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tricts--part of the parishes of Farr, Rogart, Golspie, and the whole parish of Kildonan. I was an eye-witness of the scene. This calamity came on the people quite unexpectedly. Strong parties, for each district, furnished with faggots and other combustibles, rushed on the dwellings of this devoted people, and immediately commenced setting fire to them, proceeding in their work with the greatest rapidity till about three hundred houses were in flames! The consternation and confusion were extreme; little or no time was given for removal of persons or property • the people striving to remove the sick and the helpless before the fire should reach them • next, struggling to save the most valuable of their effects. The cries of the women and children--the roaring of the affrighted cattle hunted at the same time by the yelling dogs of the shepherds amid the smoke and fire--altogether presented a scene that completely baffles description: it required to be seen to be believed. A dense cloud of smoke enveloped the whole country by day, and even extended far on the sea; at night an awfully grand, but terrific scene presented itself • all the houses in an extensive district in flames at once! I myself ascended a height about eleven o'clock in the evening, and counted two hundred and fifty blazing houses, many of the owners of which were my relations, and all of whom I personally knew; but whose present condition, whether in or out of the flames, I could not tell. The conflagration lasted six days, till the whole of the dwellings were reduced to ashes or smoking ruins. During one of these days a boat lost her way in the dense smoke as she approached the shore; but at night she was enabled to reach a landing place by the light of the flames! It would be an endless task to give a detail of the sufferings of families and individuals during this calamitous period; or to describe its dreadful consequences on the health and lives of the victims. I will, however, attempt a very few cases. While the burning was going on, a small sloop arrived, laden with quick lime, and when discharging her cargo, the skipper agreed to take as many of the people to Caithness as he could carry, on his return. Accordingly, about twenty families went on board, filling deck, hold, and every part of the vessel. There were childhood and aged, male and female, sick and well, with a small portion of their effects, saved from the flames, all huddled together in heaps. Many of these persons had never been on sea before, and when they began to sicken a scene indescribable ensued. To add to their miseries, a storm and contrary winds prevailed, so that instead of a day or two, the usual time of passage, it was nine days before they reached Caithness. All this time, the poor creatures, almost without necessaries, most of them dying with sickness, were either wallowing among the lime, and various excrements in the hold, or lying on the deck, exposed to the raging elements! This voyage soon proved fatal to many, and some of the survivors feel its effects to this day. During this time, also, typhus fever was raging in the country, and many in a critical state had to be carried by their friends out of the burning houses. Among the rest, a young man, Donald McKay of Grumb-morr, was ordered out of his parents' house; he obeyed,



in a state of delirium, and (nearly naked) ran into some bushes adjoining, where he lay for a considerable time deprived of reason; the house was immediately in flames, and his effects burned. Robert McKay, whose whole family were in the fever, or otherwise ailing, had to carry his two daughters on his back, a distance of about twenty-five miles. He accomplished this by first carrying one, and laying her down in the open air, and returning, did the same with the other, till he reached the sea-shore, and then went with them on board the lime vessel before mentioned. An old man of the same name, betook himself to a deserted mill, and lay there unable to move; and to the best of my recollection, he died there. He had no sustenance but what he obtained by licking the dust and refuse of the meal strewed about, and was defended We're Committed to Quality Seafood Products, Cape Breton Island, and Our Local Community Oarwaler Arichat, Isle Madame Real Estate & Insurance "If you're thinking of selling your home, give us a call." Serving Industrial Cape Breton and North Victoria RHickey&Co. P.O. Box 96, "North Sydney B2A 3M1 Gerald Brennan, Mgr. Residence: 794-4564 "And remember: No sale, no charge." 784-3119 "Old Fashioned Hospitality; makes The Castle Inn the Traveller's Choice OVERLOOKING SYDNEY HARBOUR 400 KINGS ROAD, SYDNEY 564-4567 (902) | 105 BEAUTIFUL ROOMS • ALL NEWLY DECORATED NEW TELEPHONE SYSTEM * AIR CONDITIONED * COLOUR CABLE 116 EXTRA LONG BEDS * 60 DRIVE-UP ROOMS CASTLE GATE LOUNGE Sir Arthur's Fully Licensed Dining Room 1(35)