

CROFTER COLONISATION.

THIRD REPORT

OF

HER MAJESTY'S COMMISSIONERS  
APPOINTED TO CARRY OUT A SCHEME

OF

COLONISATION IN THE DOMINION OF CANADA

OF

CROFTERS AND COTTARS FROM THE WESTERN  
HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS OF SCOTLAND,

WITH

APPENDICES.

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Presented to both Houses of Parliament by Command of Her Majesty.

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# THIRD REPORT

OF THE

## COLONISATION BOARD.

TO THE QUEEN'S MOST EXCELLENT MAJESTY.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR MAJESTY,

WE, the undersigned Commissioners, appointed under Your Majesty's Royal Sign Manual, for the purpose of carrying out a scheme of Colonisation in the Dominion of Canada, of Crofters and Cottars from the Western Highlands and Islands of Scotland, and from the congested districts of Ireland, desire humbly to submit to Your Majesty the following Report:—

Reports have recently been received from the agent of the Board in Canada, relating to the settlements at Killarney, in Manitoba, and at Saltecoats, in the North-West Territories. The former was established in the summer of 1888, and the latter in the spring of 1889.

Statements are appended giving extracts from the reports of the agent (Appendix A), and summaries of the returns (Appendix B), showing the position of the various families at the end of October last, with particulars of the acreage under wheat, oats, and potatoes, in the years 1890 and 1891, the number of tons of hay cut in the latter year, the extent of the land prepared for crop in the coming season, the buildings erected, the live stock on the farms, and other interesting information.

### *Killarney Settlement.*

The following table relates to the Killarney settlement for 1891:—

	Acres.	Estimated Average Yield (Bushels).	Estimated Total Crop (Bushels).
Wheat - - - -	2,110	20	42,200
Oats - - - -	182	45	8,190
Potatoes - - -	11½	—	2,377

Most of the grain had not been threshed when the report of the agent was prepared, but the estimates are calculated at a lower rate than the actual yields were expected to return. Some of the grain already threshed yielded 28 bushels per acre for wheat, and 57 bushels per acre for oats, as compared with the estimates of 20 bushels and 45 bushels respectively. In a few cases the frost is reported to have done slight damage, but the above figures will not be materially affected thereby.

The value of the wheat for 1891 is estimated by the agent at over \$27,000 (5,550*l.*), of the oats at about \$1,700 (355*l.*), and of the potatoes at about \$356 (73*l.*). The average value of the crops for the year is, therefore, equal to nearly 200*l.* per family, irrespective of other sources of income.

The area prepared for cultivation in 1892 is 3,565½ acres, compared with 2,303½ in 1891, an increase of 1,262 acres, which is most gratifying. 896 tons of hay were obtained by the settlement, an increase of 378 tons over the previous year. It is satisfactory to observe that the younger members of the various families have amongst them no less than 1,374 acres of ploughed land ready for crop included in the total acreage of 3,565½ acres already alluded to.

As the settlement consists of 30 families, the average extent of land prepared for cultivation in 1892, including the heads of families, and the younger members thereof, is 119 acres per family, a result which could certainly never have been attained in the Hebrides.

In many other ways the settlement has considerably improved since our last report, and the holdings have consequently much increased in value. There are now 60 houses in the settlement (besides many additions to the buildings originally erected on the arrival of the crofters), of which 30 belong to the heads of families, and 30 to the younger members of the families who are now farming for themselves; and there has also been a substantial addition to the number of stables, granaries, and other buildings.

Reference must also be made to the considerable increase in the live stock in the possession of the various families, especially those under the headings in the statement of horses, oxen, and cows. The additional 38 oxen chiefly belong to the younger members of the families, and have been acquired out of their earnings. It will be noticed that the young stock has also shown a satisfactory increase, and now numbers 63 heifers, 53 steers, and 7 bulls.

In connexion with the very satisfactory condition of the Killarney settlement, it must not be forgotten that, for the first two years, its progress was comparatively slow, and that the crofters had to be assisted during the winter of 1888-89, and also with seed grain in the following spring.

It is perhaps a matter for regret that the settlers have acquired so much machinery on credit. They were warned against doing so, but the allurements of implement agents seem to have been difficult to withstand, and the scarcity of labour often makes it difficult to harvest the crops with rapidity, especially if reliance has to be placed on machinery not entirely under the control of the farmer.

The value of the land in the settlement, the buildings, stock, &c., is estimated at a low valuation, at about 16,000*l.*, against an indebtedness of about 5,000*l.*

#### *Salteoats Settlement.*

The following table refers to the Salteoats settlement for 1891 :—

	—	Aeres.	Estimated Average Yield (Bushels).	Estimated Total Crop (Bushels).
Wheat	- - -	271½	—	—
Oats	- - -	223½	—	—
Potatoes	- - -	19½	—	3,592

The report so far as it concerns Salteoats is, as was to be expected, not quite so satisfactory as that relating to Killarney. There were 166½ acres more under wheat in 1891 than in 1890, 103 acres more of oats, and 3½ acres more of potatoes. Manitoba and the North-West Territories, with a few exceptions, enjoyed a bountiful harvest last year, but unfortunately the Salteoats district was one of the exceptions, the entire crop of wheat being seriously damaged by frost in the last week in August. The crofters are, however, self-supporting, and have not required any assistance from the Board.

