

with general approval throughout the world – they include even pygmy countries with less, sometimes much less, than half a million inhabitants. With over five million inhabitants Scotland is more populous than Norway, Denmark, and Switzerland, not to mention Ireland, and her revenue is more than double that of any of them. Even an opponent of Home Rule like Professor A. C. Turner of Toronto – in his book *Scottish Home Rule* – says there seems little doubt that Scotland is better able to support herself than England. He is one of the few who have taken the trouble to study the facts.

It is unnecessary here to discuss the case for and against independence. But it is not wise to bamboozle the Scottish people by arguments which will not bear examination. They are more likely to be moved by the plea that after long association in peace and in war, in government and in trade, it would be a pity for the two countries to separate. But such a plea involves a mutual obligation – the obligation to consider just claims with sympathy and understanding.

One thing more must be said. You cannot reasonably tell Scotland that every nation has a right to self-determination, but that one of the oldest and most democratic nations in the world has none. Whatever the circumstances that attended the Union in 1707, it was entered into freely by the standards of the time. Sixty years ago the question was never raised whether a nation entering into a free union was also free to leave it. The fact that this question is raised to-day shows that there has been political incompetence in British governments, an incompetence which cries out for a cure. Nothing could be more certain to foster a claim for independence than the brash assertion that no matter what the Scots may want, they are going to be tied to England for ever. It is hard to believe that our English brothers are capable of such injustice or such folly.

It should be added that even the kind of independence sought by the Scottish National Party is independence under the Crown.

CHAPTER II

HISTORY AND LEGEND

*We are told that the Deity cannot alter the past.
But historians can and do.*

Samuel Butler

1. *History*

The troubles of Scotland have their roots deep in past history – that is, in the long series of events which have made Scotland and England what they are. Unless we know something of events in the past, we must fail to understand attitudes and conflicts in the present.

We learn about past events mainly from the accounts given of them by historians – that is, from ‘history’ in a different sense. In this second sense history (sometimes given the rather pompous name of ‘historiography’) is the writing of history or history as written. This too may be a source of present troubles, although in a different way.

No change in political machinery can alter either past events or the way in which history has been written; and indeed history as already written is itself a past event. Nevertheless it remains true – and even trite – that we cannot understand a present demand for political change without knowing something of its historical background. In the face of widespread ignorance no apology is necessary for touching upon the history of the relations between England and Scotland. As little will be said about this topic as possible, but some misleading attitudes and assumptions must be challenged.

The English take a proper pride in their own history and are prepared to justify all sorts of political oddities on historical grounds. Yet too often they are inclined to resent appeals to Scottish history and to charge the Scots with an unhealthy

tendency to dwell on the past. This used to be a still commoner accusation against the Irish. The cruder type of Englishman is even inclined to suppose that Scotland as an independent nation has no history worthy of the name.

This attitude does not make for good feeling or for political wisdom. Although the modern Scot is in fact strangely ignorant of his history – apart from some of its more romantic episodes – it may be true that a nation is inclined to dwell on its past when it is denied a future. If so, the remedy is to see that some future for it is assured. It is bad enough to say that Scotland does not exist as a nation, but it is still worse to pretend that it never did.

2. *History and Legend*

Every country has its own legends, and these are bound up with its patriotism. Legends do not cling too closely to historical facts, but they give a picture, generally an ideal picture, of how a nation appears to itself; and this is itself a historical fact. Horatius may never have defended the Tiber bridge against the proud Lars Porsenna, but he illustrates the ideal, and the fact, of Roman courage.

In the legends of a country, the country itself is always in the right and its enemies always in the wrong. In the Roman account of the long wars with Carthage 'Punic faith' is synonymous with the blackest treachery. The Carthaginians themselves may have used words rather differently.

As is suggested by these examples, the distinction between legend and history is not always so sharp as we are apt to think. Even modern 'scientific' historians are inclined to exaggerate the vices of their enemies and to condone or excuse or gloss over the misdeeds of their compatriots. They may be patriotic enough to see the best in their own country – and who can blame them? But if they portray their country as more ideal, and other countries as less ideal, than the facts warrant, if in short they are moved by national pride or by political and religious prejudice, their history contains an element which may be described as legend.

