

It is of interest to recall that the Royal Highland Commission of 1883, which included such well-known men of the time as Lord Napier, Sir Kenneth Mackenzie of Gairloch, and Cameron of Lochiel, suggested that the appropriation of land for deer might be prohibited below the 1,000 ft. contour line in the east of Scotland, though it might be lower in the west. At that time the acreage under deer was computed to be under 2,000,000, and this the Commission estimated could then have grazed 395,000 sheep.

It would seem safe to assume that nearly 2,000,000 acres throughout the Highlands will need to be taken back from deer after the war and can be resumed without any great harm to true sport. The question of the proper utilisation of these areas is one of the problems Highland owners are having to face. At present the assessed value of the Scottish deer forests works out on an average of close on a shilling an acre per annum, including lodges and other buildings. The lower land is, of course, the more valuable, and if landowners are not to lose money it will probably have to yield an average from 1s. 3d. to 1s. 6d. an acre. It is possible that a good deal of this land might suitably go back to sheep grazing, but it has to be borne in mind that such reconversion can only be effected gradually—partly because the sheep stock would need to be bred up, and sheep stock acclimatisation is a serious difficulty in most parts of the Highlands; but also because the herbage after deer have been in occupation becomes coarse and unsuitable for sheep, though less so for cattle. Further, reconversion to sheep farming will necessitate considerable capital expenditure in restoring fences, draining, buildings, &c., and it is doubtful if at the total cost a return could be realised anywhere near the forest rent.

PLANS FOR AFFORESTATION.

The more promising method of dealing with the lower deer land would seem to be to put it under timber, and already some of the owners of extensive "forest" lands are considering this course seriously and preparing plans. The Development Commissioners have, through the Board of Agriculture for Scotland, offered to provide money for the planting of large areas after the war, and they have also provided competent forest officers in each district to advise landowners and others free of cost. This seems likely to afford the ultimate solution of the problem of the utilisation of the lower deer land in part, but it must be borne in mind again that such conversion will necessarily be slow, because even if labour becomes plentiful after the war the supply of plants will be limited for some years, notwithstanding that grants from the Development Fund have enabled large quantities of conifers to be sown, in preparation for the demand, by the Agricultural Departments of Government. It would suggest itself that only the schemes that are prepared soon are likely to be carried out for some years.

A point to be kept in view in planting is wintering, whether for sheep or deer. The fear is sometimes expressed that timber growing will deprive Highland farms and forests of the lower wintering land. That, of course, would be so if all the low ground was planted up at once, but that would be a practical impossibility in most cases even if desired, for planting involves the question of raising the plants required besides the supply of labour. It must necessarily be a gradual process, and in 20 or 25 years the first planted woods grown on the better land, if well managed, will afford considerable wintering either for sheep or deer. The myth that extensive planting must spoil wintering for deer was effectively disposed of by Lord Lovat, who himself owns extensive forests and takes deep interest in this subject, in a publication a few years ago on Scottish afforestation. On the contrary, as he showed, it will help the deer and it will presumably relieve owners of the cost of artificial winter feeding.

The prospects for owners of deer forest land are not in any view too bright, and it is hoped that at least they will be treated with sympathetic consideration by the Scottish Board of Agriculture (under the new Secretary for Scotland, Mr. Tennant) and other authorities. The war has knit together all classes in a way unknown before, and feeling over land questions in Scotland is less acute at present than it has been for many years.

PROFESSOR PATTEN ON POVERTY

Professor Simon N. Patten, head of the Department of Economics of the University of Pennsylvania, is beginning to see some of the economic truths that Henry George pointed out thirty-seven years ago.

In an article in the CHICAGO NEWS of June 13, Professor Patten discusses the problem of poverty. He holds that hitherto a poor man in the country districts could get along better than a city dweller, because—

"They had free water, free wood for fuel, free fishing to supplement food supplies, less difficult and costly to obtain in their environment than can be had now. In a primitive community waste lands afford resources largely utilised by the poor, and even the item of rent was reduced almost to nothing."

On this account Professor Patten makes a distinction between the country poor and the city poor. He then proceeds to show how the advantage possessed by the country poor has been worked out. He says:—

"Now, with the exception of some very few localities, all that is done away with. The poor man in the country can no longer fish and hunt freely, nor can he gather his firewood gratis. There remains no room on the countryside for the very poor. Two sets of causes are driving them out of the country and into the towns."

"One of those general factors attends the high price of land. Land owners are assured of good prices for everything they raise; they have nothing to give away. No crumbs fall from their tables, where formerly something akin to profusion refused to permit poor neighbours to suffer real want."

From this it would appear that the remedy is to give access to land to those denied it. This access should be much more than the slight amount which Professor Patten describes as no longer existing, and it should not be confined to country districts.

In the vacant and partly used lots in the cities, there are opportunities withheld from labour which should be opened. There is no occasion for the distinction insisted on by Professor Patten between city poverty and country poverty. In a country large enough and rich enough to support the entire population of the world, there is no excuse for poverty-breeding conditions anywhere.

It is not necessary that primitive conditions be re-established to restore access to land. All that is needed is to make it unprofitable to hold natural resources out of use. For this the taxing power is sufficient. It is a pity that Professor Patten, having seen as much as he mentions, does not see further and advocate the forcing open of withheld opportunities through taxation of land values. That is certainly the conclusion to which his diagnosis of poverty logically leads.—(American Economic League, Bulletin 937.)

Speaking at the Congress of the Sanitary Association of Scotland in Edinburgh on 7th September, Professor Sir Halliday Groom, of Edinburgh, stated that "of 1,100,000 children born in 1905, 140,000 died during the first year and 140,000 more before the age of five." These casualties of peace are as horrible, and as shameful, as the casualties of war. As much life is destroyed by unjust social conditions in one year as by gunpowder and poison gas during a prolonged war.