

CHAPTER XVI

AN APPEAL TO REASON

*We've drunk to our English brother
(And we hope he'll understand)*

Rudyard Kipling

1. *The claim for Scotland*

Perhaps in conclusion we may sum up our modest claim for Scotland in the light of the preceding arguments.

The claim is that under the Crown and within the framework of the United Kingdom Scotland should have her own Parliament with genuine legislative authority in Scottish affairs.

This reform, it has been contended, is necessary to secure good government in accordance with Scottish wishes and traditions and to promote the spiritual and economic welfare of the Scottish nation. It is also necessary in the interests of the United Kingdom, if the welfare of the whole depends upon the welfare of all its members.

Besides this major claim there is a minor or secondary one, which is consequential. Since Scotsmen have a special concern with the government of their own country, they should be given a clear opportunity to say what kind of government they prefer. This means that they should be allowed some sort of plebiscite or referendum – the name matters little – held in Scotland itself. It is contrary to common sense to assume that the fate of Scotland can best be settled by a predominantly English Parliament if it knows nothing about what Scotsmen want.

The argument is directed partly to Scotsmen themselves. Some Scotsmen have become apathetic and accept too readily the belief that they can have no power to change their present circumstances. Many remain vaguely uneasy, but do not see

clearly what is happening to their native country. Others have been brainwashed and accept without question warped accounts of their own history, both ancient and modern. For all these I have tried to provide a rough map – it can only be rough – which may help them to explore for themselves the strange situation in which they now find themselves. Perhaps it may also be of help to those – an increasing number – who are acutely conscious of separate injustices, but have not been able to see them as a whole.

Yet the appeal I make, even if this is a too sanguine hope, is directed, not merely to Scotsmen, but to all men of good will, especially among citizens of the United Kingdom, and in particular to Englishmen, who form the majority of such citizens and therefore have the decisive power. It assumes that as reasonable men they are also citizens of the world – devoted in words and deed, not merely to the supposed interests of England, but to liberty and justice among all nations, not excluding their nearest neighbours. Nothing that I may have said, perhaps in irritation, about English attitudes to Scotland will, I trust, be allowed to obscure this more fundamental assumption.

What our English brother is invited to do is to think, as dispassionately as possible, about Scotland and her proper relation to the United Kingdom of which she is an honourable part. Thinking requires an effort; and most thoughtful Englishmen will agree that this is one of the topics about which they hardly think at all. Yet it is not unreasonable to ask what is their considered policy for Scotland – that is, if they have one – and what are the principles on which this policy should be based.

2. *An appeal to reason*

It will, I hope, be agreed that no one has a right to sweep aside all Scottish claims – or even our present plea – by saying that they are too irrational to be worth considering. This simply assumes – in an unnecessarily offensive way – what it has to prove. Nor does it become less fallacious when expressed in

more emotive terms, as when the Scottish case is ruled out of court as sentimental and unrealistic and prejudiced and extreme and fanatical and rabid and insane. We may surely expect all reasonable Englishmen to accept the view that rational discussion of this or any other subject should be carried on within the bounds of ordinary courtesy.

To dismiss a claim as irrational is itself an appeal to reason. As such it must be supported – or at least be capable of being supported – by rational argument. The supporting argument, if there is one, can hardly rest on the principle that patriotism is always wrong – that no men have a right to love their country, to be proud of their traditions, or to seek to manage their own affairs. The English take a proper pride in their own patriotism and cannot reasonably deny a similar pride to others. By signing the Bill of Rights the British Government itself, as we have seen, is officially committed to the principles embodied in both our claims for Scotland: it is pledged ‘to uphold the principle of self-determination of all peoples and nations and to facilitate this right through plebiscite or other recognised means’. It is commonly said, with some show of justice, that the British have taught and applied this principle throughout the world.

If it is held, as it appears to be, that Scotland is an exception to this otherwise universal principle, the burden of proof must rest on those who hold it; and manifestly it is a heavy burden. It is no answer to put Scotland on the defensive and to say she must prove, and prove to the satisfaction of Englishmen, that she too can reasonably claim the rights which are freely accorded to the rest of the human race. To any impartial observer, and surely also to any reasonable Englishman, the boot would seem to be on the other leg.

The problem before us is to find reasons – and not merely excuses – why Scotland should be treated as an exception to an otherwise accepted rule. It is not easy to see where such reasons can be found. Presumably they must rest on the exceptional character either of the Scots or of the English or of both together – a character so exceptional that it must over-ride ordinary human rights and obligations in the sphere of government.

