

attempt an apology for the practice, by representing that the 'deer-shootings' yield a rental equal to that from sheep-farming, and, besides, give employment to large numbers of men as keepers. This argument, which could with equal propriety be used in vindication of gaming-houses, is too ridiculous for criticism. On the spot, the new process of turning arable and pasture lands into a wilderness is far from being popular. Houses and hamlets are eradicated, farmers of all sorts disappear, and long-established roads through the glens are ruthlessly shut up; and any one who, on business or pleasure, attempts to pursue their half-obliterated track, is exposed to challenge and litigation. As yet, the great landowners who indulge in these odd fancies have encountered only public sarcasm and reproof—a species of bombardment which they endure with magnanimous coolness.

Besides the enforested and sheep-pasturing portion of the Highlands, there still exist a number of districts in which something like the old small-farm and crofting systems prevail; and after looking at these, the mind is almost brought to admit that it would be better for the country that the Highlands should be peopled with grouse and deer, than with human creatures who draw out existence in what must be called the wretchedness of barbarism.

Fort-William is a small town at the opening of several valleys pursuing an easterly direction, and for the most part pastoral. In the low grounds, cultivation is pursued on a limited scale, while the hills around—the Braes of Lochaber, as they are locally termed—are devoted to purposes of pasturage. Interspersed with these varieties of surface, we may observe pretty considerable tracts of moss, black, miry, and, in present circumstances, useless for anything but to furnish fuel to the inhabitants. About this district, from the foot of Ben Nevis to Glen Spean and Glen Roy, we wandered about for a few days, and took the liberty of noting the condition of the cottagers. In this quarter we are in the country of the Macdonalds, one of the most gallant of the clans, whose descendants, till the present hour, though altered in position, retain many traditional recollections of their ancestors. Several owners of property hereabouts, as in many other parts of the Highlands, are, however, English successors, by purchase, of what once belonged to old native families. The extensive estate of Inverloch, which lies immediately to the east of Fort-William, is the property of an English nobleman, whose father purchased it some years ago, on the insolvency of its former owner, the Marquis of Huntly. Regarding the general aspect and condition of the Inverloch estate there has been some unpleasant controversy. Mr. Somers, a gentleman of the press, in connection with the 'North British Mail,' having, after personal inquiry, made various statements, unsatisfactory to the noble proprietor,* his account of the state of affairs was impugned as untrue and unjustifiable. I pronounce no opinion on the special matters in dispute, but I lament to say that the condition of many cottages not only on the estate of Inverloch, but on that of Glen Spean, are so extremely, though not peculiarly bad, as to be somewhat of a scandal to the age.

In describing the human habitations which lie scattered about these wastes as 'cottages,' we employ the only term which the English language admits of. But to what is generally understood as a cottage they bear very little resemblance. In travelling by a cross path along a bare hillside, you suddenly observe smoke issuing from certain holes in certain lumps of stone and turf. These lumps are the dwellings of the small farmers and crofters; and a number of them together forms the Highland hamlet or clachan. In the midst of a struggling clachan we one day stopped our conveyance and alighted; and pioneered by our obliging conductor—a Macdonald, who introduced us in Gaelic—we stepped into one of the cottages. On opening the door, the apartment we were ushered into was that devoted to the cattle; but these were not at home, though the damp mud floor was strewn with their litter and refuse. On our left was a partition formed of wattle, and this imperfect screen was all that separated the biped from the quadruped inhabitants. Passing through a door in the wattle, we were in the family apartment. On one side was a shelf with a few articles of earthenware, and below it was a wooden chest holding the Sunday clothes; on the floor were two or three stools and a chair, which, with an iron pot and a deal table, were the whole furniture. There was no grate or chimney. The fire was on the bare floor, and the smoke from it curled in wreaths round the apartment, glazing every rafter with a jet-black japan, and finding exit by an opening in the roof, or by the door and window—or, more correctly, hole in the wall; for the aperture answering as a window had no glass. Over the fire there dangled a chain, to which the pot might be hooked; and half up towards the roof the chain passed through a disk like a pot lid, the object of which was to prevent the props of rain which descended through the chimney-opening from falling into the fire, or into the food which was dressing upon it. Another wattle partition divided the apartment from a dark den-like place, in which I caught a glimpse of a bed. And this was the house of a farmer, as he must be called.

* 'Letters from the Highlands, on the Famine of 1847.' By Robert Somers. 1 vol. duodecimo. London: Simpkin and Marshall. This work, embracing much graphic description, is well worthy of perusal.

