

219 The 7
HISTORY OF SCOTLAND.

By
SIR WALTER SCOTT, BART

In Two Volumes

VOL. I.



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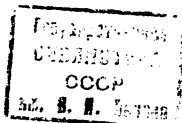
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THE Author was invited to undertake this general Sketch of Scottish History in connection with a similar abridgment of English History by Sir James Mackintosh, and a History of Ireland by Thomas Moore, Esquire. There are few literary persons who would not have been willing to incur much labour and risk of reputation for the privilege of publishing in such society. On the present occasion, the task, though perhaps still a rash one, was rendered more easy by the Author having so lately been employed on the volumes called *Tales of a Grandfather*, transferred from the history of Scotland for the benefit of a young relation. Yet the object and tenour of these two works are extremely different. In the *Tales* taken from Scottish history, the author, throwing into the shade, or rather omitting all that could embarrass the understanding or tire the attention of his juvenile reader, was desirous only to lay before him what was best adapted to interest his imagination, and, confining himself to facts, to postpone to a later period an investigation of the principles out of which those facts arose.

It is hoped, on the contrary, that the present history may, in some degree, supply to the reader of more advanced age truths with which he ought to be acquainted, not merely as relating to one small kingdom, but as forming a chapter in the general history of man. The object of the two works being so different, their

contents, though drawn from the same sources, will be found so distinct from each other, that the young student, as his appetite for knowledge increases, may peruse with advantage this graver publication after being familiar with that designed for an earlier age; and the adult, familiar with the general facts of Scottish history, as far as conveyed in these volumes, may yet find pleasure in reading those Tales which contain its more light and fanciful details.

Abbotsford,
November 1. 1829.

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THE HISTORY OF SCOTLAND.

CHAP. I.

THE EARLY HISTORY OF SCOTLAND. — CALEDONIANS, PICTS, AND
SCOTS. — KENNETH MACALPINE.

THE history of Scotland, though that of a country too poor and too thinly peopled to rank among the higher powers of Europe, has, nevertheless, attracted the attention of the world, even in preference to the chronicles of more powerful and opulent states. This may be justly ascribed to the extreme valour and firmness with which in ancient times the inhabitants defended their independence against the most formidable odds, as well as to the relation which its events bear to the history of England, of which kingdom having been long the hereditary and inveterate foe, North Britain is now become an integral and inseparable part by the treaty of union.

Our limits oblige us to treat this interesting subject more concisely than we could wish; and we are of course under the necessity of rejecting many details which engage the attention and fascinate the imagination. We will endeavour, notwithstanding, to leave nothing untold which may be necessary to trace a clear idea of the general course of events.

The history of every modern European nation must commence with the decay of the Roman empire. From the dissolution of that immense leviathan almost innumerable states took their rise, as the decay of animal matter only changes the form, without diminishing the sum, of animal life. The ambition of that extraordinary people was to stretch the authority of Rome, whether under the republic or empire, over the whole world ; and even while their own constitution struggled under the influence of a rapid decline, the rage with which they laboured to reduce to their yoke those who yet remained unconquered of their unhappy neighbours, was manifested on the most distant points of their enormous territory. Julius Cæsar had commenced the conquest of Britain, whose insular situation, girdled by a tempestuous ocean, was no protection against Roman ambition. It was in the year B.C. 55 that the renowned conqueror made his descent ; and the southern Britons were completely subjected to the yoke of Rome, and reduced to the condition of colonists, in the year of grace 80, by the victorious arms of Agricola.

This intelligent chief discovered, what had been before suspected, that the fine country the southern part of which he had thus conquered was an island, whose northern extremity, rough with mountains, woods, and inaccessible morasses, and peopled by tribes of barbarians who chiefly subsisted by the chase, was washed by the northern ocean. To hear of a free people in his neighbourhood, and to take steps for their instant subjugation, was the principle on which every Roman general acted ; and it was powerfully felt by Julius Agricola, father-in-law of the historian Tacitus, who at this time commanded in South Britain. But many a fair and fertile region, of much more considerable extent, had the victors of the world subdued with far more speed and less loss than this rugged portion of the north was to cost them.