3. *Exceptions and their grounds*

To fall back on the exceptional character of Scotsmen or Englishmen does not offer a very promising line of defence. Though it seems to lurk behind some of the arguments used, it is seldom brought out into the open. If it were brought out, it might be seen to work in a direction opposite to that intended.

It can hardly be said about the Scots, as it used to be said unfairly about the Irish, that they are unworthy, or incapable, of self-government. They have been far too successful in governing other people (including the English) for this to sound even plausible. Equally absurd would be the contention that Scotland is too poor and backward to enjoy the rights freely granted to other nations with strong English approval. Her claims to self-determination cannot be dismissed as weaker than those of such countries as Trinidad or Malta or Lesotho. Assumptions of this kind are not in need of refutation: to state them explicitly is to refute them.

No less preposterous would be the view that Scotland is not a nation, but merely a part of the English nation. She is, on the contrary, one of the oldest nations in Europe and has had too long a history, and too great a reputation in the world, to be dismissed so lightly. In any case, whatever be the characteristics necessary to constitute a nation, the most fundamental is consciousness of nationality, and this Scotland has never lost. An impartial observer would be hard put to it to find anywhere in the world a people without self-government whose right to be regarded as a nation is so strong.

If we abandon assumptions which mean in the end that the Scots are exceptionally unfitted for self-government, the argument can hardly be that it is the English who are so exceptional that they are entitled to deny to their immediate neighbour the rights which they, in common with other reasonable men, recognise as rights of the human race. It may be said that this is precisely the kind of privileged position that they claimed for themselves in the heyday of the British Empire; and an unfriendly critic might perhaps be tempted to say that they are

now compelled to concentrate their colonial ambitions on their unfortunate partner. In relation to Scotland the English do sometimes behave as if they were the only disinterested and trustworthy persons in the universe; but this must be considered as a pardonable human weakness rather than as a rational ground for over-riding the claims of others. The essential characteristic of disinterested persons is that they claim no special privileges for themselves. A claim to special privileges is unreasonable, and indeed immoral, whether it is made by individuals or by nations.

4. *Political realism*

It may be objected that this talk about principles is all very well, but is unrealistic – high-falutin' and up in the air: what we have to deal with is an actual concrete situation.

There seems to be some confusion in this. Throughout the whole course of this discussion I have tried, whether successfully or not, to deal with the actual concrete situation. What I am trying to do at present is only to examine the practice of rejecting Scottish claims as irrational. This rejection, if it means anything, is, as I have said, an appeal to reason; and so, whether you like it or not, it is an appeal to principles. There is no other way to get rid of sheer prejudice and muddled thinking. What I have been trying to do in this chapter is to argue as politely as possible (and not merely to assert) that the habit of sweeping Scottish claims aside as more or less insane is itself a product of muddled thinking and sheer prejudice. It will not stand up to dispassionate examination.

The use of the word 'unrealistic' is itself suspicious. Does it mean that, whatever be the arguments used, the plain fact is that the Scots occupy little more than one third of a small island otherwise inhabited by Englishmen (and Welshmen), and that the English are determined to maintain their grip on Scotland (and Wales)? If this is so, let it be stated bluntly without any affectation of intellectual and moral superiority. No reasonable man and no reasonable Englishman could possibly defend such an attitude as rational. It seems

rather to be the product of an aggressive, if unconscious, nationalism.

It might seem rather more plausible to urge that it is reasonable to appeal to precedents as well as to principles. But an appeal to precedents is merely a buttress for injustice unless we can show that these precedents are themselves in accordance with principles of justice. There are only too many precedents for attempts to bring Scottish affairs under the rigid control of London. This civil servant's ideal was already expressed by King James I and VI once he had established himself in his southern capital. 'This I must say for Scotland, and may truly vaunt it; here I sit and govern it with my pen; I write and it is done.' The process of administrative encoachment has continued since the Union of 1707 and has accelerated steadily during the present century. It is precisely this which rouses opposition and is in need of reform. If it is unjust in itself, it cannot become just merely because it has been going on for so long a time. A defence which rests solely on precedents, however numerous, cannot be a rational argument for denying Scotland self-government now.

5. *Arguments against Scottish self-government*

So far I have sought merely to get the situation into perspective and to blow away some of the mists of ignorance and prejudice by which it is enshrouded. We cannot simply take it for granted that if the Scots want self-government, this is a demand so obviously wanton that they must justify it to a shocked world before any kind of argument is required.

If we are to deny to the Scottish people rights freely accorded to all others, it is obvious that the arguments required must be very strong; and it is astonishing, even in this muddled world, to find how weak so many of them are.

