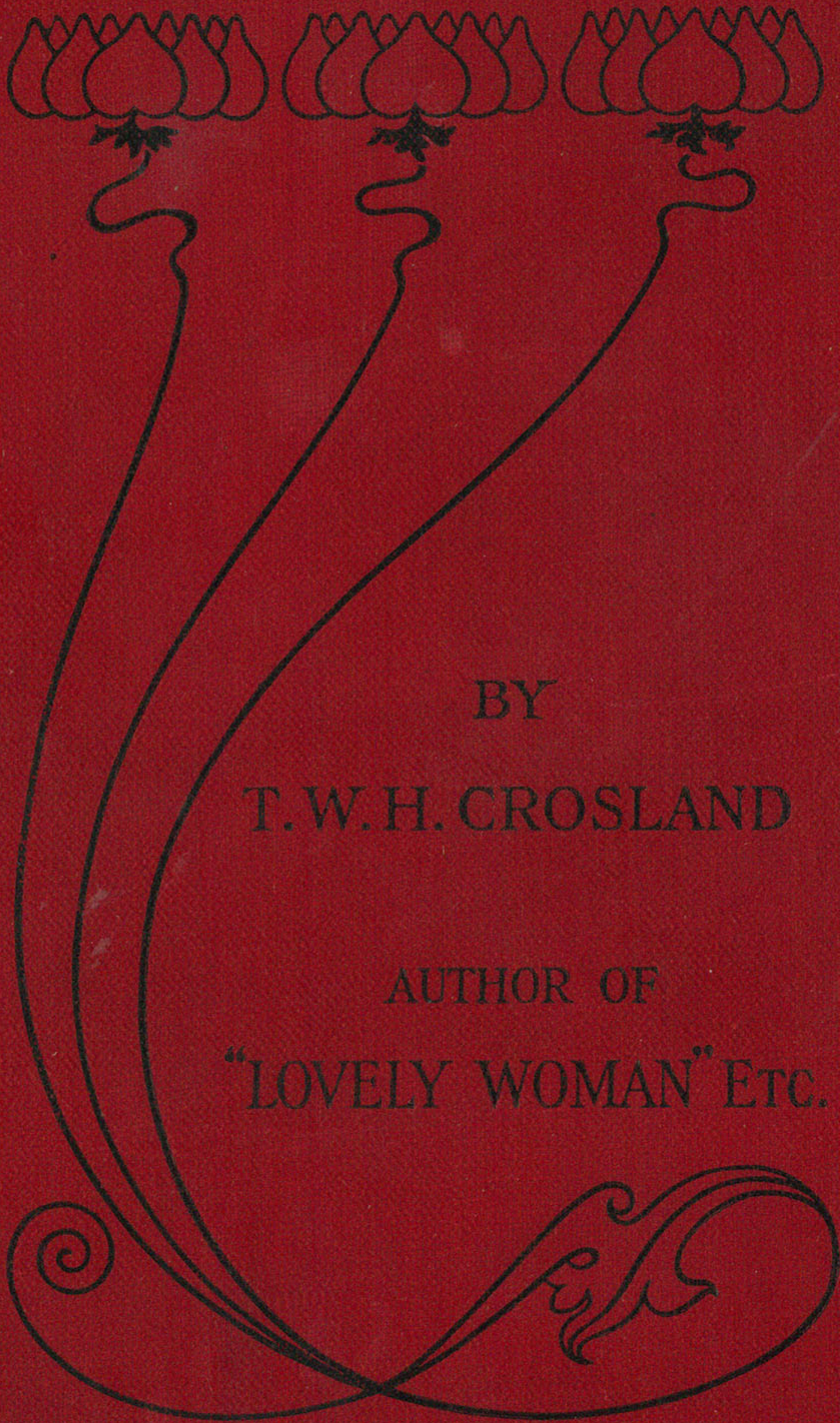


THE UNSPEAKABLE SCOT



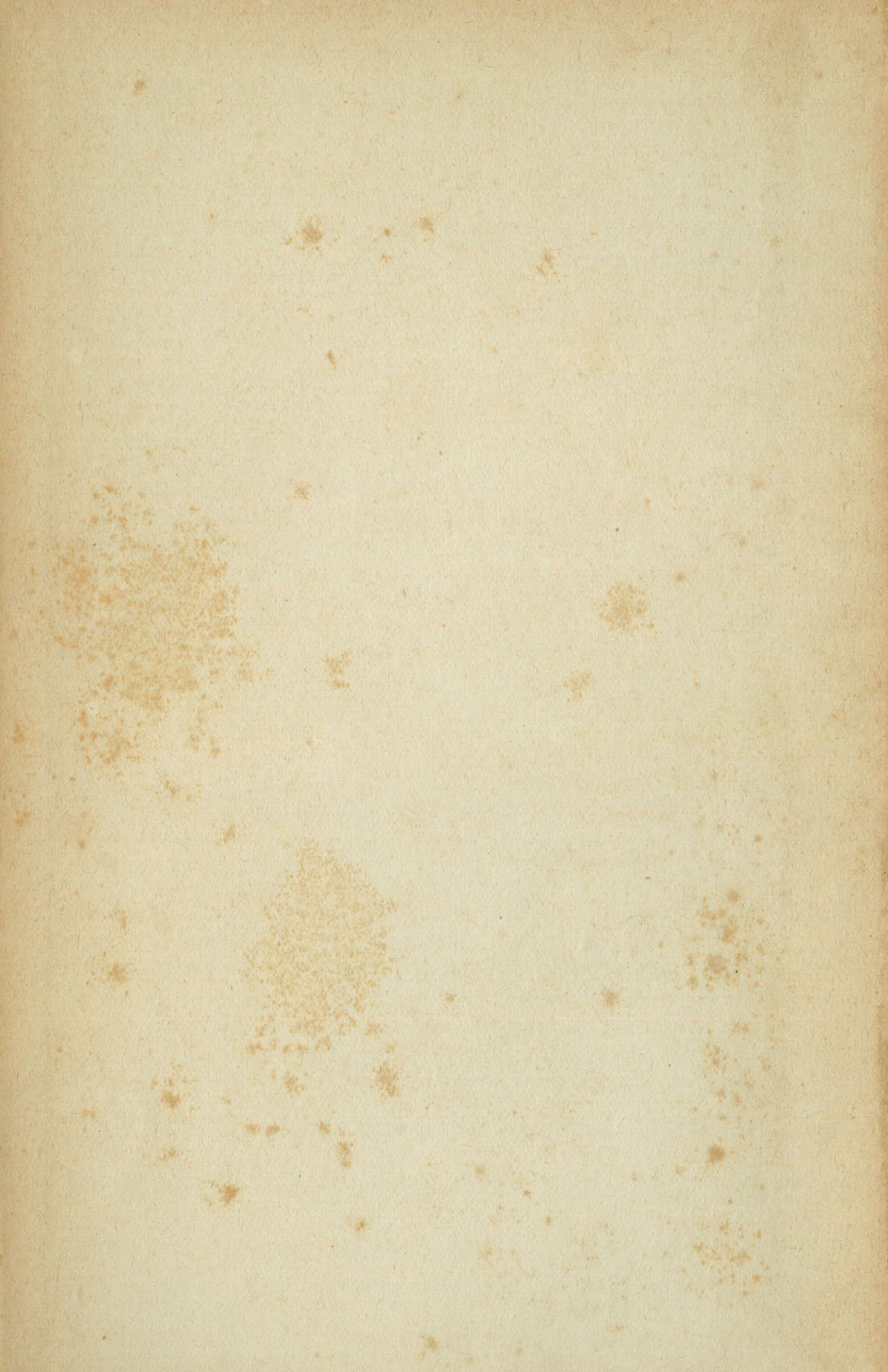
BY

T. W. H. CROSLAND

AUTHOR OF

"LOVELY WOMAN" ETC.

