—I cannot say. There are 75,000 acres in the whole island, but I cannot say how many are under sheep.

12869. Would there be 10,000 acres that were once under cultivation

and are now out of cultivation, taking the most fertile parts of the north?—No.

12270. Not so much as that?—No, because the cultivated part bears but a small proportion to the grazing part of the land.

12871. But still you say that in your younger days, when the people were as numerous as they are now, they did not import corn, and it must have been grown on the island?—But they have the same holdings that they had then, except the Loch Eport tenants. No grazing has been taken from them, and no part of their tillage land has been taken from them.

12872. Since when?—Since 1855.

12873. But I am going back fifty years ago?—I cannot speak of fifty years ago.

12874. I will put the question again. You said that when you were a young man there was no meal then imported into the island, and you have also stated that now a great deal of meal is imported into the island. Is it not one of the probable causes why meal is necessary to be imported into the country that a deal of land that in your younger days was turned over by the plough regularly is not now turned over by the plough?—I attribute it to the seasons having changed, and to the ground being in some places exhausted. I do not see the bearing of the question at all, because the people have the same quantity of land now that they had then.

12875. Is there at this moment over the whole of North Uist as much land turned over by the plough every year as there was fifty years ago?—No; since these clearances took place there could not be.

12876. How much was thrown out of cultivation by these clearances?—I cannot say in acres.

12877. But there is a great deal?—Yes.

12878. That being the case, surely if so many acres have been thrown out of cultivation, must it not follow that the produce of grain has decreased?—No, not from that cause. A crofter who was a crofter fifty years ago has the same holding to-day. There has been nothing taken from that croft. His father and grandfather had it at the same size. He had plenty of grain in the days you speak of. He has the same amount of land to-day, but he has not the grain.

12879. But I don't think we have found any man who is in the same spot and in the same circumstances as his father and grandfather?—There are a great many here.

12880. *The Chairman.*—Since you have been in the management of this estate have there been any evictions except on account of non-payment of rent?—None at all. There has been no eviction in my time.

12881. Since the management came into your hands, has there been any diminution of the hill pasture of the small tenants?—Not one foot; more has been added to it.

12882. Has there been any increase of rent in reference to the small tenants?—Not one sixpence.

12883. Has there been any diminution of the same?—No. Of course, burdens have largely increased in that time.

12884. Could there be in many cases land added to the crofters' holdings, both arable and hill pasture, without destroying the large farms, but leaving the large farms still of tolerable area?—Some of the farms of course might be reduced in size. There are only seventeen in the island paying above £30 of rent.

12885. You told us what has taken place during the period of your management, but looking back on all you have read and heard about the management of this island, do you think on reflection that the system of

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evictions and consolidation into large farms was in those days carried too far, and do you regret it now?—It may have been carried too far, but it was before my time.

12886. You have not formed any decided opinion about that?—No.

ANGUS MACAULAY, Crofter, Grimsay Island (65)—examined.

Angus Macaulay.

12887. *The Chairman.*—Have you been freely elected a delegate?—Yes.

12888. Have you a statement?—Yes.—'To Lord Napier, Chairman of 'the Royal Commission. *Statement by the Inhabitants of Grimsay, North 'Uist, regarding their Grievances*, as represented by their delegates Angus 'Macaulay and Donald Stewart. We were born in Grimsay, and we are 'both of us no less than sixty-five years of age. Our fathers and grand-'fathers were born in Grimsay; also our ancestors were about the place 'from time immemorial. We are aware of every change and every altera-'tion which took place in Grimsay from our infancy to this day. In 1820 'the island of Grimsay was tenanted by sixteen crofters paying a rent 'from £3, £4 to £6 each, paying the rent by kelp manufacturing. We 'had good living at that time, and had very little to do with foreign 'aliment, with the exception of very little in summer time. Maclean of 'Boreray was proprietor of Grimsay at that time, and in a few years after 'the sixteen crofts were cut by a surveyor, eleven other crofts were taken 'out of the sixteen cut by the factor, which brought our fathers and our-'selves to poverty ever since, as we are deprived of the grazing of our 'sheep and cattle, and no deduction in the rent. The kelp manufacturing 'has ceased now, and the rent must be paid with money. We must sell 'the most of our cattle for food and rent. We are encumbered by twenty-'nine cottars; also there was a piece of barren and submarine land which 'our fathers with great energy have selected, preventing the sea from 'enveloping it by embankment. This piece of land was very fertile, and 'produced a good crop; we got the most of our living out of it while the 'embankments stood, and that for fifty years. In 1868 a tremendous 'hurricane, accompanied by a high tide, occurred, which came in contact 'with the embankments. The sea broke in, and our corn was under water. 'When the proprietor was aware of this piece of land being good and 'fertile he charged us a £1 each, and we are paying that pound sterling 'to this day, although there are fifteen years since the embankments gave 'way. We have no pretension against our present proprietor.'

12889. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—How long is it since that additional £1 was put upon you?—Considerably over forty years ago.

12890. In Lord Macdonald's time?—In Maclean of Boreray's time.

12891. Have you ever represented to the present proprietor that you were over-rented?—No; we cannot blame the present proprietor in the least. He left us as he found us, and our condition has not been in any way improved by it.

12892. The embankment broke down in the present proprietor's time, did it not?—Fifteen or sixteen years ago, during the time of the present proprietor.

12893. Would it take a large outlay of money to put it in repair again?—It would not, with men of means; but we are fewer than we were, and we have not the means to make it up.

12894. Was it your fathers' money or your fathers' labour which put up the embankment?—Their own labour.

12895. And you have not sufficient labour power on the island to do it now?—Yes, if other things did not stand in the way. But we require to be earning wages in order to pay rent and provide for our families. We could not at our own expense provide the rent and the food for the families, and at the same time do this work.

12896. Have you represented to the proprietor that your land has become deteriorated by the breaking of this embankment?—He saw it at various times.

12897. But he may not have appreciated the amount of damage it did to you?—Sir John Orde, the father of the present proprietor, is no more living. He said that it was not right, it was not the proper thing to attempt to prevent the sea attaining to its own proper boundaries by throwing obstacles in its way in that fashion.

12898. How did those twenty-nine cottars come to establish themselves there?—It is only an island of small dimensions. The east end of it is occupied by a tack which carries 200 sheep, and the crofters are upon the west end. Some of these cottars came from Bernera and another place called Rona, which was cleared fifty-two years ago. Some of the people of Rona, who declined to go to America when the proprietor sent them away, came to Grimsay, because they had relatives there, and they squatted there without land, and they are there to this day. There are not more than two or three of the twenty-nine cottars I mentioned who were born upon the island.

12899. Is it by the kindness of the people of Grimsay that those cottars have been allowed to settle there?—You know that every factor could send any person he pleased to any place he pleased.

12900. But were these sent by the factor?—It was the factor of the time that sent some of them at least to Grimsay. He was Captain Macneill.

12901. Then do you claim a reduction of rent?—We would be glad to get it if we got it, but we are afraid not.

12902. And you want the cottars removed from the land?—If it would seem good to the noblemen who rule, Captain Macdonald of Waternish has a small tack upon that island which carries about 200 sheep, and it would be a nice place to remove some of those cottars to.

12903. Have you any other complaint to make?—That was all we had to say. There is a complaint there, and if it is listened to, good and well; if not, our labour is in vain. Supposing we work the land we have as well as we can, the ground has got so deteriorated and the seasons are so changed, that we would not be able to take a living of three months or six months out of it. [*Mr John Macdonald*, factor—I wish to state that the Macleans were only leaseholders of Grimsay island along with the island of Boreray, and at the time Sir John bought the estate there were only twelve years of the lease to run. Sir John saw there were so many cottars being allowed to settle on the estate that it would be advantageous to buy the lease of the Macleans, and he did so.

12904. *The Chairman.*—How did Macdonald of Waternish get the small tack which has been referred to?—The previous tenant gave it up. He thought it too high and gave it up of his own free-will.]

John Macdonald, Crofter, Illeray, Baleshare Island (65)—examined.

