

SCOTLAND; In search of an identity The Golden Age

My interpretations of historical notes and observations on the book "Scotland and Unwon Cause" Paul Scott 1997 Canongate Books.

We have come to the pivotal time at the end of the 18th Century. The nation had bent to the pressure for Union of the Crown, with England; many had hopes dashed in the Jacobite rebellion and the Stewarts' cause; the country was crushed in the ensuing purge of Highland Culture and was in the grip of humiliating economic depression, destitution and eviction of its remote communities.



Sir John Clerk (1730) wrote in his *History* essays that the case for Union was more palatable than reckless provocation against which may possibly result in conquest and a state under subjugation. This would be discreditable to both sides. Nevertheless, it would still be thus played out by the rebellious, ambitious Prince Charles Stewart, and Scots with heartfelt grievances.

A beneficial result of the catastrophic 1745 rebellion, paradoxically, was that in the past the Lowland Scot usually regarded the Highlander with fear and distrust "He wore a different costume, spoke a different language, worshipped in another Kirk, had different morals, different social constitution from his fellows in the south." (W.Scott). Now in place of this, the Highlands became the symbol of oppression imposed by the British state. It awoke in the Lowlander a sympathy and shared scottishness.

A Golden Age lay between the Jacobite uprising of '45 and the Reform Bills of 1832. It produced the sceptical philosopher David Hume, loved poet Robert Burns, romancer Sir Walter Scott, biographers James Boswell and John Lockhart, artist Sir Henry Raeburn, architect Robert Adam, a dynasty of Doctors Monro at Edinburgh's Medical College, Adam Smith founded Science of Political Economy, James Hutton for Geology, Joseph Black revolutionised Chemistry. The world's roads were built according to John McAdam, James Watt's steam engine powered industry, and military glory shone with the exploits of the famous Black Watch. No small nation had given the world so much, since the Age of Pericles. This Scottish Enlightenment is largely credited to Scotland's Education tradition.

And from the Scots' free expression, Burns gives us characteristic righteous indignation in *Scots, Wha' Hae'*, and egalitarianism in *A Mans a Man for a' That*. Sir Walter Scot rekindled the romance of a fading era, and the scientists provided a 'can do' example, which inspired Scots to their tasks in all corners of the world. There, generations of Scots found their liberty, even under the British flag, free from the stigma of being second class Britains, and free from Scotland's own class and race feudalism. "I am naebody's Lord. I'll be slave to naebody..".(Burns). At home things got worse.

The social fabric of Scotland, particularly in the Highlands, was unravelling as landlords succumbed to failing economy and sold up estates and cleared the mostly impoverished crofters, tenants and communities from the land. Incentives for emigration were offered to the willing, and force applied to the reluctant. In 2 generations the old ways were destroyed and the "improved" order was constructed.

A major influence on Scottish characteristics since the Reformation of 1560, was the Church of Scotland; as it was instrumental in education, encouraging intellectual attitudes, moral consciousness, industriousness, egalitarianism.

"The clergy of England have no more influence over the people at large, than the Cheesemongers of England have. In Scotland the Clergy are extremely active....the common people are conversant with the scriptures, and are formidable critics to their preachers." S.Smith.

There was a Disruption in the Kirk in 1842, when it split in the very late debate over the Treaty of Union, and a Patronage Act of 1712. British Parliament legislated that landowners could appoint Ministers (as in England). The moderates in the Kirk could work around that,; but to the Evangelicals in the Church of Scotland, it was an outrage -that Parliament should interfere in the Kirk's affairs. One third of the Kirk's 1200 ministers walked. throwing congregational life and the education tradition into chaos. Many of these ministers established congregations in the new Free Church of Scotland.

However, into the separation entered Anglicanism and the great pillar of Scotland, its faith, assuredly became an English version, like its language, dress, commerce, and social order.

In the Legislative Union, and for International diplomacy, Scotland ceased to exist. This spurred new political activism, awareness and expression in the 1800's through groups such as *The National Association for the Vindication of Scottish Rights*.

An expression for Scottish Nationalism was gathering, and The Nationalist Movement led to The Home Rule Association, also an appointment of Secretary of State for Scotland. The Scottish National Gallery, and other organisations, now expressed a national identity.

The Scots, once the masters of the Claymore and Broadsword, now drew on their education to become adept in oratory and debate. Nationalism, socialism, unionism, political and social reform were the platforms for Scots in the 1800's and in a changing world.

To be continued in the next issue.