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Fernando Peron.



THE UNSPEAKABLE SCOT

By the Same Author

LOVELY WOMAN

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THE
UNSPEAKABLE
SCOT

BY

T. W. H. CROSLAND

AUTHOR OF

“LOVELY WOMAN”

LONDON
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1908

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The Unspeakable Scot

CHAPTER I

THE SUPERSTITION

THIS book is for Englishmen. It is also in the nature of a broad hint for Scotchmen. My qualification to bestow broad hints upon the politest and most intellectual of the peoples is that I possess a large fund of contempt for the Scottish character. Also I had the misfortune to be born on a day which is marked, sadly enough, in the calendars BURNS DIED. So that one way and another I appear to have been raised up for the work before us, even as Dr. J. M. Barrie¹ was raised up

¹ In a booklet entitled "The Kilt and How to Wear It," the Hon. Stuart Erskine assures us that "in Scotland every man is a gentleman." On the other hand, in England quite a number of Scotchmen seem to be doctors. I trust that I shall not be considered wanting in respect if I prefix the august, abdominal "Dr." to the names of all Scotch gentlemen whom I have occasion to mention.

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to assist the fortunes of a certain brand of smoking mixture.¹

Of course, if a man speak of the Scotch in any but the most dulcet tones he invites the onslaught of a thousand obscene pens. The bare title of the present essay is pronounced by good judges to be uncomplimentary to Scotland, and I can well imagine that since its announcement Drs. Lang, Archer, Robertson Nicoll, Ross, and Hamish Hendry, together with a base residuum of anonymous reviewers, have made a point of sleeping in their clothes in order that they might be "ready, aye ready," to deal faithfully with the haughty Southron at the earliest possible moment. I like to think, however, that Dr. Lang, who, with true Scottish shrewdness, avowed himself but yesterday a convinced crystal-gazer,² has had due prevision of the friendliness of my intentions. Were I disposed to bloody battle I might have opened fire by remarking in hot type that if you scratch a Scotchman you will find a very low

¹ *Vide* that piece of arrant Jeromeism, "My Lady Nicotine."

² Andrew Lang. "Magic Mirrors and Crystal-gazing." *Monthly Review*, February 1902.

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person indeed. Or I could have thrown from my pom-pom that shining projectile :

False Scot
Sold his king
For a groat.

But who, that has a feeling for warfare, would fight with a Scotchman ? Such a one, I hope, does not breathe ; the plain fact being that if a Scot beats you, he beats you ; whereas if you begin to beat a Scot he will assuredly bawl, in the King's name, for the law. "Hech, sirs, rin for the polis. A'hm gettin' whupped !" Let us therefore continue our discourse amicably.

Your proper child of Caledonia believes in his rickety bones that he is the salt of the earth. Prompted by a glozing pride, not to say by a black and consuming avarice, he has proclaimed his saltiness from the house-tops in and out of season, unblushingly, assiduously, and with results which have no doubt been most satisfactory from his own point of view. There is nothing creditable to the race of men, from filial piety to a pretty taste in claret, which he has not sedulously advertised as a virtue peculiar to himself. This arrogation has served him passing well.

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It has brought him into unrivalled esteem. He is the one species of human animal that is taken by all the world to be fifty per cent. cleverer and pluckier and honester than the facts warrant. He is the daw with a peacock's tail of his own painting. He is the ass who has been at pains to cultivate the convincing roar of a lion. He is the fine gentleman whose father toils with a muck-fork. And, to have done with parable, he is the bandy-legged lout from Tullietudlescleugh, who, after a childhood of intimacy with the cesspool and the crablouse, and twelve months at "the college" on moneys wrung from the diet of his family,¹ drops his threadbare kilt and comes south in a slop suit to instruct the English in the arts of civilisation and in the English language. And because he is Scotch and the Scotch superstition is heavy on our Southern lands, England will forthwith give him a chance, for an English chance is his birthright. Soon, forby, shall he be

¹ The Free University Education Scheme of Dr. Andrew Carnegie (many times millionaire, beloved of the American steel worker, and author of a book called "Triumphant Democracy," if you please) will no doubt change all this.

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living in "chambers" and writing idiot books. Or he shall swell and hector and fume in the sub-editor's room of a halfpenny paper. Or a pompous and gravel-blind city house shall grapple him to its soul in the capacity of confidential clerk. Or he shall be cashier in a jam factory, or "boo and boo" behind a mercer's counter, or "wait on" in a coffee tavern, or, for that matter, soak away his chapped spirit in the four-ale bars off Fleet Street. Hence, as an elegant writer in one of the weekly reviews puts it, the Englishman "is painfully aware that it is the Scot who thrusts him aside in the contest for many of the best prizes."

When one turns to the intimate study of the Scotch character as limned by Scotch authority, one finds oneself confronted with the work of two schools of artists, which for the sake of convenience we will dub the Old and New Schools. The Old School—of which, by the way, every Scotchman save one is either a member or a supporter—has had a tremendous vogue and has accomplished superhuman things for the country and people of its love. To this school the Scotch superstition owes its origin and its firm grip on the

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imagination of the average white man. It is a forthright, downright, thorough sort of school, not in the least diffident or mealy-mouthed, not in the least ambiguous, not in the least infected with that "proud reserve" which is understood to be Scotland's noblest heritage. Among the choice exemplars of the art of the Old School—and it has thousands of choice exemplars—we may reckon Dr. George Lockhart, who wrote the "Memoirs" and thereby earned for himself imperishable fame. Lockhart was a "Scotland-for-ever" man of the first water. "As for the [Scots]," he says, "none will, I think, deny them to have been a Brave, Generous, Hardy People. . . . As the Scots were a Brave, so likewise were they a Polite People; every Country has its own peculiar Customs, and so had Scotland, but in the main they lived and were refined as other Countries; and this won't seem strange, for the English themselves allow the Scots to be a Wise and Ingenious People, for say they to a Proverb, '*They never knew a Scots Man a Fool.*'¹ And if so, what should hinder them from being as well bred and civilised as any other People? Those of Rank (as they

¹ I am not acquainted with any such saying.

