
CHAPTER I

THE SCOTTISH IDEAL IN SCOTLAND AND IN CANADA

*This mighty dream of the race!
When, O when will it die?
When the magic of being burns from the blood,
When the violet fades from the sky;
When the mother turns from her child,
When the son his father spurns;—
And the blood of the mightiest race on earth
To bloodless water turns.*

IN this introduction to a necessarily imperfect memoir of the exodus and wanderings of a great northern race, it will be my chief object to impress upon my readers the importance of the keeping alive of the dominant historic spirit which has in the past made noted our Scottish ancestors in their own land and throughout the world. I may say, at the start, that I am not going to indulge in any mere historical or literary retrospect. My object is neither to flatter nor to condemn. As regards success, the Scottish race speaks for itself the world over; and as for failure, the signs of this are also apparent.

It would be easy to catalogue Scottish virtues

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and Scottish vices, and clothe the list in a flippant dress or a false rhetoric, as has, alas ! too often been done.

But this should be an age of few words and deep and serious thought, when great and vital subjects, such as this we are considering, should not be touched upon lightly or superficially. There never was a period in their history when our people needed all their sanity, all their ideals, all the aid that the spirit of the past can give them, more than they do to-day. We stand in great danger, and the keenest minds are too much engrossed in what one might call, to put it mildly, "the financial possibilities of the purely material." So that we, who represent, and strive to maintain, the ethical and spiritual aspects of life, cannot afford to make light of any influences which may keep alive or inspire the greater imagination of our people ; such as the splendid memories, the large and intense drama, the classic atmosphere of the history of Scotland.

Yet, sad to say, for so tragic and so subtle a race, no people has been dealt with so often, in so childish, so shallow, and so claptrap a manner as has Scotland at the hands of orators and writers innumerable throughout the world.

It is seemingly so easy to lecture on Burns or Scott, and these names are used as stalking-horses for all sorts of superficial efforts to acquire a patriotic or a literary reputation ; and all the while the real Burns and the true Scott remain utterly unknown and unappreciated, buried beneath

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the volcanic irruption of cheap democracy, false patriotism, and pretence at religion and culture. The phrase "a man's a man for a' that" has been dinned into our ears, but how many who have quoted it know its real meaning and application? Burns was the first great founder of the true modern democracy, and, like all great reformers, he has been most shamefully misrepresented by those claiming to be his friends and disciples, who have interpreted him in a class, rather than in a human sense. Likewise has Sir Walter Scott been wrongly ignored by men claiming to be scholars and writers. Instead of being, as many would class him, merely a delightful romancer, he is, without doubt, one of the truest realists, and a remarkable student of humanity. It is marvellous how much of all Scotland is mirrored in his truly magic pages.

Indeed, men may rave of the heather, the hills, the pibroch, and the Brig of Ayr, and all the time the real Scotland and the true Scottish people are a mystery to themselves and to others as they, to a great extent, remain to this day.

As this essay is an attempt at some sort of explanation of the Scottish people, I may, in places, be seemingly harsh in pointing out what without doubt appear to be degeneracies and misrepresentations of the Scottish race and character as an historical entity.

Poetry and feeling are a boon, indeed necessary in their place, and belong to the finest instincts of a race. But where they degenerate into

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mere cheap sentimentality and vulgar melodrama, nothing is so nauseous and sickening in a community.

For this reason, the greatest evil which has inflicted Scotland of late has been the rise of the so-called Kail Yard School of Fiction. It is already virtually dead. But it has accomplished in its short reign immeasurable harm. Hypocrisy and hysterics are an abomination in religion, but when they enter popular literature they are even worse. Some races, like the Irish, can afford to open their minds freely. It seems natural to that often frank and genial race. But it does not become the Scot. The true characteristic of the latter is his secretiveness, his un-get-at-ableness, his control of his inner feelings. This, in the past, made him the strong force that he became, and rendered his religion such a power in his personality. It simply permeated him in the subtlest manner, and was only recognised outwardly through his character. What his inner feelings were he kept to himself. But in these later, seemingly more degenerate, days, when religion from this standpoint had decayed, and what might be called literary emotion took its place, there came a change over the Scotsman's individuality which was not for the better; and when he began to spout cheap sentiment to his neighbours, he became an object of ridicule to the serious-minded. When he began to grow enthusiastic over and self-conscious of what he should simply have lived, namely, his religious beliefs and character, he came down from

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his unconscious dignity of centuries and became a very commonplace buffoon in the hands of Ian Maclaren and his ilk, who made a burlesque of what the Scotsman might have been at his worst. It may be difficult to realise this, but to the student who knows his Scott and Burns, and is in close touch with the real Scotland and the Scotsman of the past, it is very apparent.

