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## Electric Scotland's Weekly Newsletter for December 26th, 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

Although dated 26th December I thought I'd just put this out on Christmas Eve so I can get a wee break myself.

I'm not sure if I mentioned a book that Robert Stewart told me about...

#### White People, Indians and Highlanders

Tribal peoples and colonial encounters in Scotland and America by Colin G. Calloway. This whole book can be read in pdf format at

[http://english.faculty.ifmo.ru/materials/%D0%B0%D1%81%D0%BF%D0%B8%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%BD%D1%82%D1%8B/White\\_people\\_indians\\_and\\_highlanders.pdf](http://english.faculty.ifmo.ru/materials/%D0%B0%D1%81%D0%BF%D0%B8%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%BD%D1%82%D1%8B/White_people_indians_and_highlanders.pdf)

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#### Merry Christmas

Our Electric Scotland Community wishes everyone a Merry Christmas and have selected videos for you to watch. Add your own if you are a member.

Visit <http://www.electricscotland.org/showthread.php/4718-Merry-Christmas>

We also have an old Christmas page at <http://www.electricscotland.com/index98.htm>

#### Christmas in Scotland

Prior to the Reformation of 1560, Christmas in Scotland, then called Yule was celebrated in a similar fashion to the rest of Catholic Europe. Calderwood recorded that in 1545, a few months before his murder, Cardinal Beaton had "passed over the Christmase dayes with games and feasting". However, the Reformation transformed attitudes to traditional Christian feasting days, including Christmas, and led in practice to the abolition of festival days and other church holidays; the Kirk and the state being closely linked in Scotland during the Late Middle Ages and the Early Modern period.

A 1640 Act of the Parliament of Scotland abolished the "Yule vacation and all observation thereof in time coming".

Two Acts of the Estates of Parliament—Act discharging the Yule vacance (2 June 1640) and Act dischargeing the Yule vacance (15 April 1690)—abolished the Yule Vacance (Christmas recess). The first Act was partly repealed in 1686, when Episcopalianism was briefly in ascendancy within the Kirk, and the second Act was partly repealed in 1712, by The Vacance Act of the Westminster parliament.

The 1640 Act stated (in Middle Scots):

"... the kirke within this kingdome is now purged of all superstitious observacion of dayes... thairfor the saidis estatis have dischargid and simply discharges the foirsaid Yule vacance and all observacion thairfor in tyme comeing, and rescindis and annullis all acts, statutis and warrandis and ordinances whatsoever granted at any tyme heirtofor for keeping of the said Yule vacance, with all custome of observacion thairfor, and findis and declares the samene to be extinct, voyd and of no force nor effect in tyme comeing." (**English translation:** "... the kirk within this kingdom is now purged of all superstitious observation of days... therefore the said estates have discharged and simply discharge the foresaid Yule vacation and all observation thereof in time coming, and rescind and annul all acts, statutes and warrants and ordinances whatsoever granted at any time heretofore for keeping of the said Yule vacation, with all custom of observation thereof, and find and declare the same to be extinct, void and of no force nor effect in time coming.")

Christmas in Scotland was traditionally observed very quietly, because the Church of Scotland – a Presbyterian church – for various reasons never placed much emphasis on the Christmas festival.

Christmas Day only became a public holiday in 1958, and Boxing Day in 1974. The New Year's Eve festivity, Hogmanay, was by far the largest celebration in Scotland. The gift-giving, public holidays and feasting associated with mid-winter were traditionally held between the 11th of December and 6 January. However, since the 1980s, the fading of the Church's influence and the increased influences from the rest of the UK and elsewhere, Christmas and its related festivities are now nearly on a par with Hogmanay and "Ne'erday". The capital city of Edinburgh now has a traditional German Christmas market from late November until Christmas Eve.

See my own account of Christmas Day in Scotland at:

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

**Electric Scotland's Webboard Banter Conference**

We were reminiscing in our Electric Scotland Community about the old WebBoard we used to run which was in the days before Facebook and Twitter, etc. For those that remember it I did post up a wee collection of stories from the Banter conference which you can read at:

<http://www.electricscotland.com/familytree/community/banter/index.htm>

## Electric Canadian

### Canadian Jingle Bells

<http://youtu.be/yi8MRUMKatI>

#### Kindle Fire 7 HD Tablet. Bit of a nightmare if you live in Canada.

I decided to use some of my visa card points to treat myself to this Kindle Tablet. So having received it and porting over some of my books, music and pictures I was feeling very happy with my purchase. However when reading a book on it I just nudged it and it went from Portrait to Landscape mode and I couldn't get it to go back to portrait. So I just read on in Landscape when after about half an hour it just as suddenly went back to Portrait mode. I then decided something was wrong with it so brought up some of the pictures I'd transferred and again it wouldn't switch between landscape and portrait.

And so I decided I had a problem and phoned Amazon technical support. WOW That became a bit of a nightmare. Some 10 phone calls and 10 emails later it had been identified that the device was faulty but now Amazon couldn't figure out how to get me a replacement. As I was talking to them in the USA and I lived in Canada everything they tried just brought up an error message on their computer. One representative decided to transfer me to Canadian tech support but that didn't work as Canada said the USA had tried this before and it was their problem not theirs and they needed to fix it and promptly transferred me back to the USA.

I actually got another tech support person who said he'd fix the problem and likely be able to arrange for Fed-Ex or some other carrier to get me a replacement and would contact me when it was on its way. No contact so after some 3+ weeks of haggling over this I decided to apply to the visa points rewards folk and they told me they'd had this issue before and so will now arrange to have it sent back to them and when they received it I would get a credit. However this is going to take around 3 weeks due to being in the middle of the holiday season. They did say they'd experienced this problem before with Amazon a number of times.

Given that Amazon is meant to be a global company they sure get their pants in a twist if they have to support someone not living in the USA. Some people said they'd phone me back and didn't. I even got to a Supervisor in their support department and he also said he'd phone me back and didn't. He also acknowledged that he had received a computer error when trying to process my exchange.

Total pain and I was looking forward to using it. So be warned that if you get such a device and it is faulty and you live in Canada you will have problems.