Too often, for example, we are told that water has flowed under the bridges or that we must not try to put back the clock or alternatively that the time is not ripe. We are entitled to something more weighty than platitudes about the flow of water or speculations about the more recondite characteristics of the temporal process.

Sometimes the arguments used are almost unbelievably irrelevant. Even Scottish candidates for Parliament, when asked why they oppose Home Rule for Scotland, have been known to reply that they don't believe in divorce or that they don't want to go back to the 'black houses' of the Highlands. If presumably intelligent men can think such irrelevancies a sufficient answer, this suggests that there can be no sufficient answer at all.

On a slightly higher level is the contention – favoured by some ex-Secretaries of State for Scotland – that the Scots would become more and more parochial and inward-looking if they were allowed to manage their own affairs. This concern for the spiritual welfare of the Scottish people is touching, but what makes men fiercely parochial is having their parish affairs mismanaged from outside. What has to be explained is why self-government should have an effect on the Scottish people precisely opposite to the effect it has on others.

If we are looking for more serious arguments, we can find them best in a book entitled '*Thoughts on the Union between England and Scotland*.' This is a learned and persuasive work, as might be expected from the names of its authors – A. V. Dicey and R. S. Rait. It assumes from the outset that the Union is 'a triumph of legislative wisdom'; and in the light of this question-begging assumption it runs through some parts of Scottish history, and especially the periods preceding and following the Treaty of Union. It makes every effort to be fair: it recognises, for example, that the restoration of Church Patronage – really of lay patronage – in 1712 was a violation of the Treaty and did great harm in Scotland; it admits that the language of the Treaty may have deliberately been made ambiguous so that it seemed to exclude all appeals to English courts from any causes tried in Scotland, but left a loop-hole for arguing that there could still be appeals to the English House of Lords; and it maintains that the union with Scotland was the 'unshakable foundation' of British power and liberty, without which there could never have been a British – or rather an English – Empire. Even in such cases it takes the English point of view and seeks to tone down the Scottish side of any argument. In

other matters its bland assumptions produce strange arguments and lead to queer conclusions based on shaky evidence.

For example, by what looks like a gross breach of the Treaty of Union, Scottish members of Parliament, before they could take their seats, were compelled to receive the Sacrament according to the rites of the Church of England. This our learned authors defend partly by obscuring the difference between entry into what was now supposed to be a British Parliament and admission to purely English offices of profit at a time when such an imposition might seem less unreasonable than it does to-day. They even stress as a weighty consideration that the English clergy would probably have been offended if no Anglican test had been imposed on Scottish members of Parliament; and they argue seriously that a religious Scotsman of that period may possibly have preferred that the Sacramental forms imposed on him should be those prescribed by the Church of England, and not those prescribed by the Church of Scotland. To support so improbable a conclusion the only evidence they adduce is a rhetorical defence of the Test Act delivered as late as 1791 by 'Jupiter' Carlyle, a rumbustious Scottish divine not remarkable either for indifference to worldly interests or for reluctance to scandalise his clerical brethren. Soon afterwards the obnoxious Test was quietly abandoned.

It would be interesting to examine more examples in detail, but there is no space for this here. In any case the book is concerned mainly with past history rather than with present problems. Because it was published in 1920, it can take no account of the invasion of English administrators into Scottish affairs throughout the last half century. Even so, it is probably the best and most sympathetic, if too complacent, statement of the English case. As such it may be commended to all students of these problems.

At this stage it is not possible to review – still less refute – all the arguments that have been used, or might be used, against Scotland's claim for self-government. The most that can be done is to call attention to some typical lines of argument hitherto overlooked or under-estimated. These arguments may be classified as political, administrative, and economic.

6. *Political arguments*

One argument is common to both Conservative and Labour politicians, and it seems to form the basis for the policy adopted by the Labour party since it came to enjoy real power. It is this. If Scotland were given self-government, her representation and influence in the British Parliament would have to be proportionately reduced. She has therefore to make a painful choice. Surely it is better that she should contribute her wisdom and energy to the United Kingdom and to the wide world than that she should concentrate all her forces on managing parochial affairs within her own narrow borders.

The choice would certainly be painful, but why should it be necessary? It would be reasonable enough to say that Scottish members should be excluded from voting on purely English affairs or – still better – that the English should have a regional parliament or parliaments of their own. But Scotsmen, if they had some real control over their own affairs, would have no less interest than before in legislation affecting the United Kingdom as a whole – including such questions as defence and foreign policy and tariffs, to mention only the most obvious. To say that Scotland must lose her voice on all these matters in proportion to the amount of self-government she enjoys would be manifestly unfair. It is extraordinary, even under the present party system, that intelligent Scotsmen should let themselves be so bemused as to accept such a stipulation without questioning its justice.

