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Electric Scotland's Weekly Newsletter for December 22nd, 2023

Electric Scotland News

We're now in Winter!!! My Calendar tells me that Thursday 21st December is the first day of Winter. Here in Chatham we've only had a couple of inches of snow and none forecast for the rest of 2023.

A friend sent me a Christmas card and included this Christmas Prayer which I thought I'd share with you all...

A Christmas Prayer
By Robert Louis Stevenson

O God, our loving Father, help us
Rightly to remember the birth of Jesus,
That we may share in the song of the
Angels, the gladness of the shepherds
And the worship of the wise men.

Close the door of hate and open the
Door of love all over the world.

Deliver us from evil by the blessing
That Christ brings, and teach us
To be merry with clear hearts.

May the Christmas morning make us happy
To be thy children and the Christmas
Evening bring us to our beds with
Grateful thoughts, forgiving, and
Forgiven, for Jesus' sake, Amen.

Current Inflation Rates

UK - 3.9%
Canada - 3.1%
USA - 3.1%
Australia - 7.0%
New Zealand - 5.6%
Germany - 3.2%

France - 4,5%

Sudan

There's a reason why the fighting that has erupted there over the past week is ringing so many international alarm bells. Sudan is not only huge - the third largest country in Africa - it also stretches across an unstable and geopolitically vital region.

Whatever happens militarily or politically in the capital, Khartoum, ripples across some of the most fragile parts of the continent.

The country straddles the Nile River, making the nation's fate of almost existential importance; downstream, to water-hungry Egypt, and upstream, to land-locked Ethiopia with its ambitious hydro-electric plans that now affect the river's flow.

Sudan borders seven countries in all, each with security challenges that are intertwined with the politics of Khartoum.

There are more deaths in Sudan than there are in Gaza... just saying.

See a BBC article on Sudan in our Scottish News section below.

Scottish News from this weeks newspapers

I am partly doing this to build an archive of modern news from and about Scotland and world news stories that can affect Scotland and as all the newsletters are archived and also indexed on search engines it becomes a good resource. I might also add that in a number of newspapers you will find many comments which can be just as interesting as the news story itself and of course you can also add your own comments if you wish which I do myself from time to time. Here is what caught my eye this week...

Arrests Suggest Terrorist Organization Is Operating in Europe

Germany used to be considered a safe haven for Hamas, a place where the terror organization could raise money and build networks. Now, with the arrest of suspected members, fears are growing that Hamas could be planning attacks in Europe.

Read more at:

<https://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/hamas-in-germany-arrests-suggest-terrorist-organization-is-operating-in-europe-a-ba8a9a89-b5bc-49a1-9247-3cbac9519a58>

Scottish councils warn of bankruptcy risk without more funding

Local authorities are at risk of bankruptcy if funding from the Scottish government is not improved, council leaders have said. Cosla issued the warning in a briefing paper ahead of the Scottish budget on 19 December.

Read more at:

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-67611177>

Christmas in Scotland

From being banned to the first UK mention of Santa, how festivities have been reinvented down the centuries

Read more at:

<https://www.sundaypost.com/fp/christmas-in-scotland-from-being-banned-to-the-first-uk-mention-of-santa->

[how-festivities-have-been-reinvented-down-the-centuries/](#)

Royal Navy Type 45 destroyer's downing of drone hailed after first attack in 12 years
A royal Navy warship has carried out its first shot in anger since the Libyan campaign 12 years ago after downing an Iran-sponsored attack drone.

Read more at:

<https://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/1846466/Navy-destroyer-drone-attack-red-sea>

Huge jobs growth seen in Scotland's renewables sector
A study by the Fraser of Allander Institute says the industry supported 42,000 jobs compared with 27,000 the previous year.

Read more at:

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-67728915>

Conrad Black: No excuse for Trudeau turning his back on Israel's just war
There was not, after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, any agitation for a ceasefire by Canada or other allies

Read more at:

<https://archive.is/1vozR#selection-1647.0-1647.113>

To Govern is to Choose

The Scottish Government has recently been pushing misleading lines on Barnett consequentials. These are the facts.

Read more at:

https://www.these-islands.co.uk/publications/i394/to_govern_is_to_choose.aspx

Look this way: the glass is half full
A proper winter morning for a change. I'm bird watching by the window with a cooling coffee.

