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BUSINESS
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FAMOUS SCOTS
FLAG IN THE WIND
FORUMS
FOOD & DRINK
GAMES

GAZETTEER
GENEALOGY
HISTORIC PLACES
HISTORY
HUMOR
JOHN'S PAGE
KIDS
LIFESTYLE
MUSIC

NEWSLETTER
PICTURES
POETRY
POSTCARDS
RELIGION
ROBERT BURNS
SCOTS IRISH
SCOTS REGIMENTS
SERVICES

SHOPPING
SONGS
SPORT
SCOTS DIASPORA
TARTANS
TRAVEL
TRIVIA
VIDEOS
WHAT'S NEW

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Electric Scotland's Weekly Newsletter for January 17th, 2014

To see what we've added to the Electric Scotland site view our What's New page at:

<http://www.electricscotland.com/whatsnew.htm>

To see what we've added to the Electric Canadian site view our What's New page at:

<http://www.electriccanadian.com/whatsnew.htm>

For the latest news from Scotland see our ScotNews feed at:

<http://www.electricscotland.com/>

Electric Scotland News

This is the time of year that a lot of us consider going to a local Burns Supper. The Scotsman online has produced two excellent posts. They can be found...

Burns Night: A guide to holding a Burns Supper

<http://www.scotsman.com/lifestyle/heritage/burns-night-a-guide-to-holding-a-burns-supper-1-3266436>

Burns Night: Three-course Burns Supper recipes

<http://www.scotsman.com/lifestyle/heritage/burns-night-three-course-burns-supper-recipes-1-3268417>

The famous Auld Lang Syne is always sung at Burns Suppers and we do have a very good page giving you the background to the song which you can read at:

<http://www.electricscotland.com/history/articles/langsyne.htm>

And of course we have tons of material on Burns in our section for him at:

<http://www.electricscotland.com/burns/index.html>

Electric Canadian

Scotch Block, Records and Memories of Boston Church of the Scotch Block, County of Halton, Ontario. 1820 - 1920 By John McColl D.D.

I have now completed this book which you can read at:

<http://www.electriccanadian.com/history/ontario/scotchblock/index.htm>

Across the Canadian Prairies

A Two Months Holiday in the Dominion by J. G. Colmer (1894)

Here is the Introduction to read here...

The letters which are collected in this little volume were written during a two months' visit to Canada in the autumn of 1894. They are reprinted by permission of the proprietors of The Colonies and India, in which journal they first appeared. It has been thought that they might be interesting, not only to persons who are acquainted with the districts in which I travelled, but to those who take an interest in the progress of the country.

Of course, much of what was written of 1894 applies equally to 1895; but the condition of things now is even brighter and more prosperous than it was then, in view of the revival of trade, and of the magnificent harvest with which Canada has been favoured this year. The letters, however, even in their collected form, merely contain the impressions of a traveller, and are not in any way intended to be a "book" in the usual sense of the term. There are, no doubt, many matters which I have omitted, deserving of attention, while

others that are referred to deserve more extended treatment than they have received.

I should like to have devoted much more space to the development of steam communication, and to the work of the various steamship companies whose vessels, plying between British ports and Canada, have done so much to promote the development of the country and its commerce. The same remark applies to the railways and canals of Canada, of which only passing mention has been made. The growth of the railways in the Dominion in the last twenty years has, for instance, been marvellous, and their effect upon inter-provincial development can hardly be realised, much less over-estimated. There is also the excellent banking system, which has done so much to preserve the country from the dangers of the financial and commercial depression that has been passing over the world since 1890. Apart from their ordinary commercial business, the growth of the deposits in the banks, and particularly the expansion of the deposits in the Post Office and Government Savings Banks, form a valuable object-lesson in themselves of the wonderful improvement in the social condition of Canada since Confederation.

Then, again, there is the old Hudson Bay Company, which has played so important a part in the history of Canada for over 200 years. It seems only yesterday that it handed over to Canada the administration of a territory—now Manitoba and the North-West Territories — almost as large as Europe. So well did its officers administer it that the task of dealing with the Indians subsequently, and of preparing the way for settlement, was a comparatively easy one, notwithstanding the difficulties that occurred in 1870 and 1885, owing to the eccentricities and vanity of some of the half-breeds. The company still occupies a prominent position in the country as a trading concern. Its fur trade in the Far North remains unimpaired; and it has, besides, a large stake in the great NorthWest, in the shape of the many millions of acres of land of which it is the owner.