The present-day habit of trading in the Scottish dialect and idiosyncrasy is not only harmful to the race, but it is virtually bearing false witness against the people before the world.

Of the Scotsman of to-day, the least said the better. He is being weighed in the balance. But with regard to the Scotsman of the past, if he was a force, it was not because of his angularity, his dialect, his red hair, his so-called meanness, his poverty, his narrow "pig-headedness," as some have called his determination, and for all of which virtues or defects he has had to stand in literature and journalism. But it was because, in spite of all these, he was, for some occult reason, a man, and as an individual became a power at home and wherever he adventured throughout the world.

It was not one of his special qualities to enjoy life and to give others pleasure, but it is through his ability for struggling with existence and overcoming obstacles that he has become famous. In short, the Scottish have been in the past a race of individual builders, a strenuous, adventurous, striving, ambitious folk.

They are not a people who can afford to descend

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from this level of existence. They are an angular, dour, silent race, who must maintain, through all their kindness and humour, a stern dignity as one of their chief virtues, or else lose their influence and personality as a people.

Now I do not intend here merely to scratch the surface of the Scottish idiosyncrasy, but to endeavour to show wherein the Scottish ideal in Canada and in the motherland is worthy of our serious consideration.

If we let our minds go out so as to grasp a comprehensive view of Scottish history and the Scottish race, we will realise that in the past, in what might be called the golden age of the Scottish people, they were a force in the world because of two things, namely, their religion and their determination to be freemen and rule themselves.

Now these are two very important impulses in the life of any nation, and they mean a great deal more than appears on the surface of this statement. "Religious consciousness," and "a determination to be freemen and self-ruling," the one the natural result of the other, make a great combination in the life of any nation. But we must not be misled into thinking that religion, as Scotland realised it then, was the mere formalism that the Scotsman in Canada and the Old Land, in common with all Christians, makes of it to-day. Religion then meant much more than mere empty creed, mere class prejudice, mere observance of ceremony, mere hope of heaven or fear of hell. It was

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something divine, something vital in the very life of the people, which so affected their whole nature, their very character as a community, that they rose above the common and the mean, and moulded gradually, during half a thousand years, their national ideals ; until out of these ideals grew, side by side with them, conceptions of life and sacred institutions as a part of the State, the Church, and the general fabric of society, and, with these, a highly ethical literature. It was essentially true of Scotland that her religion permeated her whole national life. It was not crystallised into an isolated institution, but was found in the State, the University, and the family. The family, that most sacred of all human institutions, and the oldest on earth, was especially revered in Scotland ; and it was this, together with the rural and out-of-door character of her people, which was the real foundation of her national greatness.

In present-day religion there seems to be a far cry to the lives of the New Testament Apostles as alone worthy of consideration ; whereas in old-time Scotland their own and all history was teeming with heroes, apostles and saints of God. I do not say that this was so of all Scotland. No country, no people is purely of one ideal. There was then, as now, the indifferent and the selfish, and added to these elements there were other conflicting influences for ever at work in the life of the people.

Roughly speaking, there were three Scotlands—the extreme wild, purely Celtic and Scandinavian

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west ; the great middle Scotland, stretching from Berwick to Cape Wrath ; and the purely Lowland folk and city dwellers. These three elements represented three distinct ideals, which fought for supremacy—namely, feudalism, intellectual religion, and practical materialism. Of these three, the religious and intellectual element largely dominated, but feudalism even down to this day has left its influence in the heredity of the best of the Scottish people.

Against feudalism I bring no charge. It was one of the most ideal forms of organisation of society that was ever developed on earth, and nowhere else did it arrive at such a perfect condition of development as in the clan system of Scotland. It was aristocratic, but that was its virtue, as it made every man, from the highest to the humblest, a gentleman in blood ; and I claim that to be the most divine condition of society which makes every man, no matter how poor in intellect or worldly goods, proud of his lineage and his race. It linked the peasant and the king on the throne in one vast common kinship in this mutual pride in the past, and stimulated, as no other influence has done, the whole community to uphold the ancestral honour of the race. It was not the sharp antagonistic division between the rich and the poor of the present much-boasted democratic age. In it lay the secret of the spirit of the great Scottish fighting clan-regiments, and to it is owing much of that strong sentiment for the motherland which animates the Scotsman through-

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out the world, even to the third and fourth generation.