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still do) travelled Abroad into foreign Countries for their Improvement, and vast numbers, when their Country at home did not require their services [mark the fine sophistry], went unto that of foreign Princes, from whence after they had gained immortal Honour and Glory, they returned home ; and as it is obvious that at this very time (which must chiefly proceed from this humour of Travelling) the Scotch Gentry do far exceed those of England, so that in the one you shall find all the accomplishments of a well-bred gentleman, and in your country English Esquires all the Barbarity imaginable."¹

Thus Dr. George Lockhart, two hundred years ago. 'Tis a fair picture and a winning, if a trifle overstated. Consider your brilliant, and at the same time unassuming figure of a Scotchman—"brave," "generous," "hardy," "polite," "refined," "not a fool," "well bred," "civilised," "travelled," "wise," "ingenious," and immortally "honourable" and "glorious." Who can withstand him? Who would deny him the look of love, the

¹ George Lockhart's "Memoirs concerning the Affairs of Scotland from Queen Anne's Accession to May 1707."

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patriot glow? Certainly not the men of his own blood, who have their livings to get. Certainly not the Scotchman, who perceives here, by favour of Dr. Lockhart, his own impeccable self done to the life. To this day the artists of the Old School continue to paint the same inspiring portrait, and if you look into the latest replica, by no less judicial a hand than that of Dr. John Hill Burton,¹ you will discover the undying lineaments, bespeaking the undying virtues, and composed sweetly to the purposes of the undying advertisement.

So much for the Old School. As for the New School, I take credit that it is a discovery of my own. It consists of one man only. He is a Scotchman, and his name is William Robertson Nicoll. Dr. Nicoll is the editor of the *British Weekly*. He also edits the *Bookman*, and lounges round letters in a paper called the *Sketch*. Some time ago this great and good Scotchman was accused of indulging in too many literary aliases. We were then informed by a *protégé* of his that it would be well for us to lift reverent eyes and behold in Dr. William Robertson Nicoll "a

¹ John Hill Burton, D.C.L., LL.D., "The Scot Abroad."

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force in letters"—“the only force, some of us think,” added the incense-breathing *protégé*. We looked and beheld. Also we read in “Who’s who,” that Dr. Nicoll was the author of “The Lamb of God,” “The Key of the Grave,” “The Incarnate Saviour,” “The Return to the Cross,” “The Secret of Christian Experience,” “Songs of Rest,” and “Sunday Afternoon Verses,” all, no doubt, excellent and exciting works, but obviously sealed to a department of letters in which we have not specialised. Therefore, we took “the force in letters” notion for granted. Our own idea of Dr. Robertson Nicoll’s relation to letters will be set forth duly in another chapter. Meanwhile it is necessary to say that Dr. Nicoll is one of those delightfully irresponsible literary forces who babble of “Mr. S. R. Crockett’s *great* novel ‘Joan of the Sword Hand,’” in one breath, and with the next pray to be delivered from “a misuse of words.”

But let us give honour where honour is due. There are white marks even on the editor of the *British Weekly*. For quite two years past his dropsical pennyworth has been our constant solace in times of darkness and

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difficulty. Each week it contains a lengthy and helpful letter by one "Claudius Clear." Many young Scotch writers have told us in many a useful paragraph that they do not think they are breaking a confidence when they say that "Claudius Clear" is one of the pen names of Dr. Robertson Nicoll. So that on the whole "Claudius" is a Scotchman, despite the circumstance that he dates his correspondence from Basil Regis, Middlesex, and masquerades in a name which is about as Scotch as Schiepan. For that matter, anybody might have guessed his nationality from his syntax. And being a Scotchman, "Claudius" is, of course, omniscient and infallible. That is where the absurd beauty of him comes in. That, Messrs. Hodder and Stoughton, is why one reads the *British Weekly*. Do you wish to know how to run the *Times*? Would you care to be instructed in "the art of conversation"? Are you anxious to learn what is really meant by "good manners"? Would you be advised on "Order and Method," "Brilliance," "Over Work," "Handwriting," "Publishing as a Profession," "Editing as a Profession," "The Keeping of Old Letters," "How to Remember and how to Forget," "the Art of

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Life," "the Art of Taking things Coolly," "Firing Out the Fools," or indeed on any other matter under the sun—from "Vanity" to "Samuel"—why you just turn up "Claudius," and there you are ; two columns which settle the question swiftly and for ever. What wonder then, that in my anxiety to get at the truth about Scotchmen, I should turn up "Claudius" ? Nor have I turned him up in vain, as witness the following admirable words :

"In the first place, the Scotsman is a son of the rock. The circumstances of his birth and upbringing are as a rule very stern. He is cradled in the storm ; he has to fight for life in a rough climate, in a huddle of grey houses. The amenities of life are by no means plentiful. As a rule money is scarce. There are few demonstrations of affection ; one is made to feel that he must trust himself, that man is a soldier, and life is a fight." [Here, Scot-like, the worthy "Claudius" breaks off to indulge in a little pathetic personal reminiscence.] "When I look back to my early years it seems to me that the whole atmosphere was laden with care, that the strain on the hearts of the people was so tightened by the material needs of those who

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depended on them that life was a taut rope on which only a trained acrobat could keep his balance. The result was a feeling of constant anxiety, a dread of the future. It was haunted by fears which could hardly be measured, and as the years went on their difficulties seemed to increase. [Which, to say the least, is clumsily put.] In this way young Scotsmen were taught to take things seriously. They knew that their right arms must serve them, and they did not lean upon others. They were thus fiercely independent. They asked nothing from those about them—the asking would be vain. As they sought nothing they would give nothing. Acknowledgment of superior position they resolutely refused; and they were ready to resent every assumption of superiority. They knew well that the door of opportunity opens but seldom, and were eager to enter it when it did open. They knew that success in any form has to be paid for, and they were willing to pay. They would work hard without complaining, and they were willing to sacrifice, and ever came to disdain the pleasures and amusements of life. They had been taught that it was of no use to complain, and they

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did not complain. But they made amends for this by refusing to be gracious, by a reserved and proud manner. They knew that competition was the law of life, and they were none too gentle in dealing with their competitors. Those who achieved positions were objects of criticism, and the criticism was pitiless enough. For a fight they were in constant readiness. 'Touch me gin you daur,' was the national motto, and there never was one more expressive of character. The Scotsman as a rule does not take the offensive, but those who meddle with him must take all the consequences."¹

Clearly, as one might say, a Daniel come to judgment! "Claudius Clear," the New School, struts and roisters and swaggers as your Scot must do, or perish; but, on the whole and out of the honesty of his heart, he will modify. Perhaps he was not in the best of humours when he wrote the foregoing. Any way it rather disposes of the gallant and debonair vision conjured up for us by the glowing pencils of the Old School. The generous, polite, refined, well-bred, civilised

¹ "English and Scotch": *The British Weekly*, January 16, 1902.

