

*The
Claim
of
Scotland*

H. J.
PATON

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During the last fifty years the British Empire has shrunk almost to nothing; but its motto—'Wider yet and wider shall thy bounds be set'—seems to have been taken over by the central government in Britain itself. Politicians and bureaucrats invade ever more realms of our economic and cultural life. One effect of this—too often unobserved—is that they extend and tighten their grip on outlying provinces, and particularly on Scotland and on Wales. They meddle, often in horrifying detail, with matters which they do not understand; and it is this continual encroachment of centralized control which has made many Scotsmen and Welshmen anxious to have more say in their own affairs. So reasonable an attitude deserves understanding and sympathy, not impatience and contempt. In order to further such necessary understanding the present book attempts to review the new situation, not as a series of unrelated grievances, but as a comprehensive whole. This is necessary if we are to face the problem of Scotland's growing discontent and alleged decline.

The author, although best known for his philosophical writings, notably in the field of moral and political action, spent some ten years in the Admiralty and Foreign Office dealing with similar problems in Europe. At the Peace Conference of 1919 he was made a member of the British Delegation in order to advise on the Polish Settlement, about which he has written in the six volume *History of the Peace Conference of Paris*. As a student and for many years as a teacher both in the Scottish Universities and in Oxford he has long enjoyed the experience necessary to understand conflicting English and Scottish views. By the clarity and wit of his writings he is able to make political problems easy and even amusing. His urbane appeal is addressed, not only to Scotsmen bewildered by their lowered status but to all lovers of justice in every part of the United Kingdom.

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H. J. Paton

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FOREWORD

This is a book that had to be written. I only wish it had been written by some one else. What was intended to be a brief relaxation from more serious labours became a heavy and absorbing task.

The claim of Scotland to govern herself is not new, but it has become more pressing in recent years. Nothing else could be expected when, for administrative convenience, a centralising Government seeks, however unconsciously, to blot out 'regional' and other differences: almost absent-mindedly it destroys by stages everything which is distinctive of Scotland and has been the source of her greatness. Even since I began to write, this practice has increasingly provoked Scottish national feeling. To-day the cause of Scotland seems to have captured the imagination of the young, and this has begun to show itself at the polls – the one argument which politicians cannot afford to overlook. No time could be more propitious for a review of the situation as a whole.

The problems I discuss are, at least in isolation, not unfamiliar in Scotland: south of the Border they are almost unknown. What is needed is that they should be brought together in a readable form, and this is what I have attempted to do. A general review is necessary if Scotsmen are to understand what is happening to their native country. It may, I trust, be useful also to friendly Englishmen who are concerned about the fate of their Northern partner and would wish to avoid the political blindness that lost Ireland and, at an earlier stage, the American Colonies. It is my wistful hope to offer them some enlightenment.

In this overbold endeavour I have sought to aim at clarity rather than emotion, at argument rather than rhetoric. I have tried, even under provocation, to refrain from the abuse, and the imputation of unworthy motives, which so many politicians appear to find an agreeable substitute for serious discussion. On occasion I may have fallen short of this standard and may have lapsed into satire and even into frivolity. I trust that such

departures from the norm will not make my pleas less likely to be heard.

By an odd chance I became involved, as early as 1919, in similar European problems, especially in connexion with the frontiers of Poland; and my account of some of these may be found in Volume VI of *A History of the Peace Conference of Paris*. I hope this may have helped me to take a more objective view of topics where I am bound to be less detached. It has at least enabled me to see through specious arguments which in that earlier period were sufficiently refuted by events.

As to British politics in general, I have sought to be neutral as between the Conservative and Labour parties; but I am bound to be specially critical of whatever Government happens to be in power. Politicians concerned with Scotland are almost nationalistic when they are out of office: when they form a government they become obstinately and even blindly unionist.