Read more at:

<https://sceptical.scot/2023/12/look-this-way-the-glass-is-half-full/>

Sudan conflict: Hundreds of thousands flee Wad Madani safe-haven - UN
The paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) have advanced into the city of Wad Madani, in al-Jazira state.

Read more at:

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-67754921>

The Scottish Government claimed Westminster is causing real-term cuts to the Scottish NHS.

The SNP has been called out as liars after a claim about NHS funding north of the border had to be fact-checked by X.

Read more at:

<https://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/1846699/SNP-NHS-funding-lie-tweet-fact-check>

Trump's legal defeat in Colorado may turn into political gold
One of the court challenges to Donald Trump's eligibility to run for president in 2024 has finally struck gold.

Read more at:

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-67632728>

Scots 'pay more for less' after budget, Douglas Ross says
He accused ministers of wasting taxpayers' money and warned highly-skilled workers could move away from Scotland. It came as council leaders said the budget would lead to service cuts and job losses across the country.

Read more at:

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-67750361>

Electric Canadian

The History of the Morison or Morrison Family

With most of the "Traditions of the Morrisons" (Clan Mac Ghillemuire), Hereditary Judges of Lewis, by Capt. F. W. L. Thomas, of Scotland, and a record of the descendants of the Hereditary Judges to 1880. A complete history of the Morison Settlers of Londonderry, N. H., of 1719, and their descendants, with genealogical sketches also, of the Brentwood, Nottingham, and Sanbornton, N. H., Morrisons and Branches of the Morrisons who settled in Delaware, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Nova Scotia, and descendants of the Morrisons of Preston Grange, Scotland, and other families by Leonard A. Morrison (1880) (pdf)

You can read this book at:

<http://www.electriccanadian.com/makers/historymorisono00morrgoog.pdf>

The Jarvis Family

Or, The Descendants of the first settlers of the name in Massachusetts and Long Island and those who have recently settled in other parts of the United States and British America, collected and compiled by George A. Jarvis, of New York; George Murray Jarvis, of Ottawa, Canada; William Jarvis Wetmore, of New York; assisted by Alfred Harding, of Brooklyn, N. Y. (1879) (pdf)

You can read this book at:

<http://www.electriccanadian.com/makers/jarvisfamilyorde00jarvuoft.pdf>

Industries of Canada

City of Montreal: historical and descriptive review, leading firms and moneyed institutions by Argyll, John Douglas Sutherland Campbell (1886) (pdf)

You can read this book at:

<http://www.electriccanadian.com/transport/industrial/industriesofcanada02.pdf>

Sinclair, Alexander MacLean

Presbyterian minister, author, Gaelic scholar, and educator.

Read about him and also his book on the Clan Gillean at:

<http://www.electriccanadian.com/makers/sinclair-alexander-maclean.htm>

Thoughts on a Sunday Morning - the 17th day of December 2023 - Joy

By the Rev. Nola Crewe

You can watch this at:

<http://www.electricscotland.org/forum/communities/rev-nola-crewe/26433-thoughts-on-a-sunday-morning-the-17th-day-of-december-2023-joy>

Love of the Wild

By Archie P. McKishnie (1910)

You can read this book at:

<http://www.electriccanadian.com/lifestyle/poetry/ArchieMcKishnie.htm>

Electric Scotland

Thoughts on Family Worship

By James W. Alexander, Pastor of the Duane Street Presbyterian Church, New York (1847) (pdf)

You can read this book at:

<https://electricscotland.com/bible/thoughtsonfami00alex.pdf>

The Throne of the Fisherman

Built by the Carpenter's Son, the Root, the Bond, and the Crown of Christendom by Thomas W. Allies, K.C.S.G. (1887) (pdf)

You can read this book at:

<https://electricscotland.com/bible/TheThroneOfTheFisherman.pdf>

The Sea Clearances - a Global Overview

By David B. Thomson, Scotland (2001) (pdf)

You can read his report at:

https://electricscotland.com/thomson/thompson-david_sea-clearances-a-global-overview-2001-jul.pdf

Skinner, Thomas

Father of British homoeopathy

You can read about him at:

https://electricscotland.com/history/other/skinner_thomas.htm

The Life and Works of Thomas Graham, D.O.L, F.E.S.

