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## Electric Scotland's Weekly Newsletter for January 10th, 2014

### Electric Scotland News

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>

Any books that we're adding day by day or week by week can be found on these what's new pages.

Here are some of the highlights from the past week...

### Electric Canadian

Added some new videos to our Cape Breton page at: [http://www.electriccanadian.com/history/novascotia/cape\\_breton.htm](http://www.electriccanadian.com/history/novascotia/cape_breton.htm)

A Holiday Trip to Canada (1911) is a new book I've added. It was written by Mary J. Sansom in 1911 and starts with boarding a ship in England. You can read the entire book at:

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

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

This history deals specially with the first Presbyterian congregation of Esqnesing and its successor, the Boston Church, but in connection therewith other matters come in for mention.

The main source of information has been the Boston Church record-books. For some contemporaneous events and conditions in the country a few publications have been consulted. Some incidents have been ascertained by interview, or by correspondence with those who had knowledge of them, and the writer has drawn upon reminiscences of his own.

We're adding a chapter per day until complete and you can read this at:

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

### The Flag in the Wind

This weeks issue was compiled by Clare Adamson in which she is telling us how the SNP government is investing in children's future.

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

### Electric Scotland

Tales and Sketches

By Hugh Miller (1863)

This is a new book we're starting and the first two section provide considerable information about our two famous poets, Ferguson and Burns.

Here is the Preface written by his wife...

The following "Tales and Sketches" were written at an early period of the author's career, during the first years of his married life, before he had attempted to carry any part of the world on his shoulders in the shape of a public newspaper, and found it by no means a comfortable burden. Yet possibly the period earlier still, when he produced his "Scenes and Legends," had been more favorable for a kind of writing which required in any measure the exercise of the imagination. The change to him was very great, from a life of constant employment in the open air, amid the sights and sounds of nature, to "the teasing monotony of one which tasked his intellectual powers without exercising them." Hence, partly, it may be imagined, the intensity of his sympathy with the poet Ferguson. The greater number of these Tales were composed literally over the midnight lamp, after returning late in the evening from a long day's work over the ledger and the balance-sheet. Tired though he was, his mind could not stagnate — he must write. I do not mention these circumstances at all by way of apology. It has struck me, in\* deed, that the Tales are nearly all of a pensive or tragical cast, and that in congenial circumstances they might have had a more joyous and elastic tone, in keeping with a healthier condition of the nervous system. Yet their defects must undoubtedly belong to the mind of their author. I am far from being under the delusion that he was, or was ever destined to be, a Walter Scott or Charles Dickens. The faculties of plot and drama, which find their scope in the story and the novel, were among the weakest, instead of the strongest, of his powers. Yet I am deceived if the lovers and students of Hugh Miller's Works will not find in the "Tales and Sketches" some matter of special interest. In the first three there are, I think, glimpses into his own inner life, such as he, with most men of reserved and dignified character, would choose rather to personify in another than to make a parade of in their own person, when coming forward avowedly to write of themselves. And, then, if he could have held a conversation with Robert Burns, so that all the world might hear, I think there are few who would not have listened with some curiosity. In his "Recollections of Burns" we have his own side of such conversation; for it seems evident that it is himself that he has set a travelling and a talking in the person of Mr. Lindsay.

But of Burns's share in the dialogue the reader is the best judge. Some may hold that he is too like Hugh Miller himself, — too philosophic in idea, and too pure in sentiment. In regard to this, we can only remind such that Burns's prose was not like his poetry, nor his ideal like his actual life.