Words like 'nationalistic' and 'nationalist' I tend in general to avoid because of their modern ambiguity, but I do not accept the barbarous usages recently imported from Germany and Italy. It is ludicrous, if not dishonest, to say that even the Scottish National Party is 'nationalistic' in the sense applied to Hitler and Mussolini: no serious political parties in Britain are either Nazi or Fascist. If 'nationalistic' means 'opposed to alien domination', this is in the main a good quality; if it means 'seeking to dominate other nations', we must look for examples elsewhere than in Scotland (or Wales).

So too if I speak of 'race', I do not accept the absurd fiction of a so-called 'pure race'. In this country, as elsewhere, we are all mongrels; but mongrels may be more or less distinguishable as products of different kinds of mixture.

In writing a book of so wide a range it would be desirable to have an army of helpers in close touch with a great library. Without this advantage I have had to depend on secondary sources (including newspapers). Rather than give a misleading, and perhaps intimidating, appearance of exact scholarship, I have avoided references and footnotes. Since I have no quarrel with individuals, but only with their published views, I have also refrained, as a rule, from name-dropping – perhaps rather

too much. Since the situation is continually changing, some mistakes are inevitable; and in matters so complicated it is often necessary to over-simplify. I hope some one some day will write a more elaborate work full of footnotes and references and appendices and graphs and statistical tables. But I still think my simpler methods more suitable for an introduction to the subject. I believe the general picture to be accurate, and the whole argument to be sound, even if some of the details may be wrong.

Chapters I–III may be taken as a sketch of the background. In Chapters IV–X I deal with more directly practical affairs – political, administrative, legal, and economic. In Chapters XI–XV I turn to what I may call the invasion of the mind in broadcasting and education. In the final Chapter I try to gather together some of the loose ends. By the variety of fields surveyed I hope to have avoided the dangers of monotony.

Although I have consulted neither party organisations nor party leaders, I have to thank Dr. Douglas Young for some trenchant criticisms at an early stage of my first draft. I have also to thank for valuable comments Mr. C. B. H. Barford, the first Englishman – I hope not the last – to read my book with forbearance and sympathy. I am indebted to Mrs. M. J. Gregor, Mrs. Muriel Mitchell and Miss Kerstin Dow for help with my newspaper cuttings and in many other ways; and I am grateful to Mrs. T. Hawthorn for typing my manuscript with her customary care and skill. To Lady Taylor I am particularly beholden for permission to quote from a private letter of her late husband, Sir Thomas Taylor, whose death was so great a loss to Scotland as well as to all his friends.

I owe very special thanks to Sir Malcolm Knox and Dr. Douglas Young for reading my proofs in a race against time: the former has also shown me the very great kindness of taking the index entirely off my hands.

If, as I hope, my book gives rise to controversy, I must beg to be excused from taking part. Corrections of fact I will note for any possible future edition; but I shall not be able to

FOREWORD

answer letters of approval or disapproval either privately or in the press.

I have made my contribution to a cause which is widely ignored or misunderstood, and I must leave its defence to younger men.

H. J. PATON

September, 1967

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CHAPTER I
TO OUR ENGLISH BROTHER

*We've drunk to our English brother
(But he does not understand)*
Rudyard Kipling

1. *To our English brother*

During the Second World War – in a section of the Foreign Office set up for a time in Oxford – a distinguished scholar and political thinker, beaming benevolently through his spectacles, suddenly remarked to me, ‘It must be a wonderful thing to be a Scotsman’. This I had never doubted; but I asked him politely why he should think so. ‘Because’, he replied, ‘you have a double loyalty’. I was a trifle taken aback; and since my friend, although English of the English in outlook and education, happened to have an obviously un-British name, I found my mind wandering down forbidden paths.

When it returned, he was still explaining, with unnecessary elaboration, that Scotsmen were loyal to Scotland and also to the United Kingdom. Only then did the horrid implications of his doctrine begin to dawn on me. In my innocence I had imagined that all the nations constituting the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland had a double loyalty – that the English too were loyal both to England and to the United Kingdom, perhaps even to the British Commonwealth of Nations as well. Now I saw only too clearly what he meant: an Englishman was loyal only to England and for him there was no distinction between England and Britain – it was all just England.

