THE HIGHLAND CLEARANCES.

Hume Brown Junior Prize Essay

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Submitted by Seumas a ghlinne!
Mr. James Campbell in his superb "Highland Songs of the Forty Five" has aptly drawn attention to the impossibility of anybody writing a fair and impartial history of the Forty-Five without an adequate knowledge of Gaelic. Principal Rait of Glasgow University, writing in the first number of "Ossian" says:

"I wish that I could read what will be printed in these pages in what was known in the Middle Ages as the Scottish tongue. When I began to write Scottish history, I consulted a very distinguished linguist, a Scotsman, who had been brought up in a part of Aberdeen-shire where Gaelic was, in his boyhood, still occasionally spoken and had learned it, with many other languages, in mature life. I asked him whether I should make an attempt to learn Gaelic for historical purposes. His reply was: 'Most certainly, but upon condition that you give me a solemn promise never to trust to your own judgement upon any disputed question!' It was not very encouraging, and I refrained, but I have often had cause to realise how much I lost, as a student of history, by my ignorance of the ancient tongue."

Principal Rait's words bear out the reason for the intrinsic worthlessness of most Scottish historians when writing about their own country.

The same kind of apologia might be made upon tackling the vexing issue of the history of the Highlands which comes directly under our investigation. Travel in Mull, Wester Ross, South Uist, and today people are still a trifle uneasy to venture forth upon the settlements effected after the Forty-Five; in the hotel bars at Bunessan, Lochinver and Inchnadamph, Lochboisdale and Castlebay, the subject which engenders a most
vivid silence is the Highland evictions and the depopulation of the Highlands. Well has MacKenzie MacBride described it:—

And when the fight is done
And you come back over the foam,
'Well done', they say, 'you are good and true',
But we cannot give you a home.

For the hill we want for the deer,
And the glen the birds enjoy,
And bad for the game is the smoke of the cot,
And the song of the crofter's boy.

It is a truism that the social and economic system in the Highlands was completely disrupted by the defeat of the Jacobite rising of 1745-46, and the repressive measures taken by the Government which destroyed the old clan system. The chiefs had no further use for the fighting men, and began before long to consider how to exploit the land for their own profit more effectively in the new conditions. The clansmen who by tradition enjoyed some security of tenure became, in fact, what they already were in law, tenants-at-will who could be evicted without notice. Rents were raised everywhere. For a short time high cattle prices enabled the crofters to pay the constantly rising rents, but a sharp fall in cattle prices precipitated the first wave of emigration overseas between 1760 and 1783. For our purpose we shall take it that the first great period of emigration ended in 1775 with the outbreak of the American War of Independence. Miss Adam, Vol.XVI, "Scottish Historical Review", commenting on the first serious
emigration, says,

"Many of the Highlanders emigrated after the '45, owing to the break-up of the clan system and the gradual abolishing of the tacksmen. In the military organisation of the clan, the tacksmen formed an essential element since by blood, instinct and training they were its natural lieutenants. As such they were indispensable to the chiefs and they paid for the lands in full by their services. Their money rents were altogether a minor matter, and not being fixed by any economic consideration, bore no necessary relation to the economic value of the land."

And so when the clan organisation was abolished, the tacksmen found themselves without a real function. From the economic point of view they were unnecessary middlemen. As farm officials they were quite inefficient. Their service in the army being no longer available, the chief naturally looked for a return from them in the form of an economic money rent. As the money rents were at the time merely nominal, this automatically led to the increase of rents. Miss Adam in the same article writes further:

"Under the new system leases are granted, but on rents that represent, or are intended to represent, the economic value of the land. These leases are granted to a much wider class, and so far diminish the profit and the prestige of those who formerly held tacks. Again the practice of sub-letting was abolished, and the services which might be exacted from sub-tenants limited. Some of the sub-tenants were promoted at once to the dignity of lease-holders. Finally the whole relationship between landlord and tacksmen was put on a simple business footing. The tacksmen ceased to form a special and privileged class. Their status was lowered as that of the under-tenants was raised." (pps.289/0)

This process was very rapid in the sixties and seventies of the eighteenth century. While some of the tacksmen remained and accepted the new conditions, others preferred to exploit their chances in anew country. And with the idea of transferring the
the old social life to newer fields they persuaded many of their Highland followers to go west with them. Most of these emigrants were from the islands, but the glens also contributed their quota. Some of the ships sailed from Greenock and Glasgow, but more often the silent Highland lochs were disturbed by the departure of the adventurers, who aimed at setting-up clan life in Carolina, Albany or Nova Scotia. Many of them carried with them considerable sums of money, and while there were cases of poverty, these were the exceptions. Vol.XVI of the "Scottish Historical Review", p. 283 tells us:

"emigrants from Sutherland between 1678 and 1772 took with them £10,000; 425 persons who sailed from Maryburgh in 1773 took £6,000 and in 1792 it was stated that £38,000 had been taken from the country since 1772 by emigrants from Wester Ross and Inverness-shire alone."

