

SCOTLAND'S INFLUENCE ON CIVILIZATION

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Scotland's influence on civilization by Leroy J. Halsey

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LEROY J. HALSEY

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BY THE
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SCOTLAND'S INFLUENCE

ON

CIVILIZATION.

CHAPTER I.

SCOTLAND'S PLACE IN HISTORY.

THE land of the thistle and the heather, the castle and the crag, is at best but a narrow land—two hundred and eighty-eight miles between extremes from north to south, and fifty-two from east to west. Its place in history, however, is well assured, and its influence is wide as the world. Its physical aspect is exceedingly diversified and picturesque. The sky bends in beauty, the soil teems with verdure, the air rings in elastic tension, the waters sparkle with life and health. It is a land where youth may drink in exhilaration with every breath, manhood find food for high endeavor in every battle of life, and old age flourish like the evergreen pine. With a coast-line of twenty-five hundred miles so deeply indenting the main land on three sides as to bring

every foot of it within forty-five miles of the sea, with nearly eight hundred islands closely environing it and furnishing many a quiet inlet and many a bold outlook to the ocean, and with an alternating panorama of highland and lowland, of lake, river and mountain, through all its borders,—Scotland would seem to be the spot of all the earth ordained by Providence for the dwelling-place of a hardy, athletic, gallant race.

Such, in fact, have been its destiny and its history. It is not the country, but the heroic people inhabiting it, that has given Scotland its name in history and its influence on the world's civilization. And the object of this monograph is to sketch in briefest outline a few salient points in the character of the people, the work they have done and the influence they have exerted.

Who has not admired the genius and gloried in the heroism of that long line of "Scottish worthies" who fought as if they were fighting the battles of all mankind and gave their names to history as an everlasting remembrance? Who has not followed them down from century to century and often felt his indignation ablaze at the recital of their wrongs and their sacrifices for truth and for conscience' sake? What associations crowd upon us, what memories awake, what inspirations kindle, at the mention of such names as Bruce and Wallace, Knox and Melville, Argyle and Murray, Gillespie and Henderson,

Erskine and Chalmers, Scott and Burns, Livingstone and Alexander Duff!

It is instructive to notice the part which the little nationalities of the earth have played in the grand drama of civilization. We hear much about the "great powers" and how they shape the destiny of the world. History, both ancient and modern, has much to tell us of their majesty, their broad domain, their almost omnipotent sway. The old world powers of the Orient—Assyria, Chaldea, Egypt, Medo-Persia, Macedonia, Rome—all figure largely on the pages of the past, each claiming in its turn the mastery of the world. In more recent times the great races of Germany, France, Spain, Austria, Russia, Prussia, Turkey, England, have almost monopolized the map of Europe, where they still struggle for the balance of power. Is this the sum of the old-world civilized history? The whole tale is not told until we have looked at the little nationalities—Palestine, Greece, Venetia, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Scotland—each on its narrow strip of soil and with its wide influence on the world. Where has the human race risen to higher glory in the prowess of the individual man or in the achievements of the body politic than in these "pent-up Uticas" of the rocks or seas? Here is a belt of once-independent states, small isolated nations, stretching diagonally across the very heart of the civilized world from south-east to north-west,

on the very line of march which civilization followed when it left the East and made the history of modern Europe. There is something sublime in the influence which has gone out over all time from these apparently insignificant corners of the earth. There is something which seems to point to an invisible and almighty hand that can work alike by many or by few, and that often with the smallest means accomplishes its greatest works.

Strike from history these five or six lesser nationalities, and who then could tell the whole story of arts and arms, of literature and philosophy, of national independence, of civil and religious liberty? The Maccabean deliverers of Palestine, the Greeks at Marathon, the Venetian masters of the seas, the Swiss compatriots of William Tell, the heroes of the Dutch republic, the Scots of Stirling Bridge and Bannockburn, belong to all nations and to all time. They have done much to make the larger nations what they were, and to make the world what it is. Palestine gave the world a religion—the first, the last, the best, the only divine, religion. Greece gave it art, literature, philosophy, the highest which human genius unassisted ever attained. Venice gave it the earliest essays in that skill of finance and commerce which has since ruled all civilized nations. Switzerland and Holland gave it the earliest practical demonstration of those re-