

*people* of the Highlands, and placed them in circumstances of prostration too extreme to leave them any very great chance of recovering themselves, or rather in circumstances from which, in the present state of the country, recovery for them as a *people* is an impossibility.

Such seems to be the present state of the Highlands. Where are we to look for the proper remedies? Alas! in the body politic, as in the natural body, injuries may be easily dealt, for which it may be scarce possible to suggest a cure. In travelling over an extensive Highland tract last autumn, we had a good deal of conversation with the people themselves. Passing through wild districts of the western coast, where the rounded hills and scratched and polished rocks gave evidence that the country had been once wrapped up in a winding-sheet of ice, we saw the soil for many miles together,—where the bare rock had any covering at all,—composed of two almost equally hopeless ingredients. The subsoil was formed of glacial debris,—the mere scrapings of the barren primary rocks; and over it there lay a stratum, varying generally from six inches to six feet, of cold, wet, inert moss, over which there grew scarce even a useful grass, except perhaps the “deer’s hair” of the sheep-farmer. And yet, on this ungenial soil, representative of but vegetable and mineral death,—the dead ice-rubbish and the dead peat,—we saw numerous cultivated patches, in which the thin green corn or sickly-looking potatoes struggled with aquatic plants,—the common reed and the dwarf water-flag. No agriculturist, with all the appliances of modern science at command, would once think of investing capital in such a soil; and yet here were the poor Highlanders investing at least labour in it, and their modicum of seed-corn. And we are not to wonder if the tillers of such fields be miserably poor, and fail to achieve independence. There was a locality pointed out to us, in a barren quartz-rock district, in which the in-