

PROFESSOR BLACKIE, MR A. RUSSELL WALLACE, THE SELLAR FAMILY, AND THE SUTHERLAND CLEARANCES.

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MOST people are aware that one of the leading agents in the great Sutherland clearances of sixty years ago was Mr Sellar—the father or grandfather of the new member for the Haddington Burghs; of Professor Sellar, of Edinburgh; and of Mr P. P. Sellar, the well-known sheep farmer. This Mr Sellar was tried on a criminal charge or charges in connection with these clearances before the Circuit Court of Justiciary at Inverness in 1816, and was “honourably acquitted.” One Donald Macleod thereafter wrote a book entitled “Gloomy Memories of Sutherland,” which has become a sort of authority on the clearance question, and in it his remarks about Mr Sellar are anything but flattering. Professor Blackie, basing some of his “facts” on this authority, made statements in “Altavona” which are said to have given great offence to the present race of Sellars. It is indeed stated that legal proceedings were threatened. In any case, a second edition of “Altavona” has appeared with the allusions to Mr Sellar materially softened (compare pages 278 to 281 in both editions). In the second edition we are told that the quotations from Macleod are not made with the view of inculcating any one engaged in the clearances. With regard to the trial, Professor Blackie has the following in the second edition on page 281, instead of a somewhat stronger statement on the same page in the first edition:—“The person charged with the crime was acquitted, and of course I make no charge against him; but the fact of the Clearances remains, and in my opinion they were a social crime and a blunder, for which the English land laws are principally to blame.” Another gentleman who appears to have given even greater offence to the descendants of Mr Sellar is Mr Alfred R. Wallace, who recently published a book on the “Nationalisation of Land.” Mr Wallace, who appears to have based his remarks about Sellar on Mr Alexander Mackenzie’s pamphlet on the “Highland Clearances,” is obliged to re-write some pages of his book, the sale of which is in the meantime stopped! Mr Mackenzie’s pamphlet (which has not been interdicted), is now out of print, but we are informed that he is about to re-publish it, with further quotations from Macleod on the same subject.—*Aberdeen Free Press.*

[What Mr Alexander Mackenzie is preparing for publication is a new edition of Donald Macleod’s “Gloomy Memories,” so far as that work refers to the “Sutherland Clearances,” with the additional information given in his own pamphlet, considerably extended, regarding the Glengarry, Strathglass, Kintail, Glenelg, Skye, Uist, Barra, Coigeach, Lochcarron, Breadalbane, Argyle, and other evictions in the Highlands since the battle of Culloden to the present year. Mr A. R. Wallace, though professedly basing his remarks about the Sutherland evictions on Mr Mackenzie’s pamphlet, has adopted phraseology for which the author of the pamphlet is not responsible. The sensitiveness shown by the Sellars in connection with the History of the Sutherland evictions is a happy sign of the times. They inherit an unfortunate name, and on this score they deserve the most generous consideration.—ED. C. M.]

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