Illustrated by 64 unpublished letters by Dr. R. Angus Smith, LL.D., F.R.S.

Edited by J. J. Coleman, F.I.C., F.C.S. (1884) (pdf)

You can read about him at:

<https://electricscotland.com/history/other/thomas-graham.pdf>

Scottish Jews

I added three videos of Jewish connections in Scotland.

You can watch these at:

<https://electricscotland.com/history/world/Jews.htm>

Clan MacLean

Added two videos to the history of Clan MacLean, one a two part which features the Clan Chief in Australia.

You can watch these at:

<https://electricscotland.com/webclans/m/maclean2.html>

Perthshire

By Peter MacNair, F.R.S.E., F.G.S., Curator of the Natural History Collections in the Glasgow Museums
Lecturer on Mineralogy and Geology in the Technical College, Glasgow, With Maps, Diagrams and Illustrations
(1912) (pdf)

You can read this book at:

<https://electricScotland.com/history/perth/perthitsannalsit00peacuoft.pdf>

The Pheasant

From the Fur, Feather & Fin Series.

You can read this book at:

<https://electricScotland.com/history/sport/pheasant.pdf>

Beautiful Christmas Music 2024

Best Christmas Songs of All Time for Relax, Sleep, Study.

You can watch this video at:

<https://electricScotland.com/index98.htm>

Time's Treasure

Or Devout thoughts for every day of the year expressed in verse by Lord Kinloch (third edition) (1865) (pdf)

You can read this book at:

<https://electricScotland.com/bible/Timestreasure.pdf>

Fur Feather & Fin Series

Edited by Alfred E. T. Watson - The Trout

You can read this book at:

<https://electricScotland.com/history/sport/furfeather.htm>

Story

Reminiscences of Dr. Guthrie

By a Mourner

ALMOST in the "Queen's Highlands," and within a ride from Glenmark lies the little loch among the mountains, beside which Dr. Guthrie found his autumn home and resting-place for more than twenty years. "Lochlee" lies in no tourist route, but in the midst of a great deer forest. It is situated about twenty-four miles from Brechin. A drive for the most part through the wild and romantic scenery of Glenesk, finally passing through the rustic villages of Inchgrundle and Tarfside. At one extremity of the loch, and commanding a splendid view of the surrounding country, stands a ruined castle or keep, once the northern retreat of "the Lindsays." Near at hand is Invermark Lodge, a hunting-box belonging to Earl Dalhousie. And close to the shore of the loch are a few cottages in ruins, and a little old churchyard, wherein lay the remains of an almost forgotten rural poet, Alexander Ross.

Five years ago, it was my privilege to spend some memorable days with the great and good Doctor and his lovely household in this retreat.

Visitors could be seen a long way off, and the Doctor came out of the house to welcome us while we were yet far away on the road by the loch-side. For the cottage where he dwelt was at the farther end from Invermark

Lodge and the ruined keep. It was a farmhouse of very modest pretensions, and the Doctor's family and hospitality had so far overflowed its bounds, that it had been found necessary to supplement its limited accommodation by a moveable wooden house which stood among the offices, and had been brought up, American fashion, from Brechin. I afterwards made a little sketch of the dwelling, with the mighty crag behind and the silvery loch before. My hand had not much cunning, and I only aspired to fix a pleasant memory out of reach of Time's officious fingers.

But the Doctor was pleased to approve of my sketch, above many more artistic ones, and that for a reason so characteristic that I cannot omit it "The others had all made the house too big; out of proportion to the hills, they had just been afraid to show that they saw how wee it was!"

I think the Doctor had almost an affection for the great dark crag, which reared its savage head behind and almost over his little dwelling. He planned an early day for me to ascend it, and made every considerate provision for the possible weakness of my London-used feet. He was as delighted as I could be, that the day proved so unusually favourable, that from its summit we caught a glimpse of the distant sea. The crag is truly full of wild beauty, treacherous too, as all savage things are wont to be, for its higher levels are thickly dotted with peat mosses, which in their day have engulfed both man and beast. It is quite easy to lose oneself on the crag, and there are so many dangers on every hand, that the least mist puts one at fault. A bride and bridegroom were crossing it on the evening of their wedding day, when a fog arose, and they were only too thankful to find a refuge for the night in a chilly "cleft of the rock." A wild cotton plant grows on the crag, and many rare and lovely specimens of moss and fern. The etymology of the crag's name is rather doubtful. I have only seen it once or twice in print, and each time it varied. I cannot be far wrong in spelling it Maist-keldie, since local tradition says it derived its name from the following incident.