Ideally what is wanted is some sort of federal system, and in a federal system no one dreams of such stipulations. Its members do not lose the right of representation in the central legislature; and their influence is increased, rather than diminished – as in Canada and Australia and the United States and Germany – when they have their own representative bodies for managing their own affairs and meeting their own special needs.

England may not want a federal system for herself; but this is no reason why Scotland (and Wales) should be denied such federal rights as have been advocated here. No one would suggest that Londoners should have less representation in

Parliament because London has something like a local parliament of her own. The present system may suit England very well, but it does not suit her partners.

A purist may argue that it is anomalous and illogical to allow federal rights to some parts of a country unless a federal system is extended to the country as a whole. This verbal argument comes curiously from those Englishmen who vaunt their indifference to logic and their willingness to accept anomalies so long as these can work in practice. Anomalies are willingly accepted for the Isle of Man, the Channel Islands, and Northern Ireland. Why should it be only for Scotland (and Wales) that they must be rejected without consideration? Have we not here only another example of the unexamined assumption that whatever suits the English majority must be imposed on other parts of the country, no matter how different the desires and needs and interests of these may be?

If we are to accept the principle that every step in self-government must mean less representation in the central Parliament, the logical conclusion for Scotland would be to seek complete independence.

7. *Administrative arguments*

It is sometimes argued that self-government for Scotland should be rejected because it would mean a further proliferation of bureaucracy with all its extravagance and waste.

It is difficult to take such a contention seriously at a time when bureaucracy is encouraged to proliferate everywhere else with an almost tropical luxuriance. It is also hard to believe that any method of administration could be more wasteful and extravagant than the present ramshackle and top-heavy system, which no one could have invented deliberately (unless perhaps in order to bamboozle Scotsmen into imagining that they control their own affairs). Whatever may be the view of centralised officials anxious to smooth their tasks and add to their empire, a coherent system of administration in Edinburgh would probably require fewer men and less money: it would certainly be able to avoid the heart-breaking frustrations and delays and misunderstandings which do so much spiritual as

well as economic harm. Scotsmen are not notorious for extravagance and waste – qualities which can be found more easily elsewhere. They have been able in the past to do great things with few men and little money, and we need not assume that they have been entirely corrupted by the existing distresses. There would be some temporary administrative inconvenience in making the change, but this would be a small price to pay.

The argument would not be convincing even if we were to accept the dubious premise that there would be a further proliferation of bureaucracy. Control would at least be less remote than it is; but the fundamental point is that the bureaucrats dealing with Scottish affairs would be exposed to democratic criticism and control as they can never be in a Westminster Parliament. In any case the fundamental claims of Scotland are not to be decided on the ground that their satisfaction would require a few more bureaucrats or a few less.

8. *Economic arguments*

The field of economic argument offers special difficulties: it is too vast and varied for a brief review. Almost every topic already discussed – notably that of administration – has its economic aspects. Unsatisfactory though it may be, we shall have to content ourselves with some very general considerations. Details may be filled in from earlier chapters.

One difficulty, as we have seen, is that we are not supplied, and are not likely to be supplied, with accurate figures about the economic traffic between Scotland and England – not even as regards public taxation and expenditure. The obscurity surrounding these matters forms, as we have argued, an ideal smoke-screen under which the wealth of Scotland can, to a greater or less extent, be drained away to the South without anybody being the wiser. Nevertheless we cannot sweep aside economic arguments for self-government simply on the ground that we lack the necessary information. There are quite enough known facts on which our case may rest. Indeed, especially in these days when governments seek to control the entire economy, the centre of government is bound to attract wealth away from

the 'regions', unless the 'regions' are themselves given some real power. In their new-found zeal for the 'regions', even English economists occasionally find themselves driven by the logic of the situation towards an ideal of regional parliaments with power to raise taxes and control their own revenue. At this point they are apt to shy away hurriedly on the ground that – as I heard one of them say – 'if this happened, the Welsh might want to secede!' Here, as in other cases, political prejudice may interfere with economic thinking; and everywhere we come up against the political assumption that economic co-operation depends on domination by the central government.

Another way of arguing against self-government is to introduce such a disordered mass of economic detail that we are unable to see the wood for the trees. 'You might gain sixpence here, but you would lose another sixpence there'. The fate of Scotland cannot be allowed to rest on the principle of 'Bang went saxpence'.