After the American War of Independence had temporarily halted emigration, there was a perceptible pause, not broken until the Treaty of Versailles which formed the starting-point of a fresh movement. Comparative inactivity seemed to separate the waves of emigration, and this boom and slump can be traced through the whole sad story of Highland clearance and depopulation. This new phase was different from the first emigration period largely through the social standing of the bulk of the people involved. We must be careful lest we fall into the trap of overemphasising this point, because tacksmen who were largely responsible for the first emigration to the New World were still active in many parts of the Highlands and some certainly emigrated after 1783 for
reasons similar to those motivating their fellows before 1775. Broadly speaking, we may say that before 1775 the chief impulse to emigrate came from above, and the people who were mostly affected were the semi-aristocratic holders of large farms, but after 1783 the impulse was more from beneath, and it was the peasant class whose diminished numbers marked the force of the new movement.

It is not very easy to come by accurate statistics, but the "Old Statistical Accounts" mention definitely the departure of 4000 persons between 1785-1793. Additional information can be had from the "Caledonian Mercury" and the "Scots Magazine" of corresponding years which make the total much nearer 6,000. Therefore allowing for some emigration taking place during the early part of the war, the total number of Highland emigrants between 1782-1803 could not have been less than 12,000 and may have been considerably more. (Telford writing in the "Scots Magazine" of May, 1803 says that between 1801-1803, 5,391 persons left for America, all but one ship sailing from Highland or island ports.)

The causes of upheaval of this second period of emigration which ended approximately in 1803 are many. There was the growing familiarity with the New World, the increasing importance in a commercial sense of the emigrant trade, and later we shall find more general reasons which promoted emigration westwards. To the Highlander of the eighties and nineties America had emerged as the bright new star of the age; a land of promise, capable of
satisfying the land hunger for which Scotland itself failed to provide a remedy. 'Back to the Land' is not only an attractive political cry, it corresponds to one of the strongest and healthiest instincts of human nature. The instinct was here in the Highlander; and in Scotland it was not satisfied. Fostering this boost in America can be traced out three contributory agencies, namely the Highland regiments, Jacobite exiles and the small tenants who had followed their tacksmen masters in the emigration of the seventies. The Highland soldier had served in the military operations in Canada, or in the Hudson campaigns of 1757, and some of them had been offered terms to settle in America, having been given an option to take up land in this new world. The same sort of thing happened to many of the Jacobite exiles, and so America for many came to be the household word, even in the remotest glen of the Highlands. A striking example of this can be seen in the way with which emigrants from the same district in the Highlands consistently sought the same part of territory in America. The war affected this tendency but did not destroy it. And this clannish instinct was a powerful contributory force in the promotion of emigration, a force which appeared to gain increased strength with the departure of each fresh batch of emigrants. A word is necessary about the important part played by the agents for emigration who had extremely important persuasive powers, and these men did a similar work for those districts which had hitherto been unaffected by the contact with America. All contemp-
-oraries were agreed that heavy influence was brought to bear by these emigration officials. The ships were horrible, full of disease and death: Dr. Morrin, Commissioner of the Marine and Emigrant Hospital at Quebec, who inspected the incoming ships, reported:

"I am at a loss for words to describe the state in which the emigrants frequently arrived; with a few exceptions the state of the ships was quite abominable; so much so, that the harbour master's boatmen had no difficulty, at a distance of gun-shot either when the wind was favourable or in a dead calm, in distinguishing by the odour alone a crowded emigrant ship. I have known as many as from thirty to forty deaths to have taken place, in the course of a voyage, from typhus fever, on board a ship containing from 500 to 600 passengers; and within six weeks after the arrival of some vessels, and the landing of the passengers at Quebec, the hospital received upwards of 100 patients at different times from among them. As to those who were not sick on arriving, I have to say that they were generally forcibly landed by the masters of the ships without a shilling in their pockets to procure for them a night's lodging, and very few of them with the means of subsistence for more than a very short period......for six weeks at a time from the commencement of the emigrant ship season, I have known the shores of the river along Quebec, for about a mile and a half, crowded with these unfortunate people, the places of those who might have moved off being constantly supplied by fresh arrivals, and there being daily drafts of from ten to thirty taken to the hospital with infectious disease."

