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Electric Scotland's Weekly Newsletter for May 15th, 2015

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 newsletter

Last week I was unable to send out the notification email to our list. There is obviously something that has changed since our move and Steve is looking into this. I did get a phone call from him on Wednesday afternoon saying he believes he has fixed the problem so hopefully this week it will go out ok.

Of course the actual newsletter was available on the site if you had looked.

Election News

Clearly the story of the week was the UK Elections where the Conservative party got an unexpected overall majority and the SNP in Scotland won an expected landslide winning all but 3 of the 59 seats.

The SNP's aim was to keep Cameron out but that wasn't to happen and so despite having gained 56 seats out of 59 in Scotland they are in a minority along with Labour at Westminster and so the question is what can they do to counter the majority conservative party.

I did an overview of the election at:

<http://www.electricscotland.com/independence/2015election.htm>

In the above link I also provided a link to an overview of Trident in that while Scotland wants to get rid of Trident there are global implications of its removal and I believe should be "must read" for all those involved in this debate.

There has been a lot of discussion throughout the world on the results of the election and what it might mean for Scotland and the UK in the world. For example the US papers were forecasting a lessening of the Special Relationship.

'Take us with you, Scotland' say thousands in North of England is one such discussion and you can read about this at

<http://www.bbc.com/news/blogs-trending-32736153>

Nicola Sturgeon actually came out top in the various UK national debates on TV.

In our ScotNews feed on our site index page I am of course providing links to these stories.

Our move to new address

We are still having issues with Comcast our Telco. It seems that the people we deal with have no idea what service they can provide and one person contradicts another until there is total confusion. We have been promised download/upload speeds of 50/10 but then one technical person says that it's just not available in our area. Another says that is rubbish and then tells us they have configured our modem for that speed. Then another tells us that while the modem may be configured to accept that speed it's not physically able to provide it <sigh>.

On Friday we are getting visits from two of their tech people one of whom should be replacing our modem hardware so that it is

capable of accepting those speeds and another to upgrade other hardware so it can deliver those speeds. I have no idea of what the outcome will be but fingers crossed things will be resolved.

As a general comment I would say that I find dealing with large companies is more and more impossible and I don't blame the people on the phone. Instead I blame their bosses as they have clearly not given them proper training. I mean if a member of their sales team is selling something they can't provide then it's the bosses that need talking to but of course they gear their business in such a way that they never hear the complaints. Write to the CEO's and they are protected by layers of intermediaries so they never get to hear about these issues. But that's also the CEO's fault as they should have systems in place to ensure they at least hear a small cross section of complaints or indeed compliments if there are any. In my view they are losing many millions if not billions through stupid errors that cost lots to fix.

Enigma Machine

We have now completed all 100 of our original puzzles created by Doug Ross. Hugh has decided to add to this by creating other puzzles and so we are now on puzzle 101 which you can see at:

<http://www.electricscotland.org/showthread.php/4849-Enigma-Machine-101>

Electric Canadian

William Osler

WHATEVER may be said of Sir William Osier in days to come, of his high position in medicine, of his gifts and versatility, to his contemporaries, love of his fellow-man, utter unselfishness, and an extraordinary capacity for friendship will always remain the characteristics which overshadow all else. Few so eminent and so industrious come in return to be so widely beloved for their own sake. Most of us do well with what Stevenson advises—a few friends and those without capitulation—but Osier had the God-given quality not only of being a friend with all, high or low, child or grown-up, professor or pupil, don or scholar, but what is more, of holding such friendships with an unforgetting tenacity—a scribbled line of remembrance with a playful twist to it, a note of congratulation to some delighted youngster on his first publication, the gift of an unexpected book, an unsolicited donation for some worthy cause (and giving promptly he gave doubly), a telegram to bring cheer or consolation, an article to help a struggling journal to get a footing, a cable such as his last on the day of his operation to his old Hopkins friends, which was given by them to the press for the benefit of countless others who shared their own anxiety—all this was characteristic of the man, whose first thoughts were invariably for others.

We have added this person to our Makers of Canada section at:

http://www.electriccanadian.com/makers/osler_william.htm where you can read more about him.