I might also, perhaps, have laid greater stress upon the scenic attractions of Canada, and upon its charms for the sportsman. No good purpose, however, will be served by attempting to make up in an introduction for the deficiencies of the letters, especially in regard to matters that are somewhat outside their scope. I can only hope that they may be of some interest to those persons into whose hands they may fall.

London: November 1895.

You can read this book as we get it up at:

<http://www.electriccanadian.com/lifestyle/travel/prairies/index.htm>

The Flag in the Wind

This weeks issue was compiled by Grant Thoms in which he has an article "Learning from Europe".

You can read this issue at <http://www.scotsindependent.org>

Electric Scotland

Songs of John Henderson

John sent in another two songs, Skurk'd An' Leen and Dream Of Ochils which can be read at:

<http://www.electricscotland.com/poetry/doggerels.htm>

Robert Burns Lives!
Primrose by Clark McGinn.

Dear friend Clark McGinn has come forward with one of his better articles in my opinion. Continually, Clark has been and I predict will continue to be a tremendous supporter of these pages. He has done so while changing jobs and moving from London to Dublin. He has completed his work for his PhD and the only thing left is to defend his thesis. Knowing Clark, it will be some of The University of Glasgow professors on trial and not him. He is still travelling speaking for Burns and the last I heard these trips would equate to 6.7 times around the globe and the 2014 Burns season is just beginning. I cannot imagine the energy, much less the time, he will burn up speaking for our Bard. I have a mere three speaking engagements over the next few weeks to deliver Immortal Memories. Mine will all be in Georgia – Atlanta, Savannah, and Statesboro. Clark's travel will take him throughout Europe and the Northeast of America. Did I tell you I have only head him speak once and I had to travel 4,000 miles to do so in Glasgow. Not a finer speaker have I heard before or since. Actually, Google says Glasgow is 4004 miles if you add the miles from the Premium Outlet Mall (near our home) on 400 to the airport entrance!

What you will be reading today has to do with some men who talked among themselves some few years after Burns died and decided to celebrate his work in the "old clay biggin" where Burns was born. The Reverend Hamilton Paul was in charge and you will find an article on him by Clark McGinn if you go to Chapter 141 of our index. The article is entitled A Forgotten Hero. Clark has volunteered to write an article on each of the nine men who were guests at the first Burns Supper in 1801.

There is an old cowboy saying, thanks to Zane Grey, I think of as I conclude this introduction. In the early days of the West being settled more than one river had to be crossed and trouble awaited many of them. Dangers lurked everywhere from Indians to snakes to bears. Rivers of trouble were almost everywhere. The greatest compliment a cowboy could receive from another was "He'll do to ride the river with" which if interpreted today would mean "I got your back". That describes Clark McGinn, a literary cowboy! (FRS: 1.15.14)

You can read this article at http://www.electricscotland.com/familytree/frank/burns_lives190.htm

Scottish independence: EU financial benefit outlined
An article from the Scotsman and comments by Dr James Wilkie
by ANDREW WHITAKER

SCOTLAND would benefit from hundreds of millions of pounds of extra funds with thousands more jobs created if it was an independent member of the European Union, Nicola Sturgeon claimed in a keynote speech last night.

The deputy SNP leader used a speech in Edinburgh to claim that if Scotland was represented as an independent nation in the EU it would have received £850 million in Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) funding, which she said would have supported an extra 2,500 jobs.

Ms Sturgeon said the CAP funding would increase economic output by £1 billion from 2014 to 2020.

She went on to claim that Scotland had been short-changed by decisions at Westminster, which she said had left Scots with the lowest farm payments in the EU.

"As an independent country we would have benefited from an additional £850m in farm payments from Europe, estimated to support an additional 2,500 jobs in our local communities over the period 2014 to 2020," she said.