Morrin's evidence was included in the Durham Report. But however severe the overcrowding and disease on board the emigrant ships, and however unscrupulous the emigration agents, they were essential links in the chain of emigration.

But these suggested causes are but one side of the truth. It is true they explain why part of the Highland population preferred to move off to America, rather than south to the Lowlands, but they do not explain why a people so notoriously conservative
and attracted to their native soil should have chosen to move at all. Why should a brave race have submitted to eviction? This becomes all the more remarkable when we recall that during those very years of eviction regiments raised in the Highlands were gaining for the Empire and for British arms the most noted achievements ever won in the Napoleonic wars and in the colonies. It was not all accepted in an enigmatic silence. McKenzie's "Highland Clearances", p.307 describes one of the situations which developed at this time, and of this incident in Ross-shire, has this to say of it:

"In 1792 clearances in Ross-shire and Sutherlandshire produced serious riots, the people attempting to drive the sheep away... at Coigeach there was stout resistance, the women disarming about twenty policemen and sheriff officers, burning the summonses in a heap, throwing their batons into the sea, and ducking the presenters of the law in a neighbouring pool. The men formed the second line of defence in case the women should receive any ill-treatment. They, however, never put a finger on the law officers, all of whom returned home without serving a single summons or evicting a single crofter. The result is that the Coigeach tenants are still where they were, and are today among the most comfortable crofters in the North of Scotland."

There were, undoubtedly, disturbances all over the Highlands, but as the "London Times" Special Commissioner said later (1845):

"It is owing to the influence of religion alone that they refrain from breaking into open and turbulent resistance of the law."

More shall be said of this later, but to return to the causes which were of a quite different kind, some of which were very general in their operation, and some of a minor importance affecting only small areas or special years.
Among the particular causes, famines stand out with special prominence. A typical example was the famine in 1782 when a bad harvest spread distress of a very painful kind throughout the north and west of Scotland. Fergusson's "Henry Erskine" gives an idea of the conditions prevailing during the year 1782 when the weather spoilt the scanty grain and the storm prevented the fishing with the result that hundreds were starved to death and cattle died in crowds. There was another famine in 1796, one in 1799 and one in 1800 - during which, declared Dr. Somerville of Jedburgh, "thousands perished of starvation". Ague, asthma, consumption, rheumatism caused by low ceilings, damp houses, poor diet, labouring in the peat mosses, and so on were rampant diseases. The famines and acute physical distress undoubtedly helped the revival in emigration thinking.

But interesting as local causes and situations might be in the evidence for emigration it is obvious that we must go further afield to account for the general unrest and unsettlement of the Highland people during the twenty years in question. At that time and since three most popular explanations have been proferred to explain this condition. First there has been rack-renting; secondly the union of farms; and thirdly the displacement of tillage and cattle by sheep. All these three reasons have been generally regarded as symptoms of the greed and tyranny of the land-holding class. Upon closer scrutiny the three suggested causes tend to merge into each other. In eighteenth century it
was not usual to find the farms in the Highlands being merged and united except for the purpose of adapting them better to sheep-runs. Hence we find that the second and third causes of emigration are hardly distinguishable. The question of rents is slightly more intricate but is still closely bound up with the introduction of sheep into the Highlands. As Miss Adam suggests in Vol.XIX of the "Scottish Historical Review", the most common view of the general causes producing this particular phase of emigration tends to resolve itself into three propositions.

" (1) Emigration was chiefly the result of the creation of sheep runs. 
(2) The introduction of sheep was due solely to the greed of the landowner and his callous indifference to the interests of his original tenants. 
(3) The landlord, therefore, is to be held primarily responsible for the great exodus of population from the Highlands westwards."

