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NO. 1.

ROSS-SHIRE AND ITS PEOPLE.

By Rev. M. A. McKenzie, Middle River.
[Written for the Telephone.]
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The county of Ross, Scotland, lies between that of Inverness to the south and Sutherlandshire to the north. It comprises with little exception all the land between the Gulf of Dornock to the West Coast in conjunction with the island of Lewis. In area it comes next to Inverness and Argyre, possessing many excellent qualities characteristic of these counties. The topography of the land is somewhat variable. On the West Coast and all northwards we find gneiss existing—the most ancient of rocks—then a little inward we meet the Silurian formation and to the extreme east of the county the old red sandstone of commerce abounds in luxuriant layers. The interior of the county is generally rocky and mountainous, suitable for nothing except sheep and deer. From Muir of Ord to Bonarbridge is comparatively level and from thence there run in a westerly direction, Strath Cinon, and Strath Peffer—the latter continues its course with little interruption until Loch Carron and Stromeferry are reached. Then there are from these westerly thoroughfares many indentations whereby travellers can communicate with their Sutherlandshire brethren lying due north. Whilst the West Coast and many parts of the interior abound in good land and flourishing farms; it is between Muir of Ord to the east and Bonarbridge already referred to that princely farms exist, comparable to the best in any country. Here the land is alluvial and the topography of the country is particularly romantic. Capitalists alone can invest where many farms comprise from 300 to 700 acres at \$15 each of rent besides other burdens. I have known farms in the vicinity of Dingwall to yield a rent of \$30 per acre with good profit; this will give an idea of the excellent soil and splendid markets existing in '72 when this was the case.

Arable lands yield the proprietor but one rent whilst the mountainous generally secure him no less than three. 1st, the farmer pays him for sheep grazing; 2nd, the sportsman pays his quota for deer or grouse shooting; 3rd, the angler comes next for his share of the sport and 4th, picnic parties and others are charged for any damage they create on the lordly domains of those Siren tyrants. Everything here can readily be converted into money whatever it is and wherever it comes from, hence trade is seldom stagnant and the country is full of life. Visitors come in abundance. In the busy season of the year every train and steamer is loaded after which other vehicles are pressed into the tourist's service. Dingwall, Strathpeffer and Stromeferry are the chief attractions. Strathpeffer in particular having risen into enviable prominence on account of its mineral springs. In 1896, when I paid that locality my latest visit, \$18 per week were considered an ordinary charge for two rooms in a wayside cottage. We noticed three stupendous hotels in the little town (having only a population of about 5,000) besides cottages and smaller hotels—where accommodations is so scarce on some occasions as to compel the benighted new comer to bivouac in the open fields.

Ross-shire has many notable marks of antiquity which will in subsequent issues receive our attention. The Knockfarrel vetrifed forts are still the unexplained wonderful work of ancient days. Brahan Castle, the seat of the MacKenzies, Tulloch Castle, the seat of the ancient house of Tulloch; Balmagmore, the palatial residence of the Rosses; Gairloch House, the Tower of Fairburn with many others around which romance and fairytales cluster bestud the landscape raising up their burnished walls from among rich foliage or looking down from some elevated summit with arrogant pride on the valleys below. Besides these there are innumerable druidical circles, round conical towers, monuments evidently—memorials of some long forgotten conflict, Pictish underground dwellings with subterraneous passages commonly computed to be the residences of the terror stricken fairies. We shall hereafter prove to our reader's satisfaction that fairies were real persons identically like ourselves and not fictitious or imaginary personalities as many suppose them to be.

The people who inhabit the county are either the natives who speak the Gaelic language or the imported Sasanach (Englishman) who made it his home for the sake of gain or pleasure. Like many other counties depopulation has taken place to an alarming extent, Canada, New Zealand, and Australia receiving the overplus that could be spared. They were a stalwart and a powerful people long-lived, and as to their character genial and hospitable. Few could match them in physical traits and mental propensities, but they had to clear out to make room for the red Esau who tarried behind to pick the bones. The leading geologist of the century breathed the fresh air of Ester Ross—the western sent to the battle field the soldiers who fought and conquered for our crown. Eminent physicians and powerful preachers are numbered among the sons who shall in other issues call for more than passing remarks. Scotland as a whole is a land of song and story of "ancient fame and glory." I shall when convenient "telephone" to our readers regarding these should they prove acceptable.

A TENEMENT-HOUSE EPISODE

By George W. McKee, B. Sc., M. D.
[Written for the Telephone.]

It would be hard to imagine a drearier, ghastlier, more God-forsaken place than Dove Street, South Boston, even in plain summer.

It is a row of uneven, rotten, damp looking tenement houses, facing a rubbish dump, whose outer edge forms the sea wall when the tide is in. More desolate still at low water, the outlook beyond the dump is a flat slimy expanse of grey mud, strewn with shells, broken glass, old iron and an occasional dead cat.