12905. *The Chairman.*—You have a paper?—Yes.—'*Statement by the 'Tenants of Illeray.*—We, the tenants of the township of Illeray, desire to 'state that our present holdings are too small to enable us to live with

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'any degree of comfort. On account of the smallness of our crofts and 'the inferiority of the soil and grazing, we have to crop our arable land 'almost every year in order to winter our cattle. In consequence of this 'continual cropping the soil is so much deteriorated that the yield is so 'small and of such an inferior quality that we can scarcely get any meal 'from it; we have therefore to buy meal from the south to support our 'families, and are in consequence incurring debts to merchants from which 'it is not easy for us in our present circumstances to extricate ourselves. 'Formerly our township consisted of sixteen families, but now there are, 'including cottars and other dependants, thirty-one families; we have not 'received any reduction of rent for those additional cottars, although they 'pay rent to the proprietor. Thus it will be seen that our township has 'now to support thirty-one families as against sixteen in our young days, 'and in the aggregate the rent is much higher. In addition to this, the 'best part of cropping and grazing ground has of late years been rendered 'next to useless by the encroachments of the tides, and in common with 'similarly situated places a large tract of it was completely carried away 'by the high tide of November 1882. We feel the want of this piece of 'ground very much, as it was, as stated, the best arable land we had. We 'wish also to draw your attention to the fact that we are paying interest 'on the drainage money for about fifteen or sixteen years more than the 'period stipulated at the time of levying this interest that it would be 'discontinued and the capital paid up. This interest has of late years 'been added to our rents, and by paying assessments on this addition, it 'can be clearly shown that we have paid a considerable sum of money in 'excess of what our obligations demanded. We consider this a hardship 'and an injustice. As there is no work or industry of any kind in the 'country from which we can derive any support in addition to that of our 'crofts, we desire to state that if our holdings are not extended our 'prospects for the future are but very disheartening and unpromising. 'If we got more land at reasonable rents, and help to stock it in cases 'where such would be required, we think we could live again in prosperity 'and contentment.'

12906. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Have you anything to say besides what is in the paper here?—Yes. The flood tide has injured us. Illeray is divided into sixteen crofts; eight at the one end and eight at the other. Those at the far end are quite destroyed by the sea. It opens on the ocean, and the Atlantic has broken in upon us. It takes away our manure and our soil and the cut corn and the potatoes. It drowns the sheep and spoils the fresh water, so that our cattle are being injured by it, and we cannot cultivate the ground because it is continually being flooded. It is in pools and ditches, and the place which my father and grandfather as well as myself cultivated is now a wide strand.

12907. What do you want to be done to remedy that?—It cannot be remedied. The Government of the Queen could not put it in order.

12908. Then that is a complaint against Providence, and not against man?—What we wish is to get a place where we could live. We cannot live there. We would require to remove out of it.

12909. Do you wish to get out of Illeray?—We have no place where we can really remain in safety, either ourselves or our cattle.

12910. Do you wish to remove entirely out of Illeray?—We must leave it soon.

12911. Where would you like to go?—Anywhere in the island where we could make a living.

12912. Would you be willing to go to any of our colonies where people are doing well, if you get help to go?—There are many among us who are

old and not suited for the colonies, with weak families. There are crofts upon which there are three families, and two families upon others, and so on.

12913. Would it be a relief to you if some of the ablest were removed and your numbers were decreased?—There is not one down and very few up but the tide has injured. Our crofts are not side by side. There is only one here and one there.

12914. *Professor Mackinnon.*—I suppose the pastures march?—The number I have given includes one tenant who occupies a small island adjacent to us, called Island Boroghay.

12915. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—I suppose an embankment would be impossible to keep out the sea?—There is no relief in that way. It could be made, but it could not be kept up.

12916. Has the planting of bent been tried as it was in the island here?—It would be of no use. Where myself and my father and my grandfather tilled the land, some of it is covered ten feet deep by the sea. We were originally fourteen crofters, eight on one end and six on the other, but during the time of Lord Macdonald and his factor, Mr Cameron, other two were thrown in upon us. When Balranald was factor, other two were thrown in upon us. When the country was under trustees, there was nothing to prevent any person coming in and building a house and squatting upon it, and lots were marked out for them, and there they are till this day.

12917. Has any reduction of rent taken place in Baleshare?—Some got a reduction in consequence of the incursion of the sea, but the eight upper crofters who had their share of the common, and who have lost it as we have, got no reduction.

The following statement was put in for the town of Baleshare:—In the township of Baleshare there are twenty-three crofters, paying on an average including taxes about £7 of rent. To the 'township 'of Balesbare originally belonged Rona, now a sheep farm, and in the 'possession of a Skye gentleman; Knockqueen, another small farm; and 'Cladach Baleshare, on which there are thirteen crofters. All those 'places were held by the twenty-three crofters of Baleshare as commonty, 'on which they grazed their sheep and where they were in the habit of 'sending their cattle in the summer times. It can easily be understood 'that the depriving them of this large tract of grazing without any reduc-'tion in the rent would reduce the crofters in their circumstances, as what 'belongs originally to twenty-three crofters has now on it thirty-six 'crofters and two sheep farms, paying about £80 and £25 respectively. 'Previous to their being deprived of those places, the people lived in com-'fort and plenty on the produce of their stock and crofts. The case is 'different now, however; the smallness of our crofts and the continual 'cropping has rendered the soil so unproductive that we can't get any 'food from our crops. We have to buy our meal from the south, and are, 'therefore, incurring liabilities from which it is not easy for us to clear 'ourselves. A large tract of our best grazing and arable land, which lies 'low and exposed to the force of the Atlantic, was about forty years ago 'completely inundated and rendered useless, so much so that it is still a 'barren and unproductive tract of sand, with no vegetation of any kind 'but a thin covering of bent. In addition to this, we were about eighteen 'years ago deprived of some of our hill pasture. The British Sea-weed 'Company having started their work at Loch Eport, a piece of our ground 'was given to them. Those parks are now so badly fenced that our sheep 'in trying to get to them, are much harassed with dogs, and we have 'suffered very much on account of this for years back. We have also to 'complain of the continuation of paying interest in the drainage money,

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'from which we should have been relieved about fifteen years ago. This 'burden was levied in 1846, and was to continue for twenty-one years, 'when the capital was to be fully paid up. Instead of relieving us, however, 'at the end of the time stipulated, it is now added to our rents, in conse- 'quence of which we have paid a very considerable sum of money, more 'than we were bound by agreement to do. There is no work of any kind 'going on in the country from which we can derive any support, and we 'therefore hope that the Commission will strongly recommend to give us 'more extensive holdings, from which we can get enough produce to sup- 'port ourselves and families.' Signed by twenty-four persons.

JOHN BOYD, Crofter, Houghgarry (65)—examined.

John Boyd.

12918. *The Chairman.*—Have you got a statement to make on the part of the people of Houghgarry?—Yes.—'Unto the Commissioners on 'Crofters in the North Highlands and Western Isles. *The Memorial of 'the Crofters in the Township of Houghgarry, Parish of North Uist,*— 'Humbly sheweth, that they have many grievances to complain of, which 'they respectfully beg leave to bring under the notice of the Commis- 'sioners. They desire to state that none of them have any grounds of 'complaint against their present proprietor, who neither increased their 'rents nor evicted any person for arrears—and his factor has always acted 'a judicious part towards their interest. Their principal grievance is the 'want of sufficient arable land to enable them to support themselves and 'families comfortably; also, the scarcity of grazing for their stock of 'cattle and horses—the former feed mostly in winter on sea-ware, the 'cattle falling in swoon or fainted down on the ground after eating it. In 'summer and harvest they are fed with green corn, nettles, and other 'weeds carried by women in creels on their backs both morning and eve- 'ning a distance of two miles. Their rents were fixed on the consider- 'ation of the manufacture of kelp, which work enabled them to pay their 'rents regularly, besides maintaining themselves and families while 'engaged at that labour; moreover, they had grazing for their horses until 'the 1st August. Your memorialists have already represented their desti- 'tute condition to the proprietor, and brought under his special notice 'that a considerable portion of their land on the west side named Airda- 'runara, and the hill pendicle of Bireval had been taken from their pre- 'decessors and forefathers, and was first added to the farm of Penmore, 'and afterwards to the tack of Balranald, without allowing any reduction 'of rent. They further stated that they would willingly pay the present 'rent, if the said land was restored to them, for it would enable them to 'raise better and larger crop, and also enable them to give rest to their 'present small holdings, of which no part has been left untilled for sixty 'years past. The said point of Aird is near the shore, and convenient for 'raising potatoes, the soil being sandy, which is now found the best pre- 'ventative against the disease; besides it would afford room for grazing 'and wintering our cattle—the possession of it would save them the 'trouble of carrying sea-ware with carts to the Outer Geary or Park, a 'distance of four miles from the shore.—In our own names and by 'authority of the rest of the crofters in the township, RODERICK MAC- 'DONALD, MALCOLM BOYD, LACHLAN MACDONALD × his mark, JOHN 'MACDONALD × his mark, JOHN MACDONALD × his mark.—*Houghgarry, '22nd May* 1883. We have also to state that we were not summoned 'when Ardirunara (the sandy soil) nor Bireval hill were taken from us and

