

And now for the Electric Telegraph.

"Would it not be strange if one born in the same town as Watt, about the same time, had brought out of electricity its fine qualities that enable it to abolish distance? This is what actually was done by a fellow-townsmen and contemporary of James Watt.

"Were not the evidence, as we shall show, too plain to be mistaken, I should much incline to doubt it. Whenever anybody discovers anything, half a dozen envious spirits are ready to flood every newspaper with columns of controversial matter to the effect that he did not discover it but stole it. If you found out a way to make gold from brass, or statesmen from demagogues, you would be told that it was all set down in papers that your grandfather most unlawfully took it from some one else's grandfather, and that you had no more right to be called a discoverer than you had to be called Emperor of China. That is human nature. But here the facts are simple, clear and past dispute. Years before the discovery is claimed for any other man, Charles Morison knew that subtle process by which thought flashes round the earth almost with thought's own swiftness.

"In the early part of last century electricity was a toy, a pet of the study. Men no more dreamed of what it could do than they might dream that a pink morsel of baby-humanity would grow into a Napoleon and cover Europe with graves. In 1736 James Watt came into the world that he was to turn upside down. It is probable that Charles Morison was born not far from the same time. Think of it. Greenock was then a cleanly, sleepy, little place. Even Glasgow was hardly bigger than a market town of to-day. Into the Greenock streets came the hardy Highlanders to traffic, and—it must be confessed—to spoil the Saxon as

completely as they could. Prince Charlie had not yet made his desperate struggle for his father's throne. Here in this quiet place, with its steady-going, decent people, more intent upon some venture to the Indies than upon all the politics that agitated far-off London, were born, and grew, and had their training in the world's work, two youths, each of whom had in his mind ideas the full extent and vast influence of which they themselves could as little dream as the Virgin-mother with the Holy Infant in her womb could foresee Christian Europe. Did they ever meet? Perhaps they went to school together, perhaps heard the same long sermon in the Parish Church, perhaps bright eyes long gone out, sweet lips long since ashes, gleamed and smiled with simple coquetry on both. Perhaps—but we must stop."  
—*W. F. Douglas, in the Celtic Magazine.*

On the wall beside you hangs a case containing the original documents which prove that Charles Morison was the inventor of the electric telegraph. The first of these is a letter dated from Renfrew, February 1st, 1753, to the *Scots Magazine*, describing "an expeditious method of conveying intelligence by means of electricity"—in other words, "The electric telegraph." The letter is signed C. M. In 1859 Sir David Brewster published an article in the *North British Review*. Part of it is exhibited here also " . . . We are constrained to admit that C. M. was the inventor of the electric telegraph. . . . Everything done since is only improvement. . . . C. M., the only name which we shall ever probably obtain for the first inventor of the electric telegraph." But four old letters, also preserved in this case, prove that C. M. was Charles Morison, a native of Greenock, who was bred a surgeon, but