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## Electric Scotland's Weekly Newsletter for November 20th, 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

Jane Espie

Hey.. Hope your well.. just to let you know about the new xmas tracks that have just been released on CDBaby At <http://www.cdbaby.com/Artist/ThePhantomPiper> where you can get to preview or/and purchase them,, I truly hope you enjoy.

Also just out is the music videos for the songs... here are the links if you would like to watch them. Silent night video will be released in due course.. Thanks very much.

<https://youtu.be/P8C9R4YxILI>

<https://youtu.be/AJ4YYTBu0ZE>

[https://youtu.be/PFjYE9JS3\\_Y](https://youtu.be/PFjYE9JS3_Y)

Much love,

Jane Espie - The Phantom Piper

Scottish Studies at Simon Fraser University

View their Fall 2015 newsletter at:

[http://www.scottish.sfu.ca/documents/doc/ScottishStudies2015\\_printFINAL](http://www.scottish.sfu.ca/documents/doc/ScottishStudies2015_printFINAL)

And now for some news from Scotland...

Edinburgh council votes to complete tram line to Leith

Extension will take route down Leith Walk connecting Ocean Terminal with city's airport, via Princes Street if it clears final hurdle in December.

Read more at:

<http://www.theguardian.com/edinburgh/2015/nov/19/edinburgh-tram-council-votes-to-complete-controversial-line>

Sturgeon not convinced by case for Syria airstrikes

Nicola Sturgeon has said she is open to persuasion in a video interview.

Read more at:

<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-34860281>

65% of Scots favour remaining in EU

Two-thirds of Scots will vote in favour of the United Kingdom remaining within the EU.

Read more at:

<http://www.scotsman.com/news/politics/poll-65-of-scots-favour-remaining-in-eu-1-3951987>

Campaigners question Scottish childcare pledge

A campaign group has questioned how the Scottish government's flagship pledge on childcare will be delivered.

Read more at:

<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-34860913>

Minecraft maps Scotland's past

Gamers can now explore thousands of years of history thanks to the most topographically accurate and interactive Minecraft map of Scotland ever created.

Read more at:

<http://www.scotsman.com/heritage/people-places/minecraft-maps-scotland-s-past-1-3947806>

Police Scotland lurches from crisis to crisis

FORMER policeman, Labour MSP Graeme Pearson, says the delay is staggering given all that's happened in the force in the past year.

Read more at:

<http://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/police-scotland-lurches-crisis-crisis-6839372>

Alex Salmond's former policy chief Alex Bell says SNP case for independence is DEAD

BELL made the remarks in an online blog, saying that the economic case presented during the referendum was based on wishful thinking and that the existing model is broken.

Read more at:

<http://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/politics/alex-salmonds-former-policy-chief-6842162>

Scottish Haggis could be on American menus by 2017

THE end of 45 year-old ban on Scotland's national dish in the USA could finally be in sight after Washington officials finally relent and agree to allow haggis imports.

Read more at:

<http://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/lifestyle/food-drink/scottish-haggis-could-american-menus-6825160>

Society of Antiquaries of Scotland

STRATEGIC PLAN 2016 TO 2021

This is your opportunity to help shape the future of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland.

The current Society Five Year Strategy ends in 2017. With the majority of the original aims already having been achieved, alongside the reorganisation of the governance of the charity completed last year, Council Trustees have taken the decision to refresh this strategy early.

Council Trustees are keen to share their draft Strategic Plan 2016 to 2021 with Fellows for comment.

A downloadable version of the draft Strategic Plan 2016-2021 will be available online from the Fellows Section of the Society website from the 30 November 2015. A series of questions to stimulate comments will be provided alongside the Plan. This will be the primary means of engaging with the Strategic Plan 2016-2021.

The consultation will be launched at the Anniversary Meeting. A limited number of paper copies will be available for Fellows without internet access. Further paper copies can be requested if required, but the Council Trustees encourage Fellows to use the online versions to reduce printing and postage costs and staff time.

The draft plan will not be considered in detail at the meeting. Council Trustees are keen to receive responses from as many Fellows as possible, many of whom are unable to attend in person.

The deadline for comments is 31 January 2016. Comments will be considered by Council Trustees in February with a final draft agreed at their April meeting. The Strategic Plan 2016 to 2021 will then be published online for Fellows and implemented from 1 June 2016, the next Society financial year.

If you have any queries please don't hesitate to contact the Director in the first instance. [director@.soeantscot.org](mailto:director@.soeantscot.org) Tel 0131 247 4115

Visit the site at: <http://www.socantscot.org/>

And finally... we completed the change to our DNS and some of you may have noted that for a while only a GoDaddy page was displayed on the site. We found we'd neglected to enter the IP address of the server and so having corrected that, thanks to the tech support folk at GoDaddy, we were back up and running.

