

Scottish Influences in Russian History

CHAPTER VI.

COLLABORATORS OF PETER THE GREAT

Among the 'helpers' or 'collaborators' of Peter the Great, three Scots, besides General Patrick Gordon, stand out pre-eminently: George Ogilvy, who planned his battles, though Sheremetieff won them; James Bruce, the astronomer; and the physician, Dr. Erskine Ogilvy did not take root in Russia. His career was this. He was a son of George Baron Ogilvy, Governor of Spielberg in Moravia (a son of Patrick Ogilvy of Muirtoun and grandson of James, Lord Ogilvy of Airlie), and in his early youth went into the Emperor's service, becoming very speedily Gentleman of the Bed-chamber and a Major-General. The Tsar visited Vienna in 1698, [*Des Heil. Rom. Reich. Genealogisch-Historischen'; Adels Lexici, II vol. (Leipzig, 1747).*] and was so much struck by him that (through the influence of the unfortunate Livonian Count Patkul) he took him into his service, and they went back to Moscow together. After General Lefort's death Ogilvy was made Field-Marshal. 'His first care was to arrange Military matters according to German style, and in this he succeeded very well,' but he was wise enough to see and to say that the Russians were but in their infancy, and ought to be brought into discipline by degrees. He distinguished himself at the taking of Narva, and concluded the Peace of Ivanogorod, when the King of Poland decorated him with the White Eagle. With the Tsar's permission he then took service with the King of Poland, and died in October, 1710, aged sixty-two, at Danzig. He bought for 120,000 florins the feudal estate of Sauerschau, and (by his wife, Marie-Anastasia, daughter of Johann Georg Yuckmantel de Brumath) left a family to succeed him in the riches he had acquired in Russia. [A pedigree of his descendants is given in *The Scottish Antiquary.*] Major-General James Daniel (Yakov Vilemovitch, 1670-1735) Bruce and his brother, Robert (Roman Vilemovitch, 1668-1720), were sons of an immigrant to Russia, Colonel William Bruce, [*A Short Outline of the History of Russia, by B. I. L. (Edinburgh: privately printed, 1900), p. 119. A book too little known. William Bruce is said to have arrived in Russia about 1650. He died in 1680 at Pskoff.*] who claimed to belong to the old house of Bruce of Airth. [See chapter vii.] They prospered exceedingly in the land of their adoption. We are told of James Bruce that he 'passed at Court for a chemist and astronomer of genius, and was held in the City for a Sorcerer.' He certainly was one of the greatest of

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the Tsar Peter's 'helpers.' There was nothing he had not a finger in. He was placed at the head of artillery and was not unsuspected of much speculation. His career was subject to sudden vicissitudes. He was at one time disgraced in favour of Prince Ivan Troubetskoi for 'lack of expedition,' and at another time for abuses in his office, though he had the reputation of never accepting bribes. The Tsar always ended by forgiving him. He had the great power of work, which was after the great Tsar's heart, and his success at the Peace of Nystadt, which gave him the title of Count, gave the Baltic Provinces to Russia, and left Sweden with no transmaritime possessions. He also induced Peter to correspond with Leibnitz, translated many foreign books for his master, and directed the Tsar's schools of Navigation, Artillery and Military Engineering. It was he who was made to collect codes of laws of other nations for the Tsar, and he was made a Senator in 1718. He later retired to his estate of Glinki, forty-two versts from Moscow, and died without issue, 19th April, 1735. Waliszewski [*Peter the Great*, p. 226. A bust (lettered additionally Daniel Bruce) which has disappeared gives his birth as 1669. I am indebted for its photograph to my friend, Mr. Clement J. Charnock, of Moscow.] writes: 'A whole legend has grown up round the light which streamed, on long winter nights, from the windows of his laboratory in the Souharez Tower. [*Souchareva bashnya*.] 'His astronomical discoveries bordered closely on Astrology, and his celebrated *Calendar*, published in 1711, is all moonshine.' [Field-Marshal Bruce lies buried under the Refectory of the Simonoff Monastery in Moscow. - *The Story of Moscow*, by Writ Gerrare, p. 262.] Brusovski Street in Moscow, where his house formerly stood, is named after him. His Countship passed on to his nephew, Alexander Romanovitch, the son of his brother, Robert (Roman), who was born in 1705. He took part in the war with the Turks, and was a Major-General by 1739. He retired, owing to ill-health, in 1751, and died the same year. He married twice into the family of Dolgorouki. His first wife was Princess Anastasia Nichaelovna. Dolgoroukaya; secondly, he married a lady who had almost been Tsaritzza of Russia, Princess Yekaterina Aleksievna Dolgoroukaya, the bereaved *fiancee* of the young Tsar, Peter II., who was described as 'beautiful, but arrogant.' On the death of her *fiance* she was (by Anna Ivanovna) banished and confined in different monasteries, but when the Empress Elizabeth came to the throne she was recalled in 1745. It was noticed that her hand had been kissed by the Empress when she was declared the Tsar's *fiancée*. We are told that, 'Arrogant till the very last, on her death-bed she ordered