Unquestionably my husband had a very strong sympathy with many points in the character of Burns. His thorough integrity ; his noble independence, which disdained to place his honest opinions at the mercy of any man or set of men; his refusal to barter his avowal of the worth and dignity of man for the smiles and patronage of the great, even after he had tasted the sweets of their society, which is a very different matter from such avowal before that time, if any one will fairly think of it, — all this, with the acknowledged sovereignty of the greater genius, made an irresistible bond of brotherhood between Miller and Burns. But to the grosser traits of the poet's character my husband's eyes were perfectly open ; and grieved indeed should I be if it could for a moment be supposed that he lent the weight of his own purer moral character to the failings, and worse than failings, of the other. Over these he mourned, he grieved. I believe he would at any time have given the life of his body for the life of his brother's soul. Above all, he deplored that the all-prevailing power of Christian love was never brought to bear on the heart of this greatest of Scotland's sons. If Thomas Chalmers had been in the place of Russell, who knows what might have been? But, doubtless, God in his providence had wise purposes to serve. It is often by such instruments that he scourges and purifies his church. For let us not forget, that scenes such as are depicted in the "Holy Fair," however painful to our better feelings were strictly and literally true. This I have myself heard from an eye-witness, who could not have been swayed by any leanings towards the anti-puritan side; and, doubtless, many others are aware of testimony on the same side of equal weight.

We may hope that the time is passing away when the more exceptionable parts of Burns's character and writings are capable of working mischief, at least among the higher and middle classes. It is cause of thankfulness that in regard to such, and with him as with others, there is a sort of purifying process goes on, which leaves the higher and finer elements of genius to float buoyantly, and fulfil their own destiny in the universal plan, while the grosser are left to sink like lead in the mighty waters. Thus it is in those portions of society already refined and elevated. But there is yet a portion of the lower strata where midnight orgies continue to prevail, and where every idea of pleasure is connected with libertinism and the bottle; and there the worst productions of Burns are no doubt still rife, and' working as a deadly poison. Even to a superior class of working-men, who are halting between two opinions, there is danger from the very mixture of good and evil in the character and writings of the poet. They cannot forget that he who wrote

"The cock may crawl, the day may dawn,  
Yet still we'll taste the barley bree,"

"A man's a man for a' that"; and they determine, or are in danger of determining, to follow the object of their worship with no halting step. Doubtless political creed and the accidents of birth still color the individual estimate of Burns and his writings. It is but of late that we have seen society torn, on occasion of the centenary of the poet, by conflicting opinion as to the propriety of observing it; and many would fain have it supposed that the religious and anti-religious world were ranged on opposite sides. But it was not so. There were thoroughly good and religious men, self-made, who could not forget that Burns had been the champion of their order, and had helped to win for them respect by the power of his genius; while there were others — religious men of old family — who could remember nothing but his faults. I remember spending one or two evenings about that time in the society of a well-born, earnestly religious, and highly estimable gentleman, who reprobated Burns, and scoffed at the idea that a man could be a man for a' that. He might belong to a limited class; for well I know that among peers there are as ardent admirers of Burns as among peasants. All I would say is, that even religious feelings may take edge and bitterness from other causes. But to the other class— those who from

loyalty and gratitude are apt to follow Burns too far — well I know that my husband would have said, “ Receive all genius as the gift of God, but never let it be to you as God. It ought never to supersede the exercise of your own moral sense, nor can it ever take the place of the only infallible guide, the Word of God.”

But I beg the reader's pardon for digressing thus, when I ought to be pursuing the proper business of a preface, which is, to state any explanatory circumstances that may be necessary in connection with the work in hand.

The “Recollections of Ferguson” are exquisitely painful — so much so that I would fain have begun with something brighter; but these two contributions being the most important, and likewise the first in order of a series, they seemed to fall into the beginning as their natural place. I have gone over the Life of Ferguson, which the reader may do for himself, to see whether there is any exaggeration in the “Recollections.” I find them all perfectly faithful to the facts. The neglected bard, the stone cell, the straw pallet, the stone paid for by a brother bard out of his own straitened means are not flattering to the “Embro' Gentry”; but amid a great deal of flattery, a little truth is worth remembering. On the other hand it rejoices one to think that Ferguson's death-bed, on the heavenward side, was not dark. The returning reason, the comforts of the Word of Life, are glimpses of God's providence and grace that show gloriously amid the otherwise outer darkness of those depths.

The sort of literature of superstition revived or retained in “The Lykewake,” there are a great many good people who think the world would be better without.