We have now ditched the Ezoic system so you should now see our pages as they were designed as we are no longer using their templates. I should say part of the reason for leaving Ezoic is that while our visitor numbers remained steady our advertising income dropped by two thirds which is a considerable loss of income and so much so that the site has been running at a loss for the past 6 months. I am unaware of how you can maintain your visitor traffic while losing two thirds of your income so I hope by going back to our normal site this will see a lift in income.

Due to this loss of income we have again implemented the InfoLinks advertising system where you may remember some key words on the page will show a double green underline. The links are adverts so if you rest your cursor over the link a pop up will come up showing the advert.

I might add that in February next year I will be receiving my old age pensions and so the income from that source will amply compensate for loss of income from advertising. At that point I may well remove the InfoLinks advertising but in the meantime I need every penny or cent I can make to make it through to February next year.

Also this week I've had to devote a chunk of my time working on the December issue of the Canadian Templar which is due out on December 1st. A lot going on with the order and of course the Paris attacks needed to be covered as did coverage of the new Prime Minister of Canada. Also our Grand Commander died and so I've been working on his biography.

I might add that I am guided by the Brussels Declaration of the Order which states our vision as...

Today, OSMTH – Knights Templar International looks for a world in which:

a constructive dialogue between the great religious faiths, and the individuals and nations that adhere to them, is conducted in an atmosphere of mutual respect, understanding and peace;

the holy sites of Christianity and the other great faiths are respected, protected and maintained, and pilgrims can travel to them in safety;

the dedication, generosity and integrity of all those engaged in providing humanitarian aid are recognised and valued, and aid workers carry out their vital work in an ethical manner without fear of discrimination;

the principles of active charity, courtesy, dedication and honesty, inherent in the highest ideals of a code of chivalry and a personal rule of life, are spread wider and wider in society;

and

the contribution of the Knights Templar, medieval and modern, with regard to agriculture, construction, transportation, crafts, medicine, finance, inter-faith affairs, diplomacy and philanthropy is both well researched, and also widely understood and valued by the public.

And so this lets me cover a huge range of material within the newsletter from all over the world. Past issues of these newsletters can be downloaded at: <http://www.electriccanadian.com/religion/kt.htm>

## Electric Canadian

Canadian mining firm Lucara finds 2nd largest diamond ever  
Gem is the largest discovered on Earth in more than a century

A Canadian mining company has found what's thought to be the second largest diamond ever in Botswana, measuring a whopping 1,111 carats — almost as big as a tennis ball.

TSX-listed and Vancouver-based Lucara said in a release late Wednesday it found the record-setting stone on the south lobe of the company's Karowe Mine in Botswana. It was recovered on Monday.

It's described as "gem quality, Type IIa," and its dimensions are 65 by 56 by 40 millimetres. One carat is equal to a fifth of a gram, so Lucara's 1,111-carat diamond weighs 222 grams.

OSMTH at the UN in 2015

A special presentation created by a Toronto member of the order. This can be viewed at:

<http://www.electriccanadian.com/images/2015OSMTHUN.pdf>

Pioneer Life among the Loyalists in Upper Canada  
By W. S. Herrington, K.C. (pdf).

To present a picture of the early settlements of Ontario and enter into the daily life of the pioneers is a most fascinating task. As we visit these historic districts and mingle with the descendants of the men and women who built the first log cabins in the forest, we imbibe the spirit of their simple life. Many of the old landmarks recall the stories of strange experiences we have so often heard, and the presence of the very flesh and blood of the first actors in the drama of the long struggle in the wilderness makes the scene all the more realistic. We think we can discern in the honest faces and general demeanour of these living links in our history something which indicates a deep-rooted sense of citizenship and a consciousness of a responsibility in keeping inviolate the traditions of their ancestors.

In the following pages I have endeavoured to bring the reader into closer touch with the first settlers. Many excellent historical works have traced the development of our province and laid before us the achievements of our public men. In vain may we turn over volume after volume in our search for information concerning the evolution of the homestead, and the customs and peculiarities of the common folk of long ago.

For the most part the sources of my information have been original documents and interviews with old men and women, many of whom have since passed away. Even from such sources it is an easy matter to fall into error; but I have discarded what I feared was not trustworthy, and believe that I can confidently ask the reader to accept the general statements of facts as thoroughly reliable.

I wish to acknowledge the receipt of many valuable suggestions from the Honourable Mr. Justice Riddell of Osgoode Hall, Toronto, and Dr. James H. Coyne of St. Thomas. I am also deeply indebted to Dr. M. B. Morden of Adrian, Michigan; the late Peter Bristol of Napanee, and Elisha Ruttan of Adolphustown, for much useful information regarding the pioneers.

W. S. H.  
Napanee, Ontario,  
December 1st, 1915.

This can be downloaded at: <http://www.electriccanadian.com/pioneering/pioneerlife.pdf>

Simcoe County Pioneer and Historical Society  
Found some papers from their archives which have been compiled into a pdf file which you can download at:  
<http://www.electriccanadian.com/pioneering/pioneerpapers.pdf>

## Electric Scotland

Neil Munro  
Added one of his books "Gilian the Dreamer" to his page and a link to the Neil Munro Society.