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all her dresses to be burned so that none might wear them after her.' [*Short Outline of the History of Russia*, ii. pp. 152-3.] Her stepson was one of the 'Counts Bruce' of the reign of Catherine II.

Dr. Robert Erskine, the sixth son of Sir Charles Erskine of Alva, Baronet, a Scottish physician who had studied in Paris, entered the service of Peter the Great and became the first of the many Scottish physicians connected with the Russian Court. Perhaps he originally took service with Prince Menschikoff, the Tsar's favourite, but anyway he entered the Tsar's service about 1704. He was appointed *Archiator* or chief of the *Aptekarski Prikaz*, or Ministry of Medical Affairs, which was removed in 1712 from Moscow to the new St. Petersburg, when the name was changed to that of Medical Chancellery, and he was used in diplomatic missions also with Tartar Khans. We are told he had the salary of 1500 ducats (promptly paid too, unlike the military allowances), and that he 'put the great Imperial Dispensary in the excellent order it is in . . . He furnishes the armies and fleets, and the whole Empire, with drugs, and makes a great addition to the Tsar's revenue.' [*History of Peter the Great*, 1755, ii. pp. 170-171.]

It is interesting to see how a Scottish friend, George Mackenzie, describes in a letter the newly-born St. Petersburg in 1714. 'Our infant City here is of that extent, that, though far from being at the fag end of it, yet have my house at above 2 English miles distance from that of the Dr.'s, so that my letter found him allready gone abroad with the Czar, though it was with him this morning before g o'clock.'

Erskine rose high in the opinion of his Imperial Patron, travelled with him and Catherine in 1716 through Denmark, Germany and Holland. He was given the title of Councillor of State. He was present at the marriage of the Tsar's niece, the Tsarevna Yekaterina Ivanovna (mother of the unlucky Regent, Anna Leopoldovna), to the Duke of Mecklenburg-Schwerin, at Danzig on 19th April, 1716. At Copenhagen he was approached by the Jacobites (his brother was one of those attainted in 1715), and Sir Henry Stirling of Ardoch (son-in-law of Admiral Thomas Gordon), came to meet him there, no doubt as a Jacobite agent, and he was very likely in the Görtz plot; anyhow, as Gordon of Auchintoul wrote: 'The Doctor was supposed in the

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latter years of his life to have kept a correspondence with the Chevalier de St. George's agents; whatever be of that, he was an agreeable, open-hearted, fine gentleman.' In spite, or because of this (for the Tsar did not love George I.), his influence continued unabated. He went with him on the celebrated visit to Paris in 1717. Next year he fell ill and went for baths at Koucheserski, near Lake Onega, and died at the Tsar's house there in December, 1718. He was only forty-one. The Tsar had his body transported to the capital, and had it buried in the churchyard of the newly-erected Alexander Nevski Monastery with the highest pomp. The funeral took place on 4th January, 1719, the Tsar carrying a lighted torch, with two hundred other mourners. [Erskine Papers; *Miscellany of the Scottish History Society*, vol. ii. pp. 373-430.]

