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Electric Scotland's Weekly Newsletter for September 15th, 2023

Electric Scotland News

I noted the flood in Libya where some 20,000+ people have died. You don't often hear about Libya these days but clearly the country has not done well since Gaddafi was removed. I only mention this as just like Iraq both countries did rather well through having rather harsh dictators. The West has been unable to do anything meaningful for either country but they did ensure that both suffered mightily under their involvement.

Going to have to purchase a new keyboard as my current one has a stuck space bar and backspace key which is causing me some major issues.

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...

Justin Trudeau hammered by devastating polls just before Parliament set to reconvene
The prime minister hasn't been this unpopular since early 2020, as Canadians grow frustrated with unaffordable housing and the rising cost of living

Read more at:

<https://nationalpost.com/news/politics/justin-trudeau-devastating-polls>

What was in the new Programme for Government?

It's a new term at Holyrood, and a new Programme for Government the first for the new First Minister Humza Yousaf.

Read more at:

<https://sceptical.scot/2023/09/what-was-in-the-new-programme-for-government-look-in-the-long-grass/>

Humza Yousaf's Rallying Cry Unravelling

Last weekend, Humza Yousaf revealed his best argument for independence: reduced energy bills. But, as our analysis shows, it's an argument which does not stand up to scrutiny.

Read more at:

https://www.these-islands.co.uk/publications/i387/humza_yousafs_rallying_cry_unravelling.aspx

Italian town Barga celebrates links with Scotland

It has led to it being called the most Scottish town in Italy and it hosted a weekend of celebrations.

Read more at:

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-66774325>

Stuart MacRae: The Highland chief who played for England
As Scotland take on England to mark 150 years of international football, there are calls for greater recognition for a Highland chief who played in the fixture - for England.

Read more at:

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-highlands-islands-66739258>

Remote Scottish island seeking postie in opportunity to begin peaceful new life
Anyone who has ever dreamed of starting over on a peaceful Scottish island may be interested in this job opportunity on Shetland that is seeking a full-time postperson.

Read more at:

<https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/scotland-now/remote-scottish-island-seeking-postie-30919783>

Scotland facing astronomical levels of online child abuse
The NSPCC says young people cannot wait any longer for first-of-its-kind legislation that will force tech giants to put safety at the heart of their products.

Read more at:

<https://www.sundaypost.com/fp/scotland-astronomical-child-abuse/>

Pollster warns Liberal MPs as Pierre Poilievre's Conservatives pull further ahead
Forty-one per cent of respondents to the survey, conducted between Sept. 8 and 12, said they would vote for the Conservatives if an election were held now. That's compared with 26 per cent who said they would support the Liberals, and 18 per cent who would vote for the New Democratic Party.

Read more at:

https://www.thestar.com/politics/federal/you-should-be-worried-pollster-warns-liberal-mps-as-pierre-poilievre-s-conservatives-pull-further/article_969b7904-f47e-5cc4-88c7-5e202ae55e0b.html

Electric Canadian

Across the Sub-Artic of Canada

A journey of 3,200 miles by canoe and snowshoe through the Barren Lands by J. W. Tyrrell, C.E., D.L.S. (1897) (pdf)

You can read this book at:

<http://www.electriccanadian.com/history/first/acrosssubarctics00tyrr.pdf>

Timber! Real Lumberjacks Of Canada

Added this video to our BC page as the second one down the page.