You can download this at:  
[http://www.electricscotland.com/history/men/munro\\_neil2.htm](http://www.electricscotland.com/history/men/munro_neil2.htm)

Dictionary of Deeside  
A Guide to the City of Aberdeen and the Village, Hamlets, Districts, Castles, Mansions and Scenery of Deeside, with Notes on Antiquities, Historical and Literary Associations, etc. by James Coutts, M.A. (1899) (pdf)

You can download this book at the foot of the page at:  
<http://www.electricscotland.com/history/deeside/index.htm>

Beth's Newfangled Family Tree  
Got in the December Section 2 issue which you can download at:  
<http://www.electricscotland.com/bnft/index.htm>

Elizabeth W. Grierson  
I have added links to three books by her to her page where we featured her "Scottish Fairy Book".

The book "Tales from Scottish Ballads" is a text file I downloaded from Guttenberg and contents include...

THE LOCHMABEN HARPER

THE LAIRD O' LOGIE  
KINMONT WILLIE  
THE GUDE WALLACE  
THE WARLOCK O' OAKWOOD  
MUCKLE-MOU'ED MEG  
DICK O' THE COW  
THE HEIR OF LINNE  
BLACK AGNACE OF DUNBAR  
THOMAS THE RHYMER  
LORD SOULIS  
THE BROWNIE OF BLEDNOCK  
SIR PATRICK SPENS  
YOUNG BEKIE  
THE EARL OF MAR'S DAUGHTER  
HYNDE HORN  
THE GAY GOS-HAWK

The other two books are "Peeps at Many Lands - Scotland" and "Early Light-Bearers of Scotland".

You can get to these at: <http://www.electricscotland.com/history/fairy/fairybook.htm>

The Scots Abroad the Nicht  
And Other Banquet Poems (Maistly Scotch) By Harry H. Johnston (1913)

TO THE CALEDONIAN & ST. ANDREWS SOCIETY  
AND TO  
CLAN GORDON No. 188. OF TACOMA

Without whose kindly encouragement these verses would not have been written. The hope that they may furnish some entertainment to the reader, be to local Scots reminiscent of those delightful occasions

"When lo! A rantin' feast weel stored,  
Saured sweetly on the festive board,"

and gratify a natural desire of the author to see his rhymes in print, is the excuse offered for their publication.

Tacoma, 1913.

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

The Life and Diary of Lieut. Col. J. Blackader  
Of the Cameronian Regiment, and Deputy Governor of Stirling Castle; who served with Distinguished Honour in the Wars under King William, Duke of Marlborough and afterwards in the Rebellion of 1715 in Scotland by Andrew Crichton (1824)

I have ocr'd in the complete book and here is the Preface...

The principal materials from which the following Life is compiled, are the Diary and Letters written by the Colonel himself during the Campaigns in which he was engaged. These manuscripts, it would appear, were committed to the hands of his widow, who was married to Sir James Campbell of Ardkinglas, Bart. After her death, they were thrown aside, as papers of no value, and lay neglected for many years. When the descendants of Sir James quitted the family residence near Stirling, a quantity of papers, supposed to be useless, were sold to a tobacconist in that town; and among these, his curiosity discovered, and rescued from destruction, the Diary and Letters referred to. The manuscripts thus, as it were, accidentally preserved, happily came into the possession of those who perceived their worth, and were anxious to make their usefulness more extensively known. Part of them were shewn to the Rev. John Newton, then (1799) Rector of St. Mary's, Lombard-street, London, who expressed his opinion that their publication might do good, and agreed to write a recommendatory preface With this view they were put into the hands of Mr. John Campbell, then resident in Edinburgh, now Minister of Kingsland Chapel, near London, and well known by his Missionary Travels in South Africa. Mr. Campbell transcribed many of the Letters and made several Extracts—a task of no small difficulty, from the smallness and faintness of the character in which they are written; but his various engagements hindered him from preparing them for the Press. He committed them to the care of Dr. Charles Stuart, of Dunearn, who, ever ready and zealous to promote the interests of religion, willingly undertook to superintend their publication. The volume made its appearance about twenty years ago, and was printed for the benefit of the Magdalene Asylum, Edinburgh, as originally intended by Mr. Campbell. It comprehended, however, only twelve years of the Diary, being, as appears, all that had come into the Editor's possession at the time of publishing.

By his diligent inquiries among the Colonel's surviving friends and relatives, Dr. Stuart collected various particulars of his family and parentage, which he prefixed to the Extracts ; illustrating the whole with short historical notes and explanations. He likewise recovered twelve additional years of the Diary, which made the series complete from 1701 to 1725. For these he acknowledged himself indebted to the Colonel's grand-nephew and representative, the late John Blackader, Esq. Accomptant General of Excise.