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and immortally honourable and glorious Scotchman of Dr. George Lockhart, becomes, under the brush of Dr. Robertson Nicoll, another and a distinctly less beautiful personality. He is born on the rock. The amenities of life are not for him. He is haunted by constant fears. He will give nothing. He refuses to be gracious. He is none too gentle in dealing with his competitors. And instead of saying "Nemo me impune lacessit," as you might expect of a young man who has been to the college, he whoops "Touch me gin you daur" like a drunken trull in the Cowgate. When I come to think of it, I am much obliged to the New School.

On another matter, a very big matter indeed with your common Scotchman, Dr. Nicoll is equally frank. "I think I may also say," he remarks, "that the Scottish people cared very much for education and knowledge, far more in my opinion than the average Englishman. They thought about learning as the New Englanders did in the days of Emerson. The learned man was much more respected than the rich man. Perhaps there was an intuition that in the end of the day

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knowledge is the key to everything. But thirty years ago, at all events, knowledge was regarded as an end, and its possessor was profoundly esteemed. The *summum bonum* of the best Scottish youth in those days was to be a professor."¹

Summum bonum is scarcely the phrase, but that and the New Englanders may pass. Scotland, admittedly, enjoys a reputation for learning, of a sort. Once, I visited Edinburgh with a Scotchman. It was a rash thing to do, yet I did it. On the road north my Scotchman filled me with tales of his country's culture. "You are not going into a dirty English city," quoth he, "but into a centre of light and leading. Every man, woman, and child in 'aud Immemour' can at least read, and every publican in the place keeps a set of 'Chambers's Encyclopædia,' a copy of Fox's 'Book of Martyrs,' and plenty of back numbers of the *Nineteenth Century*, just as an English publican keeps for the use of his customers the 'Post Office Directory' and 'Whitaker's Almanack.'" And the first thing I noticed when

¹ "English and Scotch": *The British Weekly*, January 16, 1902.

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we got into Edinburgh was a fruiterer's sign, upon which was written in startling letters :

FRUITS IN THERE SEASON

All the same, I concede that the Scotch really do love learning. I gather, too, from unbiased sources that they starve their mothers and make gin-mules of their fathers to get it. And when it is gotten, what a monstrous and unlovely possession it usually turns out to be. For your Scotchman always confounds knowledge and wisdom. His learning consists wholly of "facts and figures," all grouped methodically round that heaven-sent date, A.D. 1314¹, and if you cannot tell him off-hand the salary of the Archbishop of Canterbury, the population of Otaheite and the names of the fixed stars, he votes you a damned ignorant Southron, and goes about telling his friends that he shouldn't wonder if you never went to "the schule." It may rejoice him to know that his readiness to answer all manner of questions involving book learning is in point of fact the beginnings of a species of idiocy. Persons of whom this

¹ "The Battle of Bannockburn was won by the Scotch in 1314. Here's tae us, wha's like us?"—SCOTCH TOAST.

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idiocy has got properly hold are styled by the medical profession "idiot savants." "In all asylums," says Professor Vivian Poore, "you will find idiot savants. . . . There used to be at Earlswood—and I saw him when I visited Earlswood—an idiot quite incapable of taking care of himself, but who had a most extraordinary memory. When I went to the asylum the superintendent said to me, 'Ask that man anything you like.' It was rather a strange thing to be told to do; I said, 'What kind of thing shall I ask about?' And he said, 'Any ordinary bit of knowledge.' I said, 'Tell me about Socrates.' The idiot then drew himself up like a child would who was about to repeat a lesson, gave a cough, and told me about Socrates. . . . He knew a great deal more about Socrates than I did; he knew when he was born, why he was condemned, the name of his wife, and everything that was essential to be known. This he repeated without difficulty. The superintendent gave a grin and said, 'Would you like to ask him anything else?' I was afraid that the man might ask me something. I said, 'What do you know about comets?' Immediately he

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gave me—I presume correctly—all the facts about the chief comets, their periods of revolution, the names of the best known, and so on. Nothing that had ever been read by this patient did he seem to forget. The words which had been read to him seemed to have stuck to the cells of his brain like so much superior glue, and nothing would eradicate it.”¹

How very, very, very Scotch! Who has not met just this idiot savant in a newspaper office, at the meetings of absurd societies, at the houses of uncultivated people? And always, always he is Scotch. And always, always he has that sententious trick of drawing himself up and launching into his subject with the self-satisfied cough of conscious knowledge.

And now (to make a handsome end for a brilliant chapter) let us remember

I. THAT HADRIAN HAD THE EXCELLENT SENSE TO BUILD A WALL FOR THE PURPOSE OF KEEPING THE SCOTCH OUT OF ENGLAND.

¹ George Vivian Poore, “A Treatise on Medical Jurisprudence,” 1901.

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- II. THAT FOR A THOUSAND YEARS THE SCOT WAS ENGLAND'S BITTEREST ENEMY, AND PLOTTED AND MADE WAR AGAINST HER WITH FRANCE.
- III. THAT THE SCOTCH DESERTED THAT LARGE LAME WOMAN (AND, ACCORDING TO THE SCOTCH, THAT PARAGON OF ALL THE VIRTUES), MARY STUART, IN HER HOUR OF DIREST NEED.
- IV. THAT IT WAS THE SCOTCH WHO SOLD CHARLES I. (AND A STUART) TO THE PARLIAMENTARIANS FOR £400,000.
- V. THAT THE STUARTS WERE THE WICKEDEST AND STUPIDEST KINGS EUROPE HAS EVER KNOWN.
- VI. THAT THE SCOTCH ARE IN POINT OF FACT QUITE THE DULLEST RACE OF WHITE MEN IN THE WORLD, AND THAT THEY "KNOCK ALONG" SIMPLY BY VIRTUE OF THE SCOTTISH SUPERSTITION, COUPLED WITH PLOD, THRIFT, A GRAVID MANNER, AND THE ORDINARY ENDOWMENTS OF MEDIOCRITY.
- VII. THAT IT WAS A SCOTCHMAN WHO INTRODUCED THISTLES INTO CANADA, AND

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THAT (VERY LIKELY) IT WAS A SCOTCH-
MAN WHO INTRODUCED RABBITS INTO
AUSTRALIA.

VIII. THAT ON THE MOST LIBERAL ESTIMATE
THERE ARE ONLY ABOUT THREE DECENT
SCOTCHMEN IN ENGLAND, ONE OF
WHOM IS HALF ENGLISH, THE SECOND
HALF IRISH, AND THE THIRD (WEEK IN
AND WEEK OUT) HALF DRUNK.

