

straw. The potatoes, too, had become soft and watery, and must have formed but indifferent food to the poor Highlanders; condemned even in better seasons to feed upon them during the greater part of the year, and now thrown upon them almost exclusively by the failure of the corn crop. The cottars of the neighboring village were on other accounts in more than usually depressed circumstances at the time. Each family paid to the laird for its patch of corn-land, and the pasturage of a wide upland moor, on which each kept three cows a-piece, a small yearly rent of three pounds. The males were all fishermen as well as crofters; and, small as the rent was, they derived their only means of paying it from the sea,—chiefly, indeed, from the herring-fishery,—which, everywhere an uncertain and precarious source of supply, is more so here than in most other places on the north-western coasts of Scotland. And as for three years together the herring-fishing had failed in the Loch, they had been unable, term after term, to meet with the laird, and were now three years in arrears. Fortunately for them, he was a humane, sensible man, comfortable enough in his circumstances to have, what Highland proprietors often have not, the complete command of his own affairs; but they all felt that their cattle were their own only by sufferance, and so long as he forbore urging his claim against them; and they entertained but little hope of ultimate extrication. I saw among these poor men much of that indolence of which the country has heard not a little; and could not doubt, from the peculiar aspects in which it presented itself, that it was, as I have said, a long-derived hereditary indolence, in which their fathers and grandfathers had indulged for centuries. But there was certainly little in their circumstances to lead to the formation of new habits of industry. Even a previously industrious people, were they to be located within the great north-western curve of thirty-five inch rain, to raise corn and potatoes for the autumnal storms to blast, and to fish in the laird's behalf herrings that year after year refused to come to be caught, would, I suspect, in a short time get nearly as indolent as themselves. And certainly, judging from the contrast which my brother