You can watch this at:

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

Thoughts on a Sunday Morning - the 10th day of September 2023 - Planning & Dreaming
By the Rev. Nola Crewe

You can watch this at:

<http://www.electricscotland.org/forum/communities/rev-nola-crewe/26392-thoughts-on-a-sunday-morning-the-10th-day-of-september-2023-planning-dreaming>

Canadian Folk-Life and Folk-Lore
By William Parker Greenough (1897) (pdf)

You can read this at:

<http://www.electriccanadian.com/lifestyle/canadianfolkliif00gree.pdf>

Electric Scotland

The Billow and the Rock
A Tale by Harriet Martineau (1846) (pdf)

You can read this book at:

https://electricscotland.com/lifestyle/The_Billow_and_the_Rock.pdf

The Twenty-four Books of the Holy Scripture
Carefully Translated according to the Massoretic text. on the basis of the English version after the best Jewish Authorities, and supplied with short explanatory notes by Isaac Leeser (1891)

You can study this at:

<https://electricscotland.com/bible/torah.htm>

That Uncouth Dialect
English-Speaking Clergy in Late Medieval Gaelic Scotland by Iain G. MacDonald (2007) (pdf)

You can read this study at:

https://electricscotland.com/bible/That_Uncouth_Dialect_English_Speaking_Cl.pdf

The Christian's Birthday Book and Daily Monitor
By the Rev. Charles Rogers, LL.D., Fellow of the Royal Historical Society, Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, Fellow of the Royal Society of Northern Antiquaries, Copenhagen; Fellow of the Royal Society of New South Wales, Associate of the Imperial Archaeological Society of Russia, Member of the Historical Society of Quebec, Member of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, and Corresponding Member of the Historical and Genealogical Society of New England (1879) (pdf)

You can read this at:

https://electricscotland.com/bible/The_Christian_s_birthday_book_and_daily.pdf

Glasgow Men and Women
Their Children and some Strangers within their gates, a selection from the sketches of Twym by A. S. Boyd (1905)

You can read this and another similar book at:

<https://electricscotland.com/history/glasgow/glasgowmenandwomen.htm>

Sketches of Perthshire
By the Rev.P. Graham, D.D., second edition, (1812)

You can read this book at:

<https://electricscotland.com/history/perth/sketchesofperthshire.htm>

The Temptation of our Lord
By the Late Norman MacLeod, D.D. (1873) (pdf)

You can read his sermon at:
<https://electricscotland.com/history/macleod/temptationofourlord00macl.pdf>

Scottish Historical Review
Got up the missing volume 7

You can read this at:
<https://electricscotland.com/whatsnew.htm#:~:text=Scottish%20Historical%C2%A0%20Review>

The Franco-Scottish League in the Fourteenth Century
By James Mackinnon (pdf)

You can read this article at:
<https://electricscotland.com/history/review/francoscottishleague.pdf>

Story

JOHN HILL BURTON

From The Scotsman of 18th November 1882; where it appeared as a review of "The Book-Hunter", etc. By John Hill Burton, D.C.L., LL.D., Author of A History of Scotland, The Scot Abroad, The Reign of Queen Anne, etc. A New Edition: with a Memoir of the Author. William Blackwood & Sons, Edinburgh and London." and set forth, therefore, in all the beauties of quarto size, thick ribbed paper, wide margins, and gilt binding, and with the accompaniments of a portrait, illustrative vignettes, and a prefixed biography, which could it be but The Book-Hunter? Messrs. Blackwood have done well in perceiving this, and in making reaccessible such a famous book about books, unfortunately so long out of print, in a new edition devised so expressly, in the first place, for book-lovers of very aesthetic tastes and correspondingly superior purses.

Dr. Hill Burton used to be a little annoyed by the praises bestowed on him for his Book-Hunter. He had written books far more laborious and important, he thought; and why should the public, why should his own friends even, be always paying him such special compliments on account of a mere piece of literary bye-play?