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'given to the Benvore and afterwards to Balranald's tack, also the drain 'that was drying the land for the grass to grow at Benvore and the afore-'said Aird. We were forced to work at the drain forty days' work a year 'and that for fourteen years, without anything for that labour but a little 'bit of bread and gruel at dinner time once a day, and this land which we 'had ourselves before was taken from us and added to the Balrond's tack, 'and us forced to drain for grass the said tack, and when we at last 'were so tired of forcing us to this slavery of work, refused to work this 'work, drains what we had ourselves before, and working at it for nothing 'but for the aforesaid tack. There was a certain messenger sent to us for 'forcing us to the work, which we refused to do for the tack. But if we 'would get that land which was taken from us, which was our own right, 'that we would drain the whole of for ourselves. But the messenger said 'that it was useless to speak of that more, for that was under lock and 'key at another.—DONALD MACLEAN × his mark, JAMES MACLELLAN × his 'mark, Widow NORMAN MACDONALD × her mark, RORY MACDONALD × his 'mark, ALLAN MACDONALD × his mark, RORY MACDONALD × his mark, 'ARCHY MACLEAN × his mark, MURDOCH MACDONALD × his mark.' I also present the following statement on behalf of the cottars of Houghgarry:—'Unto the Royal Commissioners on Highland Crofters. *The Memorial of 'the Undersigned Cottars residing in the Township of Houghgarry, Parish 'of North Uist*,—Humbly sheweth, that from the want of land for til-'lage, it is hardly possible for your memorialists to make but a bare liveli-'hood, especially such of them as have families to provide for. They are 'in the habit of getting annually small patches of ground for raising 'potatoes from the crofters, to whom they are a great burden in many 'ways; were it not for family relationship and other connections with 'them, your memorialists would, from sheer want of the common neces-'saries of life, have been on the paupers' roll before now. Their chief 'hardship is, that they cannot get holdings of land to cultivate, for which 'they would willingly pay a fair and reasonable rent to the proprietor, who 'has been demanding yearly rent for the site of their houses, but which they 'were unable to pay by reason of their destitute circumstances. If each of 'your memorialists got a suitable portion of ground near the sea-shore for 'raising potatoes and corn, in a place convenient for landing sea-ware with 'creels, it would be the means of ameliorating their present miserable con-'dition. There is abundance of land of that description in many parts of 'the west side of the island, if they could only get it. Your memorialists 'humbly submit their case of real hardship for the special investigation 'and consideration of the Royal Commission.' Signed by fifteen persons.

12919. The principal demand is that a portion of land which is now in the tack of Balranald should be restored to the crofters?—It was added first to the tack of a Mr James Maclean, who occupied Benmore.

12920. But it belongs to Balranald now?—Yes. The marches were such that Balranald was here, and a small strip belonging to this township jutting in between this and the grazing of Benmore, and Mr Cameron, the factor, just added on this bit to Benmore without consulting the people about it.

12921. Do you know when the tack of Balranald will expire?—No. [*Mr Macdonald.*—It should be out soon].

12922. Have you brought your wishes under the consideration of the proprietor?—Yes; before the proprietor and the factor.

12923. Could this portion now belonging to Balranald be taken back and restored to them without serious injury to the farm of Balranald?—Oh yes, it could easily be done. It is only forty-five years since it was added to Balranald.

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12924. With regard to the complaint from the cottars on your place, how do those cottars come to be there?—Some of them were reared in the place, and others came from everywhere.

12925. Were most of them the natural increase of population in that place?—Yes, most of them belonged to the place.

12926. How do they earn their subsistence? Do they go away to work in the Lowlands?—They get a patch of land here and there, and they have a horse and cart by which they work that patch of land. The maintenance of that horse falls upon us, which is a very great burden upon us. Some of them go south to work, and make their living in all sorts of ways.

12927. Do they pay rent to the landlord or to the crofters?—They pay no rent to the crofters. I don't think they pay to the proprietor either.

12928. Have you heard what has been stated to-day by the other delegates?—I did not hear much of it.

12929. Then your chief demand is for increase of land?—Yes, we are very much crowded in. We have no provender for the cattle. We have no pasture at all. Our cattle die for want of grass.

12930. Don't you say in your paper that the cattle die from eating sea-weed?—It appears that when they go and eat the sea-ware during the day, unless they get a good bellyful of barley fodder when they come home, they fall into a trance and die.

12931. Is that in consequeuce of the sea-ware being poisonous or in consequence of their not getting food besides?—It is not any poison in the sea-ware, but when they eat it it takes the heart out of them, and unless they are refreshed by a feed of barley they are the worse of that; but if they are, they are the better of it. Then we give them hand-feeding twice a day during summer and autumn.

12932. *Mr Cameron.*—Why have the people put their marks to these petitions?—Because they are not able to write.

12933. Can nobody in your township write his own name?—Only three.

12934. Out of how many?—There are twenty crofters and fourteen cottars.

12935. And only those out of all these can write their own names?—There are only three of the crofters. It may be that a cottar may be able to sign his name.

JOHN LAING, Crofter, Knock-an-Torran (60)—examined.

John Laing.

12936. *The Chairman.*—Have you a written statement to lay before 'the Commission?—Yes.—(*a*) The principal complaint of the township we 'represent is that the land has been divided and redivided from time to 'time as the factors thought proper, so that now the profits accruing from 'our present lots are quite inadequate to keep an ordinary family in any 'degree of comfort or independence. (*b*) While the boundary line between 'us and the neighbouring tacksman was re-adjusted, the said line was made 'to fall wholly on our side of the old one, thus making the straight line 'take off all the clippings from our side. (*c*) In common with the other 'townships of this district, we had the benefit of our share of the grazing of 'Loch Eport side, where the people used to work at kelp during the summer 'season. This was all taken from us without any reduction whatever. '(*d*) We have been paying drainage money for at least thirty-two years.

'This money was borrowed of Government. At the rate at which we paid, 'both capital and interest would have been paid up in twenty years. 'Instead of this being taken off, it is now added to the rental, and we have 'to pay rates accordingly. (*e*) The amount of implements required by 'each crofter on his present lot would be quite sufficient to work three 'times the quantity of land they have without any additional expenditure 'worth speaking about. (*f*) On account of the scarcity of pasture for the 'number of stock we are allowed to keep, we have to hand-feed them in 'many cases from September till the end of May. Our twelve months' 'labour is in this way eaten up by our stock, so that the potato crop is the 'principal profit by the lands except what we realise on the market day. '(*g*) Were it not for the kindness of the factor this year in ordering food 'for ourselves and families on credit, it is hard to say what would have 'become of us. (*h*) We desire to draw the attention of the Commissioners 'to an expenditure we were put to in putting up a wire fence between this 'township and the neighbouring tacksman, which is now perfectly useless. '(*i*) Over and above paupers, this township is taxed in having about 'eighteen families of cottars spread over the township. Even the removal 'of these cottars to a better place would be a great benefit to the crofters. '(*j*) From the general tenor of the above, we hope that the Commis-'sioners can easily see our grievances, and can easily understand the best 'mode of redress. The above is a statement of the principal points the 'crofters of Knock-an-Torran wish to lay before the Royal Commission, and 'the delegates present are ready to explain what may be obscure, and 'to answer further questions.—JOHN LAING, MALCOLM M'DONALD, 'JOHN M'LEOD.'

12937. How many crofters are there in the township of Knock-an-Torran?—Our place was at first occupied by twenty families, and then when it was lotted out it was made into twenty-two crofts.

12938. How many crofters are there now?—There are only twenty-two full crofts, but eight of them have been subdivided, some of them among three families, so that there are up to forty families now.

12939. How many cottars?—There are fifteen or sixteen, and paupers in addition to them.

12940. The crofters have multiplied from twenty-two to forty. Has that been by the natural increase of their own number, or have others been brought in and settled upon them?—An increase came from the outside when the country was scourged by factor Cameron.

12941. There has been no increase from your own families?—Yes; there are some of them subdivided by the increase in our own families.

12942. You state that a wire fence had been put up between your hill pasture and the adjacent tack?—Yes, it is so far right that it was upon the west side—not the hill pasture but the macher pasture. It was made as a march between us and the neighbouring tack.

12943. Was it useful to you when first put up?—A fence that is put up at great expense, and that will not last many years, cannot be of much use.

12944. Who paid for it?—The adjoining crofters, comprising four townships on the one side and the farm of Balranald on the other.

12945. Did the proprietor not pay some portion of it?—I am not aware. I and my neighbours feel it heavy enough.

12946. Was it made of wooden posts and iron wire?—There is no wood; the pillars are iron as well.

12947. Has it never been repaired? When it went wrong, did you not get it repaired?—It was often repaired. It would require to be repaired continually before it could be kept up. My son and myself were obliged

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to leave putting sea-ware above the tide mark, and to go and get stones to make a base for this fence. It was made out of an old dyke, and was not of very much service. I was born on the march between the township and Balranald. My father occupied a croft that abutted upon the tack. They removed the fence over upon our croft, and took away about half of my father's croft, and a piece of some five or six crofts as well. My father and these others were recompensed again at the expense of the township lands, but the township got no abatement of rent.

12948. These are very old wrongs. I want to know what demand you make at present to better your condition?—I have been listening to other delegates since the forenoon, and I quite approve of their statements—additional land, if we could get it at a reasonable rent.

ANGUS FRASER, Crofter, Balemore (49)—examined.

Angus Fraser.