We need not spend time on the more ludicrous types of economic argument with which we are so often favoured. It is not true that if we had self-government, we should all have to go back and live in the old 'black houses' of the Highlands. It is not true that we should have to set up a customs barrier at the Border; nor would it be the end of the world if we did. It is not true that we should have to cut off trade with England and other countries – that we should no longer be able to drink French wine out of Swedish glasses; and so on *ad absurdum*.

If we are looking for arguments within the bounds of common sense, these must presumably be very general, or else must be concerned with the special economic needs of Scotland and England.

The very general types of argument are not altogether promising.

It might be argued, for example, that the bigger the unit, the more efficiently it can be run. This view, highly favoured by London centralisers, may actually hold in some cases; but it does not hold in all cases, and it is sadly contrary to Scottish experience – perhaps even contrary to the experience of outlying English provinces. Once more it seems to assume that

efficiency must depend on domination from a centre, not in free co-operation of the parts. There is little reason for accepting such a principle, and still less for allowing it to over-ride all other relevant considerations.

A more simple-minded, if less convincing, version of the same type of argument, is that a system will work more efficiently if its parts are all alike. I mention this only because it seems to lie behind the English passion for assimilation when they decide the affairs of Scotland in the interests of what they are pleased to call 'the whole'. The plants native to Scotland are always being encouraged, or compelled, sometimes after a little perfunctory praise, to be trained up an English wall. But the principle here is in the main false. A plant may develop better if it is allowed to grow in its own natural way; and a garden may be all the richer because of the diversity of its parts.

If we turn to arguments based on the special economic needs of Scotland and England, we are back at the type of argument already outlined more generally in section 3. We are trying to find something so exceptional in the character of Scotland or of England that it can over-ride principles accepted everywhere else.

If the argument means that because of her special poverty or special situation, Scotland is not what is called 'viable' and cannot get on without England and England's help, this obviously requires a vast amount of elucidation. Here we have a topic on which it is difficult not to be satirical. In the year 1966 poverty did not prevent two tiny islands in the Caribbean – St. Kitts and Nevis – from being cheerfully granted, not only immediate Home Rule, but also the right to declare their independence at any time that they might wish to do so. It is true that they have one advantage over Scotland – they are very much farther away from England; but it is not easy to believe that political justice should depend entirely on geographical location. It is also true that unless Scotland could trade with the rest of the world (including England), she would be in a difficult position; but there is nothing very exceptional about that. Nor can we take it for granted that without continual subsidies from England Scotland would totter to her

doom – this may be the reverse of the truth. As to 'help' in general, we can hardly assume that Scotland would be less prosperous and less contented if she could decide for herself where her roads and railways and steamers should run, which ports and airports should be developed, where her new factories should be located, and so on. Under the present system such things have in the last resort to be settled, in horrifying detail, by some unknown London officials who are primarily concerned with English interests and need never have seen the regions they control. This is the kind of 'help' we could well do without. It is one of the main sources of the present discontents.

Throughout this book I have tried – I hope with at least partial success – to criticise the English, not as such, but only in their treatment of Scotland; yet all this talk about Scotland's need of 'help' is almost bound to raise the question whether the English are competent to provide it.

British governments since the Second World War – to go no further back – have tottered from crisis to crisis and left the whole country on the verge of bankruptcy. They seem not to have learned even the most elementary precepts of the nursery – 'Don't bite off more than you can chew' and 'Don't count your chickens before they are hatched'. It is not easy to believe that politicians and administrators who make such a hash of matters in which they are really interested are able, as it were in their spare time, to solve the problems of Scotland with their superior wisdom. But here perhaps I yield to prejudice; and this must be avoided at all costs.

The economic argument against self-government in Scotland might be more convincing if we reversed it and suggested that England cannot do without Scotland and Scotland's help. We may even suspect, however unworthily, that this is the real ground for English inflexibility on the subject.

This argument is not so unpalatable as may seem at first sight, although we are not given the information necessary to prove how much England is enriched by her control over Scotland. Here we may give one example, where we do have the facts. We often hear complaints of the heavy burden laid on the British economy by the £80,000,000 a year that must be

paid annually, and paid in foreign currency, for the upkeep of the British Army of the Rhine. We hear less often that the revenue from the duty on Scotch Whisky amounts, in round figures, to £100,000,000 a year, and that the same precious fluid earns also £100,000,000 a year in foreign currency. This is a contribution which British governments would be reluctant to lose, though there may be some danger of their killing the goose that lays the golden eggs. Their merciless imposition of ever heavier duties is already verging on a diminution of returns. What is worse, it encourages foreign governments to impose similar duties on imported whisky and so to reduce the amount of foreign currency that it can earn.

