

Scotland in Revolution

II.

In the previous article we dealt with the first phase of the revolution accomplished by the Scottish lairds and nobles in the social and political economy of that nation. During the later 16th and early 17th centuries, these classes, or "estates," as they called themselves, were transforming lands held from the Crown as the self-appointed trustee of the people, from public or partially claimed or Church property into private property. They were resisting the centralising policy of the Scottish crown or bringing that institution under their own control, using their legal opportunities to further their private

and their class ambitions. They were possessing themselves of land and labour-power in such a legal fashion as to enable them to accumulate their primitive forms of agrarian, commercial and moneyed capital.

The middle and closing years of the 17th Century were employed by the protagonists of private property in land, as well as by the commercial interests, in overthrowing the remaining political forms and safeguards of temporal and spiritual feudalism; in other words, in finally curbing the power of the Monarchy.

After a long and bitter struggle, into the details of which we need not enter, the landed and mercantile classes of the Lowlands took the decisive step, acting in conjunction with their co-religionists and co-landlords and merchants of England, of forcibly expelling the reigning dynasty of Stewart, or rather, in the first instance, of setting aside the King in favour of his daughter and his son-in-law, William of Nassau and Orange.

This action has been commemorated in many a respectable record and reputable history as "the Glorious Revolution." It seems strange that Clyde workers cannot proceed to the Glasgow Green, but they must file past a statue set up as a memorial to a Revolution, a Revolution that brought in a German house; that they must needs assemble in a square sacred to the German patronymic of a ruling house here introduced by revolutionary action; and that they cannot find lodgment for sedition but they go to Duke Street—of that Bloody Cumberland, who finally overthrew the Scottish clans and established by armed force private property in the Highlands under Hanoverian patronage.

Yes—Scotland had a Revolution, and no infamous or unworthy Revolution was it, no revolution to be scarified, lampooned and execrated. It was a "Glorious Revolution." Needs must it have been glorious when we find that the Meeting of the Estates in Edinburgh gave over the "regulation of Public Affairs" to "a Committee of Noblemen, Barons, and Burgesses appointed for that purpose by a Meeting of the Estates." This Meeting of the Estates was quite out of order, quite unconstitutional and signalled its revolutionary career at an early stage by deciding, on receipt of a letter from James VII., that, regardless of any dismissal it might contain, they should continue to sit. They addressed a memorial welcome to William of Orange, and they chose as their President His Grace the Duke of Hamilton. He was supported from the revolutionary Clyde by the Earl of Home, Lords Belhaven and Blantyre, the Laird of Lamington, and Sir Daniel Carmichael of Malslie, Wm. Cuninghame of Craighs, and Thos. Hamiltoune from Lanark. Sir Wm. Fleming of Ferne and Lord Belhaven were both in command of armed forces of rebels; and in the following year, 1690, we find that the town of Paisley was granted two yearly fairs as a reward for its support of the Revolution in sending a company of soldiers to guard the Estates at Edinburgh. To find the name of a lord of Blantyre sitting at an "unofficial" strike committee, and to discover a company of warriors proceeding on revolutionary business from Paisley makes us wonder why so much ado about the Lanarkshire Miners' Unofficial Committee and so much indignation at Gallacher's classic allusion to "a six-inch howitzer."

When the Revolution had been firmly established by the adequate exercise of a Dictatorship of the Bourgeoisie, the now duly constitutionalised Parliament set to work to function in the interests of the classes who controlled the State. It began to inquire into and to attempt to "control" the price of that laird's necessity—brandy; to forbid the making of rum from molasses for home consumption, because it "doth hinder the consumpt of strong waters made of malt, *which is the native product of this Kingdom*, as also that the said Rum is rather a drug than liquor, and highly prejudicial to the health of all who drink it"—a quality that did not invalidate its use in export trade to the Red Indians in exchange for furs and skins; to encourage the export

of victual and to permit lairds to levy taxes on beer and malt to pay for erecting harbours in their burghs of barony and regality. It passed a single sweeping enactment "for dividing Commons" and for "division of Mosses." At the same time it revived the Acts of the Council anent the Poor "and ordains them to be put to vigorous Execution in all poynets."

Some thirty years later the landlords and merchants secured by Parliamentary enactment the setting up of a Board of Manufacturers which made grants to persons starting bleachfields and bounties for planting flax. In 1746, says Bremner, in his *Industries of Scotland*, the Duke of Argyll and other nobles and gentlemen, "with a capital of £100,000, the subscribers of which were actuated solely by patriotic motives . . . imported flax, linseed, and potashes, which they sold on credit to suitable persons, afterwards buying at a fair price the yarns and linens made from the material supplied." So was started the British Linen Company, "solely for patriotic motives" to stimulate the growing of flax and the manufacture of linen in places wherein the said Duke of Argyll and his co-partners were in the habit of collecting their rents.

That was an ominous year for landlords to be "actuated solely by patriotic motives." For there figures on the Statute Book of the United Kingdoms in that year an Act for abolishing certain land tenures. The land of Scotland hitherto had been held from the Crown on Ward Tenure with the duty of keeping "Watch and Ward," *i.e.*, by military holding or in return for rendering military service to the King as custodian of the realm. In 1746 the chiefs superior, *i.e.*, the landholders holding direct from the Crown, were relieved by their corporate selves "in Parliament assembled" of this immemorial duty and their tenure "converted into Blanch (free) holding," or upon payment of a nominal quit rent of "ane Scots penny." At the same time, and by the same Act, the "tenures of Ward Holding held of any Subject Superior" were "to be converted into fen holding." That is to say, whilst the landlord became a freeholder, discharged of all military or alternative service, his tenants were relieved of the former only to have it transformed into a rent payment. It was the moment of this self-sacrificing act that the Duke of Argyll chose for his adventure in patriotic altruism indirectly contributing to the increase of the rental value of his new freeholds.

When we recollect that the Scottish lairds not only legalised—under a revolutionary constitution—their seizure of the Commons and Mosses and their transformation of the Custom of Land Tenure, but barefacedly and brazenly broke the law of minerals and worked these as if they were their own property, we can understand what a mortal antipathy their descendants, now involved in agriculture, commerce and industry, have to the propaganda of exposure and education carried on by the Scottish Labour College and the Plebs League. Comrades! here's to "the Wee, Wee German Lairdie" and "the Glorious Revolution" as reputable precedents to which we can refer!