12949. *The Chairman.*—You have a written statement to submit?—Yes.—'Unto the Royal Commissioners appointed to inquire into the state 'of the Highland Crofters, and meeting at Loch Eport on 30th May 1883. '*The Statement, Petition, and Complaint of the Crofters of Balemore, 'North Uist.*—In 1814 Balemore was divided into eighteen crofts, but 'twelve years after the then factor, Mr Allan Cameron, cleared several 'townships for himself, and seventeen families were placed in Balemore, 'and the land subdivided among the thirty-five, without any reduction of 'rent to the former tenants, in which state it has since continued. Shortly 'after we were deprived of a grazing pendicle at Loch Eport, which was 'given to crofters cleared from other places, and still no reduction of rent. 'Another complaint is that our crofts are so small that we require to 'plough them every year, consequently the returns are very small indeed. 'We complain also that upwards of thirty years ago a loan was obtained 'from Government for the purpose of drainage, to be repaid, principal and 'interest, in twenty years, but this charge has been made a permanent 'addition to the rents. We complain also that cottars are placed on the 'crofts and paying rents to the proprietor, without a corresponding reduc-'tion to the crofters. We complain also that for upwards of fifty years 'we have had to pay rent for a hill called Marviall, which formerly had 'been held as grazing ground by us and neighbouring townships, and to 'the possession of which the townships were entitled without any additional 'rent. What we would require to live comfortably upon is at least double 'the size of our present holdings. The land would thus get rest and 'become more fruitful, yielding both more provender for our cattle and 'meal for ourselves. Our cattle would be in a better condition, and yield 'better prices than they do at present, having to sell them lean for small 'sums to pay for the meal, &c., which we have got on credit. Besides 'increased holdings, we would require leases, and in case of removal com-'pensation for improvements and unexhausted manures. Were these 'granted and land sufficient (and there is plenty in the parish) there would 'be peace and plenty, instead of living from hand to mouth, and contract-'ing debts, as many of us do in the best of years, with scarcity and hunger 'for man and beast on the failure of potatoes and other crops as this year's. 'There would then be no need to go a-begging for money, meal, and seed 'to rich and sympathising friends in the south. We would have comfort, 'if not luxury, within our own parish. Though we lodge complaints and 'make demands, we have no fault to find with either our present pro-

'prietor or factor. The former has made no addition to our rents, or taken 'any lands from us since his father bought the estate, and the latter deals 'kindly and leniently towards us.—ANGUS FRASER, EWEN M'LEAN, 'NORMAN M'LELLAN.' NORTH UIST. LOCH EPORT.

12950. You say there are cottars that have been placed upon your lands and who pay rent to the proprietor. Are these the natural increase of the crofters, or are they strangers?—Some of them came from Ireland, so far as I have been able to learn, and they were settled there without leave asked, by order of the then factor. Angus Fraser.

12951. How long is that ago?—About thirty years ago.

12952. Why did the factor bring people from Ireland?—They came to the country from Ireland as tinkers, and the factor allowed them to remain.

12953. Do they pay rent to the proprietor, or do they pay to the crofters?—Those of them that had horses and some stock at first paid rent to us; but since the proprietor, some seven or eight years ago, took matters into his own hands, they ceased to pay rent to us, and said they would settle with the proprietor.

12954. What do they pay to the proprietor?—The rent varies—30s., 20s., 10s. Some never pay any except taxes; others, so far as I am aware, pay regularly.

12955. Then what you want is to get more land for the improvement of your crofts?—The very thing.

12956. Have you heard generally what the other delegates have stated here to-day?—I heard the most of it.

12957. Do you agree generally with all they have stated?—In so far as their statements concern matters that are within my own recollection, I quite agree with them, but I am unable to say about events that occurred before I was born.

12958. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Where is Balemore?—West from here.

12959. Is it near Houghgarry?—Balrauald and Knock-an-Torran lie between it and Houghgarry.

12960. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Does the paper which you have given in contain the substance of your complaint and grievances?—Yes. The smallness of our holdings is the chief complaint. When our crofts were subdivided, that was the date upon which our affairs got into such a condition that they have not recovered since

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ARCHIBALD MACDONALD, Crofter, Knockline (44)—examined.

12961. *The Chairman.*—Have you a statement to make to us?—Yes.—'*Unto the Chairman of the Royal Commission.* This statement is in 'behalf of the crofters of Knockline, seen and approved of by the same 'tenants. I was born in the township of Knockline, in which I am now 'a crofter. My father was a crofter there also. According to the history 'of this township, as I learned from my father and other old pepole who 'inhabited the place from time immemorial up till the time of my father, 'and those living at that time, it was tenanted by eight crofters, paying a 'reasonable rent. Each crofter at that time lived very comfortably, buying 'very little of foreign produce if any at all. The division of the township 'into crofts was rearranged, and instead of eight as formerly there are now 'twenty crofts, and the rent is increased according to that. Some time 'ago Loch Eport side belonged to our township, which was of immense use Archibald Macdonald.

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'to us for grazing our cattle during the summer time. This place was 'taken from us, and we got no reduction of rent, although we were deprived 'of the place. This place was afterwards given to the tenants who were 'evicted from Sollas. Thirty-two years ago our crofts were drained, and 'we were told at that time that we were to pay a certain sum yearly for 'the said drainage, and at the end of twenty years we were to stop paying 'it. For twelve years now we are paying that money, and not only that 'but it has been put upon us with rates as part of our legal rent. Marivall 'was our hill pasture by rights, and we now pay three shillings each for it. 'At present there are twenty-three crofters or, more properly, twenty 'crofters, and three of these subdivided—and twelve cottars. These 'twelve cottars pay a yearly rent to the proprietor, and although they are 'a burden upon us we get no reduction of rent for what they pay to the 'proprietor. We have a piece of common where we keep our cattle some-'times, and which is very convenient to us, especially in harvest and spring, 'from which the proprietor cut a small park last year for one of the cottars 'who is not a native of the place at all. We sent him a petition, which 'showed him how inconvenient it would be for us to part with any of that 'ground, and how unwilling we were to do so, but the said petition was 'of no consequence to us. He did not reduce a single penny of our rent 'for what he gave to that cottar. Our lots are by far too small for us, 'and as the land does not get any rest by leaving part of it uncultivated 'for some years, it has been rendered unproductive and poor, and before 'we can be raised to better circumstances we must get more land. If 'some of the tacks on this estate were divided, there would be enough of 'land for the people. We would urgently demand the right to buy our 'holdings for so many years, to have them increased to as much land as 'will support each family in comfort; that we should not be removed from 'our holdings as long as we pay fair rent; that we shall have compensa-'tion for whatever improvements we make on our dwelling houses and 'crofts in the event of our being removed.—ARCHY MACDONALD, ARCHY 'MACDONALD, Knockline.'

12962. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—How much land was taken off you for the cottar of whom you complain?—A piece that was right in the heart of the township, which formed a track for the cows of the township to get round the bay back and forward to the pasture.

12963. What was the extent of it?—I don't know that there was an acre of it altogether; but still it was a great loss to us.

12964. Was your petition put into writing?—Yes, and the proprietor would not take it from our hands except by putting it through the hands of the factor; and then we sent a petition to the factor, and we never heard anything more about it.

12965. Do you know what this cottar is paying for the land?—The factor can answer that question. The rumour was that he paid £1.

12966. So not only is the proprietor getting £1, but he is getting that over and above the old rent, besides putting you to great inconvenience?—Yes, and every crofter upon the township that pays rent he gets £1 from him too.

12967. Do you know that each of these cottars pays £1?—The greater part of them pay £1.

12968. You mention that Loch Eport side belonged to your township. Did the Loch Eport people get the exclusive right to the part you refer to, or had they merely the power of putting their beasts on the hill?—It was taken from us entirely. There is not a hoof of our cattle there since they got possession.

12969. And no reduction of rent?—No.

12970. What was the value of that piece which was taken from you? Would it be worth £10?—Yes, it would be well worth £10.

12971. What is the total rent that the twenty crofters are paying the landlord just now?—£5 or £6, up to £8 a piece; I cannot tell the total amount.

12972. How long is it since that rent was fixed?—When the crofts were lotted out the rents were fixed in that way.

12973. And since then the hill that the Loch Eport people got use of has been taken from you?—Yes.

12974. *The Chairman.*—Do you know whether the Loch Eport people pay rent to the landlord, and how much?—I know that five or six of them pay rent.

12975. How much?—So far as I can make out, they pay £1 a piece.

12976. There is a paper sent in here by the cottars of Knockline, in which they say that they pay rent from 12s. 6d. to £1, 10s. Are you aware that one of the cottars pays as much as £1, 10s.?—Yes; I knew that one of them paid 30s. once, but I understood it was reduced last year and this year. Twelve years after the crofts were lotted out, additional two crofts were taken out.

12977. Are you aware that the cottars of the place are also complaining?—Yes, and they have reason; but still we have great reason to complain of their being a burden to us in addition to all our other burdens. There is plenty of land, if only the cottars and poor people who need it got it.

12978. Then your principal demand is more land, and you agree with what has been said in your presence to-day?—Yes, our complaint is the smallness of our holdings, and that the land which there is does not give good crops in these years.