CHAPTER II

PREDECESSORS

FROM the day he first clapped eyes on him, the Englishman has felt that there was something wrong about the Scotchman. And this feeling rapidly crystallised itself into literature. Many early ballads against the Scotch are to be found by him who cares to look for them. That Chaucer did not love Scotchmen is pretty certain, though there is nothing in his writings to prove it. The same holds true of Spenser. But when one comes to Shakespeare, the case is very much altered. There can be no getting away from the circumstance that Shakespeare knew his Scotchman through and through. Any Scot who is feeling a desire to be particularly humble and to learn the real truth about himself and his compatriots should read, piously, the tragedy of *Macbeth*. Of course, Shakespeare does not count much in Scotland.

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Whenever a Scottish writer of the old school has to speak of him, he does so with a grumbling grudgingness as who should say, "The man was a genius, but not a Scot. What a peety!"

"Here Douglas forms wild Shakespeare into plan," warbled Burns. Think of it! And I have seen a Scotch reviewer complain that a certain author was cursed with a "Shakespearean smartness." This antipathy for the Bard of Avon has often created much wonderment in the mind of the Englishman, and the cause of it, one may guess, is that Shakespeare wrote *Macbeth*. There is scarcely a line in that remarkable drama which does not mean bitter reading for Scotchmen. Almost the first person named is one Macdonwald.

The merciless Macdonwald
Worthy to be a rebel for to that,
The multiplying villainies of Nature
Do swarm upon him.

In a neighbouring passage we are given a beautiful insight into Scottish views of warfare. Ross is made to say :

Sweno the Norway's King craves composition
Nor would we deign him burial of his men

PREDECESSORS

Till he disbursed at Saint Colmes' inch
Ten thousand dollars to our general use.

From the beginning of time Scotch fighting men have been mercenaries, and Scotch armies have insisted upon fining a vanquished foe. They did it in France; and they did it in their own country. And, after Naseby the Scotch army in England coming to the conclusion that there was nothing more to be done straightway demanded a sum of money in the way of solatium for leaving the country. "Nor would we deign him burial of his men till he disbursed," hits them hard. Shakespeare, as was his way, understood. Then one comes to the celebrated scene on "the blasted heath." Here enter three witches, and to them Macbeth and Banquo. Macbeth bloated with pride and devoured with ambition falls an easy victim to Shakespeare's trinity of hags.

All hail, Macbeth! Hail to thee, Thane of Glamis!
All hail, Macbeth! Hail to thee, Thane of Cawdor!
All hail, Macbeth, that shalt be King hereafter!

The man swells visibly as a Scotchman should, and stalks off heroically, full of the consciousness of his own bigness. And mark how arrant a Scotchman he becomes in the result. In his castle he has for guest a king

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who has trusted him and bestowed honours and dignities upon him. "Conduct me to mine host," says the unsuspecting monarch. "We love him highly, and shall continue our graces towards him." And all the time the excellent Macbeth and his excellent lady are plotting the King's murder. When it comes to the point of actual killing, the gentleman's Scotch spirits fail him; he is really not sure, don't you know, whether after all it ought to be done. Then the lady very naturally grows disgusted and shrill:

Was the hope drunk,
Wherein you dress'd yourself? hath it slept since?
And wakes it now to look so green and pale
At what it did so freely? From this time,
Such I account thy love. Art thou afraid
To be the same in thine own act and valour,
As thou art in desire? Would'st thou have that
Which thou esteem'st the ornament of life,
And live a coward in thine own esteem;
Letting I dare not wait upon I would,
Like the poor cat i' the adage?

And what a deliciously smug Scotch answer is immediately forthcoming! Says the faint-hearted traitor:

I dare do all that may become a man;
Who dares do more, is none.

PREDECESSORS

Here we have the moralising scoundrel in which Scotland is so prolific turned out to the life. Right through the play Shakespeare pitilessly holds up to our gaze the low and squalid cunning, the treachery, the hypocrisy and the deviltry which he believed to be at the bottom of the Scotchman's soul, and Macduff puts the coping stone on the structure of opprobrium by calling his countryman a hell-hound and a bloodier villain than terms can give him out, and assuring him that he will live to be the show and gaze o' the time :

Painted upon a pole and underwrit,
Here may you see the tyrant.

From Shakespeare it is an easy jump to Jonson, who helped to write a play which put the Scot in such bad light that it had to be suppressed by the authorities. Then, of course, there is Samuel Johnson, LL.D., who hated the Scotch at large and by instinct. Johnson has enjoyed no little reputation for his animadversions upon Scotland. In bulk they are slight, but they are decidedly to the point.¹ Boswell treasured them and put them

¹ The best and truest of them is the one of which we hear least : "He was also outrageous upon his supposition

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into his book, and to Johnson was the glory. Boswell, it is true, was a Scotchman himself, and the fact that he has given us one of the most entertaining pieces of biography ever written is allowed to redound to the credit of Scotland. I never read the Life, however, without feeling that Johnson must have written Boswell and that Boswell probably wrote Johnson's poems.

The next good hater of your Scotchman is Charles Lamb. Lamb, need one say, was Lamby, even in his hatreds. He had a gentle heart and he never exerted himself to put down aught in malice. So that he called his feelings of contempt for Scotchmen an "imperfect sympathy," and this is what he wrote :

"I have been trying all my life to like Scotchmen, and am obliged to desist from the experiment in despair. They cannot like me—and in truth, I never knew one of that nation who attempted to do it. There is something more plain and ingenuous in their

that my countrymen 'loved Scotland better than truth,' saying, 'All of them, nay, not all, but *droves* of them, would come up, and attest anything for the honour of Scotland.'" Thus Boswell.

PREDECESSORS

mode of proceeding. We know one another at first sight. There is an order of imperfect intellects (under which mine must be content to rank) which in its constitution is essentially anti-Caledonian. The owners of the sort of faculties I allude to, have minds rather suggestive than comprehensive. They have no pretences to much clearness or precision in their ideas, or in their manner of expressing them. Their intellectual wardrobe (to confess fairly) has few whole pieces in it. They are content with fragments and scattered pieces of truth. She presents no full front to them—a feature or side-face at the most. Hints and glimpses, germs and crude essays at a system, is the utmost they pretend to. They beat up a little game peradventure—and leave it to knottier heads, more robust constitutions, to run it down. The light that lights them is not steady and polar, but mutable and shifting; waxing, and again waning. Their conversation is accordingly. They will throw out a random word in or out of season, and be content to let it pass for what it is worth. They cannot speak always as if they were upon their oath—but must be understood, speaking or writing, with some abatement. They