Electric Scotland

A Tour in Sutherlandshire

With extracts from the field-books of a Sportsman and Naturalist by Charles St. John, Esq. in two volumes 2nd Edition (1884).

We have now embarked on Volume 2 of this publication and now up to Chapter XXVIII.

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

Rambles in Europe

Historical Facts relating to Scotch-American Families gathered in Scotland and the North of Ireland by Leonard A. Morrison. Added a link to this book at the foot of our page at:

<http://www.electricscotland.com/history/scotsirish/scotsirishndx.htm>

The Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence May 20, 1775

And Lives of its signers by George. W. Graham, M.D. (1905) (pdf). Added a link to this book at the foot of the page at:

<http://www.electricscotland.com/history/america/part2.htm>

Rental Book of the Cistercian Abbey at Cupar-Angus

Edited by the Rev. Charles Rogers LL.D. (1879). Added this 2 volume publication to our page about Cupar Angus at:

<http://www.electricscotland.com/history/strathmore/chapter05.htm>

McKinstry Family

Added a page for McKinstry at <http://www.electricscotland.com/webclans/m/mckinstry.html>

Road that left home

A Romance of Plow-Land by Will E. Ingersoll (1918).

Essentially this is a collection of stories of the old days which tell about places and characters in America.

DEDICATION

TO ONE FOR WHOM I HAVE BEEN BY TURNS A LOCOMOTIVE, A DONKEY, A HARLEQUIN. AN ENCYCLOPEDIA, A DOOR-MAT, AND A LOAD OF HAY; TO ONE WHO IS NEVER STILL EXCEPT WHEN ASLEEP, AND THEN ONLY PARTIALLY; AT WHOSE COMING THE CAT'S HEART SKIPS A BEAT; WHO CONSIDERS HAIR WAS MADE TO LEAD SLAVES AROUND BY. AND REGARDS EYES AS QUEER, GLASSY APPEALING THINGS THAT WOULD LOOK BETTER POKED OUT; WHO IS A FRIEND AND INTIMATE OF HIS BROTHER CLAY AND A SWORN ENEMY OF THE SPONGE AND WASH-BASIN; WHO WEARS OUT A PAIR OF BOOTS A MONTH; TO WHOM SPANKING MEANS POSTPONEMENT; IN SHORT. TO YOUNG BILL. WHO WILL CELEBRATE HIS HUNDRETH BIRTHDAY IN 2015. THIS BOOK IS HUMBLY DEDICATED BY HIS DAD.

And hopefully he's still around to read this <grin>

You can download this book at <http://www.electricscotland.com/books/pdf/roadthatleftthome.pdf>

THE STORY

I've always been interested in self sufficiency and thus over many years have read books about crofting and small farming operations. I also enjoy watching TV programs on the subject. Many years ago now I picked up this book "10 Acres Enough" and having read the Introduction I purchased it and got a great deal of pleasure in reading it which I have done several times. It's essentially about a manufacturer, his wife and family who collectively decided that they would like to run a small farm. And so at the start of the book you learn about their life in town and the problems they have while the husband dreams of having a small farm. It then leads us through his decision to sell up and do just that... run a small farm... and hence this book takes us through all the ramifications of how he came to that decision. How he studied to prepare himself for the role and then selling his business through to locating and purchasing his farm and then all the work he does to turn it into a good business for himself and his family.

So below I'm giving you the Introduction I read that persuaded me to purchase the book and then I have selected Chapter IV where he locates and purchases his farm so hope you enjoy this.

10 Acres Enough

Introduction

What Jethro Tull did to improve tillage, the author of "Ten Acres Enough" did to prove that intensified agriculture on small areas could be made not only to support a family, but to yield a handsome profit, and health, freedom and happiness as well. It has taken two centuries for the most advanced farmers to appreciate Tull and his teachings. It has taken nearly half a century in this progressive age to appreciate and to put in practice, in a feeble way, the fundamental principles which underlie all our dealings with Mother Earth as set forth in this modest volume of two hundred pages.

If one is totally ignorant of the principles and practices of the various operations necessary to bring to perfection the many plants with which Agriculture has to do, were limited to two publications, I would advise him to purchase "Horse-Hoeing Husbandry" and "Ten Acres Enough."