It chanced to me some three years ago, when residing in a seabathing village, and sitting one day on a green turf-bank overlooking the sea, to hear a conversation in which this point was brought very prominently forward. A party consisting of a number of young people, accompanied by their papa, a young French lady, who was either governess or friend, and a gentleman in the garb of a clergyman, either friend or tutor, seated themselves very near me; and it was proposed by the elder gentleman that a series of stories should be told for the amusement and edification of the young people. A set of stories and anecdotes were accordingly begun, and very pleasingly told, chiefly by the clergyman, friend or tutor. Among others was a fairy tale entitled “Green Sleeves,” to which the name of Hugh Miller was appended, and which evoked great applause from the younger members of the party, but regarding which the verdict of papa, very emphatically delivered, was, “I approve of farics neither in green sleeves nor white sleeves. However,”—after a pause, during which he seemed to be revolving in his mind any possible use for the like absurdities, — “they may serve to show us the blessings of the more enlightened times in which we live, when schools for the young, and sciences for all ages, have banished such things from the world.” So, with this utilitarian view of the subject let us rest satisfied, unless we are of those who, feeling that the human mind is a harp of many strings, believe that it is none the worse for having the music of even its minor chords awakened at times by a skilful hand.

I am unable to say whether “Bill Whyte” be a real story, ever narrated by a bona fide tinker of the name, or no. I am rather inclined to think that it is not, because I recognize in it several incidents drawn from “Uncle Sandy's” Experiences in Egypt, such as the hovering of the flight of birds, seared and terrified, over the smoke and noise of battle, the encampment in the midst of a host of Turks' bones, etc.

With the “Young Surgeon” I was myself acquainted. It is a sketch strictly true.

“The Story of the Scotch Merchant of the Eighteenth Century,” which also is a true story, was written originally at the request of a near relative of Mr. Forsyth, for private circulation among a few friends, and is now for the first time given to the public by the kind consent of the surviving relatives.

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

Among the Wild Ngoni

Being some chapters in the history of the Livingstonia Mission in British Central Africa by W. A. Elmslie, M.B., C.M., F.R.G.S., Medical Missionary with Introduction by The Right Hon. Lord Overtoun (1899)

This is a new book we're starting and here is part of the Introduction...

THE eyes of the world are on Africa, and the nations of the West are eagerly engaged in exploring and annexing land without asking the consent of the inhabitants. Till far on in the century only the fringes of Africa were known, the districts round the Cape up to Natal were early colonised, while the West Coast was specially known as the “White Man's Grave.” The north, once the abode of pirates, fell chiefly under French influence, and the wondrous land of Egypt, stretching into the dim past, has been the battlefield of hosts contending for its possession. While the East Coast has languished under Portuguese misrule and neglect, Egypt and the southern regions have steadily advanced under British possession and influence.

The southern portion of what has long been known as the Dark Continent has been to a great extent civilised, and while elements have not been wanting to degrade the native races, much has been done to spread the Gospel and the arts of peace. But during all these years the interior of Africa was an unknown land, sometimes marked in maps as “Desert,” but believed to be the abode of horrid

cruelty. Explorers from Bruce to Speke, Thomson and Grant, sought to penetrate its secrets, but the malarial climate, the fever swamps and tangled forests, not to speak of wild beasts and savage men, barred the way.

It was David Livingstone, a self-educated Scottish weaver, who, inspired with the passion to discover the secret sources of the Nile, and the mysteries of Central Africa, was raised up by God to carry the Gospel message to those who, for centuries, had sat in darkness and in the shadow of death.

This is not the place to recite how, time after time, he plunged alone into the dark land, and with a gentleness which won his way, and a dauntless and persevering daring which carried him through many perils, brought to light the secrets of centuries, and blazed a path for civilisation and the Gospel.

But his heart was wrung with the horrors of the dreadful slave trade which had decimated Africa for ages, and caused the groans and sighs of her sons and daughters to ascend to heaven.

On a May day in 1873, worn out by fatigue and cruel fever, he was found dead by his faithful native boys, kneeling as in prayer at the side of the rude bed in his hut, amid the swamps of Lake Bangweolo.

Among his last written words were, "May Heaven's rich blessing come down on every one—American, English, Turk—who will help to heal this open sore of the world." Carried by loving hands over a nine months' march, his body was laid in Westminster Abbey in April 1874, and the story of his life and death sent a thrill through Christendom, and purposes were formed for the sending of the Gospel to Central Africa.