The following is the statement of the cottars of Knockline, referred to in the examination of this witness:—'Unto the Chairman and Royal Commission to the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, at the meeting to be held at Loch Eport on 30th May 1883. *Statement, Petition, and Complaint of the Cottars of Knockline,*—Honourable Gentlemen, We the above cottars have to state, that we are in a miserable condition as to the way we live. We are left as a burden on the crofters, without any way of living by labour in this island. There is no public works in it that keep us and our families alive, and nothing is given or allowed to us. Our hovels or poor habitations are so close to the sea, and in such a low place, that the tides are coming into our houses; sometimes now and then that we were almost drowned, and obliged to save ourselves on the top of our beds. Our peats, potatoes, &c., swept away by the tide. Besides this, we are not allowed to remove or get houses built in higher grounds to save us from the tide; also are charged such heavy rents for these hovels, from 12s. 6d. to £1, 10s. &c., which the most of us have not any thing to pay for it. We beg the Commissioners that they would consider our poor and miserable state or case, and plead hard in Parliament for us, who have no money or other stock; to plead for us to get some waste land, with rushes and heather plentiful, annexed to large tacks, without any profit to those who have, might be useful to us to cultivate and keep us alive. The number of cottars at Knockline is sixteen; Balemore, eleven; Knock-an-Torran, nineteen.'

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ALEXANDER MACKINNON, Crofter, Cladach Carinish (70)—examined.

Alexander Mackinnon.

12979. *The Chairman.*—What statement have you to make to the Commission on behalf of the people of Cladach Carinish?—Our cases are different. There are the Cladach Carinish people and the Carinish people. We were on Boreray estate. Our place belonged to the laird of Boreray until it was bought by the present proprietor. The people are crowded. It was a very rough, mossy, wild place—peat haggs. Before it was lotted out into crofts it was occupied by four tenants. This was made into nine crofts, and eight crofters occupy it just now. We have also to complain that during the time of the laird of Boreray a piece of outlying pasture belonging to us was taken from us, and other crofters were placed on it. These crofters had it for seven years, that outlying place that belonged to us. They paid nothing for it, only it was taken from us. When they were removed the rent they were paying was laid upon us as additional rent, and our stock was taken from us in order to pay this additional rent. We were also paying school rates, and we have no school of our own. It was a wild place, cut off here and there with lochs in the moor; and when the crofts were lotted out fences were made as best could be made by taking short cuts here and there between the various lochs, and now we wish that these marches should be made upon a better fashion. These march fences were put up not in places where they should be put up, but in places where they were easiest to be set, the place being so rough and difficult of access.

12980. Have you anything else to say?—No.

12981. Then your principal complaint is that you want to have more land?—Yes. There are eight cottars along with us—nine crofters and eight cottars. There are three crofts upon which there are two of these each.

12982. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Have you always been in Cladach Carinish?—Yes; I was born on the adjacent township.

12983. Where was your father?—He had a croft there; half of that township.

12984. What rent was he paying?—£13 or £14 a year.

12985. Were you the eldest son?—I was the youngest.

12986. How many cows have you?—I may say I have none at all. They belong to the merchants who keep us alive. If we paid the merchants that keep us alive from the beginning of summer, we would not have much stock just now. When prices are good we may have a little to our credit; when they are not good, we have nothing at all.

12987. How many cows have you nominally?—I have two cows, two two-year-old queys, and three stirks.

12988. A horse?—Yes.

12989. And sheep?—Two sheep.

12990. What rent do you pay?—£6, 5s.

12991. The horse must eat a great deal of your grass?—Yes; he needs that. They have not grass to eat this year.

[ADJOURNED.]

OBE, HARRIS, THURSDAY, MAY 31. 1883.

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.

Rev. ALEXANDER DAVIDSON, Free Church Minister, Harris (70)—examined.

Rev. Alex. Davidson.

12992. *The Chairman.*—Will you kindly make your statement to us?—The crofters and cottars of South Harris of this generation have no charge of oppression or injustice to bring against their proprietor or his officials. The proprietor—the Earl of Dunmore—seeks in every competent way to promote the welfare of his people, and the Dowager Countess of Dunmore is greatly esteemed in Harris for her long-continued endeavours to advance the social comfort of the people. Some painful evictions there may have been, whose sting rankles in the bosom of a few survivors to this day; and there were also frequent removals, which were most detrimental to the subject in loss of time and substance. The discontinuance of the kelp manufacture has been a great loss to the crofters of South Harris. The crofters, when engaged in kelp-making, got meal to support their families for three or four months in the year, and they earned money to pay their rates. This kept them from falling in arrears with the estate. There is now no work on the estate that will enable them to pay their rent by labour. Last winter the proprietor did provide some work, which proved a great help to many of the people. Generally the crofters have no capital, and when the season proves unfavourable in regard to crop and fishing, they have nothing to keep them except any little stock they may possess, and if they are forced to part with it, they are wholly destitute. For instance, if a man at such a time has to sell a cow, perhaps he may not be able to buy another cow in his lifetime. Overcrowding has a tendency to impoverish; for instance, where three sons, with their families, share the croft that their father occupied alone. Huddling the people together in some particular localities, mossy bogs, as they are in Ardvee of Finnisbay, while other larger areas of the country are almost without an inhabitant, is most injurious. Fishing is a most precarious source of industry in Harris, especially the herring fishing. The people buy materials and waste their time about it, and often gain nothing by it. They earn something by the lobster fishing. Through the complete failure of the herring fishing for the last few years, and of the crops,—especially last year—many of them have fallen considerably into arrears, as they were obliged to lay out all their earnings in meal for their families. This year many of them could not have put down their crop, but for the aid they received from friends in the south. That aid was most seasonable. *Quis cito dat, bis dat.* I would suggest that the people should get a competent portion of the earth to cultivate. The want of a road through the East Bays of Harris, and bridges on the rivers, is an unspeakable grievance and hardship. All the crofters pay road money. This is not a country for the squatting system of farming, where there are men to cultivate the soil. It is most unnatural that man should be chased away to make room

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for sheep and deer; that the land should lie uncultivated when men are perishing for lack of food. It is very unnatural that old or young should not be allowed to cast a hook into a standing lake or stream to catch a trout without being pursued by an officer of the law. This Royal Commission has a most sacred—I had almost said divine—duty entrusted to them. The state of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland for many generations to come will be influenced either for good or evil by their report. 'The heaven even the heavens are the Lord's, but the earth has He 'given to the children of men.' Man's original charter was—'God blessed 'them,' the parents of the human family; 'and God said unto them, Be 'fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have 'dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over 'every living thing that moveth upon the earth.' May I add a few words? With regard to this crowding, the most of the people are driven to the East Bays. There are about 700 people about the bays between Rodel and Loch Stockinish, within an extent of seven or eight miles. There are a great many cottars, and this kind of crowding has a great tendency to impoverish the people—where there are so many, for instance, three families on one lot. And in Finsbay—the place I mentioned formerly, there are three families on a plot of ground that pays 15s. of rent. The only other particulars I could wish very especially to bring before the Commission is the want of roads in this part. We have no road, I may say, from Rodel to the place where the bays pass with the main road that goes round the west side to Rodel. There is a distance of some fifteen or sixteen miles, and there are eight large streams. We often call them burns, but large rivers is the proper term, as they are quite impassable during a flood; and life has been lost there, and many very narrow escapes with life frequently. I may say. The people have been paying road money for many generations, All the crofters pay road money, and before my time I believe all the adult male population were made to pay road money. I heard it said that every young man, whether he had lands or not, had to pay 5s. in the year for road money. Another thing in regard to Stroan here—the south end. We had a conversation with the people there last night, and they think that their land is rather too highly rented, and the reason for that is, that the rent was put on the land when they had this kelp-making in connection with the land—that the rent was put on the land very much in proportion to the convenience and facilities they had for kelp-making. Now the kelp-making has ceased; it is gone, but what they consider its burden still remains on the land. I shall be glad to answer, if I can, any questions that may be put to me. At Finsbay there were only two crofters in times past, and now there are seven or eight, besides a number of cottars.

12993. You have stated that the painful evictions, as you have justly termed them, are a thing of the past. Do you speak of removals from one place to another?—Yes.

12994. How long is it since any removals of that kind took place?—Well, there have not been any particular removals of late.

12995. Have there been any within the last twenty years?—I don't know it is exactly within twenty years that the people were removed from the south end of Bernera, and when they were removed from the island of Pabbay.

12996. Where were they brought to?—A good many of them were sent to the island of Scalpa, down in Loch Tarbert, and other parts through the country.

12997. And when they were removed were they crowded upon existing crofts, or were additional lands brought in to accommodate them?—The places they would get in the island of Scalpa would require to be taken in.

I believe there was no cultivation there before. A great many were sent there, and they would be sent perhaps where there was a person occupying a lot, and one of these people would be sent in on that lot.

12998. And when they were removed to those places, was that to benefit the condition of the people who were removed or left behind, or was it for the convenience of the people who took large farms?—Well, there were no crofters left behind.