Two men had climbed to its highest point,—a great granite boulder which, I know by experience, catches the wind very fairly. One attempted to lean over the face of the crag, which is perpendicular, or just a little out, in the way of the tower of Pisa. He nearly lost his balance, but was saved by his comrade's grasp, who coolly observed, "Eh, mon, that maist kilt ye" (Maistkeldie). I tell the story as it is told. But I strongly suspect that the unpronounceable name preceded it.

On the right hand of the loch looking from the house lies a long green hill, whose summit comes out against the clear evening sky in a curious likeness to a sleeping man,—a spell-bound giant. It is an Ossianic poem by nature herself.

There, in that homely retreat of a great genius and a sublime orator, life was reduced to its simplest elements only to show how rich they are! It may be that those yearly autumns at Lochlee, when the Doctor shut himself out from the bray of fame, and the ceremonious compliment, and "dwelt among" the humblest and the poorest, had something to do with that perennial flow of sympathy which never failed to enrich with its own beauty the simplest paths of obscure life.

If ever there was a man who kept his eyes open to the truth that what has been, still is, and will be, and that the great army of saints and martyrs has not departed without dropping its mantle on those that remain, that man was Thomas Guthrie. He would point out this one and that one among the scattered neighbours, as circumstances brought them before us, and with just a hint at their history — no betrayal of confidence, but some fact grasped by a strong heart guided by a sharp eye — he would say emphatically, "That man is a hero!" "That woman is a saint!" Yet he encouraged no morbid introspection. He did not lower virtue by teaching her to watch her own reflection. Many and many a one placed in trying paths, only knew his sympathy by the consciousness that after "a word wi' the Doctor," they felt the stronger to struggle on! And yet it might be a very simple word, such as another might speak unheeded.

Dr. Guthrie was no unsocial student, none of those who must be shut up in a solitary tower to consume the midnight oil — whose oracle will not speak unless all else be silent. Whilst I was at Lochlee he wrote not only

his correspondence, but also a sermon (which he afterwards preached in the open air by Invennark,) in the midst of his family — a large party in close quarters — with many coming and going. He would look up suddenly, and tell an anecdote apropos to his work, or of his correspondent. The richness of this, his ordinary household talk, was remarkable. He should have had a Boswell. Doubtless the affectionate memory of his children and friends will do much to gather up the fragments. Still many a gem must be lost.

He loved nature with the simplicity of a child, was never weary of sitting outside the door, gazing at the varying aspects of the crags and loch, or using his glass to watch the red deer as they bounded on the far-off hilltop. He loved, too, the old simple Scotch songs, asking for them and never wearying of them. The pathos of the “Land of the Leal” and the humour of the “Laird of Cockpen,” alike found echo in his great heart. He had the same innocent delight in literature, reading slowly, and judging of the characters and events of fiction in the full, quiet light in which one would judge of real life. During my visit he was reading “Esmond,” and while he repeatedly paused to make admiring comment on passages of wisdom and beauty, he was nevertheless keen to detect the tarnish on Lady Castlewood’s story, and to doubt whether such a man as Henry Esmond would have been so long enslaved by such “a Jezebel” as Beatrix.

Dr. Guthrie, of course, conducted his own family worship, his household being always joined on these occasions, not only by the family who were the permanent occupants of the lonely farm, and by any gillie who might be in the vicinity, but also by the tramps who might be earning a few days’ shelter by a little field work. For these waifs, the Doctor had ever a kindly word and inquiry, and a special clause in the prayer. It was touching to see the dull faces brighten, and the shuffling forms draw up, as, on their second appearance, they found that their names and any special circumstance about them was duly remembered. I have seen the Doctor standing in brilliant halls with rank and power and beauty hanging spellbound on his words; but, pleasant as all those memories are, I love best to think of the Lochlee evening “worship” — the chapter, the prayer, the psalm — with just his dearest about him, and those few weatherbeaten shepherd folk, shut by the awful mountain silence, only broken once and again by the bay of a hound or the shrill pathos of some wandering gillie’s bagpipe. The letter-bag once arrived in the moonlight to the sound of that strange, wild music. Had the beginning of a life’s romance been in that letterbag, I think it would have had a fitting accompaniment.