The wonder to a Lowlander is, how people can live in such hovels; but the human being has a marvellous power of accommodating himself to circumstances. The poor Highlander has never known any better, and if he did wish to have a good house over his head, he would require to build it at his own cost, and be compelled to leave it at the end of his lease. Thus insecurity as to a return for outlay is substantially the reason why the Highland, like the Irish small farmers, are so poorly lodged. In the lowlands of Scotland, the landlords, almost without exception, build excellent stone and slated houses for their tenants; but except on the estates of the wealthiest proprietors, this very proper practice does not appear to prevail in the Highlands. When asked how they contrive to exist with any degree of health or comfort in their wretched turf huts, the Highlanders seldom fail to ascribe much to the beneficial influence of the peat smoke. How far this opinion rests on any sound principle I am unable to say; perhaps it is not unworthy of the investigation of sanitarians.

In the general economy of Highland farming, such as we see hereabouts, there is room for vast improvement. By a judicious application of capital, great patches of the lower-lying mossy lands might be reclaimed and cultivated, by which luxuriant green crops would be raised for the winter food of cattle. At present, there is a melancholy waste and misapplication of natural resources—no proper fences, no rotation of crops, while the apportionment of farms is very defective. We found in full operation an extraordinary species of communism, which I shall leave to be described in the language of Mr. Somers. 'Each township or hamlet is literally a joint-stock company of farmers, the members of which are bound, jointly and severally, to the landlord for payment of the rent. The arable part of the farm, rented by one of these clubs, or companies, is divided into ridges of equal size; and these again are divided equally among the members; for, as the people argue, in order to secure a fair division of the soil, it is necessary to cut it up into small sections, and set aside a section to each family consecutively, till the whole are exhausted. A family will thus have as many as six or seven ridges spread over all parts of the farm, and each of them surrounded by similar stripes belonging to his co-tenants. The hill or pasturage of the farm is held strictly in common. Every member of the hamlet contributes an equal number of the sheep and cattle necessary to stock the hill; a shepherd is employed at the common expense to tend the flocks; and one of the number, in whom the little community has confidence, is appointed annually to sell the stock requiring to be taken to market, the proceeds being applied to the payment of the rent, and the overplus, if any, divided equally among the co-tenants. The rent of the townships vary from £150 to £350 per annum, being at the rate of from £7 to £20 for each tenant. The stock of sheep range from 600 to 2000 on some farms; and each family has seldom less than three milch cows. If any of the tenants proves indolent, wasteful, and unable to pay his share of the rent, his neighbours are secured against loss by his stock; and should he turn out incorrigible, they can expel him from the club: but in the event of any one being disabled, by accident or sickness, so that he cannot cultivate his part of the farm, his co-tenants join together and do it for him gratuitously. The claims of widows in this respect particularly are respected, it being a fixed rule that no widow be put out of the club, but that all lend her a helping hand till her own family are able to take the duty off their shoulders. There is thus in these simple communities an active and benevolent co-operation, which saves individual members from the calamities which befall poor families in more artificial states of society.'

From what I heard on the spot, there is no reason to discredit an observation of Mr. Somers in reference to a farm of this class. 'The produce of the farm is insufficient to maintain the families upon it, and the attention of the tenants is distracted from the cultivation of the soil in a too often fruitless search for day labour, to eke out the inadequate resources. Driving sheep to the south is a common employment for this class of men; and it takes them away from their farms at the time when their crops are arriving at maturity, and when their undivided attention is most necessary to secure the fruits of their labour from the ravages of a fickle and boisterous climate.' In other words, the proprietors of these lands do not get rents out of the produce, but from the employment of their tenants in work, altogether apart from the farms. Affection for the place of their birth, and an unwillingness to leave it for more favoured climes, cause them to undertake obligations unwarranted by the peculiar circumstances in which they are placed. What should we say of the sameness of a shopkeeper who proposed to pay his rent not from his receipts in trade, but from the wages of himself or daughter employed in a separate establishment? Yet on a footing of this nature stands the rent roll of many Highland as also many Irish proprietors.—It may perhaps be said by way of offset, that if the land which now forms a club-farm were let in a mass to one farmer with capital, a better rent would be paid, and, besides the farmer would have an overplus profit. Be it so. The negligence which avowedly tolerates and maintains a condition of things revolting to decency and humanity, not to say dangerous to national safety, only the more exposes itself to reprehension.