This was put more crudely by a poet in *Punch*, who was complaining about the way in which modern countries kept changing their names. He ended:

'Under Mr. de Valera
Ireland changed its name to Eire.
Britain strictly keeps its name,
It's called England just the same.'

It may seem frivolous to begin a plea for Scotland with a trivial quirk of language, but such quirks may have a deeper psychological import. The attitude of the English to Scotland is no doubt complicated. For the most part they do not think about Scotland at all. When they do think about it, they regard it sometimes as a place utterly remote, where strange things may happen which have no bearing on their own lives. At other times they think of everything that happens there as barely distinguishable from what is familiar to them in England. But when it comes to action, they tend to assume that whatever may suit England must be well adapted to the needs of Scotland. Pleas to the contrary are apt to be regarded at first as funny, and then as irritating, and finally, if persisted in, as the product of some provincial irrationalism, not to say madness: they are attributed to what is politely called the lunatic tartan fringe.

Such an attitude is hardly generous or even just, nor does it seem worthy of a partnership which has stood for so long. Yet, broadly speaking, it is actions based on this attitude which have produced the feeling of frustration so wide-spread in Scotland at the present time. You may think that this feeling is perverse, and you may put it down to original sin or some other occult cause, but no reasonable man can deny that it exists, unless he has cultivated the wilful blindness of the professional politician.

The whole body cannot be healthy if one part of it is sick, and this is true also of the body politic. Hence the malady of Scotland should be of concern to all of us – to the English, the Welsh, and the Northern Irish as well as to the Scots. Indeed should it not be of special concern to the English? It is they who, by their very numbers, have the final say in every question affecting any part of the United Kingdom. Even without regard to the claims of justice and the ties of friendship should they not out of enlightened self-interest consider seriously the claim put forward by any considerable part of our common country?

It is hard for a Scotsman, especially for one who is very much at home in England, to accept the view that such a hope can have no chance of being fulfilled.

Hence I write this plea for Scotland even at the risk of losing whatever reputation for sanity I may have acquired in the course of a life spent almost equally in Scotland and in England. It is written for men of good will who seek to establish justice and promote freedom. I hope it may be read by our English brothers and by Scotsmen who acquiesce too readily in a purely English point of view. Even if I fail to make any impression on deep-rooted prejudice, I hope that I may be able in some degree to express the often inarticulate feelings of the mass of the Scottish people.

g. Difficulties

The difficulties of the task I have undertaken are formidable.

A man with a grievance may easily become a bore, and this may be true of a nation with a grievance – or with a series of grievances. A discussion of these may become a catalogue of complaints, many of which may seem trifling in themselves; and the problem may become obscured in a mass of details. It is not merely the details that are wrong, but the whole system by which these have been produced. If an appearance of nagging is to be avoided – and this is not easy – the details must be restricted to typical examples which can do no more than illustrate the unsatisfactory working of a system unsatisfactory in itself.

Again, it is impossible to complain of the present relation between Scotland and England without criticising those who are primarily responsible for it. Men do not like to be criticised, and the English are no exception. Personal resentment is apt to be fortified by national pride. Yet it is English complacency about the treatment of Scotland which requires to be disturbed, if this is possible; and why should it not be? This can hardly be done without some harsh words which may arouse resentment. On the other side it is difficult for Scotsmen who feel strongly about the way in which Scotland is treated not to become bitter;

and this may cause their complaints to be dismissed as unreasonable, no matter how reasonable they may be in themselves.

All of this calls for an attempt at better understanding, which ought not to be too difficult in view of all the circumstances. I want to make it clear at the outset that if I say some hard things about 'the English', I mean 'the English in their attitude to Scotland' – or more precisely 'the English attitude to Scotland', though it would be intolerable to use such abstract language throughout. For the English as such I have the utmost admiration and affection. The stirring up of national animosities is deplorable, but this is only one more reason why the source of these animosities should be investigated and, where possible, removed.