The whole of the original Manuscripts, comprising many unpublished Letters, and the remainder of the Diary from 1700 to 1728 inclusive, are in the hands of the present Compiler. The former Extracts have been revised and enlarged, various Letters and Select Passages inserted, so as to render the Life as complete and interesting as the nature of the materials will admit. A chasm of fifteen years in the Colonel's history is here supplied; historical illustrations have been more copiously introduced, so as to render the subject intelligible without the labour of consulting the political or military annals of the times. The peculiar formation of the Cameronian Regiment—the character of the religious Sect from which it was originally composed—and the distinguished share they took in the memorable Revolution, are dwelt upon at considerable length; not altogether from their connection with the Colonel's personal history, for he then acted in a very subordinate capacity; but because they throw light on the principles and conduct of the party with whom he was associated in arms—a party which has been much traduced and misunderstood.

Of the execution of the work, the public must judge; of its fidelity to truth and fact the Author can speak with confidence. The dates and form of the Diary have been preserved; which may give it a desultory and disconnected appearance; but the spirit and expression of the original must have been impaired had it been thrown into the form of a continued narrative.

Of the utility and entertainment to be derived from Biography in general, not a word need be said—more especially from the Lives of those military men who have acted upon Christian principles, and while fighting under the banners of an earthly sovereign, have not forgotten that they were soldiers of the Cross.

The favourable reception of Dr. Stuart's Extracts, encouraged the present Publisher to undertake the work on a more full and comprehensive plan. He had, besides, other inducements; as various attempts to republish Colonel Blackader's Life and Diary have, from time to time, been made, by those who had not access to the original sources of information, and were therefore in danger of obtruding upon the world defective and inaccurate editions. In the present work, these faults have been avoided, so far as care and research could accomplish it.

The engraving of the Colonel is taken from the original Family Painting; which appears from the style and superior manner of execution, to be the workmanship of some foreign artist.

Subjoined is a Poem, by Colonel Blackader, intituled, "A Vision of the Last Judgment," though it is more properly a vision of the latter days, describing the degeneracy of man, the dissolution of the material universe, &c. It seems only the commencement of a larger poem; but the piece, so far as it goes, gives strong indications of an original mind, and of a poetical imagination.

Edinburgh  
September 10, 1824.

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

## THE STORY

### Life in the Hebrides

A story of crofting life taken from an old book about the Hebrides. Once you read this you can imagine how these people made great settlers all over the world and how they also made great soldiers. They were used to a hard life as you will read and so the hard work of settlement and soldiering were easy in comparison. Here is the article to read here...

The men of the isles are more faithful than the women, and retain their suit of sonsy dark blue home-spun and broad blue-bonnet. The kilt never seems to have found favour amongst them. Happily the number of black coats and hats is very limited, and you see at a glance that you are surrounded by a race of hardworking fishers and shepherds.

The marvel is to see such families of well brushed-up lads and lassies—so many, and so well grown—and then to look at the tiny bothy whose roof is home, not to these only, but probably to other sons and daughters as well, who have gone to earn their bread on the mainland, or to establish far more prosperous homes in distant lands beyond the seas, but whose hearts are so warm to the old home, and to those that gather round its hearth, that no new ties will ever fill its place. A steadfast people in truth, to whom the home of childhood, how homely soever, will be the golden milestone from which to date each stage of life. And nowhere are the little ones more deeply cared for, and more heartily welcomed. Poor though the hearth may be, that house is reckoned poorest where the quiver is empty, for the Highlanders say that a home without the voices of children is dreary as a farm without sheep or kye.

The bothies are all much alike; there are generally two rooms: the outer division is the byre for the cattle. It is not cleaned out very often, and is not altogether a pleasant entrance-hall!

Most houses have a double wall of rough unhewn stone, perhaps five or six feet thick, the interstices being crammed with heather and turf. On the inner side of this wall rests the roof, which consequently acts as a conduit to convey all the rain that falls, right into the middle of the double wall, which accordingly is always damp. Hence the necessity of sleeping in box-beds, which form a sort of wooden lining for the sleeping corner. Such beds are stuffy, and very suggestive of the probable presence of noxious insects, but the wooden backs, following the angle of the roof, protect the sleepers from some draughts and possible rain-drip, and the bedding looks warm, and as clean as can be expected.

A well-to-do house probably has a window at the end where the family live. It cannot, however, be very efficient in the way of admitting light, since it is merely a hole from twelve to eighteen inches square, and only partially glazed, about half the space being filled up with turf. A misty gleam, however, streams through the opening, by which the smoke ought to escape, but the interior is chiefly dependent for light on the ever-open doorway. To enable the door thus to do double work, it is generally made in two halves, the lower half being frequently closed, while the upper half stands open.

