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Electric Scotland's Weekly Newsletter for August 11th, 2023

Electric Scotland News

We have an American Civil War section on the site which was mostly created by Lu Hickey many years ago now. I was reminded about this when reading about the epic poem "John Brown's Body" in the Canadian Bookman Magazine. I decided to add that article as our story for this week and have added this story with a link to the book in our Civil War section which you can get to at the foot of the page at:

<https://electricscotland.com/history/america/civilwar/index.htm>

And again working with the 1928 edition of the Canadian Bookman magazine I was reading about another author, Arthur Stringer, in which I read about his series of 3 books entitled Prairie Wife, Prairie Mother and Prairie Child which was based on life in Alberta. I started reading the first one and got about half way through and have really enjoyed it so perhaps have a wee read and see what you think. There is a link in our Canadian section below to the authors page where you'll find links to the books.

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...

For the Love of Trump

Criminal indictments in two federal cases, and another on charges brought by the state of New York, have not dented the former US president's popularity with Republican voters. What explains the tenacity of his grip on so much of the American electorate?

Read more at:

<https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/why-gop-voters-still-worship-indicted-trump-by-ian-buruma-2023-08>

Scottish government loses bid to delay gender reform review

The Scottish government has failed in a bid to delay a judicial review of Westminster's decision to block its gender recognition reforms.

Read more at:

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-66409588>

RAF Lossiemouth pilots intercepted 50 Russian aircraft

RAF Lossiemouth pilots intercepted 50 Russian aircraft during a four-month mission in the Baltic. The crew

were among personnel from the air station in Moray deployed to Estonia to help patrol Nato airspace

Read more at:

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-north-east-orkney-shetland-66382479>

An Australian solution?

Critics of the NHS often point to continental Europe's social insurance systems as a potential alternative. It is the Australian system, however, which provides arguably the most compelling vision of a health system that combines comprehensive care with market mechanisms and patient choice.

Read more at:

<https://capx.co/there-is-a-health-system-the-nhs-could-learn-a-lot-from-and-its-certainly-not-america/>

A taste for Scotch

What is it about Scottish whisky that has made it such an enduring success, and an export that Winston Churchill described as 'invaluable' to the UK? Like a good Scotch, the idea is complex and takes time to appreciate. A good product is one thing, but it's also a tale of adaptation, canny marketing and strong suppliers.

Read more at:

<https://theconversation.com/how-canny-marketing-and-strong-supply-links-gave-the-world-a-taste-for-scotch-whisky-210595>

Let's make interest rates zero permanently

In 1937 the English economist Joan Robinson proposed that when capitalism is rightly understood, the rate of interest will be set at zero and the major evils of capitalism will disappear.

Read more at:

<https://sceptical.scot/2023/08/lets-make-interest-rates-zero-permanently/>

British politics is better off without Mhairi Black's binary views on Karens

British politics will be better off without the outgoing SNP MP Mhairi Black. Her ignorant comments describing gender-critical women as Karens betrays the Nationalists' trademark binary view of politics one in which their supporters are the 'good guys' and everyone else is an enemy.

Read more at:

<https://capx.co/british-politics-is-better-off-without-mhairi-blacks-binary-views-on-karens>

Billy Connolly releases four new limited edition prints

Sir Billy Connolly has released four limited edition art prints as part of his Born on a Rainy Day series.

Read more at:

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-66460658>

Why is there a row over Scotland's longest road?

People are being asked for their views about the project to upgrade Scotland's longest road. The work to dual the remaining single-carriageway sections of the A9 between Inverness and Perth was meant to be finished by 2025.

Read more at:

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-highlands-islands-64581289>

How indigenous conservation protects Canada's environment

In Canada, centring conservation with the country's indigenous peoples is allowing its original stewards to reconnect to their land and culture and proving remarkably effective.

Read more at:

<https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20230809-how-indigenous-guardians-are-protecting-canadas-environment>

Electric Canadian

Arthur Stringer

By Constance Davies-Woodrow and includes his three book Prairie series.