Even the phrase 'the English in their attitude to Scotland' is not meant to cover all Englishmen. There are some, I hope many, who are ready to be sympathetic to the troubles of their northern partner if only they can be made to understand what these troubles are.

Another point that should be made clear is this. We must make a sharp distinction between the treatment of Scotland and the treatment of Scotsmen. It is too often said, 'What has Scotland to complain of? Do not Scotsmen hold a larger proportion of the highest positions in England than they are entitled to by their numbers?' This used to be said more often in the past than it is to-day, but the fallacy is obvious. If Scotland, as we are told, is falling short of her past achievements and is always in need of English direction and English help, it is a poor consolation to be told that many of her ablest sons are doing very well for themselves elsewhere. Scotsmen have no complaint about the way they are received in England: quite the contrary. But this has no bearing on the fact that Scotland may be suffering both spiritually and materially from political treatment which is neither considerate nor even fair.

3. *Scotland and England*

What then, it may be asked, is wrong with the state of Scotland, and how can it be put right?

To these questions no simple answer can be given, but it is to be hoped that the answer will become clearer as we proceed. The problem lies deep in the long history of both England and Scotland and in a direct clash between the English and Scottish points of view. If an over-simplification may be forgiven, what is fundamentally wrong is that Scotland is being steadily deprived of control over her own destiny and even her own ideals. The only cure – so far as there can be a cure – is that she should be given more power to manage her own affairs.

Behind all this there lies, as I have said, a clash of attitudes or ideals. To many Englishmen Scotland is nothing but another province of England, a strange province perhaps, and even an irritatingly reluctant province, but in the last resort a province whose destiny is to become more and more absorbed in the glorious system of English government and civilisation. Every encroachment becomes an argument for further encroachment – the English attach more importance to precedents than to principles; and objections on the part of the Scots are put down to an irrational parochialism or even to that spirit of nationalism which is said to be the bane of the modern world. In many Englishmen this attitude may be unacknowledged or even unconscious; it may take the form of sheer indifference; but it is always liable to appear in action, or at least it seems to do so to those who belong to the northern kingdom.

The attitude of most Scotsmen is very different, whatever may be their political beliefs. To them it seems that the two ancient kingdoms of England and Scotland, after centuries of unhappy struggle, entered freely into one United Kingdom in which both the former kingdoms disappeared. But this did not mean that there ceased to be two nations in the United Kingdom, each entitled to a loyal partnership from the other. It has always been recognised by the Scots that the English nation because of its numbers and wealth must be the predominant partner; but few Scotsmen can regard their country as merely an English province. Even the Royal Commission on Scottish Affairs, whose report was published in 1954, recommended that Scotland should be treated as a nation, though it gave little help about the way in which this could best be done.

There are other nations in our one Kingdom. There were the Irish, and there are the Welsh. The Irish have now become independent through the political unwisdom with which they were governed, but the Welsh are still with us and appear to be as dissatisfied with their present position as the Scots are with theirs. It was the glory of the United Kingdom that it carried on so many different traditions – that it was enriched by so many varied types of men. But this does not alter the fact that the Welsh and the Irish were conquered nations and suffered the psychological wounds which come to the conquered. The position of the Scots, like that of the English, is different. These are the two free founder-nations of the United Kingdom and ultimately of the British Commonwealth and Empire. Why should it be a bad kind of nationalism in the Scots if they remember this, but no kind of nationalism in the English if they forget it?

The case for self-government in Wales may be very strong – I believe that it is. I will not attempt to pronounce on the view that the Welsh claim has stronger grounds than the Scottish one, for my judgement might be biased. There are certain principles which apply in both cases, but the Scottish claim is different in many ways, and it is only with this claim that I am here concerned.