If you approach such a dwelling, a kindly voice will assuredly bid you welcome in the Gaelic tongue (for they "have no English"), and as you stoop to enter the low doorway, you become aware that the peat-reek which saturates the thatch, likewise fills the interior of the house with a dense blue cloud, stinging and choking to unaccustomed eyes and lungs. Then you perceive that half of the house is devoted to the cattle—is, in fact, the byre, and a very dirty byre to boot. Here stand the cow and her calf, or maybe a goat or two, kept for milking.

Possibly a rough pony is grazing near, with his fore-legs hobbled to prevent his straying. The pig, should there be one, likewise takes care of itself and roams about outside, for that household companion of the Irish Celt is not a welcome inmate here. Indeed this is gentleman who pays the rint in the Emerald Isle (or rather who did so in bygone days) is by no means a common possession in these Scottish Isles, where the domestic pig has ever been held in abhorrence well-nigh as deep-seated as among the Hebrews.

A man of the true old type would sooner have starved than have eaten pork or pig's flesh in any form. Now the old prejudice is so far modified that a certain number of "advanced" Celts tolerate the unclean animal as a marketable article; but they are still in a minority, as may be judged from the fact that in the statistics of the Isle of Lewis we find that four thousand families only own one hundred and fifty pigs amongst them all.

Another departure from old tradition is shown by the presence of poultry, the use of which, for food, would have been as repugnant to an ancient Celt as would have been that of a goose or a hare.

Now, however, the "croose tappit hen" is in high favour, and the gude-wife's poultry share with the cat and her kittens, and the handsome Collie dogs, the privilege and honours of the inner chamber. The mother-hen and her chickens seek for crumbs of oat-cake that may have been dropped by the bairns on the earthen floor, while the venerable cock and the other members of his family roost on a well-blackened rafter, rejoicing in the warm smoke.

So also apparently does the kindly-looking old crone in the large clean white cap, bound round her head with a rusty black ribbon, who bends over the peat fire, turning the well-browned oat-cakes on the flat iron girdle which hangs from a heavy chain, suspended from the open chimney, down which streams a ray of light which perchance glances on the blue bonnet and silvery hair of the old grandfather, who sits in the corner quietly knitting his stout blue stockings, and perhaps indulging in a pipe at the same time. A tidy woman, dressed, like all the family, in thick warm homespun, is spinning at her wheel,—the most picturesque of all occupations, and the most soothing of sounds. Possibly the home also owns a loom, in which she can weave the yarn of her own spinning, and so indeed clothe her household in the work of her own hands.

Probably the baby is in a rough wooden cradle at her side, the bigger bairns being away at the school; and wonderful it is how the baby intellect survives the terrible shocks of such rocking as is administered by the maternal foot, working in sympathy with the busy hand. Near the fire are a heap of peats, drying for future use, and perhaps some tarry wool, and a coil of rope, and fishing-nets, proving that here farming and fishing are combined professions.

Unfortunately all homes are not so well provided. Here are a few extracts from evidence given in the north of Skye.

"There are, on our township, double the number of tenants that I have seen upon it, and the hill pasture was taken from us. We were ordered not to keep a single sheep when the pasture was taken. We were told we would have to dispense with our sheep, or give up our holdings. The sheep were sold at 6\*. a head. We were for several years without sheep, after which the proprietor gave us liberty to keep five or six. The few we now have are spoiling our townships for want of pasture. The want of hill grazing is very much felt. It prevents us from keeping some sheep. The remit of the prevention is that many of us have no better bed-clothes than old bags, formerly used in conveying whelks to Glasgow.

"Some of the people in our township have no land or sheep, and are so poor that they are glad of a cast-off oilskin. Sometimes when a poor man gets a good meal-bag he converts it into underclothing.

"We have spinning-wheels yet A man who lived near me died at the age of one hundred and five, and he never wore anything but spun clothes made by his wife and daughter. We are now clothed with south country clothing. In this respect things are very different from what they used to be. There are distaffs to be seen now. Those who have hill pasture with sheep upon it yet have clothing made with the wool of their own sheep. This cloth costs not more than 18d. a yard. The same kind of stuff costs 4s. 6d. a yard if bought in the shops.

"The women themselves get the dye stuffs from the rocks. They can get, perhaps, nine or ten different colours of cloth with the dye stuns they make themselves. They dye with peat soot, lichen, heather tops, and tea, but tea is too dear a commodity to dye much with. When we come back from the south country, we, perhaps, buy a stone of wool to be worked up.

A "merchant" giving his evidence says: "The people are buying less of some sorts of goods, but more meal. They are more deeply in debt to me than ever. I know the people are getting poorer, and that there are families in want of clothing and bed-clothes. The people were in the habit of making their own blankets of their own wool. Many of them have no blankets. Perhaps they will have bags over than at night"

A few plates and bowls, spoons and wooden porringers, stand on the rude dresser; a rickety table, a few stools and benches (all probably made of worm-eaten driftwood), complete the furniture, always excepting the hist, or seaman's chest, which contains all the Sunday garments of the family, and perhaps, too, the carefully-treasured winding-sheets, prepared by the good-wife for herself and her husband against the day when they will surely be required—a day that is often in their thoughts, not as the end of life, but merely as an incident in the journey that will take them safely to the only Land that is more to be desired than even their own dear Western Isles—the only Home that could be dearer than this, in which they have dwelt so lovingly ever since they can remember, and where most likely their ancestors for many generations have lived and died.