Always well treated by the Tsar and handsomely paid, he returned the Imperial kindness in his will, dated in 1718. He left all his money in England to his mother, that in Russia to necessitous families. His library was to be sold for the benefit of his heirs. If the Tsar liked he could purchase his curiosities, medals and surgical instruments, the price being given to orphanages, hospitals, and almshouses in Scotland. Two legacies he made to the Imperial family, and both are characteristic of the time and country. He leaves 'To the Most Gracious Lady the Tsaritsa Ekaterina Aleksievna such of my linen as has not been used, and the lace which is not torn, and all my porcelain ware,' and 'The Country seat Gastel (now called Gostilitzi) I transfer to the most gracious pleasure of His Imperial Majesty, in case he should wish to give it to her Highness the eldest Princess. [Anna Petrovna, born 9th March, 1708; died 15th May, 1728; married, 1725, Charles, Duke of Holstein-Gottorp and was mother of Peter III.] We read, also, among his papers a letter in 1713 desiring a recommendation to him of 'Thomas Garvine, who is now a surgeon in the Hospital of Petersburg,' and who was sent later by Peter the Great to Peking at the request of the Chinese Emperor, Kang Hi, on one of those Oriental missions which owed so much to Scottish leaders.

Such was the career of the first, but by no means the last, [Dr. Grieve was later another Scottish doctor in St. Petersburg, also Dr. Halliday, who died there in the beginning of the eighteenth century. - *New Statistical Account of Scotland (Dumfriesshire)*, p. 156.] **Scottish Court Physician in Russia.**

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John Bell of Antermony, whose name is associated with diplomatic relations between Russia and China, went to Russia in 1714, and was received by Dr. Erskine 'in a very friendly manner.' Desiring to travel, Dr. Erskine recommended him, as having some knowledge of surgery, to the College of Foreign Affairs in St. Petersburg, and so he entered the Tsar's service. He first went in the suite of Artemy Petrovitch Valenski on the embassy from 'his Czarish' Majesty to the Sophy of Persia, which lasted from 1715 to 1718, and next year set off in the train of Leoff Vassilievitch Ismayloff, ambassador from the Tsar to Kang Hi, Emperor of China. Two excellent volumes, published by subscription later, were the fruit of his observations. His Chinese embassy did not reach home until 1721. It was a great success, and may be studied in his book. [*Travels from St. Petersburg in Russia to Diverse Parts of Asia*, 2 vols. (Glasgow, 1763.) A good life is given in W. Anderson's *Scottish Nation*, vol. ii. pp. 273-275.] It is sad to read how many prisoners (one a General Hamilton), [Hugo Johan Hamilton, Major-General of the Swedish cavalry, was taken prisoner at the Dnieper in July, 1709, and conveyed to Moscow and Kazan. He had fought at Narva, Clissow, Frauenstadt and Poltava. He was released, became Field-Marshal, and died in 1748.] taken in the Swedish wars, he met going and returning through Kazan and Siberia; though he states that in the case of the latter they 'contributed not a little to the civilizing of the inhabitants of these distant regions; as they were the means of introducing several useful arts, which were almost unknown before their arrival.' Bell again went to Persia, and then was on a mission, in 1737, to Constantinople. He married, in 1746, a Russian subject, Marie Peters; left the Russian service; had a career as a Turkey merchant; and, finally, died at Antermony, aged 89, on 1st July, 1780.

Another Scot, a more humble adherent of the Great Tsar, was one of those 500 Scots and English whom he picked up during his residence in England. He was 'Mr. Farquharson [Most likely the Professor Farquharson (wrongly spelled) of St. Petersburg mentioned in Dr. Cook's book.] (an able mathematician), a Scots Highlander,' whom he took with him from England to Holland and Russia, and who taught Moscow youths arithmetic in a room in the Souchareva Bashnya before he was transported to St. Petersburg. Major-General Chambers was made a Knight of St. Andrew after the taking of Narva. Alexander Magnus Anderson, Major of the Österbotten regiment, went over from the Swedes to the Russians in 1712, but was later sent to Siberia, with many other Scoto-Swedes, whose descendants have become Russians.