Speaking at the first in a series of lectures organised by the Royal Society of Edinburgh and the David Hume Institute in the run-up to the referendum, Ms Sturgeon insisted that an independent Scotland would not be blocked from joining the EU in the aftermath of a Yes vote.

The SNP government claims the country would remain inside the EU after a Yes vote and renegotiate its membership from within.

Ms Sturgeon also warned that Scots wanting to remain in the EU could be outvoted by the rest of the UK due to David

Cameron's plans to stage a referendum on Europe if the Tories win the next general election.

She said: "The EU is not in the business of throwing out its citizens, of ignoring democratic processes, of reducing co-operation and cutting the size of the EU.

"The only risk to Scotland's continuing membership of the EU is the in/out referendum that the Prime Minister has pledged to hold by 2017.

"Before that we know he wants to renegotiate Britain's relationship with the European Union. But we don't know precisely what he wants to renegotiate.

"We don't know if he will recommend withdrawal if those renegotiation talks fail. And we obviously don't know what the result of any referendum on Europe might be.

"It is perfectly possible that a majority of people in Scotland would vote to stay in the EU but that a majority elsewhere in the UK would vote to come out."

However, a spokesman from the Better Together campaign accused Ms Sturgeon of promoting "scare stories" about the UK's future EU membership.

The UK government's Scotland Office last night issued a statement that suggested an independent Scotland would not immediately receive the same financial benefits as existing EU member states.

A Scotland Office spokesman said: "It cannot be taken for granted that an independent Scottish state would be able to negotiate with all 28 other member states to secure the same terms that we hold as part of the UK."

Ms Sturgeon went on to accept that this year's referendum could be the only one ever held. She said: "What worries me is that if we

don't take this opportunity we might never get it again."

Comments by Dr. James Wilkie

I am afraid that Nicola has a mental hangup on the EU, and no amount of reasoned argument is going to shift her from her fixed position.

The first question that has to be answered is: should Scotland be in the EU in the first place, and if so why. How would membership benefit Scotland? The SNP has never yet come up with an answer to this.

You don't join an international organisation just because it is there; there has to be a reason for the step, and the balance between advantages and disadvantages has to come out by a large margin on the advantage side to justify the expense and complications involved.

This pie-in-the-sky reference to one hoped-for advantage that is in fact completely illusory (as several commentators have pointed out, the EU budget is fixed at its present level until 2020) is a fair indication that the SNP cannot come up with a single concrete reason why Scotland should seek EU membership at all.

Even if the CAP subsidies to Scottish farmers Ms. Sturgeon claims were to be realised, they would still be no more than a fraction of our own money being returned to us. As presently a net contributor to the EU it would be much more economic to pay them ourselves rather than sending the money on a tour to Brussels and with luck getting a fraction of it back.

The subregional EU is not European in scope. It represents only half of Europe, despite its unjustified hijacking of the title. The other four major European institutions, with up to 57 member states each, are all-European in scope, with genuinely all-European parliaments.

Most people are unaware of how far the EU has been rendered redundant by globalisation and global governance. For example, recent research has revealed that some 80% of the EU's economic activity is now downstream of the global organisations where the policy decisions are now taken - the EU can only pass them on disguised as its own policy. It is the EU itself that is governed by "fax diplomacy" on policies that it has no power to alter.

All the EU and EFTA states are members of these global institutions like the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) or the all-important World Trade Organisation (WTO), etc. The difference is that the likes of Norway, Iceland or even tiny Liechtenstein have a full say in the formulation of economic policy, whereas the EU member states are forbidden to put forward their own cases under the EU "common policies" regulation and are represented by the EU Commission.

Fact is that, at the upstream decision making level, Norway and Iceland have more economic clout than any EU member state, and just as much as the EU itself. And still there are people who distort facts to disparage EFTA/EEA membership for Scotland. As I have stated elsewhere, they need their heads felt.

The Songstresses of Scotland
By Sarah Tytler and J. L. Watson (1871)

Here is the Preface...

THE object of the authors of this book has been to bring together into one group some gifted women whose songs are known wherever the Scotch foot treads or the Scotch language lingers. It was the part of famous Frenchwomen to reign in French salons, it has remained for this unique group of Scotchwomen to reign alike "in the kitchen and the ha'," in the cottage as well as the castle.