## Electric Scotland

### Enigma Machine

Added puzzle 93.

An alternative to your crossword puzzle and created by a Scots Canadian, Doug Ross.

You can join with others in our community trying to complete these at:

<http://www.electricscotland.org/forumdisplay.php/17-Thistle-amp-Whistle>

You can get to the puzzles at <http://www.electriccanadian.com/lifestyle/enigma/>

### Wilkie Collins

A Biography by Kenneth Robinson.

Now completed this book by adding the final 3 chapters which you can read at:

<http://www.electricscotland.com/history/collins/index.htm>

### Deeside Tales

Or Men and Manners On Highland Deeside since 1745 by John Grant Michie (1908).

We're now on Section V—The Free Forester. In the first chapter of this section we read...

"The steady brain, the sinewy limb

"To leap, to climb, to dive, to swim;

"The iron frame inured to bear

"Each dire inclemency of air;

"Nor less confirmed to undergo

"Fatigue's chill faint, and famine's throe." —Scott.

THE propriety or impropriety of some kinds of life is to be judged of, not from any fixed canon, but from a relative point of view, and their social conventional aspect at the time they were enacted. This statement, of course, holds good only so far as man's estimate of morality in his day and generation goes; for we must logically believe, whatever we do sentimentally and educationally, that the habit of "rieving," or cattle-lifting, was abstractly as immoral in the days of Rob Roy as it would be in our own. So great an influence, however, has a perverse conventionalism on the mind of a man as to distort and pervert in his moral nature all honest notions of meum and tuum, and to paralyze in his mind the legitimate use of "The Law and the Testimony" of an inflexible standard of appeal. To illustrate what is meant: Rob Roy lived at a time when such lax notions prevailed about cattle-lifting and money-taking from the wealthy, as to lead him not only to believe that there was no harm in this kind of life, but positively to think that, when the Chief of the McGregors could not live any other way—work or even commerce was out of the question—it afforded a means of livelihood not unbefitting a chieftain and gentleman. He would not allow young Rob to be taken to Glasgow by the Bailie, with whom his name is indissolubly associated, to learn the trade of a weaver, or any other honest calling. So perverted were the minds of men of this order of thinking, that, though they accounted the kind of theft spoken of rather meritorious than otherwise, they would sooner have burned their fingers than have been found burglarizing away the silver plate of those gentlemen from whom they would take a purse well lined with "gowd guineas," or a well fed ox. "Do you think the chief of the Macgregors is such a dog as to steal your silver plate?" is the language Rob Roy would most naturally have used.

You can read this book at <http://www.electricscotland.com/history/deeside/index.htm>

**Robert Burns Lives!**  
Edited by Frank Shaw

John Galt: The Other Great Ayrshire Writer by Ian McGee.



Here is an interesting connection, slight as it may be, between Robert Burns and John Galt, "the other great Ayrshire writer." Were they the best of friends? No and neither did they frequent the pubs together, but they had one thing in common – they were distant kin being, I believe, second cousins. There was twenty years separating them with Galt being the youngest. Because of this age difference, there is little between the two except their bloodline and their desire to write. One wrote books, the other a book. One dealt in prose and the other primarily in poetry and songs. Yes, one went to debtor's prison while the other thought he was going there too as he lay on his death bed. One was the son of a sea captain who told stories around the fireplace that caused his son to go see the world for himself as a traveler to Canada and Europe. As Chris Rollie points out in his fine book Robert Burns in England, Burns went to England but ventured into the country for only a few miles. One founded cities and made good money while the other could only dream of such money -- and none of us will ever forget him on his death bed begging for a few pounds. One is enshrined in the hearts of men and women all over the world and the other, by contrast, is hardly known by our world's population. I could go on with other comparisons, but John McGee's wonderful article on John Galt awaits. Enjoy.

Our writer, Ian McGhee, or John if you prefer, was born and brought up in Ayrshire, Scotland and has recently returned there to live. After a successful career in the public service dealing mainly with business and industry, he enrolled at Glasgow University to study Scottish Literature and was awarded a first class Honours degree in 2013. He is currently completing a Masters in John Galt's North American corpus.

I'm grateful for John's assistance with this article and for the several pictures he has shared, and I also appreciate Gerry Carruthers putting the two of us together for this piece. A new [John Galt Society](#) was just formed in Glasgow this month with dues of only £10 annually. I jumped at the chance to join as a means of learning more about John Galt from these scholarly Scottish men, and I hope you will join me in membership. There is so much more to Scotland than just Robert Burns. So please contact me and I will put you in touch with the person in charge. (FRS: 12.18.14)

You can read this article at [http://www.electricscotland.com/familytree/frank/burns\\_lives208.htm](http://www.electricscotland.com/familytree/frank/burns_lives208.htm)

**European Union**

I decided to add some videos discussing the European Union (EU). I am of the opinion that most Scots do not know enough about the EU to make a decision on whether Scotland should be a member or not. I am also pretty sure that few will bother to watch these videos. That said I figured I'd make them available should any of you want to have a look at this institution to see how relevant it might be to Scotland.

You can watch these at

<http://www.electricscotland.org/showthread.php/4719-European-Union>

**Legends of the Braes O' Mar**

By John Grant (1876)

I was going to ocr in this book but the font used created umpteen errors so just decided to make the whole book available as a pdf document which you can download at:

<http://www.electricscotland.com/books/pdf/legendsbraesoma00grangoog.pdf>

**The Life and Opinions of Major-General Sir Charles Metcalfe MacGregor**

K.C.B., C.S.I., C.I.E. Quartermaster-General in India, Edited by Lady MacGregor in two volumes.

In preparing the following memoir of my late husband for publication, I have desired to reproduce, as nearly as possible in his own words, a personal account of the stirring and momentous events in which he played always an active and latterly a leading part.

The principal portion of the biography relating to his early career up to the time of his promotion to field rank is taken from the unstudied letters written in camp and bivouac by Charles MacGregor to his parents during the period which includes the Indian Mutiny, the Chinese War, the Bhutan Campaigns, and the Abyssinian Expedition.