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seldom wait to mature a proposition, but e'en bring it to market in the green ear. They delight to impart their defective discoveries as they arise, without waiting for their full development. They are no systematisers, and would but err more by attempting it. Their minds, as I said before, are suggestive merely. The brain of a true Caledonian (if I am not mistaken) is constituted upon quite a different plan. His Minerva is born in panoply. You are never admitted to see his ideas in their growth—if, indeed, they do grow, and are not rather put together upon principles of clock-work. You never catch his mind in an undress. He never hints or suggests anything, but unloads his stock of ideas in perfect order and completeness. He brings his total wealth in company and gravely unpacks it. His riches are always about him. He never stoops to catch a glimmering something in your presence, to share it with you, before he quite knows whether it be true touch or not. You cannot cry *halves* to anything that he finds. He does not find, but bring. You never witness his first apprehension of a thing. His understanding is always at its meridian—you never see the first dawn, the early streaks

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He has no falterings of self-suspicion. Surmises, guesses, misgivings, half-intuitions, semi-consciousnesses, partial illuminations, dim instincts, embryo conceptions, have no place in his brain, or vocabulary. The twilight of dubiety never falls upon him. Is he orthodox?—he has no doubts. Is he an infidel?—he has none either. Between the affirmative and the negative there is no border land with him. You cannot hover with him upon the confines of truth, or wander in the maze of a probable argument. He always keeps the path. You cannot make excursions with him, for he sets you right. His taste never fluctuates. His morality never abates. He cannot compromise, or understand middle actions. There can be but a right and a wrong. His conversation is as a book. His affirmations have the sanctity of an oath. You must speak upon the square with him. He stops a metaphor like a suspected person in an enemy's country. 'A healthy book!' said one of his countrymen to me, who had ventured to give that appellation to John Bunce—'did I catch rightly what you said? I have heard of a man in health, and of a healthy state of body, but I do not see how

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that epithet can be properly applied to a book.' Above all, you must beware of indirect expressions before a Caledonian. Clap an extinguisher upon your irony, if you are unhappily blest with a vein of it. Remember you are upon your oath. I have a print of a graceful female after Leonardo da Vinci, which I was showing off to Mr.——. After he had examined it minutely, I ventured to ask him how he liked 'my beauty' (a foolish name it goes by among my friends)—when he very gravely assured me that 'he had considerable respect for my character and talents' (so he was pleased to say), 'but had not given himself much thought about the degree of my personal pretensions.' The misconception staggered me, but did not seem much to disconcert him. Persons of this nation are particularly fond of affirming a truth—which nobody doubts. They do not so properly affirm as annunciate it. They do indeed appear to have such a love of truth (as if, like virtue, it were valuable for itself) that all truth becomes equally valuable, whether the proposition that contains it be new or old, disputed, or such as is impossible to become a subject of disputation. I was present not

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long since at a party of North Britons, where a son of Burns was expected ; and happened to drop a silly expression (in my South British way), that I wished it were the father instead of the son—when four of them started up at once to inform me that ‘that was impossible, because he was dead.’ An impracticable wish, it seems, was more than they could conceive. Swift has hit off this part of their character, namely, their love of truth, in his biting way, but with an illiberality that necessarily confines the passage to the margin.”¹

“The tediousness of these people is certainly provoking. I wonder if they ever tire one another ! In my early life I had a passionate fondness for the poetry of Burns. I have

¹ There are some people who think they sufficiently acquit themselves, and entertain their company, with relating facts of no consequence, but at all out of the road of such common incidents as happen every day ; and this I have observed more frequently among the Scots than any other nation, who are very careful not to omit the minutest circumstances of time or place ; which kind of discourse, if it were not a little relieved by the uncouth terms and phrases, as well as accent and gesture peculiar to that country, would be hardly tolerable.—Jonathan Swift: “Hints towards an Essay on Conversation.”

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sometimes foolishly hoped to ingratiate myself with his countrymen by expressing it. But I have always found that a true Scot resents your admiration of his compatriot, even more than he would your contempt of him. The latter he imputes to your 'imperfect acquaintance with many of the words which he uses;' and the same objection makes it a presumption in you to suppose that you can admire him. Thomson they seem to have forgotten. Smollett they have neither forgotten nor forgiven for his delineation of Rory and his companion, upon their first introduction to our metropolis. Speak of Smollett as a great genius, and they will retort upon you Hume's History compared with *his* continuation of it. What if the historian had continued Humphrey Clinker?"¹

I reproduce this estimate with the utmost satisfaction. The irony of the "imperfect intellects" passage will not be understood by dull Donald—indeed he will in all probability take the passage seriously and quote it against me; but he is welcome. And on the whole I think that Lamb's view of the Scot is almost as

¹ Charles Lamb: "Essays of Elia."

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acute as that of Dr. Robertson Nicoll himself. Nobody can doubt after reading the foregoing that Lamb saw in the Scotchman a crass and plantigrade person, incapable of comprehending the inexplicit and as devoid of true imagination as a hat-box. Lamb's notion of the Scots incapacity for humour also chimes with that of Sidney Smith, who, as all men know, was of opinion that if you would have a Scotchman see a joke you must perform a surgical operation on him.¹

Last of all, though perhaps brightest and best of them, who have lifted up their voices in the unmasking of the Scot, we must take Mr. W. E. Henley. In an entirely just and reasonable essay on Burns, Mr. Henley made a passing reference to "the poor-living lewd, grimy, free-spoken ribald old Scots peasant-world." For this choice collocation of adjectives he was rewarded with many Scottish thwacks. That the old Scots peasant-world

¹ Mr. Spielmann has assured us that seventy-five per cent. of the jokes accepted from outsiders by *Punch* come from Scotland. This, however, only tends to show that Lamb and Smith knew what they were talking about, for it is everywhere admitted that if you want humour, you must make a point of avoiding *Punch*.

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was everything that Mr. Henley said of it no person of sense will gainsay, and that the Scots peasant-world of to-day is, if anything, worse is evident from the remark of one of Mr. Henley's Scottish critics, who says :

“ We challenge Mr. Henley *et hoc genus omne* to disprove the fact that the record of crime, immorality, loose living in every parish wherein Burns resided shows less by one-half—by fifty to seventy per cent.—in that [Burns'] epoch than it does in the same parishes to-day.”

Mr. Henley has brought such a swarm of bees round his bonnet by a simple and quite tolerant bit of criticism, that to venture on anything in the way of plain talk about the Scotch might well appal the stoutest. The worthy Dr. John D. Ross, editor of the *Burns Almanac* and sundry other compilations of a fatuously Burnsian character, has collected some of the diatribes against Mr. Henley into a volume which he calls “ Henley and Burns.” Like everything else that comes out of Scotland, this volume gives the Scotchman away at all points. For example, it is made quite plain that Mr. Henley's essay, a purely critical venture, was

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regarded in Scotland as a base attempt to pull down the cash value of early editions of Burns's poetry. Dr. Ross's volume opens with the following oracular sentence : "Lovers of Burns will rejoice to learn from the large price paid this week for a Kilmarnock edition, that despite the criticism of Mr. W. E. Henley in the Centenary edition, there are as yet no signs that the poet's popularity is on the wane." And our brilliant commercialist adds : "Rightly or wrongly, Scotsmen will cling to the Burns superstition, and will be the better for it. At an important book sale in Edinburgh this week, a Kilmarnock first edition in an apparently perfect state of preservation, fetched the remarkable price of 545 guineas. The highest price ever before given for a copy of this edition, mutilated however, and in inferior condition, was £120. Such a figure is undoubtedly a fancy price. The book is very rare, and to the bibliophile, rarity is an all-important consideration in estimating value. But the popularity of the poet, the admiration of the uncritical, as Mr. Henley would put it, has helped to magnify the price of the book and the critic's depreciation has had

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no effect on the market." What in the name of all that is Burnsy does this gentleman imagine?