Learn more about him and read the series at:

<http://www.electriccanadian.com/lifestyle/Arthur-Stringer.htm>

The Macaulay Club

By R. E. Gosnell

An interesting account of this club based in Chatham, Ontario which you can read at:

<http://www.electriccanadian.com/lifestyle/MacaulayClub.htm>

A Cup of Tea With Nellie McClung

By A. Ermatinger Fraser

You can read this article at:

<http://www.electriccanadian.com/lifestyle/cupoftea.htm>

Church Annals at Niagara

From A.D. 1792 — A.D. 1892. A Paper read by the Rev. Dr. Scadding at the St. Mark's Centennial, Niagara, Monday, July 11, 1892 (pdf)

You can read this book at:

<http://www.electriccanadian.com/Religion/churchannalsatni00scad.pdf>

Thoughts on a Sunday Morning - the 6th day of August 2023

By the Rev. Nola Crewe

You can watch this at:

<http://www.electricscotland.org/forum/communities/rev-nola-crewe/26382-thoughts-on-a-sunday-morning-the-6th-day-of-august-2023>

My Canadian Experience

Report for May to July 2023.

You can read my update at:

http://www.electriccanadian.com/canada_add13.htm

Couples Report from understandmyself.com

Jordan & Tammy Peterson with four videos

Dr. Jordan B. Peterson is a Canadian clinical psychologist who has risen in popularity due to his detailed lectures on controversial topics such as mental health, gender identity, and more. You can learn more about him and his family at:

<http://www.electriccanadian.com/lifestyle/paterson%20.htm>

Electric Scotland

Select Biographies

Edited for the Wodrow Society chiefly from Manuscripts in the library of the Faculty of Advocates on John Welsh, Patrick Simson, and John Livingstone by the Rev. W. K. Tweedie (1845) (pdf)

You can read about them at:

<https://electricScotland.com/bible/selectbiographies01twee.pdf>

A Description of the Isles of Orkney

By The Rev. James Wallace, Minister of Kirkwall, Reprinted from the Original Edition of 1693, with Illustrative Notes from an interleaved copy in the Library of the University of Edinburgh, formerly the property of Malcolm Laing, the Scottish Historian, together with the additions made by the Authors Son, in the Edition of 1700, Edited by John Small, M.A., FSAScot. (1883) (pdf)

You can read this book at:

<https://electricScotland.com/history/orkney/aroundorkneypeatmaci.pdf>

Clan Munro of Australia

Got in their August 2023 newsletter along with the three previous issues to complete our collection.

You can read these at:

<https://electricScotland.com/familytree/newsletters/munro/index.htm>

1950s Scottish Whisky Documentary film

Scotch Distillery Glenrothes Glenlivet Whisky 15554

This 1950s film describes the different stages of production of Scotch whisky from start to finish.

You can watch this at:

<https://archive.org/details/15554scottishwhiskeyvwr>

North East Corner - Scottish Office film 1946

Information film compares the old way of life for fishing and farming communities of north east Scotland with the new. Added this video towards the foot of our Aberdeen Shipbuilding page.

You can watch this at:

<https://electricScotland.com/history/aberdeen/aberdeenshipbuilding.htm>

Weir's Way: Mingulay & Berneray

Tom Weir was a writer, broadcaster and an environmentalist. Tom wrote and presented this classic Scottish TV series Weir's Way which ran from 1976 to 1987. See this video at the foot of our page on Harris and Smaller Islands.

You can watch this at:

<https://electricScotland.com/history/outer/chapter17.htm>

The Correspondence of the Rev. Robert Wodrow

Edited from Manuscripts in the library of the Faculty of Advocates, Edinburgh by the Rev. Thomas M'Crie.

Added this two volume set to the foot of our page about him.