4. *The Covenant*

It is hard to see how the position of Scotland can be improved without a radical change in the English attitude; but if we come down to matters of machinery, the aspirations of the Scottish people have been expressed in what is known as the Scottish Covenant. This was launched in 1949 and obtained over two million signatures. It runs as follows:

‘We, the people of Scotland who subscribe this Engagement, declare our belief that reform in the constitution of our country is necessary to secure good government in accordance with our Scottish traditions and to promote the spiritual and economic welfare of our nation.

‘We affirm that the desire for such reform is both deep and

widespread throughout the whole community, transcending all political and sectional interests, and we undertake to continue united in purpose for its achievement.

‘With that end in view we solemnly enter into this Covenant whereby we pledge ourselves, in all loyalty to the Crown and within the framework of the United Kingdom, to do everything in our power to secure for Scotland a Parliament with adequate legislative authority in Scottish affairs.’

This document, and especially the final paragraph, deserves to be studied carefully on the supposition that it means what it says. What is asked for is asked ‘in all loyalty to the Crown and within the framework of the United Kingdom’; and the Parliament which it demands is one which has adequate legislative authority ‘in Scottish affairs’.

The demand is, on the face of it, a modest and reasonable one: it asks for nothing more than has long been enjoyed in Canada by Quebec, in the U.S.A. by the state of Nebraska, and in Australia by New South Wales. Why should it be dismissed as unworthy of serious consideration? Yet the leaders of the Labour and Tory parties – at that time Mr. Attlee and Sir Winston Churchill – refused even to see those who had drawn up this Covenant and won so much support for it in Scotland. It should in fairness be added that a too hurried approach by the organisers of the Covenant may have contributed to this unhappy result.

You may ask, ‘How do I know that over two million people signed the Covenant?’ The answer is that I know and respect the men who organised it, and I also know the mood that was prevalent in Scotland at the time. Large-scale dishonesty is not a Scottish vice. Various local plebiscites have more recently confirmed these earlier results. But even if you suppose that only half of those who signed the Covenant were serious people – an incredibly wild hypothesis – there would still be enough to deserve something more than a studied neglect of their opinions.

You may say that these signatures were not collected under strict supervision such as prevails at a general election. Strict

supervision cannot be secured by an organisation of private persons with a limited amount of money. But the answer is obvious. If more evidence is wanted about the wishes of the Scottish people, let the Government itself organise a plebiscite under whatever conditions it may care to impose.

5. *Demand for a plebiscite*

After the signature of the Covenant the two main political parties, by a strange coincidence, gave almost the same answer to this demand. The first objection raised was that these matters are too complicated for a plebiscite, and the second was that a plebiscite was unconstitutional. 'Constitutional change', said the spokesman of the Labour Party, 'is considered and settled by the normal processes of Parliamentary democracy'.

The first objection springs from a confusion of thought. The principle of Home Rule is simple: it is its application which is complicated, and this would have to be the subject of elaborate negotiations. The representative of the Conservative Party went so far as to say that 'if the people of Scotland were ultimately to decide in favour of a Scottish Parliament, no one could gainsay them'. But he was as anxious as the Labour Party to make sure that no opportunity for such a decision could be given.

The objection that a plebiscite would be unconstitutional is no more convincing. If it rests on precedent, it means that Parliament has never consulted the people of Scotland on this topic in the past and has no intention of doing so in the future. If it rests on principle, the principle in question would seem to be that of the absolute supremacy of Parliament, a doctrine never accepted in Scotland. If we interpret this principle as meaning that Parliament can best decide the fate of Scotland by refusing to ascertain the views of its inhabitants, this is an inadequate ground for rejecting the only procedure suited to the situation.

In matters of dispute between political parties a referendum or plebiscite may be undesirable: it does not follow that it would be equally undesirable where a dispute transcends party

politics. But the question of self-government for Scotland not only transcends party politics: it affects Scotland more intimately than it does the other parts of Britain.

What the Scots are being told is this. If they wish for self-government, they must renounce all other political interests and build up a new party confined to this one narrow issue. Only when it has won a majority of the parliamentary seats in Scotland can the question even be considered.