Many of these houses are most picturesque. In old age the thatch acquires a canopy of gold and brown velvety moss, and is perhaps also adorned with so rich a crop of grass as is positively valuable to the thrifty gude-wife, who, mounting on the roof with her rusty sickle, carefully cuts it all for her cow, should she be so fortunate as to possess one.

The roof is tied on with a perfect net-work of straw or heather ropes, and weighted by large stones, to resist the frightful gusts of wind, which would carry off any ordinary cottage roof. A wealthy man, and one who cares about trifles, may perhaps put up an old herring-barrel to act as a chimney, but, as a general rule, there is none, and the blue smoke finds its way out where it can, or settles on the brown rafters, encrusting the hanging cobwebs with thick peat-reek, which is a much more romantic decoration than our common domestic soot! As years wear on, even oft-repeated patching will not keep the decaying roof water-tight, and in the heavy rains every weak corner is betrayed by a ceaseless drip of diluted soot, establishing black puddles on the earthen floor, or wherever it may chance to fall. When the roof has become so thoroughly saturated with this rich brown grease that a new thatch becomes necessary, the old one is broken up, and becomes very valuable as manure for the little crofts (though some say that soot thus applied merely stimulates, but eventually deteriorates the land).

Owing to the great difficulty in obtaining timber, the real value of the house lies in its rafters; these are for the most part the gift of the sea; sometimes the masts of some poor ship, whose crew lie deep beneath the waters; oftener some grand tree torn up by the mighty tempests that months before raged over the western forests; thence floated by rushing torrents to the deep sea, to become the sport of the waves, and the home of strange creatures, animate and inanimate—barnacles and limpets and many-coloured weeds, which the builder has not thought it worth while to scrape off, so that when, after a few months, they have acquired the general rich brown hue of all within the house, they might very well pass muster as fine old oak carving.

As to the roots and branches, you must not fancy anything so precious is used for firewood; each little chip is turned to some good account; and the man who secures a good log of driftwood has found a prize indeed. Should he change his home from one village to another, he claims compensation from his successor for the roof timber, which is probably his most valuable possession. Hence when a young couple are courting, their wooing and cooing is accompanied by a most serious search for wood, sticks, straw, and moss, wherewith to build and thatch their future nest.

This lack of timber is one of the great grievances of the lairds, some of whom keep up a ceaseless struggle with nature, striving to make wood grow where she has determined to have none. All of which sound rather romantic, in the Robinson Crusoe style. The romance however fades considerably, when we face the unpoetic details of disputes between crofters and factors concerning the gathering of shell-fish,— the proclamations of legal penalties to be enacted against any person found carrying away drift-wood from the shore,—indignant gamekeepers driving off the women who venture to pull heather for thatch or ropes from their own pastures, the number of days' work claimed by the large farmers for permission to cut rushes from the sand-hills, or sea-ware from the rocks. It is vain to suggest that these bare moors are, at least in this present era, the true character of the country, and that they might as well try to change an aquiline nose into a Roman one. The struggle still goes on, and good gold is sunk in hopeless plantations and great



stone walls to protect them from the cutting sea blasts. By dint of these, the young trees are so far protected that they do get a fair start, but alas for the proud day when they attempt to over-top that kindly shelter! Very few days will pass before they are scorched and burnt up, as if by a furnace; and it seems pretty clear that except in a few sheltered nooks, such as Armadale, Dunvegan, and Greshernish, trees will not grow.

This is the more remarkable, as there are traces in different parts of the Hebrides of the comparative abundance of timber in olden days, a fact to which Dean Munro alludes when, writing in a.d. 1594, he speaks of Pabba (now a low grassy island lying off Broadford), as being "full of wodes, and a main shelter for thieves and cut-throats." With respect to more ancient forests, very extensive tracts exist where stems, roots, and branches of large trees, are constantly dug up in the peat moss, remains both of hardwood and of pine, the latter being invaluable as a substitute for candles, from the clear light of its resinous wood; and many a cosy home-group gathers round the ingle neuk, listening to stories of the old days, while one, learned in legends of the past, tells how the Norwegians swept these coasts, and burnt all the old forests, leaving traces of their devastations even to this day, in the charred and blackened timber.