Such an example proves nothing by itself, but it does suggest possible lines of enquiry. The claim of the Scottish National Party is that by herself Scotland would have no problem about the balance of payments. This is partly born out by the fact that even in the present difficulties Scottish exports increase more rapidly than those from the rest of the United Kingdom.

The contention that England cannot do without the Scottish contribution to the British economy cannot be set aside without enquiry; and if there is any truth in it, it would have further implications. It might suggest, for example, that so competent a partner should have his wishes seriously considered and should be granted some autonomy in managing his own side of the business.

It must be insisted again that all these economic arguments, however important they are, cannot by themselves properly determine the issue of Scottish self-government. The question is not ultimately whether Scotland would gain or lose a little in material wealth. What is at stake is the whole character and tradition of Scotland, and in particular the freedom which has been her ideal through so many centuries.

One last point. It may have been observed that some of the arguments considered might seem more appropriate if they were directed against claims for Scotland's complete independence rather than against the modest proposals put forward here. This raises questions which deserve at least some consideration.

9. *Independence*

What Scotland wants and needs is genuine, and not bogus autonomy. If hope of this is continually deferred, if interference from London becomes ever more extensive and more arbitrary, and if as a result Scotland appears to be going down hill and to be losing her national identity and her national pride, it is not surprising that some Scotsmen should begin to talk about independence. What is surprising is that this talk is so limited.

The high hopes raised by the signing of the Covenant in 1949 were smothered by well-tried methods of procrastination with the help of a Royal Commission. Since then London interference in Scottish affairs has steadily and insidiously increased: even the Scottish system of education is being knocked about to fit in with the latest innovations from the South. It is hardly surprising if the demand for independence has become stronger in Scotland, as also in Wales, and has won increasing support in Parliamentary elections.

This is the only kind of argument that English politicians cannot entirely ignore; but they try to sweep it aside as a 'protest' vote – generally against the Party to which they do not themselves belong. They are strangely reluctant to open their eyes to the truth and to see that it is a protest against both the main political Parties and against the London misgovernment which they practise and defend. The first reaction to the success of National Parties is to dismiss their policies, not merely as folly, but as 'criminal' folly. But abuse is not a substitute for argument. If there has been any criminal folly, it has been displayed by successive British Governments which have closed their ears to the most just and moderate claims.

The case argued throughout this book is that the ideal solution would be to have a complete federal system like that of the U.S.A., where the separate States have equality in the Senate as well as full representation in Congress. If this is impossible, as so many think, the next best solution would be to set up subordinate national parliaments with real, and not illusory, control over their own affairs. If this too is resolutely ruled out, what is left open to Scotsmen and Welshmen except to seek for

independence? If reasonable Englishmen would only begin to try to understand the situation, it would be far better for everybody concerned.

There is a heavy burden of proof on those who assert that no matter what Scotland may desire, she is not entitled to the independence freely acknowledged as the common right of all other nations in the world. The burden is all the greater since Scotland entered freely into the Union with England and may reasonably claim that she has a further, and very special, right to leave it in equal freedom – a right certainly not weakened because the predominant partner has so often ignored the conditions of the Union. The Scots, like other reasonable men, may not insist on exercising all their acknowledged rights; but the brash denial of these rights might easily produce a different attitude. The topic of rights is one which reasonable Englishmen would do well to avoid. Their concern should rather be to remove the grievances from which Scotland suffers and to meet the demands which have been put forward with such moderation.

Again, it would be unconvincing to argue that whatever be the theoretical rights of Scotland, she is in practice incapable of independence. Scotsmen are not unacquainted with what happens in comparable sister countries in Europe, and especially in Scandinavia. They can see how well these countries manage their own affairs, how competent and progressive and trig they are, and how they grow richer rather than poorer even without the natural advantages which Scotland enjoys. They may even ask themselves how many Norwegians – whose standard of living has recently become higher than that of Britain – would wish to go back to their former dependence on Stockholm. It must carry little conviction to assert that Scotsmen alone could never manage their own country without some benevolent stranger breathing down their necks and supervising their every movement.

It is sometimes argued that an independent Scotland would have less influence on world affairs. This too is hardly plausible. At present she has no such influence – not even in matters that concern her deeply, such as the three-mile limit for territorial

waters, where a tiny independent country like Iceland is able to defend her own interests. No one could argue seriously that Eire has less influence in world affairs than she had before she broke away.