I was privileged to hear the sermon which the Doctor preached in the open-air by Invermark Lodge. There were a hundred and twenty people present, nearly everybody — from peer to pauper — within a long walking distance, and some few beyond it.

Perhaps I maybe permitted to quote from a letter written immediately after this occasion.

“It was very thrilling to hear the Hundredth Psalm pealing out among the solemn old hills, and it was such a blessing to hear the Doctor’s living soul in his prayer and sermon..... His subject was the blind man receiving his sight, and two or three of his remarks struck me so forcibly that I will do my best to report them from memory.

Christ says, “As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” And as He is the light, so must every Christian be a light. He must be a blessing to somebody. Somebody must find a strange darkness fall when his life goes out. Pity the dying man who will be missed by none, neither beast nor body. For this I say, that not only will Christianity make one a better father or mother, husband or wife, son or daughter, but that his very cat and dog will be better off through his Christianity.

“If I did not believe in the power of the Spirit of God, I would as soon go and preach to the dead in yon churchyard as to you. For preaching is nothing; only where man is doing his best, the Spirit of God is most likely to come in and complete his work.

“In this world we must not measure God’s heart by his hand. He chastens whom He loves. And even with men is not the sheep pampered for the slaughter, while the son is disciplined and punished, and trained to endure

toil and hardness?

“I have seen a mother who shut her door on her daughter. I have known a father who spurned an only son. But I never knew God to turn away from one who called on Him.”

Another letter, written soon after, asks its correspondent, then on the Continent:—

“Do you feel any evil influence from your stay in irreligious and Sabbathless countries? For the other day Dr. Guthrie was speaking about life on the Continent, and he says he has often seen the most melancholy results follow a residence in places where the spiritual life could get no sustenance or sympathy.”

Another letter narrates:— “Dr. Guthrie was telling me a story of the Covenanting times. The dragoons searching for a proscribed preacher, met the preacher’s wife, and asked to be led to his house, and she took them straight to the place, and into the very room where her husband sat, but effectually saved him from suspicion by giving him a sharp cuff, calling him a lazy loon, and bidding him go and tend the gentlemen’s horses.”

I have quoted these passages because they were just written at the time, and their bald distinctness may be more reliable than any memories. There is a suspicion, generally well founded, that—

“The past doth always win
A glory from its being far.”

But these little extracted notes were made when they were not sacred reminiscences, but just pleasant “news.”

That visit to Lochlee is one of the purest pearls on my thread of life. I want to give to others a pale, poor picture of the ideal which it gave me. But these few words represent the yearning memory of happiness and holiness which I bear, only as an old “hortus siccus” represents the beautiful days of summer time and love, when its withered treasures were plucked from their dewy stems.

The pass behind Crag Maistkeldie, opal in the sunset, will still rise on my mind whenever I read St. John’s imagery of the New Jerusalem, and the black crag will still frown over the silver lake, and the green hill giant will go sleeping, but the good Doctor has found a more enduring repose than his annual rest among the mountains.

“We shall go to him, but he will not return to us.” I think nobody can ever have better fulfilled his own idea of a Christian, for many a life has lost a light in him, and many a heart turns, with a new understanding, to the promise, “When father and mother forsake me, then the Lord taketh me up.”

“He’s in the light, he’s in the song,
He sees the smile on Jesu’s face.
But oh to us, it seems so long
To live and watch his empty place.”

“O hush, impatient hearts, and think:
God’s floods are swift and strong and deep,
You shrink and shiver on their brink;
Who trust God’s hand, God’s hand shall keep.”

“Be happier for your friend ashore.
As a tossed mariner would be,
Who sees a comrade’s danger o’er,
And knows, “then there’s a chance for me.”

"At hand he could not help you so:
But looking on the steps he trod.
You'll see some larger footprints show
The way Christ went from man to God.

"Pass bravely on, and kiss the rod.
And fear no loss, no lonely hours,—
Lift your hearts up to live with God,
And all the friends with Him are yours."

END.

You can read more about him at:

<https://www.electricscotland.com/history/guthrie/index.htm>

Weekend is almost here and hope it's a good one for you and wishing you all a Merry Christmas.

Alastair