The records of these song-writers already published do not bring them together and show them as representing a delightful branch of art. They are deficient likewise in other important particulars. The present writers therefore thought that an attempt to supply such deficiencies before it was too late would be acceptable to the general public. They have endeavoured to represent these singers amid their local surroundings, and the contemporaries with whom they were on terms of intimacy, so that side-lights might thus be cast both on the singers and their songs.

In one instance the authors have been fortunate in finding quite fresh material. Through the kind liberality of Miss Douglas, Cumin Place, Grange, Edinburgh, and of other friends, they have had access to a large portion of Alison Cockburn's fine old letters, on which Sir Walter Scott set great store. These letters afford a wonderfully perfect picture of the woman, and at the same time give quaint glimpses into the social life of the Edinburgh of the past.

There are 10 songstresses featured in this book and we're going to bring you one a week with the first one being Lady Grisell Baillie.

You can read these at <http://www.electricscotland.com/music/songstresses/index.htm>

Clan Leslie Society of New Zealand & Australia

Got in a Special edition on their newsletter on Leslie of Laggan which you can read at:

<http://www.electricscotland.com/familytree/newsletters/leslie/index.htm>

Our Fellow Warrior

A new article from Donna Flood which she wrote out and sent it in by post. You can read this at:

<http://www.electricscotland.com/history/america/donna/lore/warrior1.htm>

A Memoir of Lady Colquhoun

Found this pdf file and have made it available on the Clan Colquhoun page at:

<http://www.electricscotland.com/webclans/atoc/colquho.html>

History of St. Margarets Convent, Edinburgh

The first religious house founded in Scotland since the so-called Reformation. And the autobiography of the first religious, Sister Agnes Xavier Trail (1886)

This is a pdf book but here is the Preface for you to read here...

To one who has been witness of the vast advance which the Catholic Religion has made in Calvinistic Scotland within the last fifty years, it must prove an interesting study to trace the causes of so remarkable and extensive a development. In that space of time, churches and convents, schools and orphanages, priests and religious, monks and nuns, have multiplied amazingly, and a thousand other active forces of Catholic life have been brought into play; while the freedom now enjoyed by the lately persecuted members of the Church, and the kindly intercourse subsisting between them and their Protestant neighbours, contrast most strikingly with the penal restrictions of old and the once proverbial bigotry of the nation.

Among the factors contributing to such a result, the Convent of St. Margaret's is deservedly numbered. Founded in Edinburgh fifty years ago, it claims the honour of being the first religious house established in Scotland after three hundred years of banishment from a country where the magnificent remains of abbeys, priories, and convents show how flourishing they once had been; and, though far inferior to them in richness, in splendour, and extent, it has rivalled them in good works. The history, therefore, of such an Institution, appears most opportunely at the time when St. Margaret's Convent is keeping her Golden Jubilee, and furnishes a fruitful theme of meditation to the Christian philosopher. For here, as in other cases, he will see how Divine Providence, when it appoints any great work to be done, brings upon the stage, at the right time, the right person in the right place. He will watch with interest the first inspirations, and the gradual fashioning of the young enthusiastic Levite into the compliant instrument of the work; and will mark how, as he developed in power, he was ever looking forward so far in advance of his age, and yet knew so well what suited its wants at the moment. His genius to conceive, his skill to plan, his labours to realise, his unwearied zeal in consolidating the work of his enthusiasm, are worthily recorded in the following pages, as well as the efforts of the Sisters to correspond with the exertions of the Founder to bring the Convent up to such a state of efficiency as has made it an active instrument in advancing the good cause.

It is a great chapter in the history of the Catholic Church in Scotland, and I heartily recommend its perusal to all who love to study the ways of God in bringing about His designs.

WILLIAM,

Archbishop of St. Andrews and Edinburgh.

22nd July 1886.

You can download this book at: <http://www.electricscotland.com/bible/stmargarets.htm>

Memoir of the Chisholm

Found this book and have added it to our Clan Chisholm page at:

<http://www.electricscotland.com/webclans/atoc/chishol.html>

I also found another couple of pdf books, "Memoir of Rev. James Chisholm" and "The Chisholm Trail" which I also added to the page.