The following contemporary writers support sheep-farming as the main cause of emigration: Sir George MacKenzie, Telford, Henderson, as well as several ministers writing in the "Old Statistical Accounts". Much of this evidence is vital to our discussion. MacKenzie, for example, supported the introduction of sheep, and hence it is not likely that he would prejudice his cause and case by exaggerating its effects upon the population. Henderson was speaking from first hand experience and gave two authenticated cases in 1806 of small tenants being evicted to make way for sheep, one in Strathnave and one in Edderachyliis. Other evidence for this point of view can be seen from John Ramsay of Ochtertyre who besides being a famous agriculturist was also a man of good education and sound
II.

scholarship. Ramsay writing in his notebooks was able to pass the whole of the eighteenth century under survey. He was deeply interested in both the disintegration of the old and the evolution of the new, and this interest led him to write in a series of notebooks all that he knew of past and contemporary Scotland. On the problem of depopulation, Ramsay has this to say in the year 1804:

"...profitable as the new system (turning of large areas into sheep-runs) might be to the proprietor and the sheep-farmers, it has diminished the number of human species wherever it has been thoroughly established, even when some respect was paid to the persons and pretensions of the old possessors. So long as black cattle and horses were the principal stocking of a Highland farm, a number of servants or cottagers were absolutely necessary to raise a sufficient quantity of winter provender for them, which in that soil and climate, among a people averse to continued labour, was an arduous task, whereas a very few hands are requisite to manage a large flock. As sheep love extensive pasture, there was often a necessity to remove ten or a dozen tenants to enable a single shepherd to pay an adequate rent. Of its tendency to depopulate a country, the many ruinous houses to be seen in the Highland glens occupied by these animals afford complete and melancholy evidence."

This point, the relation of sheep introduction to Highland emigration, is controversial. Miss Adam, Vol.XIX, "Scottish Historical Review", makes play with the commentators of the eighteenth century who argue that the introduction of sheep into the Highlands caused the mass emigration. She is correct to point out that the logical connection between sheep and emigration is far from complete, and she easily presents counter commentators to reveal the flaws in the argument. Her main evidence is drawn from the observations of parish ministers who, in the main, denied that sheep farming replaced cattle-farming and who pointed out that much
of the land given over to sheep had hitherto been entirely waste. The ministers went on to deny that such displacement, where it did take place, necessarily produced emigration, and repudiated that cattle-farming was not in point of fact a better source of employment than sheep-farming. Finally, they made tentative suggestions why people were emigrating at this particular time.

Miss Adam continues by claiming that it was a significant fact that Argyllshire which absorbed sheep to a large extent provided few of the late eighteenth century emigrants while the Hebrides which were much less affected by sheep-farming provided great numbers for the emigrant ships. Stated in these terms her case displays loose logical reasoning for her comments on Argyllshire may be in effect a redescription of that county, that the geographic and labour state of the county lent itself to sheep-farming with slow repercussions towards emigration. This may be substantiated by records taken in the 19th century which reveal emigration from Argyllshire to be slow but in the long run in very large numbers. Similar treatment can be accorded to other "significant facts" of Miss Adam, and it may be apposite to point out the narrow field from which Miss Adam takes her evidence. This is mainly drawn from the Statistical Accounts compiled by parish ministers which form a very large part of our Scottish historian's material. But we feel two points may be relevant here; first of all there may be reason to doubt the reliability of the clergy's observations. MacKenzie in his introduction to the "Highland
Clearances", page xi,

"The ministers of the Gospel wielded the power of the iron hand which left its deep impress on the social life and even the literature of the Highlands. These men were - with a notable exception or two - in reality the servile tools of the 'estate' whose powers they feared, and whose support they received. In many parishes they were the only persons who were educated enough to write and so be able to express the wrongs which their people were called upon to endure. But their voices were silent and their pens were idle, except, indeed, when they were used to ennoble the character, the prestige, and the benevolence of the evicting tyrant!"

While McKenzie's passion may have capsized his commentary into condemnation, it is interesting to note that it was the very same stress on Providence and the same type of behaviour from the clergy which made David Hume in the beginning of the 18th century revolt against religion and write his "Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion." And secondly, because of the complexity of the interests involved in the Highland Clearances it may be better to draw evidence from other social groups no matter how deeply concerned these groups may be. One such group would be the Bards. They were of the people, living among them, and their protest was the bitterest of all. They knew the feelings of the people better than any other conscious social group; psychologists and sociologists were unknown. They expressed their feelings with a truth and fearlessness in the language of the people. They seek to arouse indignation because of derelict crofts and hillsides reft of men to work and fight and of their children who might still praise their God. Many of them spoke out against the sheep and the shepherds from the south who had brought shame
to their glens and who spoke an alien tongue which as McKenzie says frightened even the echoes! These poems must be significant evidence in our estimation of the Highland Clearances. The Duke of Argyll, Lord Cockburn, etc., testify in the controversy, but more of them later. The following poems have been selected to illustrate the point, and the first one is by Neil MacLeod who was born in Glendale, Isle of Skye, in 1843. Eviction and clearance had already devastated many parts of the Highlands, but the ruthless methods of the depopulator had not yet been applied to Neil MacLeod's native parish, so in "An Gleann's an robh mi òg" he gives us a pleasing picture of the social life in a Highland glen in his happy boyhood days; but as M.C. MacLeod tells us in "Modern Gaelic Bards" p.95, "there is another side to the picture."