Why should Scotsmen have to make so irksome a renunciation and undertake so great an effort before their case can be examined? In Britain it takes years and years to build up a new political party till it can win a general election. The whole Establishment, the influence of money, the power of patronage, the mass means of communication, and even the electoral system itself stand in the way. These forces are still more formidable when the party in question is confined to one part of Britain and is supposed to have one interest and one interest only. When the two main English parties combine to smother serious consideration of the topic, their action is almost as overpowering as it is unreasonable. Is this high constitutional argument anything more than a device to postpone Scottish self-government for the time being and perhaps for ever?

It is in the light of such considerations that the organisers of the Covenant refused – perhaps unwisely – to form themselves into a political party. They had drawn their supporters from all political parties in Scotland, and they were simple enough to suppose that this strengthened rather than weakened their claim.

Even if a purely Home Rule party succeeded, after years of effort, in becoming dominant in Scotland, it would still be a hopeless minority in Parliament, and there would be no assurance that its claims would be met. The Scots know this only too well from sad experience. From the late eighties of last century, when electoral reforms first made it possible for the voice of Scotland to be heard, up to the defection of the Labour Party, when it came into full power after the Second World War, there had been Scottish majorities in favour of Home Rule, although there was no separate Home Rule Party. These had

induced the Mother of Parliaments to accept Home Rule Bills in principle many times, but never to pass them into law. The Irish, on the other hand, who adopted the policy now recommended to the Scots, succeeded in winning Irish majorities for a party devoted exclusively to Home Rule, but in the end they found it more effective to take to shooting.

The plain fact is that the method of a plebiscite is ideally adapted to a problem of this kind and has habitually been applied by British Governments both outside and inside the British Commonwealth. It was used after the First World War to determine frontiers in Europe. It was used to decide whether Newfoundland should become part of Canada. It was used more recently to ascertain the wishes of the Maltese about self-government. What is more, the British Government has formally committed itself to the principle of plebiscites by signing the Bill of Rights sponsored by the United Nations Organisation; for in this 'all member States uphold the principle of self-determination of all peoples and nations and agree to facilitate this right through plebiscite or other recognised means'.

Whatever our opinions about the merits and demerits of a Scottish legislature or Scottish Parliament, should we not dismiss such weak objections to a plebiscite and agree as reasonable men that Scotland should at least be given an opportunity to pronounce upon her own fate? If, as some contend, the majority of Scotsmen have become so bemused and apathetic that they no longer want Home Rule, there is all the more reason why this should be made clear beyond any doubt.

6. *Federalism*

What the Covenant asks for Scotland is akin to a federal system such as is known and practised in many parts of the world. In a rudimentary form something like it already exists in this country for Northern Ireland, the Channel Islands, and the Isle of Man. Only to Scotland and Wales is it denied.

We might add that it is also denied to England, for it is sometimes alleged, perhaps in jest, that there are stronger

arguments for an English Parliament – the only one that is never asked for. This would be the ideal arrangement, but it is hard to see why Scotland and Wales should have to wait for a contingency so remote. If the English do not want a Parliament of their own, why should this stand in the way of peoples who do?

Federal systems may vary in form and extent; but in the wide sense adopted here, a State is federal if, besides having one Supreme Parliament, it has also one or more regional Parliaments entitled to control regional affairs. If it is agreed, at least provisionally, that Scotland should have a regional Parliament, the extent of the control assigned to it would be a matter for future discussion and negotiation. My own view is that this control should be as extensive as possible.

It must not be thought that the English are against federalism for other States. Quite the contrary. After the last War the British Government pressed for federalism in Germany on the ground that this makes a country stronger. Some Germans were cynical enough to believe that the real aim of the proposal was the very opposite. I confess I was a trifle embarrassed to hear my German friends, friends too of this country, maintaining that the British attitude was sincere.