Unpublished Old Gaelic Songs With Illustrative Traditions by Colin Chisholm

All the songs are in Gaelic but many English introductions to them which make interesting reading. This is a pdf book and can be downloaded at: <http://www.electricscotland.com/gaelic/unpublishedoldga00chisuoft.pdf>

Songs and Hymns of the Gael

This is a pdf book but have ocr'd the extensive Preface for you to help you decide if you'd like to download the book.

THE very kind reception given to this collection by the Press has emboldened the Editor to allow it to be republished. There are other very excellent collections of Highland Music and Songs, but as this book contains several melodies not printed elsewhere (for example, Nos. 3, 8, 16, and 31 of Part I., and Nos. 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11, 12, 15, 16, 18, 19, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, and 32 of Part II. and as there is as yet no other collection of Highland Sacred Music, it is perhaps not desirable that the book should remain out of print. Cordial thanks are here tendered to the many friends who have kindly assisted in collecting or revising either tunes or chords.

HIGHLAND SONGS, HYMNS, AND MUSIC

THE Songs of the Scottish Highlands form a literary heritage that will well repay study. They are remarkably rich in the lighter graces of poetry—endless variety of metrical form, and opulence of rhyme, and melodies that are both striking and sweet. Their characteristic beauties and their limitations are perhaps both alike due to their being so intensely native. The feelings expressed are simple, and scenery and incidents are redolent of the Highlands. At a period when the popular songs of other countries were stilted and artificial, the songs of the North were natural and true. English versifiers might affect longings after the myrtle groves and artificial poses of classic times, but the Gaelic bards delineated with loving art the beauties of the mountain landscapes, and the deep, simple emotions of Highland hearts.

The Love of Nature in all her moods is indeed the deepest characteristic of Highland song, which in this anticipated the loftier flights of Burns and Wordsworth. A good example of Duncan Ban Macintyre's appreciation of Nature will be found in No. 17 of this collection, "Coire Cheathaich," and it pervades the muse of his contemporary, Alexander Macdonald, whose praise of the moorland heather is worth translating—

The bonny, clinging, clustering
Dear heather growing slenderly,
With snowy honey lustering
And tassels hanging tenderly;
In pink and brownish proud array,
With springy flexibility,
With scented wig all powdery,
To keep up its gentility.

In more dignified strain we have the ode to the sun by Ossian, or some unknown bard—

Thou movest in thy might alone,
For who hath power to travel near?
The ageless oak shall yet fall prone,
The hoary hills shall disappear.
The changing main shall ebb and flow,
The waning moon be lost in night,
Thou only shalt victorious go,
Forever joying in thy light.

The Love Songs, numerous, full of headlong passion, and set to very attractive melodies, form the largest class, and their fervour and naivete give them a certain piquancy which is not displeasing. But the graces and felicities of the Home are not forgotten; there are many poetic addresses to newly-made brides and frolicking boys and girls, and lullabies to the babies. One of the most popular songs in the Highlands is a lilt to a little Highland lassie—

O, my darling Alary, O, my dainty pearl!
O, my rarest Mary, O, my fairest girl!
Lovely little Mary, treasure of my soul,
Sweetest, neatest Mary, born in far Glen Smole.

The Patriotic Songs are a large class, for the Highlanders love their barren land— "her very dust to them is dear." Her historic scenes and the Highland dress, language, and music are never-failing themes, in discoursing on which the bards occasionally added such half-serious and wholly forgiveable touches of exaggeration as the following—

Now, let me tell you of the speech and music of the Gael,
For Gaelic is a charming tongue to tell a bardic tale,
Fain would I sing its praises—pure and rushing, ready, ripe,
For Gaelic's the best language, the best music is the pipe!