The best historians, though not necessarily the most popular, try to reduce the element of legend in their history. The best American historians, for example, are trying to portray the American Revolution with less bias than was shown in the past. Yet there is still some difference in American and British accounts of the same events, and this arises from bias on both sides, not merely on one.

A second characteristic of legend is that it is often stereotyped: it becomes so fixed that it is not easily corrected by an appeal to facts.

This second element of legend is to be found also in history as it is written. Errors and distortions are repeated by one writer after another till a kind of orthodoxy is established which continues to be a dogma even after it has been shown to be false. This is especially true in national and political history and perhaps most of all in the history of religion.

In this respect also the best historians try to reduce the element of legend: they are less bound by traditional accounts and better able to rise to a fresh and truer view of the facts. But even the best of historians are only human, and some element of legend must remain.

These elements of legend are more prominent in popular history than in the works of reputable historians. They seep through into novels and journalism and radio and television and are found even in what purports to be literary criticism. In this way they affect the beliefs of the common man and help to determine his political attitudes.

3. *English and Scottish History*

The English and Scottish legends, as is only natural, differ greatly: they differ at least as much as the British and American legends, for their roots go much deeper. In the Scottish legend England is the old enemy, and the problem is fairly simple. In the English legend Scotland is only one enemy, a small one in comparison with France or Spain; but in addition – as the legend goes – it is or ought to be or will be a part of England and so is judged, even more than other countries, by

English political and ecclesiastical assumptions. Scotland has the worst of it both ways, and the English legend about Scotland goes out to the whole world, too often under the name of British history. Even when it is called English history, it is assumed to be British.

Here also the best English historians endeavour to reduce the element of legend, and they would certainly shrink from any deliberate injustice to Scotland. Yet it is comparatively rare for an English historian to have a sympathetic understanding of the Scottish point of view. Some of them hardly pretend to conceal their impatience.

It may be replied that Scotsmen can have no cause for complaint since there is nothing to prevent them from writing history from their own point of view; if they fail to do so, this is their own fault.

This criticism hardly excuses a lack of sympathy in English historians, but in itself it contains an element of truth. Here, as so often, the Scots were pioneers, and in the Eighteenth Century David Hume and William Robertson were regarded as the founders of modern history along with Edward Gibbon; but since then Scottish historians have failed to maintain this early promise. Some Scottish historians, when they write about Scotland, seem too eager not to be thought provincial, while others have adopted or even exaggerated an English point of view. In any case the history of England will always have a wider public, and it is through English eyes that Scottish affairs are most commonly seen.

4. *The legend of Elizabeth*

Patriotic historians defend the misdeeds of their country by appealing to necessities of State and the moral standards of the time; but they are not so ready to show the same indulgence to countries other than their own. An illustration of this tendency can be found in a popular lecture which appeared in the *Listener* at the beginning of 1957. The lecturer was Sir John Neale, one of the outstanding authorities on the reign of Queen Elizabeth. His subject was the execution of Mary Queen of Scots.

In his discussion he glides over the illegality of her trial – this becomes merely ‘a moot point’. He does not think that any dispassionate historian can question the truth of the verdict – perhaps Scottish historians are not to be regarded as dispassionate. He tells us that Elizabeth felt strongly the infamy and sacrilege of subjecting an anointed Queen to public execution and for this reason wanted to have Mary murdered privately – she in fact gave orders that Mary’s custodians should be urged to bring about her murder, and we possess their reply. This was already well known to William Robertson in 1759, and if anything new has been discovered it can concern only the details.

What is most illuminating is this – Sir John appears to hold that knowledge of these facts will increase our respect for Elizabeth once we take into account the moral standards of the time. Yet on his own showing even the hardened custodians of the unhappy Mary were shocked at the proposal, and – to their credit be it said – they refused to carry it out.

By the nobility of her death the Queen of Scots atoned for many faults. In his anxiety to glorify Elizabeth at her expense, Sir John appears to forget that the blood of Mary runs in the veins of our monarchs and entitles them to be Kings and Queens, not only of England, but of the United Kingdom. He does, however, remember that the people of Scotland may have a different point of view, and proceeds at once to rule them out of court. ‘In Scotland, where the people were Protestant, national sensitiveness roused Edinburgh citizens to paroxysms of anger on behalf of a queen whom they had once wanted to hang as a whore; and even today there are Scots who bear a grudge against the Sassenachs for the execution.’