The death of my husband's father in 1869 unfortunately brought to an end the interesting correspondence, which forms an almost complete autobiography of the General up to his thirtieth year. For the continuation of the memoir recourse has been made to diaries and semi-official memoranda, from which a more or less connected narrative of Sir Charles's later services has been compiled.

You can read this two volume biography at:

<http://www.electricscotland.com/history/scotreg/macgregormg.htm>

### **Andy's Ceilidh**

I note that Andy is now retiring after some 32 years and his last Ceilidh is available for you to listen to at:

<http://www.electricscotland.org/showthread.php/363-Andy-s-Ceilidh> where I've added a link to the mp3 file.

### **First Footing**

A new song from John Henderson which you can read at:

<http://www.electricscotland.com/poetry/doggerel557.htm>

## **THE STORY**

### **Reminiscences of Scottish Life & Character**

Of course this time of year is a time of great conviviality for us all with friends and family. Mind you in the old days it could also be quite exhausting as the following story will reveal...

#### **Chapter 3 - On Old Scottish Conviviality**

THE next change in manners which has been effected, in the memory of many now living, regards the habits of conviviality, or, to speak more plainly, regards the banishment of drunkenness from polite society. It is indeed a most important and blessed change. But it is a change the full extent of which many persons now alive can hardly estimate. Indeed, it is scarcely possible to realise the scenes which took place seventy or eighty years back, or even less.. In many houses, when a party dined, the ladies going away was the signal for the commencement of a system of compulsory conviviality. No one was allowed to shirk—no daylight, no heeltaps—was the wretched jargon in which were expressed the propriety and the duty of seeing that the glass, when filled, must be emptied and drained. We have heard of glasses having the bottoms knocked off, so that no shuffling tricks might be played with them, and that they could only be put down—empty.

One cannot help looking back with amazement at the infatuation which could for a moment tolerate such a sore evil. To a man of sober inclinations it must have been an intolerable nuisance to join a dinner-party at many houses, where he knew he should have to witness the most disgusting excesses in others, and to fight hard to preserve himself from a compliance with the example of those around him.

The scenes of excess which occurred in the houses where deep drinking was practised must have been most revolting to sober persons who were unaccustomed to such conviviality; as in the case of a drinking Angus laird, entertaining as his guest a London merchant of formal manners and temperate habits. The poor man was driven from the table when the drinking set in hard, and stole away to take refuge in his bedroom. The company, however, were determined not to let the worthy citizen off so easily, but proceeded in a body, with the laird at their head, and invaded his privacy by exhibiting bottles and glasses at his bedside. Losing all patience, the wretched victim gasped out his indignation: "Sir, your hospitality borders upon brutality." It must have had a fatal influence also on many persons to whom drinking was most injurious, and who were yet not strong-minded enough to resist the temptations to excess. Poor James Boswell, who certainly required no extraordinary urging to take a glass too much, is found in his letters, which have recently come to light, laying the blame of his excesses to "falling into a habit which still prevails in Scotland"; and then he remarks, with censorious emphasis, on the "drunken manners of his countrymen." This was about 1770.

A friend of mine, however, lately departed—Mr Boswell of Balmuto—showed more spirit than the Londoner, when he found himself in a similar situation. Challenged by the host to drink, urged and almost forced to swallow a quantity of wine against his own inclination, he proposed a counter-challenge in the way of eating, and made the following ludicrous and original proposal to the company—that two or three legs of mutton should be prepared, and he would then contest the point of who could devour most meat; and certainly it seems as reasonable to compel people to eat, as to compel them to drink, beyond the natural cravings of nature.

The situation of ladies, too, must frequently have been very disagreeable when, for instance, gentlemen came upstairs in a condition most unfit for female society. Indeed they were often compelled to fly from scenes which were most unfitting for them to witness. They were expected to get out of the way at the proper time, or when a hint was given them to do so. At Glasgow sixty years ago, when the time had come for the bowl to be introduced, some jovial and thirsty members of the company proposed as a toast, "The trade of Glasgow and the outward bound!" The hint was taken, and silks and satins moved off to the drawing-room.

In my part of the country the traditionary stories of drinking prowess are quite marvellous. On Deeside there flourished a certain Saunders Paul (whom I remember an old man), an innkeeper at Banchory. He was said to have drunk whisky, glass for glass, to the claret of Mr Maule and the Laird of Skene for a whole evening; and in those days there was a traditional story of his despatching, at one sitting, in company with a character celebrated for conviviality—one of the men employed to float rafts of timber down the Dee—three dozen of porter. Of this Mr Paul it was recorded, that on being asked if he considered porter as a wholesome beverage, he replied, "Oh yes, if you don't take above a dozen." Saunders Paul was, as I have said, the innkeeper at Banchory; his friend and porter companion was drowned in the Dee, and when told that the body had been found down the stream below Crathes, he coolly, remarked, "I am surprised at that, for I never kenn'd him pass the inn before without comin' in for a glass."

Some relatives of mine travelling in the Highlands were amused by observing in a small road-side public-house a party drinking, whose apparatus for conviviality called forth the dry quaint humour which is so thoroughly Scottish. Three drovers had met together, and were celebrating their meeting by a liberal consumption of whisky; the inn could only furnish one glass without a bottom, and this the party passed on from one to another. A queer-looking pawky chield, whenever the glass came to his turn, remarked most gravely, "I think we wadna be the waur o' some water," taking care, however, never to add any of the simple element, but quietly drank off his glass.

There was a sort of infatuation in the supposed dignity and manliness attached to powers of deep potation, and the fatal effects of drinking were spoken of in a manner both reckless and unfeeling. Thus, I have been assured that a well-known old laird of the old school expressed himself with great indignation at the charge brought against hard drinking that it had actually killed people. "Na, na, I never knew onybody killed wi' drinking, but I hae kenn'd some that dee'd in the training." A positive éclat was attached to the accomplished and well-trained consumer of claret or of whisky toddy, which gave an importance and even merit to the practice of

drinking, and which had a most injurious effect. I am afraid some of the Pleydells of the old school would have looked with the most ineffable contempt on the degeneracy of the present generation in this respect, and that the temperance movement would be little short of insanity in their eyes; and this leads me to a remark. In considering this portion of the subject, we should bear in mind a distinction. The change we now speak of involves more than a mere change of a custom or practice in social life. It is a change in men's sentiments and feelings on a certain great question of morals. Except we enter into this distinction we cannot appreciate the extent of the change which has really taken place in regard to intemperate habits.