But of all the Northern songs the elegies and other Lays of Sorrow are the most striking and characteristic. The Highland Lament is a thing by itself, having no exact counterpart in any other language, its wild, rich music presenting a perfect picture of the weird and grand scenery in which it had its origin. The Gaelic race has been cradled into poetry by suffering, and its spirit has been bathed in the gloom of lonely glens and northern skies. Hence its songs have always given superb expression to what Ossian calls "the joy of grief." There is, however, this difference, that while in the older songs the sadness is unrelieved and oppressive, the more modern introduce a chord of sweetness to form a very luxury of sorrow. Thus a bard laments the death of a child—

She died—as dies in eastern skies
The rosy clouds the dawn adorning;
The envious sun makes haste to rise
And drown them in the blaze of morning.

She died—as dies upon the gale
A harp's pure tones in sweetness blending.
She died—as dies a lovely tale
But new begun, yet sudden ending.

In bright contrast to these lays of grief are the Humorous Songs—serio-comic ballads, parodies, and biting satires, the latter being far too numerous.

With the exception of the wickedness in these satiric outbursts and a passing wave of depravity that swept over Highland poesy in the end of last century, the songs are pure and noble. Their Ethics are remarkably high, and their continued popularity and influence among the Gaelic population must be regarded with satisfaction.

The Language in which these lyrics have been composed is one that is unusually well fitted to be the vehicle of sentiment, readily lending itself to those little garnishments in which Celtic poets delight. It is rich, mellifluous, and copious in poetic terms, especially adjectives, which the bards used with lavish but discriminate profusion. Of its expressiveness and natural poetry, these bards had the highest opinion—

This is the language Nature nursed
And reared her as a daughter;
The language spoken at the first
By air and earth and water,
In which we hear the roaring sea,
The wind, when it rejoices,
The rushes' chant, the river's glee,
The valley's evening voices.

From a literary point of view one great charm of Gaelic verse lies in the extraordinary diversity and complexity of its Metres. Abundant use is made of the ordinary measures familiar in English poetry—the iambus and the trochee—but recourse is also had to the difficult anapaest and the high-strung dactyl, and all four are woven into numberless combinations, such as would delight the soul of an English poet, but of which English itself is unfortunately incapable on account of its limited selection of dissyllabic and trisyllabic rhymes. A common device of the Gaelic bards was to make the latter half of each stanza the first of the next stanza, as in No. 12, Part I., of this collection. Of course, that arrangement required the same rhyme to be maintained throughout the whole song, but such is the wealth of Gaelic assonance that this was accomplished with ease. Indeed, it is no unusual thing for eleven out of twelve lines to rhyme, and sometimes one rhyme is carried through twenty verses. The most common form of verse in all Gaelic poetry—Scottish and Irish, ancient and modern—is one in which the close of one line rhymes with an accented syllable in the middle of the following line. This leonine rhyme may be exemplified by the opening verse of the ancient poem known as "The Aged Bard's Wish"—

Oh, lay me by the burnie's side,
Where gently the limpid streams,
Let branches bend above my head,
And round me shed, O Sun! thy beams.

But in many songs every line bristles with rhymed words, often words of more than one syllable, as in the song No. 16 or hymn No. 4. This free use of intricate rhymes, combined with the headlong sweep of rhythm found in the best songs, can only be imperfectly reproduced in English, but an imitation of one of Macdonald's stanzas may illustrate some points of the literary structure of Gaelic verse—

Clan Ranald, ever glorious, victorious nobility,
A people proud and fearless, of peerless ability,
Fresh honours ever gaining, disdaining servility,

Attacks can never move them but prove their stability.
High of spirit, they inherit merit, capability,
Skill, discreetness, strength and featness, fleetness and agility ;
Shields to batter, swords to shatter, scatter with facility
Whoever braves their ire and their fiery hostility.

Neither is the aid of apt alliteration neglected in the adornment of these songs, which indeed possess, in an unusual degree, all the attractions of form and colour found in the best lyrical poetry.