You can read these at:

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

Lost in the Scotch Mist

New Attributions to Tobias Smollett by Donald C Shelton (2022) (pdf)

You can read this book at:

<https://electricscotland.com/history/other/smollet.pdf>

Scottish Society of Indianapolis

Got in their July/August 2023 newsletter which you can read at:

<https://electricscotland.com/familytree/newsletters/indianapolis/index.htm>

Curious Scotch Plants

Scotland as the Exotic in the Early Edinburgh Physic Garden by Kathryn James (pdf)

You can read this article at:

<https://electricscotland.com/agriculture/scotch-plants.pdf>

The Wallet-Book of the Roman Wall

A Guide to Pilgrims journeying along the barrier of the lower isthmus by the Rev. J. Collingswood Bruce, LL.D., F.S.A. (1863) (pdf)

You can read this book at:

<https://electricscotland.com/lifestyle/romanwall.pdf>

Story

John Brown's Body Stephen Vincent Benet Scores Remarkable Success

ONE of the remarkable literary achievements of the year is Stephen Vincent Benet's long narrative poem of the American Civil War, John Brown's Body. The story goes that against the advice of his friends Benet had begun a long narrative poem of the Civil War. With the aid of a Fellowship from the Guggenheim Foundation he had gone quietly abroad to work on it. Two years later he sent the completed poem, 100,000 words long, to his publishers. They warned him that though it was a magnificent piece of work it would probably have only a small sale. Discouraged, he opened no more mail before sailing for home —second class, for his money was almost gone.

But the glorious surprise that awaited him in New York recalled the morning when Byron woke up to find himself famous.

As Benet walked dejectedly down the gangplank he was overwhelmed by a swarm of photographers and reporters. For meanwhile his book had been published; the Book-of-the-Month Club had made it their August selection; critics had unlimbered their most powerful superlatives; enthusiasm among readers was boiling over; more than a thousand people a week were buying it.

This was the 100,000 word Civil War poem that the author's friends had said nobody would read!

Indicative of the praise of the critics but capping them all is this tribute from the New York Evening Post:

"Benet by one gigantic leap has become our first poet, our Homer who sings an Iliad of the Civil War."

The book is selling faster than most novels, which seems to dispose effectually of the hackneyed old axiom of the publishers that poetry won't sell. It depends upon the poetry!

Benet has given us a book that is one of the life-long companion sort. One will want to pick it up again and again.

There have been many quotations printed in the magazines and reviews, but I have not seen quoted the cry of the Union Army ending with:

"Army of the Potomac, army of brave men,
Beaten again and again, but never quite broken,
You are to have the victory in the end
But these bleak months are your anguish.
Your voices die out."

Nor the other side of the picture:

"Let us hear the voices of your steadfast enemy;
Army of Northern Virginia, fabulous army,
Strange army of ragged individualists,
The hunters, the riders, the walkers, the savage pastorals,
The unmechanized, the men come out of the ground,
Still for the most part living close to the ground
As the roots of the cow pea, the roots of the jasmine,
The lazy scorners, the rebels against the wheels,
The rebels against the steel combustion chamber
Of the half-born new age of engines and metal hands.
The fighters who fought for themselves in the old c'an fashion,
Army of planters' sons and rusty poor-whites,
Where one man came to war with a hair trunk
Full of fine shirts and a body-servant to mend them,
And another came with a rifle used at King's Mountain
And nothing else but his pants and his sun-cracked hands
Aristo-democracy armed with a forlorn hope,
Where a scholar turned the leaves of an Arabic grammar
By the camp fire glow, and a drawling mountain twang
Told Chaty stories old as the bawdy world.
Where one of Lee's sons worked a gun with the Rockbridge battery
And two were cavalry generals.

Praying army,
Full of revivals, as full of salty jests,
Who deflated on God, and Darwin and Victor Hugo,
Decided that evolution might do for the Yankees
But that Lee never came from anything with a tail
And called yourselves 'Lee's miserables faintin'"

When the book came out that tickled your sense of romance.

Army of improvisators of peanut-coffee

Who baked your bread on a ramrod stuck through the dough
Swore and laughed and despaired and sang 'Lorena,'
Suffered, died, deserted, fought to the end.

Sentimental army, touched with 'Lorena,'
Touched by all the lace-paper-valentines of sentiment,
Who wept for the mocking bird, on Hallie's grave
When you had better cause to weep for private griefs,
Touched by women and your tradition-idea of them,
The old book-fed, half-queen, half-servant idea,
False and true and expiring.