"Tha sgiathan na h'oidhche
'G an sgáileadh a nall,
'S an ceò air a lubàdh
 Mu stucan nam beann;
Tha déòr air mo shhil-sa
'S gun m'aigne ach fann

(The Wings of night are spreading across...the mist is folding about the mountain peaks...my eyes are tear laden, my spirit has gone from me....I am left all alone to weep in the glen.)

Next there is Henry Whyte, born in 1852 in Lorn, Argyllshire, who had no experience of the clearances and while his knowledge is hearsay, his knowledge of the Gaelic language, which he uses fluently and idiomatically, is commanding, and his sympathies are truly catholic, as he never shows himself to be influenced in the smallest degree by prejudices begotten of class, creed or clan. This poem is called "Fuadach NanGaidheal" (The Dispersal of the Highlanders)
"Gur a mise 'tha tursach,
A'caoidh cor na dòthcha,
'S nan seann daoine cuiseil
'Bha cliùiteach is treun;
Rinn uachdrain am fuadach
Gu fada null thar chuantan
Am fearann chaidh thoirt uapa
'S thoirt suas do na fèidh.
'S e sud a'chulaich naire
Bhi feicinn daoine lèidir
'G am fuadach thar sàile
Mar bhàrrlach gun fheum;

(It is I who am melancholy, bewailing the state of the country, the old thrifty people who were praiseworthy and strong, scattered by the 'heid yins' afar off across the oceans, and the land once fair put under white sheep, the land taken from them and given up to deer. There are nettles in the gardens and the house-ruins are under grass. How shameful to see strong men sent across the sea like useless chaff.)

The last poet in our evidence is Dr. John MacLachlan, known better as the Sweet Singer of Rahoy, born in 1804, and MacLeod in his "Modern Gaelic Bards" has this to say of him.

"Born in 1804, before then shadows had gathered which afterwards darkened and fell on the Gaelic race. In his youth MacLachlan saw the social condition of the Highlands undergo a great change, and the people cast down by oppression and poverty. Many of his lyrics express the vivid impressions of one who felt keenly for the misery of his people, and the misfortunes brought about by hard-hearted landlords and their minions. The ancient customs have passed away. The Gaels are dispersed and Lowland shepherds and sheep are in their place."

p.66

MacLachlan died in Tobermory in 1874. His pathetic song is called "Och! Och! Mar Tha Mi" (Alas, alas, I am alone) This song has also been called "The Depopulated Glen" where the bard is singing in a very touching way of a visit paid to the once populous glen where his youth was passed. A lonely, weary, and sad stranger amid familiar and endearing scenes, he laments the changed times.
OCH! OCH! MAR THA MI.

"Och! Och! mar tha mi 'us mi 'nam aonar
A'dol troimh 'n choill far an robh mi eòlach,
Nach fhaigh mi àit' ann am fhearann duthchais,
Ged phaidhinn crùn airson leud mo bhroige.

An uair a chi mi na beanntan àrda,
'S an fhearann àigh 'san robh Fionn a chòmhnuidh,
Cha 'n fhaic mi ann ach na caoraich bhâna,
'Us Goill gun àireamh 'sa h-uile còdhail.

O, chaithd gach àbhaist a chur air fuadach;
Cha chluinn thu gruagach ri duan no òran;

(Alas, alas, I am alone going through the woods which I once knew so well, I cannot find a place in my own native land, although I paid a crown for the width of my shoe. When I see the high mountains and the beautiful land where dwelt Finn and his heroes I see there nought but sheep and Lowlanders without number... everywhere... every old custom has been driven out, no longer does the maiden sing her melodies and lays.)

(The translations are hurried, and would have been more effective in verse.)

These facts throw us into a partial answer to our second proposition that the introduction of sheep was evidence of the callous and selfish nature of the Highland landlord, and his corresponding attitude to his tenants. At the outset it must be noticed, to correct much of what has been written above, that the temptation to convert the Highlands into sheep-farms must have been an extraordinarily strong one. Knox writing in his "Tour Through The Highlands 1786" says this:

"It need be no matter for surprise if gentlemen should embrace the tempting offers from sheep farmers. One man will occupy the land that starved fifty or more families; he gives a double or treble rent, and is punctual to the day of payment."
17.