"The mistaken ambition for owning twice (often ten times) as much land as one can thoroughly manure or profitably cultivate, is the great agricultural sin of this country," says the author. In California where this is being written, this mistaken ambition prevails to an alarming extent. Too often, farmers have become soil robbers. This state appears to excel all others in its haste to filch from the land every valuable timber tree, every pound of nitrogen, every vestige of humus that can be extracted at a present profit however small, with apparently no thought of the future productivity of the land, the future welfare of the farmer, or the permanent prosperity of the community.

I have made a careful study of the conditions of agriculture in the Santa Clara, San Jose and Sacramento Valleys, and I am irresistibly led to the conclusion that the great ranches must be broken up into small holdings before permanent prosperity can come to the farmers of the Pacific Coast. On a recent visit to a ranch of several thousand acres, where things appeared prosperous and the cattle looked well bred and well fed, I could not refrain from asking the impolite question, "Does it pay?" The reply was: "We have been here ten years; have put in — dollars, gotten up at two in the morning to get the milk delivery wagon started in time, have four hundred head of cattle and thirty horses, and if I should sell out to-day, I would not have a dollar clear profit."

A few days after, I called on my college graduate friend. He has just ten acres all in fruit—peaches, apricots and prunes—all of which he will dry, as transportation is uncertain and expensive and the eastern market for undried fruit precarious. Again I asked, "Does it

pay?" He replied: "Well, we have three children, my wife and I have worked hard except in the six weeks harvesting time, we have a comfortable living, some spare time, and on an average secure a profit of about three hundred a year after allowing a modest interest on the investment. The orchard is not yet in full bearing and we should do somewhat better in the future and vastly better when the well is bored and a pump provided for irrigating once or twice yearly." In this locality, land suitable for fruit is held at one hundred and fifty to two hundred dollars per acre. Where the planted orchard has been in bearing for two or three years, that is, produces two-thirds of a crop, it sells at eight to nine hundred dollars per acre. If well and pump are added, the value is increased to one thousand or eleven hundred dollars per acre.

These two cases are typical, not exceptional. After becoming acquainted with the inner life of the owners of these holdings—for there are really only two kinds, small fruit and vegetable holdings, and large cattle, sheep, grain and hay ranches—one does not hesitate to choose between them.

It all amounts to this: No one should control more arable land than he can maintain in a high state of productivity, the four great factors of which are, good seed, suitable moisture, abundant available plant food, and rational tillage. In a large majority of cases where failure, or partial failure of an abundant crop is observed the meager results are due to a partial lack of one of these fundamentals. The vicissitudes of weather have little effect, if varieties and species of plants adapted to the locality are selected, if the plants are neither hungry nor thirsty, and if they are comfortably grounded in old Mother Earth.

Then the joy of seeing happy plants and animals grow strong and produce "some fifty, some an hundred fold!—" "Twere worth ten years of city life, one look at their array!"

Again and again the author of "Ten Acres Enough" recounts the happiness of observing Nature's modes of action at first hand, the pleasure of discovering now one, now another secret of soil or plant. How he revels in plain food and peaceful slumber after a day of intelligent effort in God's first Temple under the open sky! He consulted with his neighbors often. Sometimes he "went by the field of the slothful and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding," and, lo! he "saw it was all overgrown with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof and the stone wall thereof was broken down." Then "he saw and considered it well and looked upon it and received instruction."

It did not take long for him to discover that slothfulness and ignorance were the cause of the untidy condition and meager results of these plantations which were duplicates of the one described by Solomon. So he piled his table high with the best agricultural literature and spent his evenings at home reading it. For years he and his wife and daughter were close students. When it could no longer be said that they were ignorant; they all put on plain clothes and worked—worked as only an intelligent servant works for a kind master—and the Master gave ample reward when the harvest time came. Reader, go and do likewise!

ISAAC PHILLIPS ROBERTS.

Emeritus Professor of Agriculture, Late Dean and Director of the College of Agriculture, of Cornell University; Author of "The Farmstead," "The Farmer's Business Handbook," etc.