In many instances, fine large trunks have been found under the present sea-level, covered with sea-weed and shells, a striking proof of the gradual encroachments of the ocean in certain districts. It is said that whole tracts of land, till recently under cultivation, have disappeared—or are now so covered with sand, as to be utterly worthless—very much in the same way as a great portion of the "Laich of Moray" was submerged by those fearful inundations at the close of the eleventh century, when, says Boethius, "the lands of Godowine, near the mouth of the Thames, and likewise the land of Moray on the east coast of Scotland, together with many villages, castles, towns, and extensive woods both in England and Scotland, were overwhelmed by the sea, and the labours of men laid waste by the discharge of sand from the sea."

One curious inference drawn from the class of timber which formerly flourished in these islands is, that a very marvellous change in climate must have taken place in comparatively recent ages. This seems to corroborate certain statistical accounts of the temperature which have been preserved at Kilwinning, in Ayrshire, where, it is affirmed, that so great was the heat in the month of May, that farmers had to leave off ploughing at 8 a.m., and could not resume work before 4 p.m. The same account states that the harvest was finished in August—a very different story from our average nowadays, when a harvest-home in September marks a very satisfactory autumn; while, in too many instances, a very much later date might be given.

In the Hebrides the cereal crops are always a matter of risk, owing to the extreme probability of prolonged autumnal rains; and it is only too common to see the crops at the end of the season cut green, and only fit for fodder. In truth, the patience and perseverance of the poor cotters, who continue year after year to toil in such unprofitable soil, are qualities which may well call forth but wondering admiration.

This particular district of Kilmuir, has the happy distinction of having from time immemorial been known as the best corn-producing portion of the Isle—"The granary of Skye." A hundred years ago Pennant described Uig as "laughing with corn," in contradistinction to other districts which he described as black and pathless bogs. To what extent this superiority may rise I know not, but, in a general way, the crofters on these poor lands never look for a return exceeding three times the quantity planted—many only reap one and a half times what they sow! (whereas on really good soil the farmer may garner twelve times the amount of seed sown).

So poor are the harvests of the land, throughout the Western Isles generally, that they can at best only supplement those of the sea, and these vary greatly from year to year. So essential to these small crofters is this combination of toils by sea and land, that out of the 1780 occupants of land in Skye, there are not more than sixty who are not also fishermen. This double profession is not altogether advantageous, however, as most of the work is crowded into the summer, and one labour interferes with the other. Necessary care for the land detains the men, so that they start late for the fishery; and then, again, they often have to leave the fishing-ground too soon, lest their agricultural work should suffer, and so they miss the finest shoals, which perhaps come just after they have left. Thus great labour is often expended for small profit.

Nevertheless almost every able-bodied man on the Isles counts on making his principal income by the summer herring-fishing, the profits on which (should there be any) afford his only margin of comfort for the year. For it is a rare season in which the sterile soil yields a sufficiency of grain for the requirements of the people, who are always obliged to buy meal, and are dependent on the sale of their fish to enable them to obtain their simple fare of oat-cake and porridge.

Any failure in these supplies at once results in positive distress. There is no cutting down of luxuries,—it is the necessaries of life that fail, and the whole population is at once plunged into absolute want. Never have the Isles experienced a more grievous succession of losses than those of 1882, which have resulted in such widespread misery that those dwelling in its midst, almost despair of coping with it. Indeed it would be difficult to picture a condition of more utter wretchedness than that in which the islanders are now plunged, utterly worsted in the strife with the adverse forces of nature.

The majority do not say much, being well-trained to suffer in silence, and having an amazing power of endurance in bearing troubles which they believe to be ordained by God. No Mahommedan submitting to the irresistible will of Allah can show more fortitude than do these simple Christian folk. "Our people," says one writing on their behalf, "are not over-ready to complain."

Norman MacLeod has recorded how, in a year of terrible destitution in the Highlands, he was present at the first distribution of meal in a remote district. A party of poor old women approached, their clothes patched and repatched, but very clean. They had come from a glen far inland to receive a dole of meal. Never before had they sought alms, and sorely did they shrink from approaching the Committee. At last they deputed one woman to go forward as their representative, and as she advanced they hid their faces in their tattered plaids. When she drew near she could not find words in which to tell her tale, but she bared her right arm, reduced by starvation to a mere skeleton, and stretching it towards the Committee, burst into tears, and her bitter sobs told their own tale of anguish.

That scene might be enacted again this day in a thousand districts in the Highlands and Isles, where nothing approaching to the present distress has been experienced during the last thirty years. It has been rightly said, that there could be no surer test of dire need than that these people should so far conquer their proverbial "Highland pride" as even now to reveal the depths of their poverty.

The tale of woe of 1882 practically commenced in the previous year, when a wild storm destroyed many of the boats. Local subscriptions, however, went far towards covering this loss—and the men went off in high hope to the herring fishery on the East coast. It proved an absolute failure, and at the close of the season, many crews returned home penniless, having had to borrow necessary funds from the fish-curers. Later in the season, the ling fishery, to which they looked for the recovery of some of their losses, proved an absolute blank. Thus the islanders were left entirely dependent on the return of their scanty crops. But here again they found that they had spent their strength for nought, and all their toil had been in vain.