I have an anecdote from a descendant of Principal Robertson, of an address made to him, which showed the real importance attached to all that concerned the system of drinking in his time. The Principal had been invited to spend some days in a country-house, and the minister of the parish (a jovial character) had been asked to meet him. Before dinner he went up to Dr Robertson and addressed him confidentially: "Doctor, I understand ye are a brother of my gude freend Peter Robertson of Edinburgh, therefore I'll gie you a piece of advice—Bend [Old Scotch for "drink hard"] weel to the Madeira at dinner, for here ye'll get little o't after." I have known persons who held that a man who could not drink must have a degree of feebleness and imbecility of character. But as this is an important point, I will adduce the higher authority of Lord Cockburn, and quote from him two examples, very different certainly in their nature, but both bearing upon the question. I refer to what he says of Lord Hermand :—"With Hermand drinking was a virtue; he had a sincere respect for drinking, indeed a high moral approbation, and a serious compassion for the poor wretches who could not indulge in it, and with due contempt of those who could but did not"; and, secondly, I refer to Lord Cockburn's pages for an anecdote which illustrates the perverted feeling I refer to, now happily no longer existing. It relates the opinion expressed by an old drunken writer of Selkirk (whose name is not mentioned) regarding his anticipation of professional success for Mr Cranstoun, afterwards Lord Corehouse. Sir Walter Scott, William Erskine, and Cranstoun, had dined with this Selkirk writer, and Scott— of hardy, strong, and healthy frame—had matched the writer himself in the matter of whisky punch. Poor Cranstoun, of refined and delicate mental and bodily temperament, was a bad hand at such work, and was soon off the field. On the party breaking up, the Selkirk writer expressed his admiration of Scott, assuring him that he would rise high in the profession, and adding: "I'll tell ye what, Maister Walter, that lad Cranstoun may get to the tap o' the Bar, if he can; but tak' my word for't, it's no' be by drinking."

There was a sort of dogged tone of apology for excess in drinking, which marked the hold which the practice had gained on ordinary minds. Of this we have a remarkable example in the unwilling testimony of a witness who was examined as to the fact of drunkenness being charged against a minister. The person examined was beadle, or one of the church officials. He was asked, "Did you ever see the minister the worse of drink?" "I canna say I've seen him the waur o' drink, but nae doubt I've seen him the better o't," was the evasive answer. The question, however, was pushed further; and when he was urged to say if this state of being "the better for drink" ever extended to a condition of absolute helpless intoxication, the reply was: "Indeed, afore that cam', I was blind fou mysel', and I could see naething."

A legal friend has told me of a celebrated circuit where Lord Hermand was judge, and Clephane depute-advocate. The party got drunk at Ayr, and so continued (although quite able for their work) till the business was concluded at Jedburgh. Some years after, my informant heard that this circuit had, at Jedburgh, acquired the permanent name of the "daft circuit."

Lord Cockburn was fond of describing a circuit scene at Stirling, in his early days at the Bar, under the presidency of his friend and connection Lord Hermand. After the circuit dinner, and when drinking had gone on for some-time, young Cockburn observed places becoming vacant in the social circle, but no one going out at the door. He found that the individuals had dropped down under the table. He took the hint, and by this ruse retired from the scene. He lay quiet till the beams of the morning sun penetrated the apartment. The judge and some of his staunch friends coolly walked upstairs, washed their hands and faces, came down to breakfast, and went into court quite fresh and fit for work.

The feeling of importance frequently attached to powers of drinking was formally attested by a well-known western baronet of convivial habits and convivial memory. He was desirous of bearing testimony to the probity, honour, and other high moral qualities of a friend whom he wished to commend. Having fully stated these claims to consideration and respect, he deemed it proper to notice also his convivial attainments. He added accordingly, with cautious approval on so important a point: "And he is a fair drinker." [A friend learned in Scottish history suggests an ingenious remark, that this might mean more than a mere full drinker. To drink "fair," used to imply that the person drank in the same proportion as the company; to drink more would be unmannerly; to drink less might imply some unfair motive. Either interpretation shows the importance attached to drinking and all that concerned it.]

The following anecdote is an amusing example of Scottish servant humour and acuteness in measuring the extent of consumption by a convivial party in Forfarshire. The party had met at a farmer's house not far from Arbroath, to celebrate the reconciliation of two neighbouring farmers who had long been at enmity. The host was pressing and hospitable; the party sat late, and consumed a vast amount of whisky toddy. The wife was penurious, and grudged the outlay. When at last, at a morning hour, the party dispersed, the lady, who had not slept in her anxiety, looked over the stairs and eagerly asked the servant girl, "How many bottles of whisky have they used, Betty?" The lass, who had not to pay for the whisky, but had been obliged to go to the well to fetch the water for the toddy, coolly answered, "I dinna ken, mem, but they've drucken sax gang o' water."

We cannot imagine a better illustration of the general habits that prevailed in Scottish society in regard to drinking about the time we speak of than one which occurs in the recently published "Memoirs of a Banking House," that of the late Sir William Forbes, Bait, of Pitsligo. The book comprises much that is interesting to the family, and to Scotchmen. It contains a pregnant hint as to the manners of polite society and business habits in those days. Of John Courts, one of four brothers connected with the house, Sir William records how he was "more correct in his conduct than the others; so much so, that Sir William never but once saw him in the counting-house disguised with liquor, and incapable of transacting business."