Imagine, if you can, such a place on a howling winter night; the east wind from the harbor driving the snow and salt spray against rattling windows with a sound like shot; snow and half-frozen mud inches deep on the street; the only light one flickering gas-lamp in its broken glass box, and you see it as it was that wild night I saw it first, called out at midnight to see a child,—dying—the policeman said who called me. Shivering with cold, I stumbled up two flights of rickety, broken stairs, that were covered with snow drifted in through the broken windows. Steps were missing here and there. Six months' charity practice had taught me what had become of them.

Not even the bitter cold and drifted snow had been able to stifle the sickening, penetrating tenement-house smell, that acrid suggestion of filth, of filth, and crowded unwashed human bodies, that once experienced can never be forgotten.

As I felt for the door in the darkness, a scream, half shriek, short, terrible, came from the room in front: the cry of a child in suffocating agony. I had heard it before. There is nothing like it, thank God!

Before I opened the rickety door, I knew what to expect.

I had seen misery enough, heaven knows, during my six months' work amongst the poor of that district, but never such a picture of heartrending wretchedness as this.

A candle, stuck in a bottle sitting on the mantle shelf, flickered and went out as I opened the door. I struck a match and lighted it.

On the dirty floor, in front of what had just been a fire, crouched a woman. She looked up at me as I lighted the candle, but did not speak. I close my eyes now, and can see the awful hopeless agony in her eyes, May I never see such another face!

A thin, drawn, gray face, tear-stained, starved, feelingless! On a heap of rags near the stove lay the child who had screamed, tossing restlessly and moaning, twisting its poor thin body into horrible shapes, its face swollen and purple, its head

(Concluded next week.)

The Argyre Highlanders in Camp.

The 94th battalion "Argyre Highlanders" Lt.-Colonel Bethune, M. P. commanding, went into camp at Baddeck River June 21st, for 12 days drill. All six companies came in full strength and one and all were delighted with the camp grounds and general situation. The ordinary routine of camp duties went on satisfactorily (as usual in the 94th) from reveille at 5.30 a. m. till "last post" at 10 p. m.

The absence of some of the old officers was noticed and a good deal of apprehension was felt as to how the battalion would be able to survive the retirement of Major and Adjutant Foyle. It would be with much hesitation that a young officer such as Acting Adjutant David McLae would undertake the difficult and worrisome duties of such a position and much surprise and satisfaction was felt at the able way in which the work was carried out. The commanding and self-confident way in which Acting Major John P. McNeil called out "steady," as the battalion dressed up, showed that the officer and the office were harmonious.

M. A. J. McDonald was the new quartermaster, and with his ability as a writer and book-keeper kept his accounts accurately. He has offered a reward of \$5 for the discovery of the thief who appropriated a rubber blanket from No. 6 company's camp.

There was very little work for the new surgeon, Dr. Dan McDonald, but after all, by a careful watch over the health and surroundings, prevention appeared better than cure.

A marked feature of the 94th battalion is the ability and fine physique of the non-commissioned officers, and a finer body of sergeants will not be found in any regiment in the Dominion.

A rifle association has been organized with at present about sixty members, with a council of seven officers and three as a committee of managers. The president is Lt.-Col. Bethune and secretary and treasurer, Dr. J. B. Hart, of Baddeck. It is under the regulation of the N. S. Prov. Rifle Association. All the officers are members and appear to be taking an active interest in it.

That the good shooting of a regiment is a prime necessity is shown in the choice by the department of Militia of such a good man as Sergeant Duncan as musketry instructor. He is not only a very agreeable fellow but an able drill and put the battalion through a thorough course of instruction on the Enfield rifle. The good results were shown by the scores made by the men at the target.

Capt. Curran, of Halifax was in camp most of the time looking after the stores and pay. He however did not waste his spare time but was assiduous in booming up things and took the leading part in the celebration on the 1st July.

On this date the morning was occupied by ordinary drill and inspection of companies by the D. O. G. In the afternoon the battalion formed up and fired a "feu de joie." At the end of each volley the band played four bars of the "Queen." Then came the march past to the regimental march "Argyre Highlanders" written specially for the battalion by Prof. W. S. Ripley. A royal salute and cheers were heartily given. After the official celebration the rest of the afternoon was given to sport.

The band showed up in good shape and their music lent spirit and color to the encampment. It was wonderful how quickly the men learned the step and caught on to the march time as they followed the band from the camp to the parade ground. The bandmaster, H. P. Blanchard was highly complimented by Colonel Irving for the good band he had and considered that his instruction had borne good fruit.

The D. O. C., Col. Irving was exceedingly popular with the men. They felt one and all that he had the real welfare of the battalion at heart, and whatever of strictness or attention he demanded was for the interest of the men and to advance the standing of the regiment.

Camp broke up on July 2nd amid general good feeling and cheers, with regret only that there was not another twelve days of camp life.

H. B. J.

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