The Music of Gaelic Songs bears a family resemblance to that of the Scottish Lowlands, but with all its peculiarities accentuated. In point of fact, the music of South and North was originally the same, for the Scottish Lowlanders in discarding the ancient language of the Scots had the good sense to retain their melodies. Further, it is well known that from the days of Burns, and probably from a much earlier date, the national music of Scotland has been increasingly enriched by the adaptation of Gaelic tunes to Scotch or English words. These tunes follow closely the rhythm of the Gaelic words, and therein lie much of their undoubted power and originality. But this very connection has a peculiar effect on the English songs, to which many of the airs are wedded. All Gaelic words are accented on the first syllable, and in consequence lines end with an unaccented, or sometimes two unaccented syllables. Of course, the melodies follow this peculiarity—the tunes, or parts of a tune, seldom ending on the note after the bar. In the English and Scotch dialects, however, the range of dissyllabic and trisyllabic rhymes is extremely narrow, and Scottish poets have been compelled to eke it out by using diminutives and plurals, and adding numerous “O’s” at the ends of lines, in their efforts to bend the intractable Saxon tongue to the cadences of Gaelic music. Similarly the characteristic of Scottish airs, known as “the Scotch snap,” is to be attributed to the greater difference made in Gaelic between vowels that are long and accented and those that are short and unaccented. The absence of the seventh note, B (te), in the ancient Scottish scale no doubt added to the quaintness of the national airs, but a much more striking feature was, and is, its modal character. The old harpers are said to have been extremely fond of the major mode, an lit, but that mode does not obtain in Gaelic tunes, as now sung, the predominance which it has in other modern music. One of the stumbling-blocks which the ordinary musician finds in Scottish music is that, not content with the ordinary major or even the more uncommon minor, it must wander away into the rough and unfamiliar Dorian mode. But in Gaelic music this peculiarity is emphasised, the tunes in the mode of the second (ray) being, if anything, more numerous than those in any other mode, while it is not unusual to meet with melodies in the modes of the third, fourth, and fifth notes of the scale. Probably, however, the intrinsic beauties of Gaelic airs will be found sufficient recompense for these and other singularities which, in the eyes of many admirers, are but additional beauties.

The Hymns of the Scottish Highlands have hitherto attracted little notice; nevertheless they are fairly numerous and many of them possess great merit. They are never used in public worship now, but they were certainly used in early times, and a few hymns of the ancient Columban Church have been preserved in monastic libraries—antique compositions in Latin or Gaelic, or both. In the middle ages the sacred poetry would seem to have been of a lower type—imaginary conversations like the so-called “Prayer of Ossian,” preserved in the Dean of Lismore’s Book (1512), and verses to be used as charms. The modern sacred poetry of the North began with Dugald Buchanan by the shores of Loch Kannoch about the middle of last century, but the most voluminous and popular writer of Gaelic hymns has been the Rev. Peter Grant of Strathspey, whose collection, first issued in 1809, is highly esteemed throughout the Highlands and the Gaelic districts of Canada, under the name of the lays of I’adruig Grannd. Besides these poets there have been many hymn-writers in the North. MacGregor, MacLean, Morrison, and others, some of whom have contributed but one successful hymn to the sacred anthology of their country. In that anthology it will be found that, along with undoubted orthodoxy, there is a certain echo of the secular songs, which is particularly noticeable in the use of poetic phrases such as Din nan tin “God of the elements,” Dia nam feart, “God of (many) attributes,” Slanuigkear nam bitadh, “Saviour of (many) victories.” The hymnology of the Highlands shows little trace of the religious currents of the present century, and its chief characteristic is a sad earnestness, rising at times into a passionate pessimism. A stern theology harmonises well with the environment and history of the Highlander, and whether as Pagan or as Calvinist he is most like himself when chanting eternal “Misereres” of unutterable pathos. The three great themes of Highland hymns are Sin, Death, and Judgment a trinity which is very real to the sacred bard, and whose shadow lies across all his thoughts. Hence the solemnity and awe of many of the hymns. What English poet would think of presenting for our meditation a picture such as this—

For mortal man life is quickly past,
The King of Terrors shall hold him fast,
When sick and dying, behold him crying—
“Ah! tell me, friends, is this death at last?”

“What throes of anguish are these,” he saith,
“That rend my bosom and stop my breath?
New terror thrills me, strange horror chills me —
Oh, tell me truly, can this be death?”

Yet the pages of Buchanan and Grant contain verses even more terrible than these. At the same time it would be a grave misrepresentation to say that all Highland hymns are of this gloomy cast; even in the present collection will be found many Christian

songs of the brightest and happiest description, though, happily, the language contains no hymns that show the levity frequently found in popular English hymn-books.