In the Highlands this sort of feeling extended to an almost incredible extent, even so much as to obscure the moral and religious sentiments. Of this a striking proof was afforded in a circumstance which took place in my own church soon after I came into it. One of our Gaelic clergy had so far forgotten himself as to appear in the church somewhat the worse of liquor. This having happened so often as to come to the ears of the bishop, he suspended him from the performance of divine service. Against this decision the people were a little disposed to rebel, because, according to their Highland notions, "a gentleman was no' the waur for being able to tak' a gude glass o' whisky." These were the notions of a people in whose eyes the power of swallowing whisky conferred distinction, and with whom inability to take the fitting quantity was a mark of a mean and futile character. Sad to tell, the funeral rites of Highland chieftains were not supposed to have been duly celebrated except there was an immoderate and often fatal consumption of whisky. It has been related that at the last funeral in the Highlands, conducted according to the traditions of the olden times, several of the guests fell victims to the usage, and actually died of the excesses.

This phase of old and happily almost obsolete Scottish intemperance at funeral solemnities must have been peculiarly revolting. Instances of this horrid practice being carried to a great extent are traditionary in every part of the country. I am assured of the truth of the following anecdote by a son of the gentleman who acted as chief mourner on the occasion :—About seventy years ago an old maiden lady died in Strathspey. Just previous to her death she sent for her grandnephew, and said to him, "Willy, I'm deein', and as ye'll hae the charge o' a' I have, mind now that as much whisky is to be used at my funeral as there was at my baptism." Willy neglected to ask the old lady what the quantity of whisky used at the baptism was, but when the day of the funeral arrived believed her orders would be best fulfilled by allowing each guest to drink as much as he pleased. The churchyard where the body was to be deposited was about ten miles distant from where the death occurred. It was a short day in November, and when the funeral party came to the churchyard the shades of night had considerably closed in. The grave-digger, whose patience had been exhausted in waiting, was not in the least willing to accept of Captain G----'s (the chief mourner) apology for delay. After looking about him he put the anxious question, "But, Captain, whaur's Miss Ketty?" The reply was, "In her coffin, to be sure, and get it into the earth as fast as you can." There,

however, was no coffin; the procession had sojourned at a country inn by the way, had rested the body on a dyke, started without it, and had to postpone the interment until next day. My correspondent very justly adds the remark, "What would be thought of indulgence in drinking habits now that could lead to such a result?"

Many scenes of a similar incongruous character are still traditionally connected with such occasions. Within the last thirty years, a laird of Dundonald, a small estate in Ross-shire, died at Inverness. There was open house for some days, and great eating and drinking. Here the corpse commenced its progress toward its appointed home on the coast, and people followed in multitudes to give it a partial convoy, all of whom had to be entertained. It took altogether a fortnight to bury poor Dundonald, and great expense must have been incurred. This, however, is looked back to at Inverness as the last of the real grand old Highland funerals. Such notions of what is due to the memory of the departed have now become unusual if not obsolete. I myself witnessed the first decided change in this matter. I officiated at the funeral of the late Duke of Sutherland. The procession was a mile long. Refreshments were provided for 7000 persons—beef, bread, and beer—but not one glass of whisky was allowed on the property that day!

It may, perhaps, be said that the change we speak of is not peculiar to Scotland; that in England the same change has been apparent; and that drunkenness has passed away in the higher circles, as a matter of course, as refinement and taste made an advancement in society. This is true. But there were some features of the question which were peculiar to Scotland, and which at one time rendered it less probable that intemperance would give way in the north. It seemed in some quarters to have taken deeper root amongst us. The system of pressing; or of compelling, guests to drink seemed more inveterate. Nothing can more powerfully illustrate the deep-rooted character of intemperate habits in families than an anecdote which was related to me, as coming from the late Mr Mackenzie, author of the *Man of Feeling*. He had been involved in a regular drinking party. He was keeping as free from the usual excesses as he was able, and as he marked companions around him falling victims to the power of drink, he himself dropped off under the table among the slain, as a measure of precaution; and lying there, his attention was called to a small pair of hands working at his throat; on asking what it was, a voice replied, "Sir, I'm the lad that's to louse the neckcloths." Here, then was a family, where, on drinking occasions, it was the appointed duty of one of the household to attend, and, when the guests were becoming helpless, to untie their cravats in fear of apoplexy or suffocation. [In Burt's *Letters from the North of Scotland*, written about 1730, similar scenes are related as occurring in Culloden House: as the company were disabled by drink, two servants in waiting took up the invalids with short poles in their chairs as they sat (if not fallen down), and carried them off to their beds.] We ought certainly to be grateful for the change which has taken place from such a system; for this change has made a great revolution in Scottish social life. The charm and the romance long attached in the minds of some of our countrymen to the whole system and concerns of hard drinking was indeed most lamentable and absurd. At tavern suppers, where, nine times out of ten, it was the express object of those who went to get drunk, such stuff as "regal purple stream," "rosy wine," "quaffing the goblet," "bright sparkling nectar," "chasing the rosy hours," and so on, tended to keep up the delusion, and make it a monstrous fine thing for men to sit up drinking half the night, to have frightful headaches all next day, to make maudlin idiots of themselves as they were going home, and to become brutes amongst their family when they arrived. And here I may introduce the mention of a practice connected with the convivial habits of which we have been speaking, but which has for some time passed away, at least from private tables—I mean the absurd system of calling for toasts and sentiments each time the glasses were filled. During dinner not a drop could be touched, except in conjunction with others, and with each drinking to the health of each. But toasts came after dinner. I can just remember the practice in partial operation; and my astonishment as a mere boy, when accidentally dining at table and hearing my mother called upon to "give the company a gentleman," is one of my earliest reminiscences. Lord Cockburn must have remembered them well, and I will quote his most amusing account of the effects:—"After dinner, and before the ladies retired, there generally began what was called 'Rounds' of toasts, when each gentleman named an absent lady, and each lady an absent gentleman, separately; or one person was required to give an absent lady, and another person was required to match a gentleman with that lady, and the persons named were toasted, generally, with allusions and jokes about the fitness of the union. And, worst of all, there were 'Sentiments.' These were short epigrammatic sentences, expressive of moral feelings and virtues, and were thought refined and elegant productions. A faint conception of their nauseousness may be formed from the following examples, every one of which I have heard given a thousand times, and which indeed I only recollect from their being favourites. The glasses being filled, a person was asked for his or for her sentiment, when this, or something similar, was committed: 'May the pleasures of the evening bear the reflections of the morning'; or, 'may the friends of our youth be the companions of our old age'; or, 'delicate pleasures to susceptible minds'; 'may the honest heart never feel distress'; 'may the hand of charity wipe the tear from the eye of sorrow.' The conceited, the ready, or the reckless, hackneyed in the art, had a knack of making new sentiments applicable to the passing incidents with great ease. But it was a dreadful oppression on the timid or the awkward. They used to shudder, ladies particularly; for nobody was spared when their turn in the round approached. Many a struggle and blush did it cost; but this seemed only to excite the tyranny of the masters of the craft; and compliance could never be avoided, except by more torture than yielding.... It is difficult for those who have been under a more natural system to comprehend how a sensible man, a respectable matron, a worthy old maid, and especially a girl, could be expected to go into company easily, on such conditions."