On going eastward, and seeing the extensive impro-

vements lately effected on the properties of Lord Lovat, the Duke of Richmond, and other spirited landlords, we felt as if in a new world. The neat cottages, with the well-kept patches of land about them, on the Richmond (lately the ill-managed Gordon) property, presented a scene of rural beauty and comfort which contrasted strangely with what he had witnessed on the west side of the country.

It is usual to impute much of the misery of the Highlands to the habitual indolence of the people. We may grant that they possess no earnest spirit of industry.—But in justice, we should view the inhabitants of these remote solitudes as the wreck of a primitive, uneducated, and, it may be added, unfortunate race. Faithful, kindly in disposition, submissive to law, and with strong religious impressions, they may be considered to form the raw material out of which much good might be wrought. For the greater part, however, in the hands of absentee landlords, needy from their own extravagance or that of their predecessors, they have been either expatriated, or left to carry on a hopeless contest with nature. In some quarters, their whole means of livelihood is the produce of a patch of potato ground; and by way of rent, they give their personal labour at any time and to any extent it may be required—a species of serfdom revolting to modern ideas, and which is little calculated to inspire a love of regular industry. 'How natural must it be,' says the authority already quoted, 'for the Highland cotter to detest labour, when he feels himself bound hand in foot for the petty privilege of planting a few barrels of potatoes!' If the Highland proprietors were to reside on their properties, and set about the improvement of their lands and the humanising of their tenantry, accusations as to the indolence would soon be unheard of. The physical and social improvements now going on in the Lewis under Mr. Mathison, show what may be effected in meliorating the condition of the Highlands and Islands.

The longest lane has a turning. Highland mismanagement, by the exposure connected with the late famine and other circumstances, seems likely to undergo some modification. A change in views connected with store-farming deserves especial notice. In the introduction of large sheep farms sixty to eighty years ago much suffering was inflicted. Had the new order of farmers settled in the Highlands with their families, the change would have been only from a Celtic to an Anglo-Saxon population. In too many instances, however, these farmers put their property under the charge of shepherds, and lived themselves in the south; so that there were not only absentee landlords, but absentee farmers.—Of the cruelty of this perfected system of annihilating a settled population nothing need be said. What is immoral seldom comes to any good. The system is at length discovered to be economically mischievous; for not a shilling of capital can ever accumulate in a country inhabited only by sheep and salaried assistants.—I am glad to learn that, impressed with this conviction, the Duke of Sutherland is beginning to divide his large into small farms, and lease them to capitalists, who will give the country the benefit of their presence. When the system of enforesting has run its course, let us hope that it will come to as creditable a termination.

AN UNKNOWN REPUBLIC.

Among the higher recesses of the Pyrenees there exist two small republics, having scarcely any dependence on, or connection with, the monarchy of Spain on the one hand, or the newly-got-up republic of France on the other. One of these—Andorre—is not known to the world; but the other, which is of considerable less extent and population, may never probably have been heard of in England. Goust, as this obscure little commonwealth is termed, has its locale at the southern extremity of the valley of Ossau, or rather the track which leads to it there begins. This track winds along the face of a steep, through forests, rocks, and clouds, till the stranger, faint and dizzy, begins to fancy that he is in the nightmare, climbing some miraculous bean-stalk. But courage! Goust is no mushroom power; it is full of the ease and dignity of years; and at every step you find traces of bygone generations. Here the corner of the cliff is rounded; there a rustic seat invites you to rest for a moment; and again the hewn trunk of a tree affords you passage over some mountain torrent. Pleasant is it for the wayfaring man to pause in such a place; to feel the sunbeams showering upon him through the trees; to drink of the sparkling waters, with his hand for a cup; to lean over the precipice, and watch them leaping in mad joy into a bottomless abyss; to listen to their voice as it mingles with the singing of birds; and to see in imagination the distant world below, with all its paltry cares and mean ambitions. And more than pleasant for him it is to resume the journey after such a pause, to stride forward like a giant refreshed, and to feel that his spirit belongs to that upper region to which his feet are hastening.

The apex of the mountain is at length sufficiently near to be discerned above your head, for you are now between three and four thousand feet from the level of the valley, and a beautiful and yet fantastic scene it presents. Instead of the naked rocks you might have expected, a green coronal hangs upon the peak; and this, as you approach, resolves into trees and bushes, and gardens and fields, forming a little fairy oasis, belonging more to the air than the earth. This is the domain of Goust; and in the midst of these trees are