The modern vulgar mind of a mongrel people, which has lost its race individuality, is inclined to sneer at the Celt's pride in his lineage. The other day a newspaper contained the following : "The man who is no good is he who is always bragging of his ancestors." This flippancy is as absurd as it is false. The truth is that to-day few men "brag" of their ancestors, for the simple reason that few can even tell who their grandparents were : a sad condition in a race having such a notable part in history and so long civilised. The influence that has brought this about, and which inspires the flippancy just quoted, is one not on the side of man's best interests.

It is the trail of the serpent of a modern money-tyranny, which would gradually degrade and trample on and break the high spirit of a once great people. It is the same influence which has destroyed faith in Deity and a sense of responsibility, and is now attempting to throttle true culture and the intellect. It has striven to convince man that he is but a more capable ape, and that all of life is rolled up in the material possibilities of a bank cheque-book. The answer to this superficial cavil at what was once a part of religion, of Christianity itself, is, that for one person who is proud of his ancestors one hundred are ashamed of theirs, for some unholy and inconsistent reason ; and others there are who impu-

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dently and blasphemously boast that they made themselves, and demand special privileges because they have done so. "He is a self-made man" is a common expression of praise. But, considered seriously, is it a worthy citizen who reflects on his own parents? Why should men vote for a man merely because he says his parents were humble any more than because they were lords or millionaires?

Is not this man also using his ancestry (only in a more contemptible manner) to his advantage? It should be the man alone and not his environment which should count. And this is the true application of Burns's "A man's a man for a' that." He is not a man merely because he is not rich, or not titled, or not otherwise favoured, any more than he is a man because he is all or any one of these. It is not the title or the obscurity, the rich apparel or the rags that make the man, but it is the man himself. There is too much pure flattery of and truckling to the poor to-day, and he is not the true friend of any class of men who flatters them for a base purpose. Every class should be educated to a stern sense of its own responsibilities. Therefore I would direct the sneerer at Celtic aristocracy to the instance of the Perfect Man, who, though in His generation said to be the son of a carpenter, is traced back through a line of kings to God Himself. I am not here making a plea for what is vulgarly called snobbery. I desire rather to carry the whole matter much deeper, to show a strong influence in certain races,

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and an influence for good, in spite of so much cant and hypocrisy concerning the whole matter. This side of the Scottish ideal, the feudal pride and sense of honour, is very much needed to-day on this continent, where society is altogether too much dominated by what Mr. Dooley sarcastically calls "the plain rich."

The feudal system no doubt had its weaknesses, as all human systems have. But it never lied to the average man. It never flattered him into a false idea of life, as the democracy has done. It never pronounced that monstrous absurdity that all men are born free and equal. No! But it gave man high and austere ideals toward which to climb, and it recognised and fostered genius and all that genius has to give mankind. While it recognised the necessary social grades, into which all complex communities crystallise sooner or later, it dignified the humblest lot in life, a thing which the present-day democracy has signally failed to do.

The next element in the Scottish community, and closely associated with feudalism, for which it had some affiliation, was that of religion and the intellect. These two influences, religion and the intellect, dominated the race and made the aristocrat and the cottar as brothers. A stern, uncompromising sense of religious conviction permeated the people, and affected them more than religion, in the deeper sense, has influenced any other race outside of the Hebrews. I would like to point out a strong similarity, which is plainly

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manifest, between these two great races, a similarity that is almost next to identity. In both peoples the Old Testament is lived or re-lived in the life of the people ; in both, religion is firm and unbending, and the sense of sin is sure and real ; in both the theocratic idea in the nation is remarkably prominent and deep-seated ; and in both the intense and almost undying feud between the Church and the State—or rather the fear of State interference on the part of the Church—is more than remarkable. Certainly no people in modern days has appreciated and absorbed the Jewish Scriptures as has the Scottish people. Then, in the poetical gift and temperament and their general nature they are singularly like the Hebrews ; and, sad to say, in their weaknesses, especially in their almost fatal genius for material success, and subserviency of all their highest ideals to the slavery of mere gain, the Scots are almost world-brothers to the Jew.

Here we have something more than mere coincidence. We have, without doubt, a great ethnological study, which goes back into the remotest ages of human history. But the lesson we learn from both peoples is that the abnormal individual passion for gain on the part of the Jew destroyed the national fabric and alienated and scattered the race, and that such a disintegration likewise threatens the Scottish nation and race to-day.