This accompaniment of domestic drinking by a toast or sentiment—the practice of which is now confined to public entertainments—was then invariable in private parties, and was supposed to enliven and promote the good fellowship of the social circle. Thus Fergusson, in one of his poems, in describing a dinner, says—

"The grace is said; it's nae ower lang,  
The claret reams in bells.  
Quo' Deacon, 'Let the toast round gang;  
Come, here's our noble sel's  
Weel met the day."

There was a great variety of these toasts, some of them exclusively Scottish. A correspondent has favoured me with a few reminiscences of such incentives to inebriety.

The ordinary form of drinking a health was in the address, "Here's t' ye."

Then such as the following were named by successive members of the company at the call of the host:—

The land o' cakes (Scotland).

Mair freens and less need o' them.

Thumping luck and fat weans.

When we're gaun up the hill o' fortune may we ne'er meet a freen' coming down.

May ne'er waur be amang us.

May the binges o' freendship never rust, or the wings o' luve lose a feather.

Here's to them that lo'es us or lenns us a lift.

Here's health to the sick, stilts to the lame; claise to the back, and brose to the wame.

Here's health, wealth, wit, and meal.

The deil rock them in a creel that does na' wish us a' weel.

Horny bands and weather-beaten baffets (cheeks).

The rending o' rocks and the pu'in' doun o' auld houses.

The last two belong, to the mason craft; the first implies a wish for plenty of work, and health to do it; the second, to erect new buildings and clear away old ones.

May the winds o' adversity ne'er blaw open our door.

May poortith ne'er throw us in the dirt or gowd into the high saddle. [May we never be cast down by adversity, or unduly elevated by prosperity.]

May the mouse ne'er leave our meal-pock wi' the tear in its e'e.

Blythe may we a' be.

Ill may we never see.

Breeks and brochan (brose).

May we ne'er want a freend or a drappie to gie him.

Gude e'en to you a', an' tak' your nappy.

A willy-waught's a gude night cappy. [A toast at parting or breaking-up of the party.]

May we a' be canty an' cosy.

An' ilk hae a wife in his bosy.

A cosy but, and a canty ben.

To couthie [Loving] women and trusty men.

The ingle neuk wi' routh [Plenty] o' bannocks and bairns.

Here's to him wha winna beguile ye.

Mair sense and mair siller.

Horn, corn, wool, an' yarn. [Toast for agricultural dinners.]

Sometimes certain toasts were accompanied by Highland honours. This was a very exciting, and to a stranger a somewhat alarming, proceeding. I recollect my astonishment the first time I witnessed the ceremony—the company, from sitting quietly drinking their wine, seemed to assume the attitude of harmless maniacs, allowed to amuse themselves. The moment the toast was given, and proposed to be drunk with Highland honours, the gentlemen all rose, and with one foot on their chair and another on the table, they drank the toast with Gaelic shrieks, which were awful to hear, the cheering being under the direction of a toast-master appointed to direct the proceedings. I am indebted to the kindness of the Rev. Duncan Campbell, the esteemed minister of Moulin, for the form used on such occasions. Here it is in the Gaelic and the Saxon :—

Gaelic	Translation
So!	Prepare!
Nish! Nish!	Now! Now!
Sud ris! Sud ris!	Yon again! Yon again!
Nish! Nish!	Now! Now!
Thig ris! Thig ris!	At it again! At it again!
A on uair eile!	Another time, or one cheer more!

The reader is to imagine these words uttered with yells and vociferations, and accompanied with frantic gestures.

The system of giving toasts was so regularly established, that collections of them were published to add brilliancy to the festive board. By the kindness of the librarian, I have seen a little volume which is in the Signet Library of Edinburgh. It is entitled, "The Gentleman's New Bottle Companion," Edinburgh, printed in the year MDCCLXXVII. It contains various toasts and sentiments which the writer considered to be suitable to such occasions. Of the taste and decency of the companies where some of them could be made use of, the less said the better.

I have heard also of large traditionary collections of toasts and sentiments, belonging to old clubs and societies, extending back above a century, but I have not seen any of them, and I believe my readers will think they have had quite enough.

The favourable reaction which has taken place in regard to the whole system of intemperance may very fairly, in the first place, be referred to an improved moral feeling. But other causes have also assisted; and it is curious to observe how the different changes in the modes of society bear upon one another. The alteration in the convivial habits which we are noticing in our own country may be partly due to alteration of hours. The old plan of early dining favoured a system of suppers, and after supper was a great time for convivial songs and sentiments. This of course induced drinking to a late hour. Most drinking songs imply the night as the season of

conviviality—thus in a popular madrigal:—

"By the gaily circling glass  
We can tell how minutes pass;  
By the hollow cask we're told  
How the waning night grows old."

And Burns thus marks the time:—

"It is the moon, I ken her horn,  
That's blinkin' in the lift sac hie;  
She shines sac bright, to wyle us hame,  
But by my sooth she'll wait a wee."