The logic of this is as interesting as its emotional tone. Because the citizens of Edinburgh used harsh language against their Queen at a time when she was suspected of having conspired with her lover to murder her husband, they were therefore not entitled to protest against ‘the infamy and sacrilege’ of her execution many years later. There seems to be no point in saying that the people were Protestant unless Protestant subjects ought not to resent the wrongs done to a

Catholic queen. What is even more strange, Scotsmen of the present time apparently have still no right to express, or even to feel, disapproval. The argument, if it can be called an argument, is eked out by the use of emotive words like 'paroxysm' and 'grudge'. Is there not even perhaps a suppressed sneer in the use of the word 'Sassenach'?

Here we have one typical case where the glowing English patriotism of a historian shows little sign of being merged in a wider British loyalty. And this case is unfortunately not unique. There are others more extreme.

5. *The legend of Scottish intolerance*

It would be tedious to dwell on this tendency, but let us turn to another part of the English legend. In the seventh volume of *The Political History of England* the late C. F. Montague gives a very fair account of the arbitrary dealings of Charles the First with Scotland and her Church. He tells us of the ardour with which the National Covenant was signed in protest; and if he adds that sermons, solicitations, threats and even bodily violence, all were used to get signatures, until at length the nation seemed unanimous, this may be true under the conditions of the time. There seems to be little harm in sermons and solicitations, though he appears to regard these as examples of popular fanaticism; but if he is right about threats and bodily violence, these were not unknown elsewhere during this period, and he tells us nothing about their extent. He adds that the king 'had called forth a spirit which, heroic as it was, was also narrow, dogged, bitter, and intolerant almost to madness'. He seems to assume that this typically English view is common knowledge. So far as he gives any evidence for it, it appears to be found in the fact that the Scots sought to be loyal to the Stuart kings as well as to their own Church. This goal may have been unwise and even unattainable, but it seems very far from an insane intolerance. The plain fact is that in the Seventeenth Century all parties were intolerant. Even those which, like the Scots, had a passion for freedom seem curiously blind to their own inconsistency. Was it not John Milton, the exponent of English

liberty, who insisted that bishops should not only be condemned to death, but should also be among the lowest slaves in hell?

Professor Montague himself seems a little uneasy about a view which holds that although the Scots are generally supposed to be shrewd and reasonable men, they become madly intolerant when they approach the subject of religion. Yet the terms he uses, together with others like 'dour', 'rigid', 'extreme', and even 'rabid', are stock epithets in the English legend of the Scottish Church. These hardly attain the standard of politeness which might be expected between sister nations or even between Christian denominations.

The real question is whether the Scots have been more madly intolerant than other people. This may perhaps be tested roughly by the number of those who have been martyred for their religion.

It is hard to get exact figures, and it is often possible to maintain that martyrs were punished for sedition rather than for their faith. But it has been estimated that before the Reformation the number of Protestant martyrs in Scotland was only twenty one. The Church of Scotland claims that it made no martyrs, but the Roman Church maintains that there was at least one, the Jesuit John Ogilvie: the highest estimate appears to be that there were three. According to the *Dictionary of National Biography* Ogilvie was tried and executed for stirring up rebellion; and if the account of his trial given by Archbishop Spottiswoode deserves any credit – for this happened under the bishops – he was certainly asking for trouble. But even if we suppose the worst, the persecutions originating in Scotland, shameful as they were, are mild in comparison with the record of other nations. The 'Killing Times' under Charles II and James II were imposed by absentee monarchs whose rule was absolute so far as Scotland was concerned. Even so, the Scottish Privy Council, arbitrarily appointed by the King, had to be enriched in 1674 by English members who, together with Lauderdale, were deputed to conduct Scottish affairs from London. It requires some ingenuity to ascribe the resultant savagery to the intolerance of the persecuted Scottish Presbyterians.

We are all aware of the Protestant martyrs in England under Queen Mary ; but if we visit the English College in Rome, we can see – or at least could see some years ago – a large number of not very good pictures portraying the horrible tortures of the Roman Catholics under Queen Elizabeth. The English legend that insane intolerance is peculiarly characteristic of Scotland seems to find little support in the facts.