As I have said, the general character of a federal system is well-known. Yet the arguments used against it in the case of Scotland are often almost too irrelevant to be worth an answer. Thus a favourite contention is that it would mean a customs barrier at the Border. This is taken to be manifestly ludicrous and to provide a conclusive argument against any form of federation.

It may be observed that the British Government, when it suited them, had no qualms about setting up a customs barrier in Ireland. It may also be observed that there is something like a customs barrier between Savoy and the rest of France without any one suffering intolerable inconvenience. If Scotland were to be better governed as a result, we could perfectly well put up with a customs barrier. But the fundamental answer is that in a federal system there is usually no customs barrier at all.

Certainly no such demand was made by the supporters of the

Covenant. Its organisers drew up a blueprint for Scotland dealing with matters to be reserved for a United Kingdom Parliament, matters to be dealt with by a Scottish Parliament, and matters which would be the concern of both. The power to levy Customs Duties was reserved to the Government of the United Kingdom. All this can be found in the Memorandum of Evidence submitted to the Royal Commission. It has been published separately under the title '*The Case for Scottish Devolution*'.

It is not my purpose to discuss here the machinery of these proposals. Obviously they could at the most form a basis for discussions in which the interests of England would certainly not be neglected. Some Scotsmen would, I think, be willing to begin with almost any sort of Scottish Parliament or legislature so that the voice of Scotland might at least be clearly heard. It is ungracious to pretend that their aims are entirely different from what they say.

To refute triumphantly a position which your opponents do not hold is one of the less honourable ways of conducting a political argument.

7. *Independence*

At the beginning of this century most Scotsmen felt, perhaps a little sadly, that, in the words of Lord Normand, the Union of 1707 was 'an unequalled surrender of sovereignty for the greater good of mankind'. Some of them even hoped that one day the rest of the world might come to follow so good an example. The greater part of them supported the Liberal Party, which was committed to a policy of Home Rule, as indeed it is to-day. But they recognised that the claims of the Irish should be satisfied first, because Ireland had been treated so much worse. These hopes were frustrated by the War of 1914. No one who reads the great Parliamentary speech of Mr. Redmond on the Declaration of War can fail to be saddened by the thought of what might have been.

For reasons which may become clearer as we proceed, the feeling in Scotland is now less patient, but there seems to be

little evidence that the demands of her people have greatly increased. It is unjust and ungenerous to maintain that the demand for a Scottish Parliament 'within the framework of the United Kingdom' masks a claim for complete independence. Nevertheless this claim has been raised in some quarters, notably by the Scottish National Party, which at one time succeeded in getting a member elected to Parliament and has recently won some success at the polls. Unlike most supporters of the Covenant it decided that the way to its goal lay in opposing the existing political parties and in concentrating on this single issue. It is true that it also has detailed proposals for reform in Scotland, but there does not seem to be very much point in this at present except for purposes of propaganda. The policy to be pursued in Scotland can be decided only when a Scottish Parliament comes into existence and not before.

It is not easy to be confident about political trends, but although the movement for independence is growing, it may still be some way from sweeping the country. The Scots are very sensible, very patient, very unrevolutionary. Yet it should be obvious that a continual blank resistance to moderate demands tends to produce demands that are less moderate. This result can in turn be used by the opponents of change to dismiss the whole movement as extreme. Such a hostile attitude can produce only more extremism and ought to be rejected by the good sense of the English, as well as the Scottish, people.

If we are not content to dismiss claims for independence with scornful silence or noisy hilarity or angry rebuke, it might be wise to refute them with intelligent arguments. The Scots are commonly regarded, even by their modern detractors, as capable of rational argument; and one of their crosses is to be fobbed off by criticisms which show as little respect for experience as for logic. Thus, for example, we are solemnly told that the setting up of new States is entirely against the modern trend, and that Scotland in particular is far too small and far too poor to be capable of independence.

It is unnecessary to waste time on such fantasies. Apart from the fact that Scotland is at least as old a State as England, we see new States burgeoning almost every day into independence

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