We read of some proprietors who deliberately sacrificed their own interests and economic strength and left their estates pretty much as they were to the wants of their tenants. For this magnanimous gesture these proprietors compel an unstinting admiration, but takes us straight into our third proposition and to the crux of our investigation into this second great period of emigration. Imagine for a moment that most of the Highland proprietors had marked time, and had followed the action of their nobler contemporaries, would emigration have been checked, and would the tenants have received any permanent advantage from this self-denial?

Before attempting to take sides in this problem it should be noticed that some interpreters trace the cause to overpopulation and making the point that unless positive preventive measures had been taken, emigration or migration on a fairly large scale was quite inevitable. The argument runs along the lines that the population had been overrunning its resources, and while it is difficult to say how many the Highlands could support the conclusion would seem to be that a large number of Highland inhabitants were superfluous, with not enough work to do, and not nearly enough to eat. Some interesting evidence for this point of view can be had from Sinclair's "Analysis of Stat. Accounts" which was written in 1825, and supported by MacDonald's "Report on Agriculture of the Hebrides" of 1811 give us valuable information about population figures.

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<th>1755</th>
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<td>Sutherlandshire</td>
<td>20,774</td>
<td>22,961</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inverness-shire</td>
<td>64,656</td>
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But the figures for the Hebrides are still more staggering. They are compiled from Church Records.

The general conclusion would seem to be that the greater part of the increase must have been a severe strain on the already heavy laden economy of the Highlands. A dead-weight upon the scanty resources, and an all-round lowering of the standard of living. And substantiating this argument for overpopulation is the statement of Kemp in his "Tour of the Highlands" (SPCK)

"An attentive and general observation of the present state of the Highlands and Islands, it is imagined, will warrant the assertion that the great and most universally operating cause of emigration is that, in comparison with the means of subsistence which they afford, these counties are greatly overstocked with inhabitants."

The argument would continue that sheep helped to bring matters to a head, but emigration must have still taken place, and taken place on a very large scale. In 1807 the Highland Society Transactions published these words:

"Every candid observer of things will admit that for the Highlands even under the old system, emigration must still have taken place unless the growing population had been reduced by worse causes than the one complained of - by the sword, the small-pox, or other destructive maladies."
Our last study will take us down to the last clearance approximately the same time as the Napier Commission of 1883 and the Crofter's Act of 1886. We have seen how overpopulation has been proffered as a strong argument for emigration, and we shall spend some time examining this more closely. In Scotland the system of crofting was much the same as in Ireland and produced much the same sort of result. This had been a vital factor in the increase of population in Ireland; sub-letting and sub-dividing of farms. Throughout most of the 18th century Ireland had been largely a pastoral country, but with a rise in the price of grain towards the end of the century and encouragement given to its production in the form of bounties on its export, this led to an increase in tillage. This meant that sub-dividing your farm was a very economic business. In many cases the farms were divided among the grown members of the family who wished to marry and settle down for themselves. This division of the land led to the necessity of increasing population which led to the still further sub-division of the land. Thus the process became something of a vicious circle, until the farms became so small as to be completely uneconomic. And disaster fell on Ireland when the prices of agricultural produce fell after 1815 and the process of consolidating the small farms was commenced by the landlords.

Consequently in Scotland it was in the Highland districts that the pressure of population was most acutely felt. The Lowlands where population was already most dense had its industries which
were new and absorbed much labour, and there was not very much economic distress. But the Highlands was quite a different proposition. There a wasteful system of tillage had practically laid waste the land. H.G.Graham, writing in "Social Life of Scotland in the 18th Century" says:

"The inhabitants had themselves done their utmost to make their country waste, and assisted nature by their stupidity to make it barren. They denuded the ground of its best pasture, using the turf, instead of the too abundant stones, for making their fences and building their huts, that were dark, dank, and malodorous, from whose mouldering walls and roofs there fell on the inmates the dust of the clay and the insects from the rotting sods. In truth the crofters concerned themselves extremely little as to how the soil was treated; for whenever they had got all the good out of the ground, and done all possible harm to it, they removed the rafters and doors from the hovel, which at once fell into a dirty heap, and quietly settled elsewhere, where they rebuilt a hut and again the soil was destroyed." P.222-3.

The crofters were rapidly degenerating to a standard of living very similar to the peasantry of Ireland. There was a recklessness about marriage which was prevalent everywhere. Pennant in his tour of the Highlands as far back as 1750 notes that women were used as beasts of burden. H.G.Graham says in social survey:

"if a crofter lost his horse, he found it more economical to marry, for the wife would do more work than the departed beast."