It was in the year 80 when Agricola set out from Manchester, then called Mancunium ; and that and the next season of 81 were spent in subduing the tribes of

the southern parts of what is now termed Scotland, and in forcing such natives as resisted across the estuaries of the Forth and the Clyde, driving them as it were into another island. It was not till 83 that the invaders could venture across the firth of Forth, and engage themselves among the marshes, lakes, and forests near Lochleven. Here Agricola, having divided his troops into three bodies, one of them, consisting of the ninth legion, was so suddenly attacked by the natives at a place called Loch Ore, that the Romans suffered much loss, and were only rescued by a forced march of Agricola to their support. In the summer of 84 Agricola passed northwards, having now reached the country of the Caledonians, or Men of the Woods, a fierce nation, or rather a confederacy of clans, towards whose country all such southern tribes and individuals as preferred death to servitude had retired before the progress of the invaders. The Caledonians and their allies, commanded by a chief whom the Romans called Galgacus, faced the invaders bravely, and fought them manfully at a spot on the southern side of the Grampian hills, but antiquaries are not agreed upon the precise field of action. The Romans gained the battle, but with so much loss, that Agricola was compelled to postpone further operations by land, and he retreated to make sure of the territories he had overrun. The fleet sailed round the north of Scotland, and Agricola's campaigns terminated with this voyage of discovery. There was no prosecution of the war against the Caledonians after the departure of Agricola in 85. Much was however done for securing at least the southern part of that general's conquests; and it was then, doubtless, that were planned and executed those numerous forts, those extensive roads, those commanding stations, which astonish the antiquary to this day, when, reflecting how poor the country is even now, he considers how intense must have been the love of power, how excessive the national pride, which could induce the Romans to secure at an expense of so much labour these wild districts of mountain, moor, thicket, and marsh.

Nor, after all, were these conquests secured. The emperor Adrian, in 120, was contented virtually to admit this fact by constructing an external line of defence against the fierce Caledonians, in form of a strong wall, reaching across the island from the Tine to the Solway, far within the boundary of Agricola's conquest. It is at the same time to be supposed, that the Romans of the second century retained in a great measure the military possession of the country beyond this first wall, as far, perhaps, as the firths of Clyde and Forth; while, on the further side of these estuaries, it seems probable they did not exercise a regular or permanent authority. But in the reign of Antonine another and more northern boundary wall was extended across the island, reaching from Carriden, close to Linlithgow on the firth of Forth, to the firth of Clyde. This ultimate bulwark served to protect the country betwixt the estuaries, while the regions beyond them were virtually resigned to their native and independent proprietors. Thus the Romans had two walls; the more northern, an exterior defence, assisted by military communications and defences, to receive a first attack; and the more southern, an internal boundary, to retreat upon, if necessary. The existence of a double line of defence seems to argue that this powerful people did not hold any permanent possessions beyond the more northern boundary about the year 140, when the second and more advanced rampart was completed. No doubt, however, can be entertained, even if the fact were not proved by roads and military stations, that the Romans restrained and overawed, if they could not absolutely subject, the considerable provinces overrun by Agricola in Fife and the western districts beyond the wall of Antonine. Camelodunum, or Camelon, a large and strong town, was placed near Falkirk for the support of the wall at its eastern extremity, and many Roman forts are found so disposed as to block up the passes from the Highlands. The existence and position of military roads and forts or camps also shows the care

taken by the Romans to maintain the necessary communications at various points betwixt the two walls, so that the troops stationed to guard them might act with combined movements.

Notwithstanding these martial precautions, the strength of the Roman empire failed to support her ambitious pretensions to sovereignty; and A. D. 170, the Romans, abandoning the more northern wall of Antonine, retired behind that erected under the auspices of the emperor Adrian in 120. They doubtless retained possession of such forts and stations, of which there were many, as served the purpose of outworks to protect the southern rampart.

Under this enlargement of their territories, and awed by the Roman eagles, the Caledonians remained quiet till the beginning of the third century, when in the year 207 open war again broke out betwixt them and the Romans.—In 208 the emperor Severus undertook in person the final conquest of the Caledonians. It would be difficult to assign a reason why, in the uncertain state of the empire, a prince equally politic and cautious, raised by his talents from the command of the Pannonian army to the lofty rank of emperor, should, at the advanced age of threescore, commit his person and a powerful host, the flower of his forces, to the risks of a distant contest with savage tribes, where victory, it might be thought, could achieve little honour, and defeat or failure must have been ruin to that reputation which constituted his recognized title to empire. Severus was, however, tortured in mind by the dissensions between his sons Geta and Caracalla, and hastened, with the precipitation of a soldier born and bred, to drown domestic vexation amid the din of war. A Scotsman may also argue that the subjugation of Caledonia was an object of no small difficulty and importance, since in such circumstances so wise a prince would intrust to no delegate the honour which might be won in the struggle, or the command of the powerful force necessary to obtain it.

The Roman emperor made his invasion of Caledonia at the head of a very numerous army. He cut down