It is easy enough to pick out intolerant utterances from the records of the Scottish Church (as also from those of others). These should be compared with similar aberrations elsewhere if we are to have a balanced judgement. But above all we should set beside them other Scottish statements which breathe a different spirit – one which I should judge to be characteristic of the Scottish temper at its best. I choose one example from the preface to the *Confessio Scotica* of 1560, and translate it – not without loss – into modern English. This Confession was drawn up by John Knox and five other ministers, and it continued to be the standard of the Church of Scotland till the Westminster Confession of 1649.

‘Protesting that if any man will note in this our confession any article or sentence repugnant to God’s Holy Word, that it would please him of his gentleness and for Christian charity’s sake to admonish us of the same in writing; and we upon our honours and fidelity by God’s grace do promise unto him satisfaction from the mouth of God, that is, from His holy scriptures, or else reformation of that which he shall prove to be amiss.’

Similar sentiments were repeated by Scottish divines even when tempers had been frayed by years of arbitrary interference from the South.

6. *The Wars with England*

The legend of Scotland lies outside the scope of our present plea and can be touched upon only in passing. It is no part of our present purpose to dwell on ancient wrongs, but it would give a false impression if the more sombre side of Scottish history were passed over in complete silence.

The Scots and the English fought each other off and on for some six centuries until the Union of the Crowns in 1603. A period of six centuries is quite a long time. In the earlier years war may be accepted as, so to speak, all in the day’s work, with gains and losses on both sides. At the end of the thirteenth century Edward I of England made a ruthless and treacherous and temporarily successful attempt to reduce a friendly Scotland to complete subjection. The Scots rose against him under Sir William Wallace, who defeated the English at Stirling but was himself defeated later and was in the end betrayed and captured. It was not till the victory at Bannockburn in 1314 under Robert the Bruce that Scotland recovered her independence, which was finally assured by the Treaty of Northampton in 1328. But for nearly three more centuries Scotland had to resist the aggression of the kings of England, and her only times of relative prosperity were when the English were too much engaged in foreign conquest or domestic strife to occupy themselves with their northern neighbours.

To-day we are better acquainted with the horrors of war, cold and hot, than were our Victorian grandfathers; but, even so, it is hard for us, who have not been invaded by our enemies, to conceive the brutalities of these times. According to the Scottish Declaration of Arbroath in 1320, no one who had not experienced them could describe or fully understand the wrongs inflicted by Edward I – ‘the slaughter and violence, the pillage and burning, the imprisonment of prelates, the burning down of monasteries, the robbing and killing of their inmates, and all the other outrages he perpetrated on the Scottish people, sparing neither age nor sex nor religion nor holy orders’.

You can say that this Scottish version of events may be exaggerated; but it differs little from the explicit orders given by Henry VIII to the army which invaded Scotland some two centuries later, when the Scots had, for good reasons, denounced a treaty providing for the marriage of the infant Mary with the future Edward VI.

‘Put all to fire and sword, burn Edinburgh town so used and defaced that when you have gotten what you can of it it

may remain for ever a perpetual memory of the vengeance of God lightened upon it for their falsehood and disloyalty. . . . Sack Leith and subvert it and all the rest putting man, woman and child to fire and sword without exception when any resistance should be made against you.'

These and other humane instructions from the Defender of the Faith were conscientiously carried out.

It will be said that similar horrors occurred in the retaliatory raids which the Scots perpetrated from time to time in England; and these do not escape the well-merited condemnation of English historians. But the chief responsibility must belong to the more powerful and aggressive State which sought for so long to destroy its neighbour.

7. *The Trial of Wallace*

To Englishmen Westminster Hall in London is an ancient court of justice, where freedom has broadened down from precedent to precedent. To Scotsmen with any imagination it must appear as a place that is sinister and even dreadful. It was there – to give only one example – that Sir William Wallace, who had fought loyally for his country, was condemned as a traitor by an extraordinary parody of a more sacred trial – the details may here be spared – and was sentenced to an obscene and cruel death even more horrible than crucifixion.

