

ment furnished, suddenly became oppressively redundant. It required, however, another drop to make the full cup run over. The potato is of comparatively modern introduction into the Highlands. We were intimate in early life with several individuals who had seen potatoes first transferred from the gardens of Sutherland and Ross to the fields. But during the present century potatoes had become the staple food of the Highlander. In little more than forty years their culture had increased fivefold ; for every twenty bolls reared in 1801, there were a hundred reared in 1846 ; and when in the latter year the potato blight came on, the poor people, previously stripped of their little capitals, and divested of their employment, were deprived of their food, and ruined at a blow. The same stroke which did little more than slightly infringe on the comforts of the people of the Lowlands, utterly prostrated those of the Highlands ; and ever since, the sufferings of famine have become chronic along the bleak shores and rugged islands of at least the north-western portion of our country. Nor is it perhaps the worst part of the evil that takes the form of clamorous want. Wordsworth, in describing a time of famine in which the fields for two years together “ were left with half a harvest,” tersely says, that

“ Many rich
Sank down, as in a dream, among the poor,
And of the poor many did cease to be.”

We fear that during the famines of the last five years not a few of our Highland poor *have* ceased to be, if not in consequence of absolute starvation, in consequence at least of the severe course of privation to which they have been exposed. But their wants are now all provided for ; and it is a more disastrous though less obtrusive fact, that so heavily has the famine borne on a class that were not absolutely the poor when it came on, that they are the absolutely poor now. It has dissipated the last remains of capital possessed by the