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Duncan Robertson, son of Alexander Robertson, 12th Laird of Strowan, was 'highly esteemed' by the Tsar, rose to the rank of Colonel, and died in Sweden in 1718, leaving a daughter by his wife - a Robertson of Inches. [Douglas's *Baronage of Scotland*, p. 409.] Gordons come galore. Count James Gordon was wounded 'in the ankle' at Notteburg, near Narva. James Patrickovitch Gordon, as we have seen, was captured at Narva, escaped and rose to be a Brigadier. Another James Gordon we hear of being taken prisoner in 1704 and suffering 'misirabill bondeg' with the Swedes. But a far greater man than any of these, one who made his mark upon the country of his adoption, was Admiral Thomas Gordon, whom we have already mentioned. He had left the British Navy on account of his Jacobite proclivities and was found by Peter in Holland. Peter snapped him up, and he entered the Russian Navy (another Scot was in it, one William Hay, dismissed in 1724) in 1717 as Captain-Commander. In 1719 he was Rear-Admiral. In 1721 he commanded the squadron of Kronstadt, consisting of six battleships, three frigates and two smaller vessels. He had several *fracas* with the Dane, Rear-Admiral Sievers, but they were 'reconciled' officially. He knew no Russian, but talked to Prince Menschikoff (and this again shows the receptive powers of this favourite of the Great Tsar) in fluent Dutch. He captured Danzig in 1724; was Commander-in-Chief at Kronstadt in 1727; resigned and was re-appointed in 1733, and held the appointment until his death. Kronstadt owes everything to him and to his master, except what it owes to Admiral Greig in later times.

He died at his post, at Kronstadt (during the regency of Anna Leopoldovna), 18th March, 1741, when the Jacobites, who had made much of him, announced that the Chevalier de St. George regretted 'the honnest Admiral very much.' The Admiral married Margaret Ross, the widow of William Monypenny (of the Pitmilly family). She died before 9th January, 1721-2, and was buried near the grave of the Tsar's own sister Nathalia in the Church of the Annunciation of the St. Alexander Nevski Convent, St. Petersburg. They had a son William, a sailor; a daughter Anna, who married at St. Petersburg, in 1726, Sir Henry Stirling of Ardoch, who acted as an agent for the Jacobite Court there; and another daughter who married William Elmsal of St. Petersburg.

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There was also a Douglas who came into Peter's service in a less legitimate way. Horace Marryat [*One Year in Sweden*, ii. p. 463.] gives an account of his wild career. He was one Count Gustaf Otto Douglas, born in 1687, a *lif drabant* under Charles XII. After 'wonderful adventures' he was taken prisoner at Poltava and reappears there as Governor of Finland. In a passion he murdered at table a Russian General of Police, and was sent in chains to St. Petersburg. Marryat adds: 'Peter the Great, chancing to meet Douglas wheeling a barrow with other convicts, straightway pardoned and reinstated him in his high offices. No sentiment of honour towards the country of his birth influenced his conduct. In 1719 he piloted the Russian fleet into Nörrköping, stole the bones of St. Henry (English) from the Cathedral of Åbo, carrying them off to St. Petersburg. Hence the very name of Otto was held in horror among the Finns. The more wicked he became the more honours were lavished upon him, till, when on a commission in Livonia, he caused a noble of high rank to be whipped to death. This was more than even the Czar could stand. Count Otto was advised to retire to his vast estates, where he was still living in 1763, at that time seventy-six years of age.' To this charming biography Dr. Otto Donner [*A Brief Sketch of the Scottish Families in Finland and Sweden*, by Otto Donner (Helsingfors, 1884).] adds that he was a son of Count Gustaf Douglas and grandson of General Count Robert Douglas (of the Whittinghame family), the first of the name in Sweden. Both he and his brother Wilhelm were taken prisoners at Poltava and conveyed to Vologda. There he entered the Russian service at the age of thirty. He was made Governor-General of Finland in 1717. Dr. Donner continues: 'violent in temper, he in 1719, at a wedding in Åbo, slew the Russian chief bailiff, for which he was deprived of his post and imprisoned. During his rule 3,000 Finnish recruits were taken by force and sent to Astrachan, from whence only a few more than 400 returned. After the conclusion of peace, Douglas removed to Esthonia, became Governor of Reval, 1737-41, and also General; but retired from service in 1751.' A troublous life!