12999. The loss of the kelp must, of course, have been a great loss to the people?—A great loss.

13000. But has that not been in some measure compensated by the increase of the price of the stock they have to sell?—Well, I don't think the one made up for the other at all, because the stock is a very poor stock generally, and there was no change, I would say, in the price of stock or in the increase of stock that would make up for that loss.

13001. How long have you been in this island?—Since the year 1848.

13002. Are you a native of the island?—No, I am a native of near Inverness.

13003. But your memory extends back here for more than thirty years?—Yes.

13004. What change in the condition of the people do you remark? Do you think generally, with reference to their physical condition, that they are better or worse?—Well, I think they are nothing better whatever. They were suffering very much at the time I came here from the failure of the potato crop in 1846 and 1847. They were in a very depressed state at that time, but I don't think there is any improvement since that time.

13005. Is there any marked deterioration? Do you think they are decidedly getting worse?—I cannot say it is very apparent that they are getting worse, but I don't think they are getting better at all, for when they are crowded together that way it is a very great discomfort to them, and diminishes the supply of everything.

13006. Do you think that when they were removed and when they were re-settled they were taken from the best lands and put on the worst lands?—Certainly. There is no place in Harris, I believe, for grain and crop like the island of Pabbay; and the south end of Bernera too, I think, is good for crop.

13007. Is there any number of persons of either class or any age who are unable to go to the church or to go to school on account of want of clothes?—Yes, a good many. The school board are endeavouring to compel the children to attend, but still they suffer from want of both food and clothing.

13008. They are inclined to go regularly to divine service if they can?—Well, generally. There are some who may remain back, but generally they don't.

13009. Is there any reason to complain of intemperance?—There is very little intemperance in this end. There are no shebeens so far as I know, and we are most thankful that there is no public house. Strong drink is not sold in any part in this end.

13010. You mean in this part of the island?—Yes, in South Harris.

13011. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—I thought there was a public house at Obe?—Not now; it is discontinued, and we are very thankful for it.

13012. *The Chairman.*—Then you don't think the people who are so poor owe any part of their poverty to dissipation or extravagance?—No.

13013. Do many of the people go away south during the summer to labour?—Not to the south, but they go to the herring fishing in every part—to the Moray coast, and Caithness, and everywhere.

13014. Within your recollection there has been no considerable emigra-

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tion?—There was. I think two or three batches left this country for Australia.

13015. How long ago?—I cannot exactly mention the date, but the last batch, I think, left in 1858.

13016. Is there any inclination on the part of the people to emigrate?—They are not very desirous to emigrate at all. There was a sort of move among them here in spring to go to Queensland, but they heard such bad reports of the place, in their estimation, that they just gave up the idea of going.

13017. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Do they get good crops on the west side of the country?—Yes, I think they get good crops.

13018. Is the climate very much against cropping? is it not very wet and windy?—Not on the west side. Sometimes it is windy. It is a good deal exposed to the gales from the Atlantic, but still the land is dry, and I think in favourable seasons would produce a very safe and sure crop.

13019. There were people there when you first came?—Yes.

13020. Did they get good crops?—I cannot very well say whether they did or not. They were not there very long; they were there a year or two. The place was put under crofters in my recollection, but I think they were behind in arrears, and were removed without delay. There is no question but the place is good for crop.

13021. Do the sheep farmers have large crops? Do they cultivate their land?—Yes, Mr Kenneth Macdonald has good crops.

13022. But the crofters on that side, though with good land, fell into arrears. What was the cause of their falling into arrears?—Well, the crops were not good for some time, and they did not succeed at all at the herring fishing for some time back, and they did not even get their wages at the herring fishing for some time back, which was a great drawback to them. There were several causes which concurred in throwing them into arrears at that time.

13023. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—I suppose you are well acquainted with your own district, and have travelled over the most of it?—I have.

13024. Is there a good deal of land out of cultivation, in consequence of the removal of the people you have been referring to since you came here first?—A great deal. The west side of Harris here is out of cultivation, so far as the crofting system is concerned. I may say that from Tarbert to within sight of us here, was a place at one time filled with crofters.

13025. And they cultivated the land?—Yes, and there is no crofter population there now.

13026. And I presume the farmers only cultivate a small portion of arable land?—Not much, compared to the extent of the arable land.

13027. And in consequence the production of corn in Harris is very much diminished?—Very much diminished.

13028. Will you mention the names of the larger tacks in the island here, beginning with Rodel?—There is the home farm; and then Mr Roderick Macdonald, Caolas, has another farm; Mr Donald Macdonald, Scarista-veg; then Scarista-vore; and then the farm of Luscantire, which is a very extensive farm, and extends to Tarbert.

13029. The proprietor has Luscantire in his own hands at present?—Yes. These are all the large farms; and there are the islands of Ensay and Pabbay. These places, especially Pabbay, were filled with a crofter population.

13030. The places you have mentioned are on the mainland. How many families are resident upon these farms, beginning with Rodel and ending with Scarista-vore?—I cannot state the number, but there are not very many.

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13031. They bear not the shadow of the number they could bear?—No, it bears no comparison.

13032. Or that are upon the crofter lands?—No.

13033. And I presume these lands comprise a very considerably larger proportion of acreage than the crofter population possesses?—I would say there was more of the land under these lands—under the large farms—than we have under the crofter population in the bays.

13034. Is it within the recollection of men now living when this system of making large farms was begun?—I think there may be some in this house who would be eye-witness of that.

13035. Of the system of making large farms at the expense of the small crofters?—Yes.

13036. And the small crofters were either crowded down to the sea-shore or were obliged to emigrate?—The one or the other.

13037. Is the population increasing or decreasing since your time?—I think it is about stationary.

13038. We shall come to the island of Pabbay. You mentioned it as a rich green island, which contained at one time a considerable population, and there are none on it now?—None, unless a shepherd or two.

13039. Have you an idea how many used to be there?—No, but there was a very considerable crofter population.

13040. Would there have been 100 souls?—I should say there would have been about 100 souls.

13041. To whom does Pabbay belong?—To Mr Stewart, Ensay. He also possesses some smaller islands in the Sound of Harris.

13042. But these were never inhabited?—No.

13043. Is there an old man now living in this neighbourhood, upwards of eighty years of age, who was very ill used at the time of some of the evictions that took place many years ago?—There is such a man, and he had some intention of coming forward to be present here, but I think he did not come forward.

13044. What is the name?—Donald Matheson.

13045. Where does he reside?—Ardvee, Finisbay.

13046. Have you heard him relate the circumstances?—Yes.

13047. Can you mention them very briefly? What is the import of his complaint?—This is a part of the subject I do not wish to enter into, as I was not an eye-witness. I know there are present here, about this house, those who were in Harris at the time, and who could give an account of these things.

13048. You mention in the paper something to the effect that people were prevented fishing in the lakes or lochs?—I don't mean they are altogether prevented, but it is a rule they are not allowed to fish.

13049. Is that one of the conditions of the estate?—Yes. A person would be afraid to go out to any of these lochs or streams to fish.

13050. Those that are connected with the sea, where the sea comes in?—No, the mountain lakes—in the burns and streams.

13051. They are not prohibited from fishing in any waters with which the sea is connected?—In some of them. At Obe, I think there is a place where they are not allowed to fish. I think that seems to be a part of the fishing connected with the estate.

13052. You mention that this district received certain amounts of money that were subscribed by charitable people. How was that brought about, because we find in Benbecula that the people never heard that there was such money collected?—We were in the way of reading the papers. The sheriff went up to Edinburgh and Glasgow, and told the state of the people at these places—and then there was a move made to make a collection on

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their behalf, and we thought we were as much entitled to it as any one else.

13053. Then, when you saw in the newspapers that there was a movement you very properly went forward yourselves?—Yes.

13054. And you got some money from the Mansion House Fund?—Yes, and a good sum.

13055. And that has been very beneficial?—Most useful. It enabled the people to put down a crop, and I hope that with the favourable season we expect they will have a more favourable crop.

13056. And I daresay you want to express to the public your thankfulness?—We are most thankful to every person who put his hand to that work.

13057. And you believe it has been beneficial?—Most beneficial and useful. There is no question it was, both in the way of seed and food.

13058. Are there any deer in South Harris?—A few. There are tame deer about the mansion house of Rodel, but very few on the hill.

13059. Is there any complaint against them?—Not much. There used to be a few, and they used to come down sometimes, but there was nothing to speak of.

13060. And there is no complaint on that score just now?—Not that I am aware of. I never heard that any damage was done here.

13061. In answer to his Lordship in the chair, you stated, after being a little pressed by him as to the condition of the people, that you came at a bad time—immediately after 1848—and you would not say anything more in the way of contrasting their present condition with their condition at that time, than that they were not getting better?—I won't venture to say anything more. I don't think they are much better off.

13062. Is it consistent with your observation that the constant cropping which the crofters are obliged to do, in consequence of the smallness of their arable land, is rather wasting and deteriorating their land?—There is no doubt it is. The land is quite exhausted; it has no heart.