The oat crop in 1891, although slightly damaged by frost, is said to be a fair sample, and the root crops are stated to be good.

The acreage in cultivation is not so large as could be wished, and it will probably not increase with the rapidity shown at Killarney, until a good crop has been obtained. In 1889, owing to inexperience of the country and to the dry season, the crofters did not get much crop. In 1890 they had not so much ground under cultivation as could have been expected, but the crops were excellent in quantity and quality. The grain, however, was somewhat damaged at harvest time by heavy rains, and owing to its not having been properly stacked. This naturally caused some disappointment. The crofters, however, had enough grain to supply their wants during the winter, for seed grain in 1891, and to pay the store debts they had incurred.

The acreage prepared for 1892 is 692½, an increase of 178 acres over the preceding year.

The younger members of the families have 90 acres ready for cultivation in 1892, which indicates that the settlement is following the same course of development as that at Killarney. Several of them have also erected houses for themselves; and, as at Killarney, the erection of additional buildings by the heads of the families, has added to the value of the holdings.

The hay crop was 711 tons, an increase of 143 tons compared with 1890.

It is satisfactory to notice that the live stock in the possession of the crofters has considerably increased in numbers. There has also been a desire on the part of the crofters to acquire additional cows, whenever they could arrange to do so, and it is gratifying to notice that they have purchased no fewer than 17 out of funds provided by themselves.

It will be observed that the young stock is as numerous at Saltecoats as at Killarney, although the settlement is a year younger.

The indebtedness of the crofters to implement makers is very small compared with that at Killarney.

The value of the land in the settlement (exclusive of the abandoned homesteads), the buildings, stock, &c., is already estimated at a low valuation, at about 1,500*l.* in excess of the money advanced.

Although the progress of the two settlements has not been equal, it must be remembered that Killarney occupies a very favourable position. There the new settlers are surrounded by experienced farmers, whose example has proved to be of great value, besides affording employment for the crofters in their spare time. The Saltecoats settlers have had few or none of these advantages. The condition of the settlement, however, is (upon the whole) satisfactory. It is sure to improve year by year, and if the coming season is favourable, it will have a stimulating effect, especially as the crofters are beginning to understand, better than they did, the soil and climate, and the best methods of farming.

The general remarks of the agent of the Board upon the settlement are interesting. He says in effect that although the crofters are disappointed with the results of the past year, they have learned to know and like the country, and are looking cheerfully forward to the coming season, and that they acknowledge they have never been so well off.

The land of the settlers who abandoned their holdings in 1889, is in the possession of the Board, and a portion of the stock and chattels have been granted to the younger members of the families as they entered for land. The houses, stock, and chattels not required will be sold, and the proceeds credited to the accounts of the crofters, the balances remaining a charge against the land.

The honorary sub-committee of the board in Winnipeg has been of much assistance to us, and we desire to place on record our appreciation of the valuable services it has rendered.

LOTHIAN.  
HORACE PLUNKETT.  
CHARLES TUPPER.  
JAMES KING.  
R. W. COCHRAN PATRICK.  
JOHN ROSS OF BLADENSBURG.  
JOHN MUIR.  
THOMAS SKINNER.

J. G. COLMER, Secretary.  
29th April 1892.

## APPENDIX A.

### EXTRACTS FROM THE REPORT OF THE AGENT OF THE BOARD.

#### KILLARNEY SETTLEMENT.

For 1890 I have shown the yield of grain. I regret I am unable to give the same information for 1891. The crops have not yet been threshed. I have shown machinery purchased by crofters, to give the Board an idea of the weighty obligations (\$8,779.56) incurred by them. I have taken every opportunity to point out to crofters how unnecessary it was to go so largely into machinery. I have tried to convince them that half the quantity would, if used in partnership, perform the work required. A number of them still contend that "each man wants his own" and "they were not hard to get." From my Saltcoats report the Board will notice that we have only one binder (\$225.00) in that Colony and it is nearly paid for. It will be my intention, should the Board send out any more crofters, to inform the different implement firms the conditions of the lien given by a crofter to the Board, so that they could instruct their sub-agents.

I have computed the yield of wheat and oats for 1891 at the low estimate of 20 bushels for the former and 45 for the latter. The grain already threshed by the Harris crofters yielded wheat 28, and oats 57 bushels per acre. As some of the Lews crofters' crops are slightly damaged by frost I think it advisable to estimate the average well under what I feel sure the yield will be.

I do not consider it would be advisable for the heads of families to crop much more land than at present, except in a few instances. Pasturage is required for the stock, and if the settler encroaches upon what is necessary for that purpose, he will make a serious mistake. It is quite evident that it is not their present intention to go largely into stock. I have endeavoured to impress upon each crofter that he should keep as much stock as he can procure hay for, pointing out to them that in the event of a poor crop, the sale of a few head of stock would recompense them for any loss. They seem to think cattle are too much bother and that "wheat pays best."