It may seem more plausible to say that an independent Scotland could not defend herself against external enemies. This argument might have had some weight in the past, but to-day it applies to Scotland no more than it does to all independent European countries. We are all in the same boat, and – if I may mix the metaphor – our safety depends on the American nuclear umbrella. Furthermore there is no reason whatever to suppose that an independent Scotland within the Commonwealth would be unable or unwilling to enter into the closest possible co-operation with England in all matters concerned with defence. It might even be hoped that the independence of Scotland could be a first step towards a genuine British federation or confederation, or at least a close defensive alliance, which Ireland too might be willing to join on a footing of equality.

Perhaps the strongest argument for independence is that without a change of heart in England modest measures of self-government, even if they were permitted, could never cure the ills from which Scotland suffers. The central government would still be too strong, and English nationalism is so deeply engrained that the interests of Scotland would always be sacrificed to the real or imaginary interests of England. The sad facts of history lend only too much support to this contention; and even to-day the habit of deriding all Scottish claims without any attempt to understand them is enough to make some Scotsmen despair of any solution short of independence. Is it too much to hope that our English brothers might at long last develop a truly British patriotism which would regard Britain as something more than an England possessed of a few recalcitrant provinces not yet completely assimilated? England has long enjoyed the most loyal partnership any nation has ever had. If she still regards Scotland with suspicion and distrust, is it not time that we should kiss and part?

Our discussion of Scotland's right to independence is obviously incomplete, but it was necessary in order to get the

situation into perspective. It may help to show how moderate and reasonable are the claims I have put forward for a generous measure of self-government and to dispose of the belief that they are manifestly crazy. It may also serve to remind us that there can be many degrees of self-government between a subordinate parliament on the Ulster model and the full-blown independence of Ireland.

10. *A final plea*

Throughout this chapter, and throughout this book, I have sought to present the claim of Scotland as essentially an appeal to right and reason. In so doing, I hope I have not seemed to set forth Scottish patriotism as if it were something remote and academic. Genuine patriotism is more like being in love: it has its roots deep in the hearts of men. Yet even a man in love is not precluded from giving rational answers to amiable or officious busybodies who seek to place obstacles in his way.

It is sometimes imagined that those who seek self-government for Scotland must hate the English as individuals. This is a profound mistake. Even if the greatest of modern Scottish poets has listed Anglophobia as his recreation, there may be in this an undercurrent of dry humour; and in any case there is no accounting for the ways of genius. If I have given any impression of sharing such a view I have failed in my object. From many long-standing personal friendships I know the best kind of Englishmen to be among the wisest and most just of men as well as the most charming. What I should like them to do is to direct their wisdom and justice to the plight of Scotland. She is in greater danger now than she was at Bannockburn because she has fewer means of defence.

If in the course of this plea for Scotland I have fallen into errors of details, I regret it; but in matters so complex and so changing some error is inevitable. I have tried to give a picture of the Scottish case as a whole, and this picture I believe to be substantially correct.

If I have shown bias and unfairness and occasional irritation, this too I regret; but it is hard not to feel some emotion as one examines the raw deal given to Scotland in the past and in the

present; and for any one accustomed to civilised discussion it is difficult not to become irritated when her claim is dismissed offhand with a minimum of thought and an insufferable air of superiority. I could even forgive myself a little unfairness if it would help to sting some of our English brothers out of a complacent lack of interest which is the source of half our troubles. As to bias, it would require a very great deal of Scottish bias to counterbalance the amount of bias on the other side.

I have not attempted to put forward a detailed plan for a parliamentary and administrative system suited to modern conditions in Scotland, but for this I make no apology. Such plans have been drawn up, and readers may be referred for one example to the Memorandum of Evidence submitted by the Scottish Covenant Association to the Royal Commission on Scottish Affairs and published separately by the Hanover Press in March, 1953, under the title *The Case for Scottish Devolution*. My own aim has been only to describe, however roughly, the present problem and to outline the principles necessary for its solution. It is this problem that requires first of all to be understood. Once it is agreed that Scotland, if she so desires, should have a legislature for her own affairs, the time would come to discuss detailed proposals, and these would have to be made acceptable to a British government determined that English interests, real or supposed, would be given at least their just weight. Any kind of Scottish parliament, provided it had some real power, would to my mind be better than none; for in it the voice of Scotland could no longer be muffled and smothered, and it would be impossible to maintain that nobody knew what Scotland really wanted. This by itself would be an immense gain. No sensible man can suppose that all the ills of Scotland would immediately be cured, but at least she would have the possibility of taking an initiative denied to her at present, and the effects of this in every walk of life might be far-reaching indeed. What is so devastating is the feeling that she is at the mercy of events wholly beyond her control and is unable to develop naturally in her own distinctive way.