13063. Can you state, from your own observation, there is much more meal imported into Harris than when you first came?—I think there is a great deal more.

13064. You see that from your own observation?—Yes. They import almost every grain of meal they consume. They make very little meal in the bays of Harris.

13065. Is there a mill?—Yes. There is a mill at Obe. It is in working trim just now. Sometimes it is, and sometimes not. There is a mill at Loch Tarbert, but it is far away from here.

13066. What work may the proprietor, Lord Dunmore, have had for the benefit of the people, say since October last, when things began to look serious?—They drained a good deal of land. They improved the roads. They built dykes, and cut down some plantations.

13067. Do you know what rate of wages was given to those employed?—I think he was giving about 2s. and 2s. 4d.

13068. Were these works convenient for the people to go to—I mean not beyond a reasonable distance from their homes?—Well, they could not go and come to their own houses every day. They had to lodge at Rodel during the week, and they went to their own homes on the Sunday. It was out of reach of many of them.

13069. So far as you are aware, were they paid in money for the work then done, or was it placed to account of any arrears they might have?—It was placed to account of arrears, and they were getting money and meal too.

13070. Then it was not a sharp payment of arrears?—No, I think he was giving them meal and money.

13071. Was that of material consequence at the time?—Very great consequence to the people that could avail themselves of it.

13072. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Is there local fishing going on?—Sometimes there is, but not last winter.

13073. The Harris men are good boatmen?—Yes, they are good *boatmen.*

13074. I suppose the young men regularly go to the east coast and other deep sea fishings?—Yes; and I may mention a good many go to the militia, and they attend the naval reserve training.

13075. Have you any idea of the numbers in the militia?—I cannot exactly state the number.

13076. Are there scores?—There may be twenty or thirty through the whole country.

13077. And in the naval reserve?—Perhaps twenty.

13078. I suppose it is good for these young men to get the training they get in the militia?—Yes, they considered it very useful at the time.

13079. How long does it take them away from home?—About a month in summer. They are away till about the beginning of August.

13080. After the east coast fishing is over?—No, they go away to the east coast fishing just from the militia training, and to the Caithness fishing too.

13081. Do many of the young women go south?—Not many.

13082. Have they never been in the habit of going much from Harris?—No, they never went.

13083. A good many of the women in this island get employment in knitting and in spinning cloth?—Yes, kelt making. That is their principal employment, and of late years it has been very useful to them.

13084. Who set that agoing?—Well, the Countess of Dunmore takes some interest in it, as well as other parties. I see they get very much into the way of dealing with the local merchants in order to get meal.

13085. Are most of the women in the parish employed in that way?—Well, generally.

13086. I mean every family?—Perhaps not every family, but very generally they are.

13087. They knit a great many stockings and hose?—Yes.

13088. What price do they get for socks?—Not very much—perhaps about 1s., but I can hardly say whether that is the fixed price.

13089. And they manufacture a peculiarly coloured native cloth?—Almost every kind of cloth.

13090. Native dyes?—Yes, they use native dyes.

13091. Is there a want of harbours on the east coast, or of piers?—They have generally some landing place for their boats. There is no regular harbour in any place from Tarbert till we come to Rodel, where there is a sort of quay.

13092. Would it be a great advantage to the people on that coast to have one or two piers, with a breakwater, where they could come in in any weather?—I don't think they complain very much. They are well acquainted with the shore, and they know where these landing places are.

13093. I suppose the boats they use are old-fashioned skiffs?—Yes, small boats.

13094. Have they any of the big east coast boats?—Yes; young men through the country bring a good many of them. I cannot mention the number, but there are a good many of them throughout Harris.

13095. Worked by themselves?—Yes, they get them from the fish-curers, and bind themselves to pay for their boats by fishing.

13096. Do they go to the east coast fishing themselves with these boats,

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and to the Barra fishing?—Yes, and to the Caithness fishing. I don't think there are any in this country intended for the Moray side.

13097. I suppose all the men would use such boats as these if they could afford to buy them?—Yes, no doubt. They would be safer and better adapted for the work than these small boats. They cannot go any distance from the shore with these small boats.

13098. Is there any cod and ling fishing round about here?—Occasionally they catch a good many cod and ling, but I don't think that is any great source of industry for them. They do sometimes earn a little in that way.

13099. *The Chairman.*—Is there any large common ground here to which the people take their flocks in summer for summer shielings?—Well, there is. They don't go now. There was such a place, and they used to go in summer from these bays, but they have given it up.

13100. But do they send their cattle to the hill?—Yes, they send their cattle to the hill.

13101. And do their cattle graze over the same area which was occupied by summer shielings?—Every day.

13102. But they don't send women to dwell there in bothies and cottages?—No, they don't.

13103. Is there any land on the sandy coast and elsewhere which is held on the run-rig system?—Very little in Harris.

13104. But you think there is some?—I am not aware. As far as I am aware, there is not a bit where they go on the run-rig system.

13105. Do you think there is not a bit of land held in common which is redivided from year to year?—There may be a croft where there are two parties occupying one croft, and they go on the run-rig system—just rig about.

13106. But you don't think there is any large extent of ground held by one township in that way?—No, there is not a township, so far as I am aware, of that kind in Harris.

13107. Do you remember that when you were first here?—Well, I saw a little of it—one or two lots, as it were, together, in my neighbourhood, at one time, but it has been given up.

13108. When the land was redivided for the year, or at the end of two or three years, by whom was the redivision made?—Well, it would be generally made by the ground officer and by the people themselves.

13109. Had they an officer called the maor?—That is the popular name in Gaelic for the ground officer.

13110. Did you ever hear the people had a ceremony or recited any kind of rhyme or service connected with the division of the land?—I never heard that.

13111. Or when the people were starting for the shielings?—There might be some such thing, but I never heard of it.

13112. Do you think that such a thing might exist and be concealed from the clergyman?—Well, I don't think it existed at all. I saw nothing of it in this part in my time. A great many things were put down in this country before I came.

13113. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—I forgot to follow out a question which I put about the lands. Taking South Harris as a whole, is there not enough land to support in comfort even more than the present population?—I should think it would give land to the present population, if the land were distributed among the people. I think it is quite capable of bearing all the people in comfort.

MALCOLM M'LEOD, Cottar, Bernera (42)—examined.

13114. *The Chairman.*—Have you been freely elected a delegate by the people of Bernera?—Yes, both by crofters and cottars.

13115. How many were present when you were elected?—Most of the people of the island were there, and there were seventy-two present when I read this paper which I now present to the Commissioners.

13116. Was it written by yourself?—Yes. The first paper is on behalf of the crofters. [The following is a translation.] '*A Plea from the Island of Bernera*, to be laid before the Right Honourable the Royal Commission.—We consider it a great privilege to have the opportunity of pleading for our rights before the noblemen and gentlemen who have undertaken to inquire into the condition of the poor in the Highlands and Western Isles. But every history has its preface, and my preface is that I would not feel at liberty to say anything unless I disregarded the fear of those in authority over us. For if I tell the truth, I shall risk their displeasure; and if I do not, my conscience will condemn me and the people will stone me. Now I must go back to the past. In bygone times the people had the land cheap, and they were enabled to pay their rents by the manufacture of kelp from sea-ware, for which they got £2, 10s. to £3 per ton. In my grandfather's days they had islands for grazing their stock upon, as in many places to this day the people have outlying pastures for this purpose. Now it is the poverty of our day that sets us to inquire what is the cause of this, and whether we can find any remedy for it. In those times they had pasture for their stock, and the soil yielded better crops than now. Now we were first of all deprived of the island of Hermadra, which was given to Mr Roderick M'Gillivray for pasture ground. When he was removed from the north side of Bernera to a piece of ground too small to graze his stock, the factor, Mr Stewart, asked that this island should be given to him on the term day, and we did not get it restored to us to this day. The factor Macdonald kept it in his own hands during his lifetime; and since then the Earl of Dunmore has it. They also reduced the price of kelp to £2, 2s. per ton. When Duncan Shaw, who was factor at the time, saw this he resigned his office and Macdonald succeeded. Shortly thereafter he ceased the manufacture of kelp altogether; and when the people were unable to obtain work, they fell in arrear of rent. The factor gathered together the cattle of the two townships Borv and Rusgary, and deprived the people of the best portion of their stock in lieu of rent. Following thereupon, he deprived them of a good island they had, Sousay, for peats and pasture. He asked for this island only for a month or two; but he retained it till the day of his death, subletting it to any person he pleased. We were forced to rent from him another island for peats, for which we pay £12. This island belonged to Borv in my father's boyhood; but it was taken from them to accommodate some of the tenants of Pabbay when it was cleared. Afterwards these went away to Australia, and the island was restored to us, but rent was charged for it. But the substance of what I said and mean to say, is to inquire how we at the one end of this small island can be raised out of our impoverished condition, and the remedy which I would propose is:—(1) To restore to us these islands, and to return the rent which we paid for them since they were taken from us. (2) To reduce the rent to the figure at which it stood in my grandfather's time. The kelp was the cause of the rent being nearly doubled since my grandfather's days, and now the kelp has ceased, but no abatement was made in the rent. Now our holdings are so small and bad that we cannot live