Chapter IV.—Buying a Farm—Anxiety to sell—Forced to quit

As already stated, I had in round numbers a clear two thousand dollars, with which to buy and stock a farm, and keep my family while my first crops were growing. As I was entirely free from debt, so I determined to avoid it in the future. Debt had been the bitter portion of my life, not from choice, but of necessity. My wife took strong ground in support of this resolution—what we had she wanted us to keep. I had too long been aided by her admirable counsel to reject it now. She had a singular longing for seeing me my own landlord. Her resolution was a powerful strengthener of my own convictions.

Thus resolved, we set out in the early part of March to seek a home. I was particular to take my wife with me—I wanted her to aid in choosing it. She was to occupy it as well as myself. She knew exactly what we wanted as regarded the dwelling-house,—the land department she left entirely to my judgment. I was determined that she should be made comfortable from the start, not only because she deserved to be made so, but to make sure that no cause for future discontent should arise. Indeed, she was really the best judge in this matter. She knew what the six children needed; she was the model of a housekeeper; there were certain little conveniences indispensable to domestic comfort to be secured, of which she knew more than I did, while her judgment on most things was so correct, that I felt confident if she were fully satisfied, the whole enterprise would be a successful one.

I loved her with the fervor of early married life— she had consented to my plans—she was willing to share whatever inconveniences might belong to our new position—was able to lighten them by her unflagging cheerfulness and thrift—and I was unwilling to take a single step in opposition either to her wishes or her judgment. Indeed, I had long since made up my mind, from observation of the good or bad luck of other men, that he who happens to be blessed with a wife possessing good sense and good judgment, succeeds or fails in life according as he is accustomed to consult her in his business enterprises. There is a world of caution, shrewdness, and latent wisdom in such women, which their husbands too frequently disregard to their ruin.

I am thus particular as to all my experiences; for this is really a domestic story, intended for the multitudes who have suffered half a

lifetime from trials similar to mine, and who yet feel ungratified longings for some avenue of escape. My object being to point out that through which I emerged from such a life to one of certainty and comfort, the detail ought to be valuable, even if it fail to be interesting. It is possible that I may sink the practical in the enthusiastic, and prove myself to be unduly enamored of my choice. But as it is success that makes the hero, so let my experience be accepted as the test.

I had settled it in my mind that I would use a thousand dollars in the purchase of land, and that I could make Ten Acres Enough. This I was determined to pay for at once, and have it covered by no man's parchment. But when we set out on our search, we found some difficulties. Every county in New Jersey contained a hundred farms that were for sale. Most of them were too large for my slender purse, though otherwise most eligibly situated. Then we must have a decent house, even if we were forced to put up with less land. Numerous locations of this kind were offered. The trouble was—keeping my slender purse in view—that the farms were either too large or too small. My wife was not fastidious about having a fine house. On the contrary, I was often surprised to find her pleased with such as to me looked small and mean. Indeed, it seemed, after ten days' search, that the tables had been turned—she was more easily suited than myself. But the same deference which I paid to her wishes, she uniformly paid to mine.

It was curious to note the anxiety of so many landowners to sell, and to hear the discordant reasons which they gave for desiring to do so. The quantity in market was enormous. All the real-estate agents had large books filled with descriptions of farms and fancy country-seats for sale, some to be had by paying one-fourth of the purchase-money down, and some which the owners would exchange for merchandise, or traps, or houses in the city. Many of them appeared simply to want something else for what they already had. They were tired of holding, and desired a change of some kind, better if they could make it, and worse if they could not. City merchants, or thriving mechanics, had built country cottages, and then wearied of them—it was found inconvenient to be going to and fro—in fact, they had soon discovered that the city alone was their place. Many such told us that their wives did not like the country.

Others had bought farms and spent great sums in improving them, only to sell at a loss. Farming did not pay an owner who lived away off in the city. Another class had taken land for debt, and wanted to realize. They expected to lose anyhow, and would sell cheap. Then there was another body of owners who, though born and raised upon the land, were tired of country life, and wanted to sell and embark in business in the city. Some few were desirous of going to the West. Change of some kind seemed to be the general craving. As I discovered that much of all this land was covered with mortgages of greater or less amount, it was natural to suppose the sheriff would occasionally turn up, and so it really was. There were columns in some of the county papers filled with his advertisements. I sometimes thought the whole country was for sale.