You can read this book as we get it up at <http://www.electricscotland.com/history/africa/ngoni/index.htm>

#### History of Montrose

Containing important particulars in relation to its Trade, Manufactures, Commerce, Shipping, Antiquities, Eminent Men, Town Houses of the Neighbouring Country Gentry in Former Years. &c. by David Mitchell (1866)

Another new book we're starting and there is an excellent half hour video of the town for you to view.

You can get to this book and video at <http://www.electricscotland.com/history/montrose/index.htm>

#### Songs of John Henderson

John sent in another two songs, The Vardo and Clashmaclavers which can be read at:

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

#### Robert Burns Lives!

A Letter from John Clark, Dumfries Artist and Poet

Last week we brought you the story of three Ukrainians (Peter, Hanna, and Taya) and this week we add a Scot, John Clark, a famous Dumfries artist as well as a published poet. John was asked to provide a cover for ROBERT BURNS SELECTED WORKS, a book written in both English and Hungarian. It was compiled by Peter and Hanna. John's gallery sits close to the Theatre Royal and is famous for being a place of refuge for Robert Burns. Had he lived, a lot of scholars feel that the next great adventure for Burns would be play writing. It would have been the third area to display the genius of Burns, poems and songs being the first two.

I want to express my appreciation to one and all for helping with these last two chapters of Robert Burns Lives! since it is something new for most of us. My deepest thanks go to Peter, Hanna, and John. Hopefully I will still receive the story from Taya as to how Burns influenced her life. When and if it comes in I will add it to last week's chapter featuring Peter and Hanna. Below is a letter from John Clark I received about his work on the front cover of the book.

Next time we meet I hope to introduce a series of articles to be written over 2014 that will be a highlight for me. Until then, stay tuned! (FRS: 1.9.a4)

You can read this article at [http://www.electricscotland.com/familytree/frank/burns\\_lives189.htm](http://www.electricscotland.com/familytree/frank/burns_lives189.htm)

We've continued to add chapters to...

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

The Scottish Review at:

[http://www.scottishreview.net/KennethRoy139A.shtml?utm\\_source=Sign-Up.to&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=8427-310122-Two+useful+lives+are+being+unjustly+ruined](http://www.scottishreview.net/KennethRoy139A.shtml?utm_source=Sign-Up.to&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=8427-310122-Two+useful+lives+are+being+unjustly+ruined)

First Impressions of England and its People at:

<http://www.electricscotland.com/history/miller/england.htm>

The Martyres of Blantyre at <http://www.electricscotland.com/history/africa/blantyre/index.htm>

Scotland, Picturesque: Historical: Descriptive at <http://www.electricscotland.com/history/wars>

And Finally a story sent in by Stan Bruce...

Teacher says to the class, we are going to talk about stories which have a moral today.

A wee lass at the front says to the teacher, "I went down to the hen house and there was 12 eggs, so I said to mummy, we'll get 12 chicks, but we only got six, the moral is Don't count your chickens before they hatch".

"That's a good one" said the teacher, any more?

Another wee lass at the front said, "Yes, I also went down to the hen house, and I also saw 12 eggs. I put them all in my basket and excitedly ran to the house, but I tripped and ten of them broke, only leaving me with two, the moral of the story is Don't put all your eggs in one basket".

"Excellent" said the teacher, anyone else?

Alastair at the back of the class says "Aye miss I hae one".

"OK, lets hear it then", said the teacher.

"Well miss it was during WW1, and my grandad was in the trenches in France, and all of his mates were deid. He was being attacked by ten Germans, and all he had was a bottle of whisky and ten bullets."

"So what happened?" Said the teacher.

"Well he took a swally o' the whisky, and shot the ten Germans dead".

"He was a very brave man your granddad" said the teacher, "But what's the moral to the story?"

Alastair promptly replied "Ye dinna mess wi mi grandfaither fa'n he's pissed!"

And I know how many of you enjoy some of these wee humour stories so have you have a wee browse at our Humor section at:

<http://www.electricscotland.com/humour/index.htm>

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

Alastair