Starving army
Who, after your best was dead and your Spring lay dead,
Yet held the intolerable lines of Petersburg
With deadly courage.

You too are legend now
And the legend has made your fame and dimmed that fame,
—The victor strikes and the beaten man goes down
But the- years pass and the legend covers them both,
The beaten cause turns into the magic cause,
The victor has his victory for his pains—
So with you—and the legend has made a stainless host
Out of the dusty columns of footsore men
Who found life sweet and didn't want to be killed,
Grumbled at officers, grumbled at governments.

That stainless host you were not. You had your cowards,
Your bullies, your fakers, your sneaks, your savages.
You got tired of marching. You cursed the cold and the rain.
You cursed the war and the food—and went on till the end.

And yet there was something in you that matched your fable.
What was it? What do your dim faint voices say?
Will we ever get home? Will we ever lick them for good?
We've got to go on and fight till we lick them for good.
They've got the guns and the money and lots more men
But we've got to lick them now.

We're not fighting for slaves.
Most of us never owned slaves and never expect to.
It takes money to buy a slave and we're most of us poor,
But we won't lie down and let the North walk over us
About slaves or anything else.

We don't know how it started But they've invaded us and we're bound to fight
Till every last damn Yankee goes home and quits.
We used to think we could lick them in one hand's turn.
We don't think that any more.

They keep coming and coming.

We haven't guns that shoot as well as their guns,
We can't get clothes that wear as well as their clothes,
But we've got to keep on till they're licked and we're independent,
It's the only thing we can do.

Though some of us wonder—
Some of us try and puzzle the whole thing through,
Some of us hear about Richmond profiteers,
The bomb-proofs who get exempted and eat good dinners,
And the rest of it, and say, with a bitter tongue,
'This is a rich man's war and a poor man's fight,'
And more of us, maybe, say that, after a while.
But most of us just keep on till we're plumb worn out,
We just keep on.

We've got the right men to lead us,
It doesn't matter how many the Yankees are,
Marse Robert and Old Jack will take care of that,
We'll have to march like Moses and fight like hell
But we're bound to win unless the two of them die
And God would not be so mean as to take them both,
So we just keep on—and keep on—"
To the wilderness, To Appomattox, to the end of the dream."

Throughout the narrative one is taken right into the heart of things; in fact into the very hearts and minds of the soldiers and while the language is strong at times is that not in keeping with the strenuous subject?

Here, for instance, is the soliloquy of a Union soldier, a barrel-chested Pennsylvanian, when after two or three years of fighting armies approach his own country, his own home:

Jake Diefer, the barrel-chested Pennsylvanian,
The steer-thewed, fist-plank-splitter from Cumberland,
Came through the heat and the dust and the mountain roar
That could not drown the rustle of the tall wheat
Making its growing sound, its wind rustle sound,
In his heart that sound, that brief and abiding sound,
To a fork in the road that he knew.

And then he heard
That mixed undocile noise of combat indeed
And as if it were strange to him when it was not strange.
—He never took much account of the roads as they went,
They were always going somewhere and roads were roads
But he knew this road.

He knew its turns and its hills,
And what ploughlands lay beyond it, beyond the town.
On the way to Chambersburg.

He saw with wild eyes
Not the road before him or anything at all
But grey men in an unreal Wheatfield tramping it down.

Filling their tattered hats with the ripe rough grain
While a shell burst over a barn.

"Grasshoppers!" he said
Through stiff, dry life, as he tried to gauge
That mountain roar and its distance.

"The Johnnies is there!
The Johnnies and us is fighting in Gettysburg,
There must be Johnnies back by the farm already,
By Jesus, those damn Johnnies is on my farm!"

Diefer is but one of the characters coming up again and again in the tale. In fact he is not one of the major characters at all, but it's the sort of narrative that impresses all its characters upon you clear limned; and, as already intimated, a volume to go back to again and again with keen anticipation ever alive regarding future such returns to the book. J.M.

John Brown's Body
You can read it at:

<https://electricScotland.com/history/america/civilwar/johnbrownsbody1928bent.pdf>

END.

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

Alastair