In likening the Scottish people to the Hebrew I am paying the highest, the very finest, compli-

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ment to the race to which I belong ; because of all peoples in the annals of extant human history, the Jewish is by far the greatest. Supposing we were to deny all belief in Christianity. Jesus Christ still remains without compare the ideal man, the highest type ever produced on earth, and unexplainable to the scientific mind ; and the Jewish literature is the greatest, ethically and humanly, and the one having the most tremendous and lasting effect on earth's greatest peoples. But if we accept the Divine idea, they are God's chosen people ; and if they have become in any sense inferior, it is not because of Christ, or their great literature, their mighty prophets, poets, rulers, and lofty ethics, but because they have allowed a material individualism to degrade and denationalise them ; and—let the Scot and the average Briton, the Canadian and American take warning and beware ! —I am to that extent a prophet. Give but another century to our peoples—over-material, over-cosmopolitan, over-fond of the present hour, and self-worshipping, self-indulgent and vulgar, with commonplace surroundings and the idea that they are but superior apes—and he who lives will see a spectacle beside which the Jew will appear colossal and noble.

But it may not be realised that the Scotsman has an affinity to another great people of the past, namely, the Greek ; and it is the marvellous admixture of ethics and reason, of imagination and thought, of insight and feeling, that produced the Scottish interpretation of the Bible, and the

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Scottish quality or level of Christianity, with its ethical and yet purely human literature, in Scott, Burns, and Carlyle. And I would go even farther. I claim to be something of an ethnologist, and believe that not all Scotland is north of the Tweed, and that the man who produced that wonderful combination of the Greek drama and the Hebrew conscience, "Macbeth," must have had some drop of the Scottish blood, somewhat of the northern heredity in his veins.

This whole subject which we are now considering, this historical and prehistorical personality of a people so subtle, so tragic, so spiritual, so heroic, and so intensely human as the Scottish personality, is almost a mystery to the historian and the ethnologist, but one which is well worth the study of the present-day thinker and philosopher.

The whole history of this people is a wonder—a seeming contradiction. Historians have been too narrow and dogmatic in classifying personality. To the man who gets beneath the surface, Knox, Carlyle, and James the Sixth have an affinity in temper; Burns and James the Fifth are brother-poets and individualistic men. It is only the superficial student, influenced by an ignorant class-prejudice, who would separate them. The genius for thought, for scholarship, for poetry, for piety, the strong, intrinsic love of race, permeated all ranks and made them one. But through it all there ran the silver or golden thread of a fine sense of pride, a high ideal of honour in the man,

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a deep conviction that religion is in the life, that faith and conduct cannot be separated, and that the supreme blossom of all is character.

To-day, however, the religious element has been largely supplanted by a cold, clear tendency of the mind working in purely material channels, and we now come to the third influence which has largely usurped the place of the other two, namely, the purely monetary and mercantile element in the Scottish people. The genius of the Scotsman for business is notorious the world over. He has been in the past the principal pioneer in commerce and mercantile pursuits. He has shown in this respect a single-mindedness and an indomitable force of character that has challenged the admiration of all peoples. Now, the combination of these three elements or influences in Scottish life, namely, feudalism, the religious intellect, and the genius for material advancement and acquirement, produced a wonderfully unique, forceful, and picturesque people. But the degeneration came when the more commonplace and material element crushed out the other two. The importance of the other elements may not appear to the average man in this age of "Does it pay?" "What is it to me?" "It will last our time," and many other expressions of a similar spirit or tone. But when religious ethics and ideals depart from a people that people is surely doomed. Some races cannot afford to practise even what others have thrived upon. The Saxon can safely be much more material than the Scot. But the Celt cannot risk

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the loss of his ideals and the vast dreams of his sensitive and subtle imagination.

It was while the Scotsman was at his best in the influences of religion and feudalism that he pushed forth into the world. It was then that he came to Canada and founded this country for Britain. It was he who discovered her wilds, named her rivers, her mountains, and her lonely outposts. It was he who planted religion, founded institutions of learning, and placed on them the seal of his ideals of culture and piety of that day. It was the Scot who largely peopled the wilds, and gave a thorough, honest, careful, and conservative character to Canadian business and financial life. He had much to do with the framing of laws, the fostering of legislation and education. This, in short, is the story of the sturdy Scotsman of the past who came to Canada and accomplished so much in the building-up of this country.