The young people of the present day have no idea of the state of matters in regard to the supper system when it was the normal condition of society. The late dining hours may make the social circle more formal, but they have been far less favourable to drinking propensities. After such dinners as ours are now, suppers are clearly out of the question. One is astonished to look back and recall the scenes to which were attached associations of hilarity, conviviality, and enjoyment. Drinking parties were protracted beyond the whole Sunday, having begun by a dinner on Saturday; imbecility and prostrate helplessness were a common result of these bright and jovial scenes; and by what perversion of language, or by what obliquity of sentiment, the notions of pleasure could be attached to scenes of such excess—to the nausea, the disgust of sated appetite, and the racking headache—it is not easy to explain. There were men of heads so hard, and of stomachs so insensible, that, like my friend Saunders Paul, they could stand anything in the way of drink. But to men in general, and to the more delicate constitutions, such a life must have been a cause of great misery. To a certain extent, and up to a certain point, wine may be a refreshment and a wholesome stimulant; nay, it is a medicine, and a valuable one, and as such, comes recommended on fitting occasions by the physician. Beyond this point, as sanctioned and approved by nature, the use of wine is only degradation. Well did the sacred writer call wine, when thus taken in excess, "a mocker." It makes all men equal, because it makes them all idiotic. It allures them into a vicious indulgence, and then mocks their folly, by depriving them of any sense they may ever have possessed.

It has, I fear, been injurious to the cause of temperance, that emotions of true friendship, and the outpouring of human affections, should so frequently be connected with the obligation that the parties should get drunk together. Drunkenness is thus made to hold too close an association in men's minds with some of the best and finest feelings of their nature is the constant acknowledged strain of poetical friendship: our own Robert Burns calls upon the dear companion of his early happy days, with whom he had "paidl't i' the burn, frae mornin' sun till dine," and between whom "braid seas had roar'd sin' auld lang syne," to commemorate their union of heart and spirit, and to welcome their meeting after years of separation, by each one joining his pint-stoup, and by each taking a mutual "richt guid willie-waught," in honour of the innocent and happy times of "auld lang syne." David marks his recognition of friendship by tokens of a different character: "We took sweet counsel together, and walked in the house of God as friends."—Ps. lv. 14.

Reference has already been made to Lord Hermand's opinion of drinking, and to the high estimation in which he held a staunch drinker, according to the testimony of Lord Cockburn. There is a remarkable corroboration of this opinion in a current anecdote which is traditionary regarding the same learned judge. A case of some great offence was tried before him, and the counsel pleaded extenuation for his client in that he was drunk when he committed the offence. "Drunk!" exclaimed Lord Hermand, in great indignation; "if he could do such a thing when he was drunk, what might he not have done when he was sober!" evidently implying that the normal condition of human nature, and its most hopeful one, was a condition of intoxication.

Of the prevalence of hard drinking in certain houses as a system, a remarkable proof is given on page 95. The following anecdote still further illustrates the subject, and corresponds exactly with the story of the "loosing the cravats," which was performed for guests in a state of helpless inebriety by one of the house-hold. There had been a carousing party at Castle Grant, many years ago, and as the evening advanced towards morning two Highlanders were in attendance to carry the guests upstairs, it being understood that none could by any other means arrive at their sleeping apartments. One or two of the guests, however, whether from their abstinence or their superior strength of head, were walking upstairs, and declined the proffered assistance. The attendants were quite astonished, and indignantly exclaimed, "Agh, it's sare cheenged times at Castle Grant, when shentlemens can gang to bed on their ain feet."

There was a practice in many Scottish houses which favoured most injuriously the national tendency to spirit-drinking, and that was a foolish and inconsiderate custom of offering a glass on all occasions as a mark of kindness or hospitality. I mention the custom only for the purpose of offering a remonstrance. It should never be done. Even now, I am assured, small jobs (carpenters' or blacksmiths', or such like) are constantly remunerated in the West Highlands of Scotland—and doubtless in many other parts of the country—not by a pecuniary payment, but by a dram; if the said dram be taken from a speerit-decanter out of the family press or cupboard, the compliment is esteemed the greater, and the offering doubly valued.

A very amusing dialogue between a landlord and his tenant on this question of the dram has been sent to me. John Colquhoun, an aged Dumbartonshire tenant, is asked by his laird on Lochlomond side, to stay a minute till he tastes. "Now, John," says the laird. "Only half a glass, Camstraddale," meekly pleads John. "Which half," rejoins the laird, "the upper or the lower?" John grins, and turns off both—the upper and lower too.

The upper and lower portions of the glass furnish another drinking anecdote. A very greedy old lady employed another John Colquhoun to cut the grass upon the lawn, and enjoined him to cut it very close, adding, as a reason for the injunction, that one inch at the bottom was worth two at the top. Having finished his work much to her satisfaction, the old lady got out the whisky-bottle and a tapering wineglass, which she filled about half full; John suggested that it would be better to fill it up, silyly adding, "Fill it up, mem, for it's no' like the gress; an inch at the tap's worth twa at the boddom."

But the most whimsical anecdote connected with the subject of drink, is one traditionary in the south of Scotland, regarding an old Gallovidian lady disclaiming more drink under the following circumstances:—The old generation of Galloway lairds were a primitive and hospitable race, but their conviviality sometimes led to awkward occurrences. In former days, when roads were bad and wheeled vehicles almost unknown, an old laird was returning from a supper party, with his lady mounted behind him on horseback. On crossing the River Urr, at a ford at a point where it joins the sea, the old lady dropped off, but was not missed till her husband reached his door, when, of course, there was an immediate search made. The party who were despatched in quest of her arrived just in time to find her remonstrating with the advancing tide, which trickled into her mouth, in these words, "No anither drap; neither het nor cauld."

A lady, on one occasion, offering a dram to a porter in a rather small glass, said, "Take it off; it will do you no harm," on which the man, looking at the diminutive glass, observed, "Harm! Na, gin it were poushon" (poison).