The Scots are a long-suffering people: they refer to England almost with affection as 'the old enemy'; and they even described the outrages of Henry VIII with dry humour as 'The Rough Wooing'. Yet they must feel a great gulf set when a liberally-minded paper like the *Manchester Guardian* asks the question 'Could any Englishman doubt that justice was done, if brutally, when Wallace was executed?' It should not be too difficult to understand why, with their different ideas of justice, the Scots still find it hard to swallow the bland assumption that the English brought the blessings of civilisation to a barbarous and strangely reluctant people.

It is a pity it should be necessary to write like this, but the innocence of the English in regard to their political misdeeds is

almost beyond belief. Although perfectly genuine, it is one of the reasons why they have come to be regarded so widely as hypocrites.

8. *The Union of the Crowns*

The century between the Union of the Crowns in 1603 and the Union of the Parliaments in 1707 was a most unhappy time for Scotland. When her king, James VI, became also James I of England, the Scots were still able to defend themselves with some effect; but they were now under absentee rulers who, instead of being limited monarchs, claimed to be absolute by Divine Right, and who, at least after the Restoration of Charles II, could get enough English support to enforce these claims in Scotland. From the victory of Cromwell at Dunbar in 1650 the Scots were under a military tyranny ensured in the best tradition by a massacre at Dundee of the same type as the better known one at Drogheda. In other ways the tyranny of Cromwell was mild in comparison with what came after him. The religious persecutions under Charles II, to whom the Scots had been so desperately loyal, and under his brother James II and VII have already been mentioned. But even apart from these the Scots had the worst of both worlds: they had all the disadvantages and few of the advantages of this limited Union. They were expected to fight in England's wars, but to have no say in foreign policy; and their trade with Holland was destroyed, while they were excluded from trade with England and the English colonies. By the time of the Union of Parliaments they were facing financial ruin and were in a weak position to maintain their independence.

It is true that Presbyterianism was restored in Scotland in 1690 after the accession of William and Mary, and it was possible to show what a free Scottish Parliament could do in passing some admirable laws. But this period was sadly brief.

9. *The Treaty of Union*

However unpopular the Treaty of Union was at the time and for many years afterwards, it was accepted freely by the standards

of the age, and it was a blessed relief from the horrors of the past. Thereafter the Scots ceased to suffer from the cruel wars with England. Some Englishmen and many foreigners cherish the illusion that the Jacobite Risings of 1715 and 1745 were attempts on the part of Scotland to recover her independence. These risings were, on the contrary, civil wars in which the Scottish Jacobites displayed more valour than discretion, while the English Jacobites displayed more discretion than valour. The Old and Young Pretenders were indeed willing to promise anything to the Scots for their support – this was in the family tradition – but, although there was wide-spread dissatisfaction with the Union, it was too late to hope that the Lowlanders or even all the Highland clans would trust a Stuart who was also a papist. The Jacobite movement was a minority movement, and Scottish regiments took part in the Hanoverian victory at Culloden. On the other hand, the savagery with which the Highlanders were treated after the battle, and the repressive measures directed even against the many clans loyal to the House of Hanover, shocked the whole of Scotland and helped to make the Scots the united people that they are. The misfortunes of Bonnie Prince Charlie, like those of Mary Queen of Scots, have given him a place of honour in the Scottish legend far beyond any personal merits. A good judge of character like the old Earl Marischal of Scotland, who knew him well, had no use for him.

In the negotiations for the Treaty of Union the desire of the Scots to have a kind of federal union – that is, one which would allow to Scotland a subordinate Parliament for purely Scottish affairs – was swept aside by the English, who insisted on what is known as an incorporating union, a union in which there could be only one Parliament. Even this did not mean that Scotland was to be incorporated in England. What it was supposed to mean was that the two ancient kingdoms of Scotland and England were to disappear in one kingdom – the United Kingdom of Great Britain.

In the Treaty of Union and the accompanying Acts of the Scottish and English Parliaments, three things were guaranteed to Scotland, her Mint, her Law, and her Church. The rights of

the Church in particular were a fundamental and essential condition of any Treaty or Union.