The feeling was natural on Dr. Burton's part; and it is certainly not to this casual production of his, published originally in 1862, that one would now point as the most solid exhibition of his powers. Yet the public were not wrong in their extraordinary fondness for The Book-Hunter. Not only was it a book of deliciously amusing matter, such as one prays for on a dull evening or a rainy day ; but it was pervaded, in an unusual degree, by the flavour of the author's own peculiar character. If not the most valuable of Dr. Burton's writings, it is the most thoroughly Burtonian. Hence a real propriety in the form of the present republication. If any one of Dr. Burton's books was to be converted, by the care of his publishers, into a memorial of himself,

No need at this time of day to revert to the book itself for description of the richly humorous variety of its contents, or for specification of the parts that are most fascinating and memorable. No need either to point out the errors into which the author sometimes fell in his hurry, and some of which remain in the present text, — as, for example, the extraordinary blunder of making Gilbert Rule " the founder and first Principal of the University of Edinburgh." We prefer attending to what is really the most important, as well as the most charming, feature of distinction between this new edition of The Book-Hunter and the older and smaller editions. Biographic

sketches of Dr. Burton, some of them in the shape of obituary notices, have already made the public acquainted with the main facts of his life; but there has been no such full, intimate, or interesting account of him as that furnished in the "Memoir of the Author" which opens the present volume, and bears the signature of his widow, "Katharine Burton." Consisting of no fewer than T04 pages, and sketching the whole life with sufficient continuity, and with a pleasant abundance of personal detail, it is exactly the kind of biographical introduction that one would desire to see prefixed to the most characteristic work, or to the collected works, of any deceased author. We should have been stateful for so much information about Dr. Burton and his habits in whatever form it had been communicated; but the form itself deserves praise. Although there has been evidence of Mrs. Burton's literary ability and skill in former writings of hers, in none of them has she been more successful than in this. The style is easy; and the narrative is managed throughout with an admirable combination of fidelity to fact, dutiful affection for the subject, and artistic perception of what is historically significant, or racy, or picturesque. One is struck, also, by the frank candour of the writer, her abstinence from exaggeration, her resolution that Dr. Burton should be seen in her pages exactly as he was. In two or three passages this honesty of the writer, so rare in biographies by relatives, comes upon the reader with the effect of a surprise.

In the first portion of the Memoir we are with young Burton in Aberdeen, where he was born in 1809, and where he mainly resided till 1830. We see him in his boyhood and early youth, growing up hardily among the quaint and old - fashioned domesticities of his maternal relatives, the Patons of Grandholm, or moving about between the two almost contiguous towns, the main Aberdeen and the smaller Old Aberdeen, that share the mouths of the Dee and the Don. By-the-bye, why does Mrs. Burton lavish all her affection on Old Aberdeen, calling it "a sweet, still, little place," and dilating on the charms of its college and cathedral and antique streets, while she has nothing more to say for New Aberdeen than that it is "a highly prosperous commercial city, as utterly devoid of beauty or interest as any city under the sun"? About Old Aberdeen all will agree with her; but who that really knows the Granite City will agree with her about the New? Is it nothing to be able to walk along the whole length of her noble Union Street, whether on fair summer mornings, when the sun is shining, or again in the frosty winter nights, when the eye is held by the undulating perspective of the lamps, and the very houses glitter keenly in the star-light, and the aurora borealis is seen dancing at its best in the northward sky over the chasm from Union Bridge? Is it nothing to saunter down by the bustling quays and ship-yards, and thence to the extreme of the harbour, where the great out-jutting pier of stonework commands the miles of breakers and of sandy beach to the left, and spikes the wrath of the German Ocean?