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'upon them. We crop them continuously. They are not sufficiently large 'to allow for a portion being left untilled and giving it rest, as is necessary. 'Other portions of our holdings are so rocky that we must carry soil on 'our backs before we can sow seed in it, and after all our exertions there 'are twenty crofters in the island who have not ground corn for a twelve-'month back. The produce of our crofts could not maintain our family 'six months—in many cases not four months. We have to get our meal 'from Glasgow; and with every endeavour to our rents we are unable to 'do so, we have to buy so much food, for our corn and stock cannot 'maintain us. If it were not for the manufacture of home tweeds by the 'women, we could not live at all. (3) We ask for larger holdings. There 'is plenty of land on every side of us in the hands of big folk. We think 'if it was given to us, we would have no cause of complaint. (4) We 'wish further to be informed why we are taxed so heavily in addition to 'our rents. My father Roderick Macleod pays £7, 10s. of rent, and he 'pays taxes—without reason why—5s. for a doctor, in addition to poor 'and school rates. For the last four years we have paid 10s. per annum 'for road money, though we have no road. We are of opinion that we 'still pay for the old Harris packet, though we are ourselves without post 'or packet, unless we provide one and pay for it. I shall now give a short 'account of the island as a whole. (1) It is about 3 miles long by 2 broad 'A native of Uist who lives in Uist rents much more than the half of it. 'On our portion of it there are sixty-five families. Of these thirty-five are 'cottars, without a foot of land (2) The ground officer at the factor's 'order has reported on the amount of stock in the island. We were 'annoyed at this, for very many of the people have some of their stock 'pledged for meal—some who have got meal from Glasgow on credit till 'the market day, others who got an advance from the bank till the same 'time, upon the security of a man having a deposit in the bank, and who 'relieves many in this way—in this way our stock is not our own, but a 'great part of it belongs really to others (3) The reason why so many 'cottars are in this part of the island. When the crofters were removed 'from the other portion of it, some of them came to this end. Again 'when the families grow up, and marry, and have families, they have no 'room on their father's land to make a livelihood, and so they must seek 'for their maintenance on the sea, many of them at lobster fishing—a 'work of danger on our rocky and stormy shore. (4) In the last place, I 'have to say that we do not blame our proprietor for what we have 'endured and still endure. We blame the factors and the bad managers 'whom they employed. Our proprietor granted all our requests but one '—and he promised to grant this, our last request to him also.—MALCOLM 'M'LEOD, Bernera.' The following is the statement on behalf of the cottars:—'*The Grievances of the Cottars of Bernera.* I must now fulfil 'my promise to the cottars of Bernera, and lay their case before the Right 'Honourable the Commission. We are in Bernera forty-eight families, 'who have not as much as a turf of land to maintain ourselves and our 'families. Many of us formerly had land, and this makes us feel the 'want of it more now. Our land was taken from us, and every head of 'sheep and cattle which we possessed, and no crofter on the other end of 'the island was allowed to give us a foot of land to till. We began to 'fish lobsters to maintain our families, and at once the factor Macdonald 'sent the ground officer to stop us, he being angry with us because we 'were not going to Australia. Some of us then came to this end of the 'island, where we now are, along with the crofters and others, still in Borv. 'I am ashamed to tell you the manner in which some of the people lived 'at that time. They lived on shell-fish—limpets. Those who had boats

'went out to the rocks once or twice a day when the ebb occurred at fore-
'noon and evening. All this occurred because of the clearings of Borv to
'give it to William M'Neill. Mr John Macdonald, Newton, Uist, rents
'the place now; and were it not for his liberality in giving us ground, we
'would have nothing at all, for there are thirty cottars of us getting
'benefit from his land and fourteen of the crofters from the other end of
'the island. And although he is as kind to us as any whom we have ever
'known, we are tired of asking him continually. We fish lobsters summer
'and winter, and still we are unable to provide ourselves with food and
'clothing. From want of nets, we cannot go to fish herrings, though the
'lochs on either side of us were full of them. Every year we think we
'can fish out of the Atlantic what will buy nets for us, but because we
'have our wages pledged for food before the fishing begins, we must deny
'ourselves many things in order to keep up our credit. In order to deliver
'us out of this womb of poverty in which we are enclosed, we beg of your
'honours to assist us in getting the land, of which there is plenty in the
'island, restored to us; for it is unseemly that the big sheep should die
'eating the fatness of the land at one side, and we banished from our
'fathers' land which ought to be ours, and forced to brave the dangers of
'the sea in order to obtain food; and if we had Borv at its present rent,
'when we occupied it, I believe we were still there, unless we would be
'removed for debt. Now of the cottars living in both ends of the island,
'twenty-six could take up land if they had it as the rent the present
'tenant pays for it, if once they get stock on it; and we are of opinion that
'if we had it at its present rent that no one would hear us complain.'

13117. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—When was Borv taken from you?—About thirty years ago.

13118. Was the other half of the island, which was occupied by a gentleman from Uist, always of that size, or was the whole island at one time divided among the crofters?—The whole island of Bernera was formerly divided among the crofters. Uisgary is the north and Borv the south end of Bernera.

13119. Who was it that took it from you?—Factor Macdonald.

13120. What did he do with it at the time?—He gave it to Mr William M'Neill.

13121. Were your rents reduced at the time this was done?—There was no reduction of the rents of the people at this end of the island.

13122. Did they lose any pasturage or anything else at the time that was done?—Two years before that the factor collected all the cattle of the island, and took them to pay their arrears of rent.

13123. Are the people complaining now of anything that was done thirty-five years ago except that some people on the north end of the island were crowded in upon them?—Fifty-seven years ago the island of Hermitray was taken from them where they had pasture, and thirty-five years ago the island of Susay was taken away from them.

13124. Did they get any reduction at the time these islands were taken from them?—There was no reduction of the rent when these islands were taken form them.

13125. Are we to understand that, besides getting these two islands back, the people are so numerous that they would be the better of having the whole island?—Yes, they desire that the whole island should be given to themselves to be distributed among crofters and cottars.

13126. Do you know what rent is paid for the other half of the island by the one gentleman? Do you know that it is £140?—It was £120 before, and the tenant gives £20 more now.

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13127. Are you able to pay that rent if you got the offer?—I could not say till I would see it paid, but I think they could.

13128. Are you yourself prepared to take an additional piece?—Yes, if I could get it. I would rather have a thing myself than let another man have it, but if I did not get that myself there is no man I would rather see have it than the man who has it at present.

13129. *Did you compose this paper entirely? Is it your own composition?*—The composition is all my own, but I noted down and made a scroll at first of the substance of what the others told me.

13130. And it is solely and entirely the production of the people of Bernera, without any outside assistance of any kind, minister or otherwise?—There was no assistance given by anybody outside the island.

13131. Where did you learn to write Gaelic?—At home. I never learnt it at school.

13132. Are there many upon the island who can write Gaelic?—Yes, there are.

13133. Are there some who can write English?—Yes.

13134. Did you feel more at home in writing it in Gaelic than in English?—I felt more sure in writing Gaelic that I would not put down anything I could not stand to.

13135. Have you a school in the island?—Yes.

13136. A board school?—A board school.

13137. Has the teacher got Gaelic?—Yes.

13138. How many people attend upon the average?—I don't know how many attend that school, but in the Sunday school there are ninety-seven attending.

13139. Is the Bible in Gaelic regularly taught?—Yes.

13140. Can most of the rising generation read the Gaelic Bible?—Yes, most of the children can read the Bible in Gaelic.

13141. *The Chairman.*—How many families are altogether upon the island, crofters and cottars, not counting the farmers' servants?—There are forty-seven cottars.

13142. How many crofters altogether?—There are twenty tenants, as they may be called, and ten with half lots. The population of the island is 454, having increased during the last ten years by seventy-two. These include the whole cottars on the island, and of these some are on Mr Macdonald's part.

13143. *Which is the half that belongs to the crofters?*—There are about thirteen cottars on Mr Macdonald's farm besides his own servants.

13144. Which is the larger half of the island—Borv, or your own end—the tacksman's grounds or the cottars' grounds?—Mr Macdonald's is the larger half.

13145. Which is the better soil?—His end of the island is the better to-day whatever.

13146. Is the soil cultivated by the crofters much exhausted?—Yes, it has grown so weak that it gives bad crops.

13147. When does the tack of the farmer expire for Borv?—I don't know.

13148. Have you ever asked the proprietor when the tack expires to give you back the other end of the island?—No. We were suffering many things, and we were willing to suffer in case we should lose the more by what we would get.

13149. You say Mr Macdonald was giving you labour. What kind of work do you do for him?—Whatever work is to be done on the farm.

13150. What wages do you receive—an able bodied man or a woman?—The payment is regulated by the grieve, and I am not very sure what it