But how does the Scotsman stand to-day? What part does he play? Is he a force in the community—or only an absorbed unit? Have all of the ideals which he brought with him wholly disappeared? We have seen the force which he was in the past; but now, when things have changed, can and will the Scot still hold his own? Can he be successful under the new conditions? Will he, and does he, still hold his former ideals of creed, of the home, the family, the State, education and culture, with a sense of honour in public places and in commerce, and stability in business? Does he—will he—demand that these shall all be

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maintained? It is to be feared not. The signs are that he has let go many of these ideals. But if we seek the one great Scottish national weakness, we will discover the answer to all this—and that weakness is the over-development of the mere individual at the expense of the community. In short, the Scot has carried this now long-exploded democratic idea to an extreme. He has, both here and in the old land, perhaps fatally crystallised into an ultra-conservative antagonism to any ideal save what he calls the "individual good." The community to him means nothing any more ; and while he is sometimes narrow as regards things which do not really matter, he is often careless regarding the interests of his religion and faith, his ethics and his national ideals, which his fathers struggled and died for, and continually sacrifices these in his attempts at compromise.

Fifty years ago the Scottish faith and ideal were a power in this land, and its adherents were uncompromising in their determination to perpetuate them in the community. But to-day, what a change ! A subtle influence has been at work (an influence which only he who has closely and patiently studied the life of our people can discover) to extinguish gradually this spirit and ideal in the interests of what has falsely been called toleration, but in which, sad to say, the Scotsman himself has taken a prominent part. It has been, in short, a distinct self-effacement as a community for the sake of personal interest and commercialism ; and it is just the natural result—the virtual self-

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destruction of a race which has bartered its ideals and faith, its national dreams and ancestral pride, for the false favours of any community which demanded the sacrifice.

At home, in the beautiful old land, the Caledonia and Scotia of the past, the country of Bruce and Wallace, of Knox and Argyll, of Scott and Burns, and a thousand and one other heroes and saints, leaders of men and martyrs, sad to say, the conditions are much the same. The feudalism, Scotland's glory, which Bruce lived and Scott sang is virtually dead ; and with it has largely died Scotland's faith, and with them both, it is to be feared, has perished the real spirit of that once great people. There they lie : a beautiful wreck of a former glory and power, buried under a confusion of infidelities and petty heresies, and all submerged in a vulgar muck of commercialism, which is not even true commercialism.

In Canada we seek for the old spirit, but we find it not. The ancient Church of Scotland no more acts as a community. To the individual pulpit alone is left the attempt to arouse, inspire, and anchor the people. The Church as an organisation no more stands for anything. It never dreams, as a body, of agitating or instituting reforms for the community. It has been gradually chained and muzzled, chiefly in the interests of party politics, and as it was never merely ornamental, it cannot live for ever. The Anglican Church, likewise leashed and manacled like the Scottish in the interests of party politics, may linger long in the

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twilight charm, the dim religious light of its cultured ritual and its appeal to formalism and refinement. But the Scottish Church has none of this outward attractiveness, and when it has lost its stern, aggressive Calvinistic personality, with its historic appeal to rugged truth and national and individual conduct, it is in danger of becoming merely a part of that vast element of the commonplace and dreary which dominates present-day life.

The other great ethical influence of the past was the University. But what power in national affairs does it wield to-day in Canada or Scotland? Is it really the same institution with the same ideals and objects for which it was founded? Has it not really abdicated its old place? Has it not drifted with the selfish tide in the direction of material success? Has not the word "success" replaced those of "ethics" and "culture" in the scrolls of its ideals? Has not the University, which originally stood side by side with religion for spirit and mind, for the soul and intellect, which demanded a place for character and genius in society, which really represented the middle, one time ruling, classes, and which mothered the formerly dignified and cultured professions of law, the Church, medicine, and the higher education—has it not departed from its old-time place in the community? Has not this institution, this one-time tremendous force, which represented faith, scholarship, culture, literature, legislation, and justice, which provided for the dignity and impeccability of the courts of justice, and from which there radiated a general

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influence of learning and refinement, been given over to or metamorphosed into a gigantic technical or scientific institution, run not so much in the interests of human truth or knowledge as in that of the mighty dollar?

In the face of all this—in the face of the fact that in the Church and the University the only man wanted or encouraged is he who can touch men's pockets, and not their hearts, minds, or imaginations; that the Universities no more contain the national prophets and thinkers; that in the legislative halls the conditions are similar and real freedom shackled and crushed—can you ask if it is well with the Scotsman here and in the old land?