First the potato crop proved an utter failure. As the summer wore on, the blackening shaws grievously suggested the approach of the too familiar blight. Even where the best seed had been planted in the best soil, the result was alike disheartening. In place of large mealy potatoes, the luckless planters gathered a small crop of worthless watery roots, smaller than walnuts. One man tells how he has only raised five barrels from the very same ground which generally yields thirty barrels. Another planted eight and a half barrels of seed potatoes and only raised two and a half. Others proved their crops so hopeless, that it was literally not worth the exertion of turning the ground to seek for the few half-diseased roots that might have been obtained.

Mr. Mackay, Chamberlain for Lewis, stated that in one parish he set two men to dig, in order to raise as many potatoes as possible, and all they were able to get, after working from ten in the morning till four o'clock in the afternoon, was about a basketful.

The testimony of the clergy writing from the neighbourhood of Stornaway, and from the district of Barvas, was heart-rending. They told of the sick and suffering, of feeble women and aged men who, in the extremity of illness, possessed only a few small diseased potatoes. They told of houses in which parents watched tenderly by dying children, but their bitter lamentations were not for the dying, but for the living children who were well-nigh starving. The teachers in the schools state that a large proportion of children in attendance, many of whom have travelled long distances from their homes, have actually done so without a morning meal of any sort. And they themselves have little or nothing to give. The parish ministers say truly that these are people who are not inclined to cry out for a small matter—nothing short of extreme need would have induced them to apply for aid.

But what can men do in the face of starvation? As long as there was the prospect of a tolerable grain-crop, they kept up a brave heart—though well, aware how scanty must be the supply, with neither potatoes nor herring to look to. Still, the harvest promised fair, and ripened so well that by the end of September all was cut, and ready for carrying. But on the night of the 1st October a terrible gale swept over the land, to the utter destruction of both grain and hay crops. The small stooks still stood ungarnered in the fields, all ready for stacking, when the tremendous storm burst upon the unsheltered shores, and carried them away as though they had been so many feathers. Some were carried miles inland, and scattered over the hill-sides; some were scattered along the sea-beach, others carried far out to sea.

When the fury of the gale subsided, all that remained of this—the last resource of the people—the produce of their year's toil—was some widely-scattered damaged straw, with all the grain beaten out of it. One man reports that on the morning of the gale he owned three hundred stooks of barley; of these, he was only able to save thirty. Another, who is generally able to make seven bolls of barley-mealy has this year failed to make one pound.

From every corner of the Isles, comes the same tale of distress, only varying a little in degree. Here is the report of a fairly typical village in the parish of Duirinish, in Skye. It contains thirty-seven houses, with a population of 189 persons. From this village about sixty men went to the herring fishing on the East coast, but the whole result was only twenty-one barrels, worth about £60, to be divided among the whole community—a poor reward for the long and arduous toil involved.

The crofters of this township planted 171 bolls of potatoes, but in the autumn they lifted only 215 bolls. In seed time they sowed 156 bolls of oats, but in the harvest they garnered only 136 ! So that on the grain crop all their toil resulted in dead loss.

The townships own twenty-three cows. In the spring of 1883 these were yielding only eleven quarts of milk a day—not a very abundant supply for 189 porridge-consuming men, women, and children!

Their sole remaining source of revenue was from their hens, which yielded an average of sixty-two eggs per diem.

To add to the wretchedness of their destitution, they had to endure the bitter cold of a prolonged winter, beside a dreary, almost tireless hearth, for the long summer rains which reduced the hay to a sodden pulp, prevented the newly-cut peats from drying. So they remained like heavy wet bricks, piled on the peat moss, and there in some districts they still lay, saturated,—when the wild October gale came and whirled them back into the peat-bogs whence they had been cut with so much labour.

One glimmer of hope remained in the prospect of the winter haddock-fishing, which in some years proves fairly lucrative. Last year, however, it proved an absolute failure, and for the third time in one year, the poor disheartened fellows returned to their sad homes, with empty boats, to face long months, during which no alleviation could be hoped for. So in the spring of 1883, many thousands of persons, in every part of the North-western Islands and Highlands, stood in absolute need of everything,—dependent on the charity of the more fortunate dwellers on the mainland for actual daily bread, as well as for seed-corn and seed-potatoes for the future.

This is no story of want resulting from improvidence, for the people are careful and frugal, and although very slow in their movements, and occasionally making matters worse than they need be, by procrastination, or by the listlessness born of vainly fighting against circumstances, to say nothing of the depression produced by constant under-feeding, it is certainly unjust to call them idle — many are hard-working. "A patient, industrious, God-fearing people" is the description given of them by those who know them best; and their life in most prosperous times would seem to us to be one of exceeding hardship—a life in which luxury is an altogether unknown term, and a bare subsistence is hardly wrung, by ceaseless toil, from the unfertile land and stormy waves.

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

Alastair