The food of the Highlanders was little better than that of the Irish.

South Uist was the first island to plant the potato in 1743, but gradually its use spread all over the Highlands, and eventually for ten months of the year the potato became the substitute for the more staple diet of bread. Inevitably the development of the
potato crop and the introduction of the kelp industry led to a definite increase in population. The Eighth Duke of Argyll's "Memoirs" contain this interesting comment on the kelp industry.

"...then came what seemed a godsend at the time - the discovery that the seaweed cast on an open and stormy shore was full of alkali salts of great commercial value, which could be realised by a very simple process of burning in open kilns. A roaring trade was soon established. The potato had been introduced earlier, and had served well to support the growing multitudes. The population of Tiree had increased more rapidly than the population of Glasgow, so that from 1769-1802 it had increased from 1670 to 2776 and in 1846 it had mounted up to 5,000."

And another factor in the large increase in population was the introduction of vaccination, which ended the small-pox epidemics and drastically reduced the death-rate.

It makes an interesting comparison to note that the distress in Ireland and in the Highlands was rather similar. When the potato crop failed, hopelessness produced lethargy which did much to intensify the misery of their condition. Scotland and Ireland became the breeding ground for emigrants. Those who yearned for a better life in far-off countries wrote home to their homes and friends exhorting them to give up and come west; often the steamer fare was enclosed, and in this way the emigration stream began and increased after its temporary slump.

During the period of Wakefield's influence on emigration policy the distress in the Highlands and islands was mainly due to the failure of the kelp manufacture and of the herring fishing and of the potato crop mentioned above. The kelp industry flourished during the Napoleonic wars, and the crofting system received
a tremendous stimulus, but after the war the price of kelp dropped, and the axe fell on the industry with the removal of the protective tariffs. A letter written by McLeod of Harris, and printed in the Report of the Committee of 1841, gives an account of the influence of the removal of this tariff on the kelp trade.

"The production of and manufacture of kelp, which has existed for more than 200 years, had, for a very great length of time, received a vigilant and special protection against the articles of foreign or British growth or manufacture which compete with it in the market, namely, barilla, pot and pearl ash, and black ash; up to the year 1822 considerable duties were leviable on all the commodities just enumerated; but in that year the duty on salt was lowered from 15s. to 2s. per bushel. Shortly afterwards the impost on barilla was considerably reduced. This measure was quickly succeeded by the repeal of the remainder of the salt duties and of the duty on alkali made from salt. Close upon this followed considerable reduction in the duty on pot and pearl ash, and an entire removal of that on ashes from Canada; and this step was accompanied by a diminution in the duty on foreign sulphur from £15 to 10s. per ton. Such is the succession of measures which now threatens the total extinction of the kelp manufacture, and with it (in reference to Scotland alone) the ruin of the landed proprietors in the Hebrides, and on the west coast, the most serious injury to all descriptions of annuitants of kelp estates, and the destitution of a population of more than 50,600 souls."

This failure of the kelp industry meant that marriage was forbidden by the proprietors unless the young people involved had a holding on the estate. To disobey this regulation meant immediate expulsion. And consequently there began a drift of young men south to the Lowlands for the harvest as the harvesters did from Ireland. But how much more difficult to travel south from the Highlands. It took the Highlander several days and cost him approximately twelve shillings. Glasgow could be reached by the Irishman in ten hours and cost him approximately sixpence!
The failure of the herring industry was due to two causes: the withdrawal of the bounty, and the desertion of the herrings. How tragic that in 1750 a patriotic versifier could write on the first barrel of herrings to reach London:

"So these first fish which from far Shetland came,  
Are harbingers of riches, power and fame,  
Hint that the Britons, if they'll now be wise  
May soon to all their ancient glory rise."

About this time too the work on the Caledonian Canal was concluded. This did not help the general distress of the Highlander, although critics have maintained that most of the work was done by English engineers and Irish labourers. However the population kept increasing after work had finished because many a young married Highland couple found a ready made home in the labourer's accommodation by the side of the Canal. It is worth mentioning that a novel cause of emigration was suggested by Sheriff-Substitute Brown of Inverness-shire who attributed emigration from certain areas to a movement which took its rise along the valley of the Caledonian Canal. Writing in his "Strictures" in 1806, Brown says:

"The late flame of emigration first began to be kindled along the track of the Caledonian Canal, by certain religious itinerants who addressed the people by interpreters, and distributed numerous pamphlets, calculated, as they said, to excite a serious soul concern....when the fumes of discontent had thus been prepared through the medium of fanaticism, to which, it is known, the Highlanders are strongly attached; at last these levelling principles which had long been fermenting in the west and south made their way among them, and excited an ardent desire of going to a country where they supposed all men were equal, and fondly flattered themselves they might live without labour."
This sheds new light upon the psychology of the Highlander and the emigrant, but there is not sufficient evidence from other sources to enlarge upon it. Still, Brown was a contemporary, living practically on the spot he was describing, and it seems reasonable therefore to suppose that his statements were not without some foundation.