Again in another paper headed "A Critic Scarified," the scarifier takes Mr. Henley to task for saying that "the Scots peasant . . . fed so cheaply that even on high days and holidays his diet (as set forth in the 'Blithsome Bridal') consisted largely in preparations of meal and vegetables and what is technically known as 'offal.'" To which Dr. Ross's scarifier retorts, "The author is happily addressing ignorant Southerners, not even 'half-read' Scots. However, it need not be thought that Mr. Henley can translate the Scots language of the poem he refers to, else he would not assert that the viands specified in it are such common fare, consisting as they did of six different soups, eight varieties of fish (including shell-fish), six varieties of flesh (roasts, salted meat, nolt feet, haggis, tripe, sheep's head), three kinds of bread (oaten, barley, and wheaten), cheese, new ale, and brandy." On the face of it there is here a mighty deal of offal to precious little sound meat. If nolt feet, haggis, tripe, and sheep's head are not offal in Scotland,

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they are certainly reckoned in that category in England.

We shall return to Dr. Ross's scarifiers in a chapter on "The Bard." Meanwhile let us note that the best English writers¹ have agreed that the Scotchman is, at best, not quite an angel of light. They have looked on him with the eye of calm perception, and they have found him seriously wanting. That he is a savage and a barbarian by blood, a freebooter by heredity, a dullard, a braggart, and in short a Scotchman, cannot be doubted. The testimony is all against him, and until he mends his ways, it will continue to be against him.

¹ Byron, Buckle, and Cobbett were also among the number.

CHAPTER III

THE POW-WOW MEN

It is the Scotchman's boast that the Scotchman has always figured portentously in the Councils of the civilised nations. In France, in Germany, and even in unbeautiful Russia, Scotchmen have at time and time established themselves and risen to positions of considerable political power. And if we are to credit Dr. Hill Burton, this has always been an excellent thing for the nations concerned. According to Dr. Burton, if the Scotch did not entirely build up the France of the Middle Ages, they had a mighty big finger in the process, and we are asked to believe by the same authority that it is the strain of Scotch blood in the veins of the French which has assisted very materially in making the fortunes of that singularly fascinating and ingenious people.¹ The sub-

¹ It may be surely counted not without significance among ethnical phenomena that, though France has all

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ject is a large one and much that is edifying has been written about it, not only by Scotchmen, but by various foreign authors. On the whole, perhaps, Europe has not done so badly with her Scots, the reason being that she never allowed them to be any Scotcher than she could help, and turned them out the minute they became aggressive. In England, however, the more Scotch and the more aggressive the Scot becomes the more we seem to like him. At the present moment England is virtually being run by the Scotch. In the House of Commons the Leader of the Government, and practically the autocrat of the Assembly, is the Right Honourable Arthur James Balfour, a philosopher from Scotland, who is so Scotch that he plays golf. And the Leader of the Opposition (save the mark !), of an Opposition which in a constitution like the British carries upon its

along shown in her language the predominance of the Latin race, three infusions of northern blood had been successively poured into the country : first, the Franks ; then, the Normans ; and lastly, the Scots. It seems not unreasonable, that these helped to communicate to the vivacity and impetuosity of the original race, those qualifications of enterprise and endurance which were needed to make up the illustrious history of France.—
“ The Scot Abroad.”

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shoulders the heaviest responsibilities, is Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, also a Scotchman and, if the truth must be told, a dullard. And in the way of a third party, which will imperialise with the Government and cackle of reform with the Opposition, we have the Liberal Leaguers headed by that proud chieftain of the pudding race, the Right Honourable the Earl of Rosebery. So that at the front of each of the three great political forces of Britain, the forces which, when all is said, mean everything to Britain as a nation, there stands firm and erect some sort of a Caledonian. Such a condition of things has never existed in England before, and in the light of recent political happenings it is devoutly to be hoped that it will never exist again. Since Mr. Balfour and Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman came into the offices they hold England has been going steadily down hill. At no period in her history have her enemies been so thick on the ground and so exultant and sure of themselves as they are at present, and at no period in her history has her prestige been at so low an ebb. Politically she has come to count as a little less than France and more than Spain.

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Formerly she went before the nations—now she is content to walk humbly in line with them. Formerly she led the band, now she is merely third trombone player. Formerly, if she went to war, it was with nations of ponderability and for high principles; until the other day she was draining her best blood and getting rid of one and a half millions of money weekly in a struggle with a handful of freebooters, got up and fomented largely in the interests of the children of Israel. At the time of writing Consols are at 94 and the Income Tax is 1s. 3d. in the pound, which shows what managers the Scotch are. Also government, in so far as government means the steady development of the higher interests of the State at home and in the Colonies, is at a standstill. The march of reform has been checked. Progress in the wide sense of the term is no more thought of. The legislative mill grinds heavily along and the grist amounts to nothing. And in the seats of the mighty, in the seats of Benjamin Disraeli and William Ewart Gladstone, grins Balfour and dodders Campbell-Bannerman. Mr. Balfour, golfer, and for aught I know to the contrary, curler and

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hammer-putter, plays what he is pleased to call "the game." Now the game is no new thing. Practically it is a development of that childish pastime known as "Jock's on his Island." On Mr. Balfour's island grows the green bay tree of power, and to live snugly under the shade of that tree, no matter what comes, is, in the view of Mr. Balfour, the game. It is with him a question of what can I do for England, having due regard to the exigencies of the game? Hence does he seek and bring along young talent. Having found your young talent, you must make quite sure, not of its talentedness, but of its unwavering disposition to play the game. Will it be loyal to Mr. Balfour? Can you depend upon it to stick by Mr. Balfour though the heavens fall and it thunder to the tune of Green Sleeves? Anything that will subscribe to the Test Act of Mr. Balfour is young talent. Hence it comes to pass that at the War Office we have had that shallow dandy Wyndham. He is a *protégé* of Mr. Balfour, even as Mr. Balfour is the nephew of his uncle. And he plays the game. When matters at the War Office became too vasty for him, he was shovelled by Mr. Balfour into