I would now introduce, as a perfect illustration of this portion of our subject, two descriptions of clergymen, well known men in their day, which are taken from Dr Catlyle's work, already referred to. Of Dr Alexander Webster, a clergyman, and one of his contemporaries, he writes thus:—"Webster, leader of the high-flying party, had justly obtained much respect amongst the clergy, and all ranks indeed, for having established the Widows' Fund. . . . His appearance of great strictness in religion, to which he was bred under his father, who was a very popular minister of the Tolbooth Church, not acting in restraint of his convivial humour, he was held



to be excellent company even by those of dissolute manners; while, being a five-bottle man, he could lay them all under the table. This had brought on him the nickname of Dr Bonum Magnum in the time of faction. But never being indecently the worse of liquor; and a love of claret, to any degree, not being reckoned in those days a sin in Scotland, all his excesses were pardoned."

Dr Patrick Gunning, also a clergyman and a contemporary, he describes in the following terms :— "Dr Patrick Gunning was, at this time (1751), at the head of the moderate interest, and had his temper been equal to his talents, might have kept it long, for he had both learning and sagacity, and very agreeable conversation, with a constitution able to bear the conviviality of the times."

Now, of all the anecdotes and facts which I have collected, or of all which I have ever heard to illustrate the state of Scottish society in the past times, as regards its habits of intemperance, this assuredly surpasses them all:—Of two well-known, distinguished, and leading clergymen in the middle of the eighteenth century, one who had "obtained much respect," and "had the appearance of great strictness in religion," is described as an enormous drinker of claret; the other, an able leader of a powerful section in the Church, is described as owing his influence to his power of meeting the conviviality of the times. Suppose for a moment a future biographer should write in this strain of eminent divines, and should apply to distinguished members of the Scottish Church in 1863 such description as the following: "Dr--- was a man who took a leading part in all church affairs at this time, and was much looked up to by the evangelical section of the General Assembly; he could always carry off without difficulty his five bottles of claret. Dr--- had great influence in society, and led the opposite party in the General Assembly, as he could take his place in all companies, and drink on fair terms at the most convivial tables!" Why, this seems to us so monstrous, that we can scarcely believe Dr Carlyle's account of matters in his day to be possible.

There is a story which illustrates, with terrible force, the power which drinking had obtained in Scottish social life. I have been deterred from bringing it forward, as too shocking for production. But as the story is pretty well known, and its truth vouched for on high authority, I venture to give it, as affording a proof that, in those days, no consideration, not even the most awful that affects human nature, could be made to outweigh the claims of a determined conviviality. It may, I think, be mentioned also, in the way of warning men generally against the hardening and demoralising effects of habitual drunkenness. The story is this:—At a prolonged drinking bout, one of the party remarked, "What gars the laird of Garskadden look sae gash? [Ghastly] "Ou," says his neighbour, the laird of Kilmardinny, "deil meane him! Garskadden's been wi' his Maker these twa hours; I saw him step awa', but I didna like to disturb gude company! [The scene is described and place mentioned in Dr Strang's account of Glasgow Clubs, p.104, 2nd Edition.]

Before closing this subject of excess in drinking, I may refer to another indulgence in which our countrymen are generally supposed to partake more largely than their neighbours:—I mean snuff-taking. The popular southern ideas of a Scotchman and his snuff-box are inseparable. Smoking does not appear to have been practised more in Scotland than in England, and if Scotchmen are sometimes intemperate in the use of snuff, it is certainly a more innocent excess than intemperance in whisky. I recollect, amongst the common people in the north, a mode of taking snuff which showed a determination to make the most of it, and which indicated somewhat of intemperance in the enjoyment; this was to receive it not through a pinch between the fingers, but through a quill or little bone ladle, which forced it up the nose. But, besides smoking and snuffing, I have a reminiscence of a third use of tobacco, which I apprehend is now quite obsolete. Some of my readers will be surprised when I name this forgotten luxury. It was called plugging, and consisted (borresco referens) in poking a piece of pigtail tobacco tight into the nostril. I remember this distinctly; and now, at a distance of more than sixty years, I recall my utter astonishment as a boy, at seeing my grand-uncle, with whom I lived in early days, put a thin piece of tobacco fairly up his nose. I suppose the plug acted as a continued stimulant on the olfactory nerve, and was, in short, like taking a perpetual pinch of snuff.

The inveterate snuff-taker, like the dram-drinker, felt severely the being deprived of his accustomed stimulant, as in the following instance:—A severe snow-storm in the Highlands, which lasted for several weeks, having stopped all communication betwixt neighbouring hamlets, the snuff-boxes were soon reduced to their last pinch. Borrowing and begging from all the neighbours within reach were first resorted to, but when these failed, all were alike reduced to the longing which unwilling-abstinent snuff-takers alone know. The minister of the parish was amongst the unhappy number; the craving was so intense that study was out of the question, and he became quite restless. As a last resort the beadle was despatched, through the snow, to a neighbouring glen, in the hope of getting a supply; but he came back as unsuccessful as he went. "What's to be dune, John?" was the minister's pathetic inquiry. John shook his head, as much as to say that he could not tell; but immediately thereafter started up, as if a new idea had occurred, to him. He came back in a few minutes, crying, "Hae!" The minister, too eager to be scrutinising, took a long, deep pinch, and then said, "Whaur did you get it?" "I soupit [Swept] the poupit," was John's expressive reply. The minister's accumulated superfluous Sabbath snuff now came into good use.

It does not appear that at this time a similar excess in eating accompanied this prevalent tendency to excess in drinking. Scottish tables were at that period plain and abundant, but epicurism or gluttony do not seem to have been handmaids to drunkenness. A humorous anecdote, however, of a full-eating laird, may well accompany those which appertain to the drinking lairds:—A lady in the north having watched the proceedings of a guest, who ate long and largely, she ordered the servant to take away, as he had at last laid down his knife and fork. To her surprise, however, he resumed his work, and she apologised to him, saying, "I thought, Mr---, you had done." "Oh, so I had, mem; but I just fan' a doo in the redd o' my plate." He had discovered a pigeon lurking amongst the bones and refuse of his plate, and could not resist finishing it.

You can read other chapters from this book at [http://www.electricscotland.com/history/scottish\\_life.htm](http://www.electricscotland.com/history/scottish_life.htm)

That's it for this week and hope you all have a Merry Christmas.

Alastair