To young Burton, at all events, these and other sights and experiences of his native city were by no means nothing. Familiar, like all other Aberdonians, with the quiet little old town of the Don, he was a nursling more peculiarly of the new town of the Dee, —historically the older town, after all. It was at the Grammar School of New Aberdeen that he received his first instruction in Latin; and, when he passed to the University, it was not to King's College in Old Aberdeen, but to the amorphous hulk of a building, off the Broadgate, in the New Town, then famous as Marischal College and University, where Dugald Dalgetty had been educated long before him. For a while, indeed, it seemed as if Burton was to be a denizen of New Aberdeen all his days. Hardly had he left the University when he was apprenticed to an Aberdeen writer, and began the drudgery of officework, with a view to being an Aberdeen writer himself. Two passions, however, had already been developed in him, which made the prospect of such a life un-endurably irksome. One was a passion for rambling about the country. To the last Dr. Burton was an indefatigable pedestrian, thinking nothing of a walk of fifty or even sixty miles in a day, over any tract of country and in any kind of weather; and the habit, Mrs. Burton tells us, and proves by letters, had been formed in his boyhood. Nothing more common with him then than to set off, in the holiday season, with a pound in his pocket, accomplish some incredible distance on that sum in the Aberdeenshire, Banffshire, or Morayshire Highlands, and reappear, draggled and footworn, when the sum was spent. His other passion was for literature. Letter-writing he disliked, and avoided as much as he could; but for every other purpose he had always a pen in his hand. Heaps of early manuscript of his, Mrs. Burton informs us, are yet extant, conspicuously weak in the spelling, but showing an extraordinary versatility of taste in the matter. He wrote verse as well as prose, drama as well as narrative, but had a special propensity to terrific prose-stories of the blood and murder sort. There were newspapers in Aberdeen, and even a magazine, at that date; and,

where editors were so good-natured and not over-burdened, it was not difficult for a clever young scribbler to get a percentage of his writings into print. The Memoir does not give us particulars; but Aberdonian legend still preserves the memory of those old days when young Burton, young Joseph Robertson, young Spalding, and others, began their literary lives together, and had no higher ambition as yet than astonishing the Devanha and being read in the Gallowgate.

Released, by happy chance, from his detested Aberdeen writership, Burton came to Edinburgh in November 1830, at the age of one-and-twenty, and was able, by passing some forms of examination, which seem to have been easier and more rapid than the corresponding forms now, to qualify himself at once for the Scottish Bar. He was called in 1831 ; and from that date he was a citizen of Edinburgh, never leaving it save for one of his country rambles, or for an occasional visit to London or the Continent. From that date, too, his membership of the Bar leading to little or no practice, but only to more and more distinct recognition of him as one of the Whig politicians of the Parliament House, literature was his avowed profession.

The fifty years of Burton's Edinburgh life are sketched for us in Mrs. Burton's Memoir with chronological and topographical precision. The substance is as follows:—

The thirteen years of his continued bachelorship, from 1831 to 1844, when he was domiciled with his mother and sister, first in Warriston Crescent, and then in Howard Place, with a little summer cottage at Brunstane, were a period of extraordinary and most varied literary industry, chiefly anonymous. He wrote for newspapers and reviews; he wrote schoolbooks and other compilations; he wrote no one knows what or how much. "Dr. Burton's whole resources at this time," we are informed, "were derived from his pen."

It was the same during the five years of his first married life, from 1844 to 1849, when he and his wife resided in Scotland Street, and then in Royal Crescent, his mother and sister having taken up house by themselves,—not at Brunstane, which was given up about this time,—but at Liberton Bank. It was during those five years, however, that, while still engaged in a great amount of miscellaneous hack-work, he emerged into independent authorship in his *Life and Correspondence of David Hume*, his *Lives of Lord Lovat and Duncan Forbes of Culloden*, his *Bentham-iana*, and his *Political and Social Economy*, — the last written for the Messrs. Chambers. This was the time, too, of his fullest relish for general companionship, his most frequent appearances at Edinburgh dinner tables, and perhaps his highest reputation for humorous sociability and powers of table talk.