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the Chief Secretaryship for Ireland. Even Mr. Balfour and his friends are fain to admit that Mr. Wyndham has done no more for Ireland than he did for the War Office. Yet he plays the game, and so does Mr. Balfour, and everything is right as right can be. In Mr. Wyndham's old place at the War Office we have that excellent dabbler Mr. Brodrick. Mr. Brodrick, like the House of Lords, has always been exceedingly busy doing nothing and doing it very well. Periodically he stands on his hind legs in the Commons and trots out tremendous schemes, all of which end pleasantly in smoke. The rottenness of the British Army is no affair of his ; it was rotten when he first made its acquaintance—it will be just as rotten when he leaves Pall Mall. Underneath the terrific expenditure necessitated by the War there are jobs and scandals of the gravest sort, and Mr. Brodrick knows nothing about them. His business is to vindicate the characters of fribbling officers and gentlemen, to lay on praise of the British soldier with a trowel, and to assure the world at large that the persons who have brought charges against Army Contractors have brought those charges simply because

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the Contractors' names are un-English and consequently not pleasing to the British commercial mind. He it is, in short, who allows himself to be put up as a sort of sandbag in front of the Government, guaranteed to ward off all attacks by simply sitting tight and remaining as dumb as an oyster. He was no doubt told when he took up his present dignities that Mr. Balfour would expect him to play the game, and, being a good man, he is playing it.

For the rest of them one man only needs be discussed. He is a Birmingham man, Joseph Chamberlain by name. Mr. Balfour took him over from the other side, and in spite of all his faults gave him a warm Scotch welcome and set him high in the Balfourian councils. From that day to this Mr. Balfour has looked upon him askance and wished him anywhere but where he is ; but Mr. Balfour is Scotch and he lacks the pluck to get rid of the Birmingham gentleman, because it might cost him something. The Birmingham gentleman knowing Mr. Balfour to be Scotch defies him.

On the other side, as we have said, there is poor dear old Sir 'Enry of the double-

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barrelled Scotch name which the economical have reduced to C.-B. On the whole C.-B. is about as pathetic a figure as one can find in history ; he is the type and flower of your Scotchman lifted to the pinnacle. Sooner or later he was bound to make a mess of it, and lacking the blood of Liverpool which delayed Mr. Gladstone's downfall for so many years, he made it sooner. From the first he has been the laughing-stock, not only of the Government and for that matter of Europe, but also of his own party. He lolls enthroned on the Front Opposition Bench, shoulder to shoulder with trusty lieutenants who never obey him, and backed up by political friends who put no trust in him. On the day that he took the party by the tail, the party dropped off, and all that remains to C.-B. is the tail. To this relic of ambition realised he clings with true Scottish pertinacity. He has wrapped it up in a napkin and hidden it ; probably it will never again be found, inasmuch as C.-B. is invariably too bewildered to know what he is doing. Harcourt bewilders him, Asquith bewilders him, Morley bewilders him, and latterly there has come that crowning

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bewilderment of them all, Lord Rosebery. C.-B. will go bewildered through whatever remains to him of his term of office, and when Liberalism takes thought to get properly rid of him, he will be more bewildered still. He is too Scotch to perceive that nobody wants him, and if he saw it he is too Scotch to go.

As for Lord Rosebery, the less said about him, the better. He is of Scotch stock, and he had the good fortune to be born of an English mother. But the Scotch blood in him, the Scotch ineptitudes, the Scotch lack of force, prevail. He does everything by turns and nothing long. Like Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, he failed as a leader. The statesman in him does not possess him; it is a mere detail and a small one. As an active politician he had to look round for a model upon whom to shape himself. No Scotchman can make the smallest sort of mark, whether it be in politics or anything else, without such a model. And in his middle and later periods, at any rate, Lord Rosebery has modelled himself upon Mr. Augustine Birrell, and practically ousted him from the position of wit-monger to the

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Liberal Party. In the House of Commons Mr. Birrell made a reputation, not because he was a statesman or an orator, but because he had a habit of firing off a kind of loose wit which passes in the House of Commons for epigram. When he spoke, the House was sure to be in a roar within the half-hour, and one or two of the phrases he made became texts for leader-writers and made good "quote" in Liberal speeches. With true Scottish enterprise Lord Rosebery determined to be a second and a greater Birrell. He has succeeded. In the House of Lords he is more or less noted for saying things. He is also credited, as was Mr. Birrell, with a nice taste in letters. And like Mr. Birrell he is not infrequently asked down to Little Puddlington in order to help in the celebration of the Centenaries of Little Puddlington's locally born geniuses. He dare no more make a serious speech, either in the House of Lords or at Little Puddlington, than he dare call Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman out of his name. Fireworks are expected from him, and if they were not forthcoming, there would be no Lord Rosebery. He passes for a great Empire Builder and along with

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the worthy Dr. Jameson he figures among the executors of the late Mr. Rhodes's will. He is the founder and President of the New Liberal League, which will have nothing to do with Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman. But his personal friendship with Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman continues, and Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman is certainly not mentioned in Mr. Cecil Rhodes's will. In effect Lord Rosebery amounts to little more than nothing. The Liberal League, which was to make a great to-do in most matters appertaining to Liberalism and government, fizzled like a bad squib for three or four weeks, and then Lord Rosebery went to Nice. That is exactly the man. When his time comes, when the country wants him, when Liberalism wants him, when in fact anybody wants him, he says, "Yes, yes, I am here," and immediately starts either for Nice or Epsom. Scotch modesty overcomes him. Scotch shrewdness says, "You know you are a fool; be careful to avoid ultimate risks." Scotch caution says, "If you go into battle, you might get hurt. Nice is much nicer." In newspaper columns Lord Rosebery's speeches look and read admirably, providing you do not study

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them too closely, but any person who has been present in the House of Lords what time his Lordship was on his legs must have gone away with shattered illusions. Even as C.-B. stutters and blunders and grabs for his words in the circumambient air, so Lord Rosebery cackles and sentimentalizes. In appearance he is of about the build and body of a draper. His voice is that of an anæmic curate. There are always tears in it at the wrong places, and on the whole it makes you laugh. And having spoken, he trots out like a Scotch sparrow, and with hat a-tilt and arms under his coat-tails poises himself perkily on the steps of the entrance to St. Stephen's Hall, and waits for his carriage to take him off to the station, and so to Epsom or Nice. On the turf his reputation is exactly the same in kind as his reputation in politics. He is as variable as the shade and as changeable as the moons. Sometimes he does brilliant things, but he cannot keep them up. In brief he is half Scotch and half soda.

It is to these redoubtable Scotch persons that England is looking for good government, and hence it comes to pass that of late she

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has had to govern herself. Out of Scotchmen you can get nothing businesslike and nothing dignified, at any rate where statesmanship is concerned. Their ambitions are illimitable, but their powers of execution not worth counting. They will fight, from behind cover, to more or less bitter and ignominious ends, but like the Boer farmers to whom in many other large respects they bear the most striking resemblances, they never know when they are beaten, and their warfare deteriorates into mere brigandism and filibustering. When Britain was ruled by Englishmen, she wore the epithet Great by good right; since she has been ruled by Scotchmen she has well nigh lost it.