The Sacred Music of the Highlands has a close affinity to the secular melodies, and in some cases Gaelic and other suitable tunes seem to have been adapted to sacred words. But numbers of the hymns have their own proper tunes, many of them sweet, expressive, and in every way worthy to be the exponents of religious feeling.

Besides the hymn tunes, there is another class of sacred melodies in the Highlands which is very interesting—the Psalm tunes, which differ widely from those familiar to the English-speaking world. This is specially true of the small number of very long and elaborate tunes that have been used in the North for many generations, and which are known as the “old” tunes. Their origin is unknown, for though there is a tradition that they were brought into Scotland by devout Highland soldiers returning from the Protestant wars of Gustavus Adolphus, they bear little resemblance to the Psalm tunes of Sweden and Germany. If, indeed, any such imported foreign music formed the basis of Gaelic psalmody, the superstructure has probably been moulded by the chants used in Highland worship before the importation took place. In the Psalm tunes as we now have them, the predominance of local colouring is very marked, and it may be said that, even more than the unquestionably native music of the hymns, these Psalm tunes express the deep seriousness of Highland religion.

The present collection contains the six “old” tunes, as well as the Highland forms of the modern Psalm tunes, and in preparing it the editor has had the intelligent and valuable assistance of Gaelic-speaking ministers and precentors.

You can download the book at: <http://www.electricscotland.com/books/pdf/hymns.htm>

Ed Means Column

How the UK government shortchanges Scottish Defense and you can read this at:

<http://www.electricscotland.com/independence/means/140113.htm>

Beth's Newfangled Family Tree

Added February 2014 section 1 which you can read at: <http://www.electricscotland.com/bnft>

FAL's Response to Balance of Competences Review

Fishing review of the EU (pdf). This is an article with a pdf attached which provides a lot more background and information and can be read at: <http://www.electricscotland.com/independence/fal.htm>

Reminiscences of a Scottish Gentleman

Commencing in 1787 by Philo Scotus (1861)

I've ocr'd the first couple of sections of this book through to the start of 1793. The balance of the book can be downloaded in pdf format. You can get to this at: <http://www.electricscotland.com/history/scotus/index.htm>

Enigma Machine

We are still adding a puzzle each week and the latest in No. 47 which you can get to at:

<http://www.electriccanadian.com/lifestyle/enigma/enigma047.htm>

I might add that I have now actually added all the 100 puzzles but only adding the answers each week. Puzzles with answers have an * beside them.

The Working Life of Christina McKelvie MSP

A momentous year ahead and you can read this at:

<http://www.electricscotland.com/history/mckelvie/140110.htm>

Advancing into the World

Scotland's expanding Field of Vision by Dr. James Wilkie.

You can read this article at: <http://www.electricscotland.com/independence/advancing.htm>

We've continued to add chapters to...

Scottish Historical Review at <http://www.electricscotland.com/history/review/volume15.htm>

Tales and Sketches at <http://www.electricscotland.com/history/miller/tales.htm>

Among the Wild Ngoni at <http://www.electricscotland.com/history/africa/ngoni/index.htm>

History of Montrose at <http://www.electricscotland.com/history/montrose/index.htm>

And Finally...

Oedipus Dregs

There was a lady in a bar gulping down a large pinot grigio after a day at the office who opined:

"Well, if it's not one thing, it's another."

Her friend, stirring her Hendriks gin and tonic, replied:

"Or as my therapist puts it, If it's not one thing, it's your mother'."

Out of Tune

Long-time collaborators Phil Cunningham and Aly Bain were performing at Glasgow's City Halls when Phil, chatting to the audience, told them of a Shetland accordion player who appeared on stage in his kilt.

As he sat down, he wrapped the straps around his shoulders and hefted his accordion up into the playing position, not realising his kilt was lifted with it.

An elderly lady in the front row summoned up the courage to ask:

"Mr McDonald, do you know your willie is hanging out of your kilt?"

He lent forward and said kindly:

"No, I don't. Is that a Phil Cunningham tune?"

And that's it for this week and I hope you all have a good weekend.

Alastair