The sad death of his wife in 1849, leaving him a widower in his fortieth year, with three young daughters, produced a change in that respect from which he never quite recovered. He was all but shattered by the blow, and went about for a time broken-hearted, shunning all ordinary society, and finding relief only in aimless walks by night and day, and in strenuous and solitary work. Through the whole of his widowerhood, in fact, he remained very much of a recluse, living laboriously with his children and his books, first in Castle Street and then in Ann Street, and having intercourse only with a few intimates : such as Joseph Robertson, John Ritchie, Alexander Russel and other Scotsman friends, and Professor Cosmo Innes. With the last of these, especially, he was in the habit of taking long Saturday and Sunday walks ; which ended generally in his dining with the Innes family, the one guest at their table in Inverleith Row, of a Saturday or Sunday evening. This, we Believe, was the time of the beginning of his important connection with Blackzwood's Magazine, as it was certainly of the publication of his *Narratives from Criminal Trials in Scotland*, his *Treatise of the Lazo of Bankruptcy in Scotland*, and his *History of Scotland from the Revolution to the Extinction of the last Jaccrbite Rebellion*. His appointment in 1854 to the Secretaryship of the Scottish Prisons Board, with a salary of $\text{^}700$ a year, made his circumstances easier, and at the same time provided him with that regular occupation in official business for so many hours every day which he thought desirable for any man of letters. The appointment caused him to remove to a largish, semi-rural house in Lauriston Place, backing on the Meadows, the site of which is now occupied by the Simpson Memorial Hospital.

In August 1855 he married his second wife,—the daughter of his friend Cosmo Innes, and writer of the present

Memoir. As is natural, she devotes a considerable proportion of the Memoir to recollections of the subsequent six-and-twenty years of her husband's life. Till March 1861 they remained in Lauriston Place,—where three more children were born to Dr. Burton, a son and two daughters; but in that month they entered on the tenancy of Craighouse, a quaint old-sixteenth century fortalice, near the Braid Hills, and two miles out of Edinburgh, on which they had set their hearts, partly for the charm of its own ruinous picturesqueness, partly for its historical associations with the reigns of Queen Alary and James VI., and partly on account of the singular beauty of the views in its vicinity. Here, having reduced the ruin into habitable and pleasant order, they lived till 1878, on the verge of the Edinburgh world, and sufficiently close to it for the daily business purposes of such an inveterate pedestrian as Burton, but still so much out of it that the recluse evening habits into which he had settled could be interrupted only when he chose, whether by the reception of a friend or two now and then under his own roof, or by the still rarer accident of a visit to some friend's house in town.

Incidents of those seventeen years at Craighouse, besides the birth of his seventh child and youngest son, were his honorary graduation as LL.D, by the University of Edinburgh, his election to the membership of the Athenaeum Club in London, his appointment to the dignity of the Historiographership-Royal for Scotland, and his honorary graduation as D.C.L. by the University of Oxford. These honours were successive acknowledgments of that growth of his literary reputation which had attended the appearance of such results of his continued industry for Blackwood as his *Book-Hunter* and his *Scot Abroad*, but, above all, the publication of his completed *History of Scotland* in eight volumes. Hardly had this last, his largest, work been finished when he projected his *History of the Reign of Queen Anne*.

That work, however, prosecuted slowly and intermittently, and requiring visits to London and to the Continent for its preparation, was not concluded in Craighouse, but in another country house, called Morton House, at the foot of the Pentland Hills, to which he was reluctantly obliged to remove in 1878, when a new speculation affecting the future property of Craighouse and its neighbourhood dispossessed him from that much-loved home. The last three years of his life, marked by the publication of his *History of the Reign of Queen Anne*, in three volumes, and then, as if in final farewell to authorship of any kind, by the sale of his library, were spent in this Morton House; and here he died in 1881. As he had by that time retired from his official duties in connection with the Prisons Board, and had few business occasions for being in Edinburgh, he was even more of a recluse at Morton than he had been before. Many of the younger Edinburgh generation, however, that knew nothing of him personally in his prime, must have a vivid recollection of casual glimpses of him in those still recent years, when his stooping, eccentric figure, very untidily dressed, and with the most battered and back-hanging of hats, would be seen pushing rapidly along Princes Street, or some other thoroughfare, with a look that seemed to convey the decided intimation: "Don't stop me; I care for none of you." But, if you did have a meeting with Burton in circumstances that made colloquy possible, he was the most kindly of men in his rough and unsophisticated way, with a quantity of the queerest and most entertaining old lore, and no end of good Scottish stories.