Perhaps it was from the number of Scots in Peter's service that there arose the romantic scheme of a reconciliation between the Jacobite Non-Juring Episcopal Church of Scotland, persecuted since the accession to the throne of Great Britain of George I. (on whom Peter looked more than coldly), and the Orthodox Churches in Turkey and Russia. The Tsar is said to have

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regarded the project with a favourable eye. [Keith's *Scottish Bishops*, 1824, appendix, p. 532.] The Scottish Bishops (one of the most zealous of whom was Bishop James Gadderar of Aberdeen) and the English Non-Juring Bishops entered seriously into negotiations with Arsenius, Metropolitan of Thebais, who was then in England, and with the Patriarchs of Constantinople, Alexandria, Jerusalem, Antioch, Heraclea, Nicomedia, Chalcedon, and Thessalonica, with powers to treat with all the Orthodox Greek or Russian Churches. On the Tsar's death the project died also, but it is worthy of much study, especially as, romantic though it seemed then, it was the precursor of the *rapprochement* between the Orthodox and the Anglican Churches in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

But the most romantic thing, and a thing of horror in Peter the Great's reign, is unquestionably the execution of Mary Danielovna Hamilton in 1719. Mary Hamilton was of that family that gave his mother her tincture of Western freedom and culture, and was introduced to his dangerous Court to wait on the Empress Catherine, the Livonian ex-peasant. The Tsar, *on dit*, fell in love with her. But she favoured others, and one especially, it is said, an Orloff. Children were born of her guilty connection, and she destroyed them. Russian custom at that time looked lightly on infanticide, but at last, she was condemned to death. Her story has been thought to be the origin of the old ballad, 'The Queen's Marie'; [Sir Walter Scott recorded this analogy (cf. his *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*).] at any rate the circumstances have much in common. Catherine (whom she had laughed at) interceded for the culprit, and persuaded the Tsaritzza Prascovia, [Widow of Ivan Aleksievitch, *née* Soltykova.] to intercede for her also, but Peter was immovable. 'He would not be either Saul or Ahab, nor violate the Divine Law by an excess of kindness.' She mounted the scaffold on the 14th of March dressed, according to Stachlin, 'in a white silk gown trimmed with black ribbons.' [Waliszewski's *Peter the Great*, pp. 221-253.] Peter supported her, and after she was beheaded, it is said, touched the pale lips with his own, let the head fall, crossed himself and departed. There is confirmation of this gruesome tale in the description, by a traveller [*Voyages and Travels through the Russian Empire, Tartary, and Part of the Kingdom of Persia*, by John Cook, M.D. at Hamilton, ed. 1778, pp. 56-57.] in 1735, of the contents of the Academy of St. Petersburg, a description which only an ex-medical student could have written.

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'Here I saw the head of the unfortunate Miss Hamilton, a Swedish lady, [This is what makes me think the Hamiltons came to Russia viâ Sweden.] who lost it for having murdered her child, unlawfully begotten; and this is the only murder of that kind I ever heard of in Russia. This lady was maid of honour to the Empress Catherine. It is said Peter went and saw her executed. He wept much, but could not prevail with himself to pardon her, for fear, as is said, that God would charge him with the innocent blood she had shed. He caused her head to be cupped, and injected. The forehead is almost compleat; the face is the beautifullest my eyes ever beheld; the *dura mater* and brain are all preserved in their natural situation. This is kept in spirits, in a large chrystal vessal.'