But yet there was a vast body of owners, many of them descendants of the early settlers, whom no consideration of price could tempt to abandon their inheritances. They seemed to know and understand the value of their ancestral acres. We met with other parties, recent purchasers, who had bought for a permanency, and who could not be induced to sell. In short, there seemed to be two constantly flowing streams of people—one tending from city to country, the other from country to city. Doubtless it is the same way with all our large cities. I think the latter stream was the larger. If it were not so, our cities could not grow in population at a rate so much more rapid than the country. At numerous farmhouses inquiries were made if we knew of any openings in the city in which boys and young men could be placed. The city was evidently the coveted goal with too large a number.

This glut of the land-market did not discourage us. We could not be induced to believe that land had no value because so many were anxious to dispose of it. We saw that it did not suit those who held it, and knew that it would suit us. But we could not but lament over the infatuation of many owners, who we felt certain would be ruined by turning their wide acres into money, and exposing it to the hazards of an untried business in the city. I doubt not that many of the very parties we then encountered have, long before this, realized the sad fate we feared, and learned too late that lands are better than merchandise.

One morning, about the middle of March, we found the very spot we had been seeking. It lay upon the Amboy Railroad, within a few miles of Philadelphia, within gunshot of a railroad station, and on the outskirts of a town containing churches, schools, and stores, with quite an educated society. The grounds comprised eleven acres, and the dwelling-house was quite large enough for my family. It struck the fancy of my wife the moment we came up to it; and when she had gone over the house, looked into the kitchen, explored the cellar, and walked round the garden, she expressed the strongest desire to make it our home.

There was barn enough to accommodate a horse and cow, with a ton or two of hay, quite an extensive shed, and I noticed that the barnyard contained a good pile of manure which was to go with the property. The buildings were of modern date, the fences were good, and there was evidence that a former occupant had exercised a taste for fruit and ornamental trees, while the garden was in very fair condition. But the land had been wholly neglected. All outside of the garden was a perfect scarecrow of tall weeds, thousands of which stood clear up to the fence top, making sure that they had scattered seeds enough for twenty future crops.

But I noticed that the land directly opposite was in the most admirable condition, and I saw at a glance that the soil must be adapted to the very purpose to which it was to be applied. The opposite ground was matted with a luxuriant growth of strawberries, while rows of stalwart raspberries held up their vigorous canes in testimony of the goodness of the soil. A fine peach-orchard on the same neighboring property, seemed impatient to put forth and blossom unto harvest. The eleven acres could be no worse land than this,

and though I had a horror of weeds, yet I was not to be frightened by them. I knew that weeds were more indigenous to New Jersey than even watermelons.

This miniature plantation of eleven acres belonged to a merchant in the city. He had taken it to secure a debt of eleven hundred dollars, but had pledged himself to pay the former owner whatever excess over that sum he might obtain for it. But pledges of that loose character seldom amount to much—the creditor consults his own interest, not that of the debtor. The latter had long been trying to sell, but in vain; and now the former had become equally embarrassed, and needed money even more urgently than the debtor had done. The whole property had cost the debtor eighteen hundred dollars. His views in founding it were similar to mine. He meant to establish for himself a home, to which at some future period he might retire. But he made the sad mistake of continuing in business in the city, and one disaster succeeding another, he had been compelled to abandon his anticipated refuge nearly a year before we came along.

All these facts I learned before beginning to negotiate for the purchase. As the banished man related them to me, going largely into the history of his hopes, his trials, his disappointments, I found cause for renewed thankfulness over my superior condition. With a single exception, his experience had been the counterpart of my own—he had lost all and was loaded with debt, while I had saved something and owed no man. But when, in language of the tenderest feeling, he spoke of his wife, whose highest passion had been gratified by the possession of a home so humble as even this—when he described how happy she had been in her garden, and how grief-stricken at being compelled to leave it—his eloquence fairly made my heart ache. I am sure my wife felt the full force of all he said. Her own attachment to the spot had already begun to take root, and she could sympathize with this rude sundering of a long-established tie.

The whole book can be read at <http://www.electricscotland.com/agriculture/10acresndx.htm>

And that's it for this week and hope you all enjoy your weekend.

Alastair