For the filling-out of this mere chronological scheme with the particulars that make it lively and interesting, the reader must go to Mrs. Burton's own pages. She has judiciously interwoven her own narrative with a selection from the simple and chatty letters which, with all his dislike of letterwriting, he did punctually send to his family whenever he chanced to be absent from them. Of her account of his domestic habits, and of the singular honesty which tempers, as we have said, her affectionate estimate of his character all-in-all, the following-sentences, strung together from different parts of the Memoir, will be a sufficient specimen here:—

"His defect in conversation was that he was a bad listener. His own part was well sustained. His enormous store of varied information poured forth naturally and easily, and was interspersed with a wonderful stock of lively anecdotes and jokes. But he always lacked that greatest power of the conversationalist, the subtle ready sympathy which draws forth the best powers of others. He was invaluable at a dull dinner-table, furnishing the whole *frais de la conversation* himself. . . . His mode of life at that time [during his residence at Lauriston Place and at Craighouse] was to repair to the office of the Prison Board, in George Street, about eleven. He remained there till four, and made it a matter of conscience neither to do any extra-official writing nor to receive visits

during those hours. . . . Returning from his office to dinner at five, he would, after dinner, retire to the library for twenty minutes or half-an-hour's perusal of a novel as mental rest. His taste in novels has been already described. Although he would read only those called exciting, they did not, apparently, excite him, for he read them as slowly as if he was learning them by heart. He would return to the drawing-room to drink a large cup of extremely strong tea, then retire again to the library to commence his day of literary work about eight in the evening. He would read or write without cessation, and without the least appearance of fatigue or excitement, till one or two in the morning. . . . Constitutionally irritable, energetic, and utterly persistent, Dr. Burton did not know what dulness or depression of spirits was. With grief he was indeed acquainted, and while such a feeling lasted it engrossed him; but his spirits were naturally elastic, and both by nature and on principle he discouraged in himself and others any dwelling on the sad or pathetic aspects of life. He has said that the nearest approach he had ever felt to low spirits was when he had finished some great work and had not yet begun another. . . . John Hill Burton can never have been handsome, and he so determinedly neglected his person as to increase its natural defects. His greatest mental defect was an almost entire want of imagination. From this cause the characters of those nearest and dearest to him remained to his life's end a sealed book. . . . Dr. Burton was excessively kind-hearted within the limits placed by this great want. To any sorrow or suffering which he could understand he craved with characteristic impatience to carry immediate relief; and the greatest enjoyment of his life, especially of its later years, was to give pleasure to children, poor people, or the lower animals. Many humble folks will remember the bunches of flowers he thrust silently into their hands, and the refreshment he never failed to press on their acceptance in his own peculiar manner. He was liberal of money to a fault. He never refused any application even from a street beggar. ... No printer's devil or other chance messenger failed to receive his sixpence or shilling, besides a comfortable meal. . . . Many of the ' motley crew ' along with whom Dr. Burton received his education fell into difficulties in the course of their lives. Application from one of them always met with a prompt response. To send double the amount asked on such occasions was his rule, if money was the object desired. In his earlier life he would also spare no trouble in endeavouring to help these unfortunates to help themselves. As he grew older he was less -zealous, probably from being less sanguine of success, in this service."

The illustrations that accompany the Memoir deserve a word. The portrait of Dr. Burton, etched by Mr. W. B. Hole, A.R.S.A., after a photograph, and representing him walking away, with a book in his hand, from an old book-stall near Candlemaker Row, is done to the life, slightly tidied perhaps in the look of the costume, but catching his gait and the keen expression of his eyes and face with wonderful fidelity. Very faithful and pleasing, also, are the vignettes of Craighouse Avenue and Craighouse itself, the view of a nook in the library of Craighouse, and the vignette of Dalmeny Churchyard, where Dr. Burton lies buried, all drawn by his daughter Miss Rose Burton, and engraved by her sister Miss E. P. Burton.

END.

Weekend is almost here and hope it's a good one for you.

Alastair