The Lews crofters' wheat crop (1,186 acres) is in most instances very fair grain. A few of them have suffered slightly from frost. Their crop estimated at 20 bushels to the acre means 23,720 bushels. The grain should sell at an average of 60 cents per bushel, amounting to \$14,232.00. The oat crop (441 acres) is only fair, estimated at 45 bushels would mean 6,345 bushels and if sold at 20 cents will realise \$1,269.00. Potato crop (7 acres) is a fair one, and amounted to 1,436 bushels. Last autumn it was difficult to find a market at 15 cents a bushel, if sold at that price will realise \$215.40.

The Harris crofters' wheat crop (921 acres) is very good. Gr. large and good colour. Estimated at 20 bushels to the acre, means 18,480 bushels. This grain before navigation closed could find a market at 80 cents, present price 70 cents per bushel, and if sold at 70 cents will realise \$12,936.00. The acreage of oats (41 acres) is very small. Grain very good. Estimated at 45 bushels to the acre means 1,845 bushels. The price realised last year for oats was only 25 cents a bushel, this may account for the small acreage of that grain under crop. If sold for that price this year will realise \$461.25. The potato crop is fair (44 acres) and amounted to 941 bushels. If sold at 15 cents will realise \$141.15.

The Board will see that the crofters had 2,110 acres of wheat in crop this year, against 1,319½ for 1890, an increase of 790½ acres; oats 182 acres against 64 acres, increase of 118 acres; potatoes 11½ acres against 10 acres, increase of 1½ acres. The number of acres under cultivation this year is 2,303½ against 1,423 acres for 1890, an increase of 880½ acres. Breaking for the same years 1,262 acres as against 859 acres, an increase of 403 acres. It is gratifying for me to be able to inform the Board that the Killarney and Glenboro's crofters will have under cultivation next year 3,565½ acres against 2,303½ acres last year, an increase of 1,262 acres, or an average of over 51 acres to each crofter. The number

of horses purchased by crofters for years 1890 and 1891 is for the former 1, and for the latter 28, an increase of 27. I have repeatedly pointed out to crofters it would be better for them to purchase another yoke of oxen instead of buying any expensive teams of horses, which meant raising oats for feed, shoeing, and many other incidental expenses at present unforeseen, the cost of a yoke of oxen being three-fourths less than a team of horses. Their argument is that the yokes supplied them in the first place are now useless; they have broken the required land, and a team of horses is now best, being faster, and can stand the work better than the yokes.

I believe that in the future the Board may confidently expect a greater return for the acreage under cultivation, as the crofters have not only learnt to farm and manage stock, but the land is in better condition.

#### SALTCOATS SETTLEMENT.

In my statement last year I estimated the probable yield of grain at much too high an average, it being rather over 15 bushels to the acre. The grain was damaged while being harvested by heavy rains. The loss would not have been so great had the crofters conformed to the usual method of stacking in this country. As it was, they placed their grain in too many stacks, and the rain penetrated. Notwithstanding all this, the crofters had sufficient yield to keep themselves and pay off store debts.

The Board will see I have not shown the yield of grain for the year 1891. I am unable to do so for the following two reasons. Firstly, no threshing is yet done, because the threshing machine hired for that purpose is destroyed by fire. Secondly, the wheat crop is badly frozen, and it is impossible to form any correct idea of the average.

The oat crop, although damaged by frost, is a fair sample, and will with few exceptions pay to thresh. The root crop is good.

I beg to call the Board's attention to the comparatively small amount of farm machinery purchased, \$900.77 against \$8,779.56 of the Killarney crofters.

The Board will see we had 271½ acres of wheat this year against 165½ last year, an increase of 106½ acres; oats, 223½ acres against 120½, an increase of 103½ acres; potatoes, 19½ against 15½, an increase of 3½ acres. The number of acres under cultivation, 514½ against 231½, an increase of 282½. Breaking, 178½ as against 182, a decrease of 3½ acres. The land ready for crop next year is 692½ acres against 514½, an increase of 178 acres. The increase of live stock is very good.

The small acreage ready for cultivation next year, 692 acres, can only be accounted for by the crofters refusing to break more land "until they get a crop"; they say they can earn more money working out, and that their families in their absence can look after stock, &c., they returning in time for harvest. It is regrettable we have no large farmers about here to set them an example, as is the case with the Killarney crofters.

The land is undeniably now in a much better condition for producing a wheat crop than formerly. I think the crofters may expect a crop of that grain next year, but that they will never reach the same ratio of yield as the Killarney crofters, it being generally understood that this part of the country is better adapted for stock raising than grain growing. Consequently the crofters here will go in more for stock than grain.

All the people are, of course, disappointed with the present year, but have learnt to know and like the country so well that they are already cheerfully looking forward to next season. Meantime, while they do not overlook the fact that although this year has not been so profitable as they expected, they acknowledge that they were never so well off. All are pleased with the education given their children, for which they do not have to pay in any way, and say that they were never so healthy as since they came to this country.