The claims of Scotland, so often dismissed as irrational, are fundamentally an appeal to reason and to common sense or

common justice. Sometimes it may seem that this is why they receive so little attention. It almost looks as if British governments will yield only to violence, or at least to non-violent disobedience to the law: Ireland and Ulster and the suffragettes and Cyprus and India are cases in point. Amid all the Scottish discontents there have been extraordinarily few outbreaks of this kind – the defacing of some pillar boxes, the ‘lifting’ of a Scottish stone from Westminster Abbey, a couple of misguided Scottish students imprisoned, not because they did anything destructive, but because they were found in possession of explosives alleged to have been supplied by the police. The bogey of a Scottish Republican Army comparable to the I.R.A. never had any basis in fact. Intemperate language may have been used by some agitators, but the Scots are a law-abiding race and could not even under great provocation take to the shooting which won Ireland her freedom. They still retain a pathetic belief that the voice of reason may be listened to even in the United Kingdom. Is it too much to ask that our English brothers should be wise and generous enough to understand?

Perhaps I may be allowed to end by adopting as my own the words of a private letter sent to me by one of the wisest men in Scotland – Sir Thomas Taylor, Principal of Aberdeen University – shortly before his untimely death.

‘Personally I am so sick of the mess that is being made of my native country that I should be glad of anything that would arouse contention and even passion, rather than that things should be allowed to slide.’

INDEX

- Abbotsinch airport, 140
 Aberdeen, Gordon's College, 241
 stories invented in, 193
 University of, 209, 237, 241, 272
 accent, Scottish, 217–220
 adopted children, rights of, 75
 Agincourt, 188
 aircraft industry, 73, 138
 air-services, 87
 Air Transport Licensing Board, 87
 Albemarle, 2nd Earl of, 159
 Algeria, 157
 Alness, Lord, 80
 ambulance services, 139
 Alvanley, Lord, 101
 America, 25, 159, 269
 broadcasts from, 210
 educational administration in, 227
 federal system in, 267
 its conception of the English, 198–199
 primary schools in, 232
 speech of, 219, 220
 students welcomed from, 250
 American Colonies, 9
 Revolution, 35
 ancient monuments, 152
 Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, 157
 Anglo-Saxons, 155, 157
 Annan, River, 76
 Arab historians, 188
 Arbroath Abbey, 58
 Declaration of, 41, 48, 195
 Archbishop of Canterbury, 50, 59
 Arnold, Matthew, 220
 Arran, 167
 art galleries, 110–111
 Arts Council, 111
 Attlee, Lord, 25, 69
 Auchtermuchty, 94
 Australia, 25
 Aviation, Ministry of, 140

 Bagehot, Walter, 78
 bagpipe, 161, 210
 Balliol College, 220
 banknotes, Scottish, 124–125
 Bannockburn, 41, 48, 188, 270
 Barbour, John, 196
 Barford, C. B. H., 11
 Barrie, Sir James, 188, 237, 241
 Bartonhill Coal Co. v. Reid, 102
 Battersea Fun Fair, 132

 beer, 73
 Berlin, Sir Isaiah, 192
 Berwickshire, 60
 Bevin, Ernest, 147
 Bill of Rights, 254
 Birmingham, 133, 247
 Bishopton, 173
 ‘black houses’, 258, 263
 Black Watch, 57
 Board of Trade, 152, 167
 Bonnie Prince Charlie, 44, 160
 books, 203
 Border counties, 170
 bridges, tolls on, 74
 British Broadcasting Corporation, 85,
 94, 208
 linguistic policy of, 218
 misrepresentation of Scotland by, 209
 British European Airways, 86, 140, 173
 British Federation of University Women, 89
 British Railways, 148
 broadcasting, control of, 223
 Brougham, Lord, 100
 Browning, Robert, 203
 Bryant, Sir Arthur, 50
 Buchanan, George, 238
 Burke, Edmund, 64
 Burns, Robert, 197, 216, 222
 Butler, Samuel, 33

 Cairncross, A. K., 149
 Cairnryan, 151
 Calais, 60
 California, 199
 Cambridge, University of, 238, 243,
 247, 249
 Campbell, 1st Lord, 101, 188
 Campbell-Bannerman, Sir H., 67
 Canada, 25, 28, 162
 Carlyle, Rev. Alexander, 259
 Carolina, 160
 Carse of Gowrie, 185
 Carthage, 34
 cattle-raising, 168
 Catto Committee, 90, 106
 Celtic peoples, 154, 156
 Channel Islands, 28, 261
 Charles I., 38
 Charles II, 39, 43
 Chaucer, 216
 Chelmsford, 1st Lord, 100