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Electric Scotland's Weekly Newsletter for April 2nd, 2021

For the latest news from Scotland see our ScotNews feed at:

<https://electricscotland.com/scotnews.htm>

Electric Scotland News

I got my first vaccine injection today of the Pfizer-Biontech Covid-19 mRNA PB and the next dose will be around June 20-26. It took around 30 minutes in all which included a wait of 15 minutes after you had the vaccine.

I produced a video where I'm talking about how not all political parties are getting equal billing in the Scottish elections and also how I liked the interview with the Scottish Labour leader and also commented on how despite all the mess the EU are in right now the Scottish press hardly mentions it in their publications.

You can view this video at:

<http://www.electricscotland.org/forum/electric-scotland/es-videos/26007-reporting-on-the-scottish-elections-and-the-eu>

Scottish News from this weeks newspapers

Note that this is a selection and more can be read in our ScotNews feed on our index page where we list news from the past 1-2 weeks. 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 Google and other 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.

Archaeologists re-writing the history of the Picts are honoured

Pioneering work led by Aberdeen University has radically altered understanding of the people who lived in the north and east of Scotland between roughly 300 and 800AD

Read more at:

<https://www.scotsman.com/heritage-and-retro/heritage/archaeologists-re-writing-the-history-of-the-picts-are-honoured-3174795>

Former SNP leader Alex Salmond launches new political party

Former SNP leader Alex Salmond has announced the creation of a new pro-independence party which will contest the Scottish Parliament election.

Read more at:

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-56539696>

What the Scottish Government's defeat on church worship tells us

THE HEADLINES were straightforward. - Scottish Church leaders celebrate as church ban ruled unlawful'. The reactions unsurprising.

Read more at:

https://www.thinkscotland.org/todays-thinking/articles.html?read_full=14522

Liz Truss reaches new agreement to unlock post-Brexit trade in Asia

The International Trade Secretary has set up a new framework to explore further investment opportunities with Thailand. Thailand is seen as a key player in emerging markets across Asia and last year trade with the UK was worth more than £5billion.

Read more at:

<https://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/1416562/Brexit-news-trade-deal-latest-liz-truss-asia-Thailand-European-union>

Nicola Sturgeon record of shame exposed - SNP chief blasted over appalling child poverty
NICOLA STURGEON has been attacked after pledging to end child poverty across Scotland, despite being the Scottish First Minister for seven years

Read more at:

<https://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/1416490/nicola-sturgeon-snp-scotland-anas-sarwar-child-poverty-rates-holyrood-election>

EU shocked at how rapidly UK has signed trade deals - vaccine war is revenge
THE EU has been shocked at the rapid progress Britain has made in signing trade deals around the world and is still feeling humiliated that the UK left the bloc, a senior minister has told the Sunday Express.

Read more at:

<https://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/1415796/brexit-news-uk-trade-deals-outside-eu-vaccine-war-revenge>

Macron recruits VDL in bid to class Britain a rogue state in latest Brexit punishment
President Emmanuel Macron wants the UK to be treated with the same level of suspicion as Russia, China and Iran. He has secured the backing of top eurocrat Ursula von der Leyen, who has ordered officials to draw up plans to exclude British scientists from cutting-edge tech projects in collaboration with the bloc.

Read more at:

<https://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/1416952/Brexit-news-Emmanuel-Macron-Ursula-von-der-Leyen-EU-UK-Horizon-Europe-rogue-state-latest>

Greta Thunberg tears apart EU agricultural plan over failure to tackle climate change
THE European Commission has received a brutal scolding by young environmentalist and climate activist Greta Thunberg over the bloc's Green Deal.

Read more at:

<https://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/1417365/greta-thunberg-eu-commission-climate-change-Frans-Timmermans-common-agricultural-policy>

A society can't be changed by law alone
By Ronnie Smith in the Scottish Review

Read more at:

<https://www.scottishreview.net/RonnieSmith565a.html>

Anas Sarwar MSP in conversation with Chris Deerin
A Reform Scotland Interview

View this at:

<https://reformscotland.com/2021/03/anas-sarwar-msp-in-conversation-with-chris-deerin/>

The Scottish election system

The Scottish Parliamentary election is taking place on 6 May and recent focus has been placed on the unique electoral system that voters use to choose MSPs. The potential impact of small parties on this election has also been in the news, with high-profile electoral vehicles led by Alex Salmond and George Galloway competing for votes in 2021.

Read more at:

<https://theferret.scot/ffs-explains-scottish-election-system/>

The other new parties trying to change the game in Scotland
A ragtag collection of startup pro-union parties is vying to make an impact in the independence debate.

Read more at:

<https://www.politico.eu/article/new-parties-change-game-scotland-election/>

Electric Canadian

East Gwillimbury, Ontario
Including a video on Anchor Park.

You can read about this area and watch the video at:

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

Sir William Mulock
Postmaster General

An interesting biography which you can read at: http://www.electriccanadian.com/makers/mulock_william.htm

An historical account of the expedition against the Ohio Indians, in the year 1764.

Under the command of Henry Bouquet, Esq; colonel of foot, and now brigadier general in America. Including his transactions with the Indians, relative to the delivery of their prisoners, and the preliminaries of peace. With an introductory account of the preceding campaign, and battle at Bushy-Run. To which are annexed military papers, containing reflections on the war with the savages; a method of forming frontier settlements; some account of the Indian country, with a list of nations, fighting men, towns, distances and different routs. The whole illustrated with a map and copper-plates by William Smith (1765) (pdf)

You can read this at: <http://www.electriccanadian.com/history/first/historical-account-expediton.pdf>

Added a new video "Tribute to Canada" to the foot of our Tourism page

You can find this at: <http://www.electriccanadian.com/transport/tourism.htm>

Thoughts on a Sunday morning - 28th March 2021

By the Rev. Nola Crewe

You can view this at:

<http://www.electricscotland.org/forum/communities/rev-nola-crewe/26006-thoughts-on-a-sunday-morning-the-28th-day-of-march-2021>

Pictures of Canadian Life

An Account of Actual Experiences by J. Ewing Ritchie (1886) (pdf)

You can read this at: <http://www.electriccanadian.com/pioneering/picturesofcanadianlife.pdf>

Electric Scotland

Beth's weekly video

March 31st 2021 - Beth's Excellent Genealogical Adventure.

You can view this at: <https://electricscotland.com/bnft/videos.htm>

Musings of a Tank Commander

Part 31 Backwards Airways and BMW on my double blue

You can read this at: <https://electricscotland.com/history/scotreg/tank/index.htm>

Sketches of the Families of Thomas Ewing and Mary Maskell

William Ewing and Eleanor Thompson, James Ewing and Eleanor Rhea and their descendants With Historical Data and Reminiscences by Joseph Lyons Ewing (1910) (pdf)

You can read this at: <https://electricscotland.com/webclans/dtog/sketchesoffamili00ewin.pdf>

Parish of Colinton

Found two excellent books on Colinton and it's people which I provide in pdf format at the foot of the Gazetteer page for that Parish.

You can read these at: <https://electricscotland.com/history/gazetteer/vol1page278.htm>

Hylton Newsletter

Got in the March 2021 newsletter of an American staying in Scotland.

You can read this at: <https://electricscotland.com/familytree/newsletters/hylton/index.htm>

Autumns in Argyleshire with Rod & Gun

By the Hon. A. E. Gathorne-Hardy (1900) (pdf)

You can read this at: <https://electricscotland.com/history/sport/autumnsinargyleshire.pdf>

Story

Life in the Hebrides

A story of crofting life taken from an old book about the Hebrides.

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.

END.

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

Alastair