The Agent-General for Emigration in his report dated 29/7/1837 wrote with regard to the prevailing distress, that

"what is described is not a mere diminution of employment which might be of longer or shorter duration, and the people be afterwards restored to as good a condition as before, but an absolute cessation of the only occupations (kelp and herring) by which the bulk of the people lived, without a prospect of their revival."

Emigration was recommended as an immediate remedy for the situation. It was thought that, on the lowest estimate, one-third of the population of the Highlands could be removed with beneficial results. A movement to the Lowlands had commenced from those parts of the Highlands more conveniently situated, but this gave little help to the west coast and the islanders. Numerous small 'clearances' for sheep farms or deer forests continued, and in some instances those who were evicted were given assistance to emigrate. In some instances there was genuine over-population, but in others the motive for removal was the greater gain to be obtained from the land being used for sheep-keeping or as deer forests.

There followed a lull in emigration again from about 1850 to 1878 which was quite remarkable when the great improvement in the means of transport is taken into consideration. The decrease
in emigration towards the close of this period might be explained by the depression in the United States which commenced in 1873. Professor Farrand in his "Development of the United States says of this crisis:

"The usual characterisation that it was 'brief but sharp' would apply perfectly to the panic of 1873, but the five years following were a period of declining markets and surplus goods, of idle mills and idle men, of strikes, lockouts and bankruptcies."

But soon the lull was over and in 1875 there began an industrial and commercial depression which meant a continued increase in emigration. While agricultural workers were affected by this depression it was the agriculturists as regular wage-earners who benefited from the fall in prices as their real wages had increased through the greater purchasing power of money. For the unemployed it was a severe time. And while many drifted south to the Lowlands and were successfully rehabilitated many had to seek relief elsewhere. And thus we come to the last chapter in emigration with schemes being conjured up for assisted passages abroad. The system of assisted emigration differed from that of Ireland in that Scotland adopted more a system of colonisation than mere emigration. The experiment was reasonably successful. With troubles in Skye, however, troops had to be despatched to suppress crofters who had started to seize land, and the Government was forced to intervene. The Napier Commission was set up, and after a favourable reception, the office of Secretary for Scotland was revived. It led to the Crofter's Act of 1886 which for all its shortcomings gave the crofters security
of tenure, the assurance of a fair rent, compensation for improvements on leaving his holding, and the right to bequeath his holding within his own family. It has been described by J.P. Day as "The MagnaCharta" of the Highlands. This probably exaggerates the importance of the Crofter's Act but it was an historic landmark, marking the beginning of Government intervention to protect the crofters, and virtually marked the end of the clearances.

Although the clearances had stopped as such, the problem of depopulation of the Highlands is still with us, and as the following table shows is a vexing issue indeed.

**Population of the Highlands.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1755</td>
<td>257,183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1831</td>
<td>388,876</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>360,367</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>341,535</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>293,212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>291,848</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>299,223</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 1755 Webster estimated that one-fifth of Scotland's population was in the Highlands and islands, and in 1945 it contained only 5.7 per cent.
The direction of our observations has been towards clarifying what has already been said about the causes of the Highland Clearances, and towards affirming the complexity of these causes. To label the problem of the Highland Clearances would be to generalise grossly. Sheep or over-population have gone hand-in-hand with peculiarly local factors; there can be no doubt that each area reacted differently. As the result was the same, however, we feel justified in discussing the principle forces at work, and in substantiating our comments with contemporary evidence as far as possible. If the three fundamental questions in any scientific enquiry are: what is its point? is it true? and how does it help us? then we are assured in tackling our problem from its general causes and in clarifying and unpacking some of these generalisations. There are no doubt other ways of coming to the problem. We have said little of the morality of the way the clearances were enforced, and the decay they caused in the relationships among men. Neither have we taken particular evictions and expanded our observations into a general thesis; Sutherland affords an excellent opportunity to condemn the clearances without appreciating the historical necessity. We may regret the cruelty but the facts stand without regard for tears.