The Church of Scotland had long had her own democratic machinery of self-government in her General Assembly, which had expressed the spirit of Scotland far better than her hampered Parliament; but it is hard to see how a system of law could be properly maintained without any special machinery for Scottish legislation. In any case the Union Parliament proceeded to break the Treaty on all three conditions of Union. The Scottish Mint disappeared – its only relic is that the Scottish Lion is still to be found on some of the shilling coinage. The Church had imposed upon her a system of lay patronage which was alien to her traditions and was the prime source of the secessions so commonly attributed to a quarrelsome spirit peculiar to the Scots. As to the Law, it had been stipulated that there was to be no appeal from Scottish Courts to the English ones, a list of which was carefully given, 'or to any other of the like nature after the Union'. This was evaded by insisting on appeals to the (unmentioned) House of Lords, where English lawyers who knew no more of the laws of Scotland than of the laws of Japan had the final say. This system imposed a heavy financial burden on Scottish litigants and resulted in many injustices.

In both Houses of the Union Parliament Scotland was greatly under-represented relatively to her population at a time when the ratio of Scotsmen to Englishmen was one to five. In those days property was more important than men.

For the House of Lords, which had one hundred and ninety English peers, the numerous Scottish peers were allowed to elect only sixteen representatives. Those not elected – and at first also their eldest sons – were debarred from sitting in the House of Commons and even from voting in the election of its members. What is more extraordinary, Scottish peers who had been made also peers of Great Britain were denied seats in the House of Lords till 1782. The election of representative peers continued till 1963, when all the holders of ancient Scottish peerages, now sadly reduced in number, became entitled to sit in the House of Lords as the result of a Bill initially devised

to enable a popular young English politician to abandon his seat in the Upper House for one in the House of Commons.

In spite of their small numbers the Scottish representative peers in 1712 had some chance of holding the balance between the two English parties in the House of Lords and so of doing something in the interests of their country. The danger was averted by the large-scale creation of new peers, the so-called 'Tory dozen', in order to make the Government majority safe. Till 1832 the elections were successfully, and even scandalously, manipulated through the influence of the Court.

In the House of Commons the Scots were allowed forty-five members as against five hundred and thirteen from England. The favoured county of Cornwall had as many. In spite of improvements under the reforms of 1832 and later, it was not till the Reform Bill of 1884 that the number of Scottish representatives became proportionate to the population. The original electoral system was in any case so gerrymandered that in 1790 – to take one example – the Government could secure a majority in every Scottish constituency by the votes of three thousand individuals (some of them fictitious) out of a total population of one and a half million. Scottish writers on politics and economics might be respected throughout Europe, but in the British Parliament the voice of Scotland was effectively gagged for some hundred and seventy years after the Union. No wonder that nothing could be done to cope with the dire results of the industrial revolution. Proposals for reform in Scotland were received by Lord Melbourne with something which it is hard not to describe as insolence. Scotland had been reduced to one vast 'Rotten Borough', and her interests could be ignored with impunity.

Injustices of this kind may be trivial in comparison with the sufferings of Scotland during the previous centuries, but they placed serious obstacles in the way of her progress. Without understanding this the present system of administration in Scotland is unintelligible. It consists of a series of make-shifts devised to soothe Scottish opinion when that opinion at long last acquired some power to make itself heard in Parliament.

The English did not argue a great deal about the Treaty –

they had too much to gain; but even before it was signed they had already begun to describe Scottish opposition to it as illogical, unreasonable, and fanatical. Perhaps their attitude was best expressed in the words of one enthusiast: 'We have caught Scotland; we will never let her go.'

10. *A double loyalty*

This potted history, or potted legend, is intended only to make one thing clear. The English have not displayed so much wisdom and benevolence in their dealings with Scotland as to justify the assumption that they know what is good for that country better than the Scots do themselves.

To some Scots it seems as if the English are still, with their customary innocence, carrying on by gentler, but more effective, measures their traditional policy of reducing Scotland to an English province. This Scottish suspicion might be understood more sympathetically by our English brothers if they had a better informed and less one-sided view of British history. Is it too much to ask them to remember that in the United Kingdom two ancient kingdoms became freely one? The Scots have faithfully developed a double loyalty, loyalty to their own country and to the United Kingdom as a whole. Is it impossible that the English, instead of condemning this as parochial, should begin, even at this late day, to do the same?