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Scotland is Britain:

The Union and Unionist-Nationalism, 1807–1907

Graeme Morton

In the spring of 1898 it seemed to some that the Scottish nation was under challenge. It was no new threat causing the agitation, but a re-run of anxieties raised forty-five years earlier.¹ Centred on the persistent public use of ‘England’ when ‘Britain’, ‘Great Britain’ or ‘British Empire’ was intended, it was a sign of wider ills, a fear that the institutions, history and ethos of the nation were diluted, just as Malachi Malagrowther had predicted would happen back in 1826.² It was a continuing refrain of nomenclature, yet not one borne by the non-use of ‘Scotland’. Now, less than a decade shy of the bicentenary of the creation of Great Britain, that ancient name was still in vogue, still drawn upon, still with an everyday as well as international profile. ‘Scotland’ was not the issue. Nor was ‘North Britain’ bemoaned; that eighteenth-century term had grown into acceptable usage in the Victorian years.³ Rather, it was ‘Britain’, the name that had emerged to encompass the new political creation; the name for the expansion of England’s empire, with ‘British Empire’ used only a year after union.⁴ It was ‘Britain’. These Scots wanted the term ‘Britain’ to be used.

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¹ The wrongful use of ‘England’ for Britain and the incorrect presentation of Scotland’s heraldry were raised by the National Association for the Vindication of Scottish Rights in 1853. See Graeme Morton, ‘Scottish Rights and “Centralisation” in the Mid-Nineteenth Century’, *Nations and Nationalism*, 2 (1996), 267–9.

² Malachi Malagrowther, *Thoughts on the Proposed Change of Currency, and Other Late Alterations, as they Affect, or Are Intended to Affect, the Kingdom of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1826). See also his second and third letters (also 1826).

³ See the discussion in Paul Langford, ‘South Briton’s Reception of North Briton, 1707–1820’ in T.C. Smout (ed.), *Anglo-Scottish Relations from 1603–1900* (Oxford, 2005), 143–70.

⁴ Devine notes the significant publication by John Oldmixon in the year after the Union. John Oldmixon, *The British Empire in America, containing the History of the Discovery, Settlement, Progress and Present State of all the British Colonies on the Continent and Islands of America* (2 vols., London, 1708). See T.M. Devine, *Scotland’s Empire, 1600–1815* (London, 2003), xxiii.

Measuring the strength of Scottish national identity in any period is not straightforward.⁵ The biggest number ever ascribed to its nationalist cause in the nineteenth century was 104,647, the list of names garnered to petition Queen Victoria in 1898 about this wrongful use of the term 'England'. The wider reception of the campaign is unclear yet that is not untypical for any group working on the margins. From those that took notice in England, it appeared a non-issue. Writing first in the *Positive Review*, the journal for which he was editor, the noted positivist and critic Frederick Harrison (1831–1923) suggested the petition was unwarranted and misconceived. Harrison had stood unsuccessfully as a Liberal home ruler in the 1888 general election when the concern was Ireland not Scotland. Responding to the criticism directed at him by the Reverend David Macrae, joint leader of the petition, Harrison was prepared to insist that Scotland's name should not be absorbed into that of England, yet dismissed the legal basis of the argument.⁶ That the royal title and that of her realm was changed in 1707 he agreed, but that title could not now be asserted because it had itself been altered in 1801 upon union with Ireland.⁷ The attack on Harrison then fell to Macrae's partner-in-petition, Theodore Napier: 'Scotland's sons will not tamely submit to have their treaty rights trodden on, and their identity lost, in the name of their ancient enemy of England'. In response to the specific accusation concerning 1801, Napier contended the term 'Great Britain' had not been removed, it had merely added the words 'and Ireland'.⁸ He was not alone in filling the letter pages of the newspapers with ire. Another condemnation directed at Harrison suggested 'the ludicrous attempt to call the United Kingdom "England" is not worth commenting upon; why not call it "Cockniana" such was the London-centeredness of the view'.⁹ It was a short flurry of excitement. The Under-Secretary for Scotland Colin Scott Moncrieff dismissed the petition on behalf of her majesty: she was 'not pleased to issue a command thereon'.¹⁰

⁵ On this difficulty even in periods of nationalist political parties, see A. Henderson, *Hierarchies of Belonging: National Identity and the Political Culture in Scotland and Québec* (Montréal & Kingston, 2007), 116ff.

⁶ M.S. Vogeler, 'Harrison, Frederic (1831–1923)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* [accessed 21 November 2007].

⁷ *The Scotsman*, 31 March 1898.

⁸ *The Scotsman*, 2 April 1898.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Graeme Morton, 'The First Home Rule Movement in Scotland, 1886–1918' in H.T. Dickinson and Michael Lynch (eds.), *The Challenge to Westminster: Sovereignty, Devolution and Independence* (East Linton, 2000), 121. See also M.A. Hollings (ed.), *The Life of Sir Colin C. Moncrieff, K.C.S.I., K.C.M.G., R.E.* (London, 1917).

While the size of the petition does suggest the blanket use of ‘England’ for all parts of Britain and its Empire was unwelcome, does the evidence indicate that Scots generally, not just these petitioners, felt their national identity to be in imminent danger? Only three months later, on 24 June 1898, ‘no more than two dozen strangers. . . half drenched. . . huddled in a corrugated iron hut at the Bore stone, and three barefooted boys sheltering under the wayside hedge’ commemorated the anniversary of the battle of Bannockburn. The weather was blamed for the low turnout, as were the alternative attractions of a circus, a cricket match and a cattle show. The management of the event, having no-one there other than Macrae, Napier and Isaac Low, President of the Kilt Society, to address the gathering, was equally lambasted.¹¹ It was no march of solidarity. Yet five years earlier an almost unbelievably appropriately named American Consul, Wallace Bruce, Esq., had joined Napier to unfurl the Scottish Standard and the British Ensign to what seems to have been greater effect. Both were thanked in verse for their efforts in creating great national interest:

The mighty crowds, the loyal mind
Are with us year by year
They gather home from any lands
And join us brothers in our bands.
And Napier, how shall words express
In common speech to thee
How Scotland’s heart goes forth to bless
Her sons far o’er the sea
How mother-love so warm and true
Goes from the old world to the new.¹²

It was again a time of appealing. The House of Commons had debated Home Rule for Scotland the previous evening, without doubt its sponsor having an eye on his timing. Yet Hebert Maxwell (1845–1937), who would continue to do much to thwart the nationalists, argued there was no serious support amongst the Scottish people, to which other voices were added. Dr Gavin

¹¹ *The Scotsman*, 27 June 1898.

¹² Agnes H. Bowie, ‘Lines written on the occasion of the anniversary of the Battle of Bannockburn, June 24th 1893: Inscribed to Wallace Bruce, Esq., American consul at Edinburgh, and Theodore Napier, Esq. of Magdala, president of the Scottish National Association of Victoria, on the occasion of their unfurling the Scottish standard and British ensign from the flagstaff at the borestone’. NLS, RB.m.143f.111.

Brown Clark's motion to devolve upon a Scottish legislature the Scottish business that the Imperial parliament was unable to engage was defeated by 168 votes to 150.¹³

I Scotland's Nationalism

Given such an unpromising contemporary assessment, is it worthwhile to examine Scottish nationalism through the sentiment of a few activists on the margins huffing and puffing, writing a lot of letters, perhaps in green ink, but were supported by. . . *who exactly*? It is difficult to deny the difficulty, as the one thing nationalist groups in Scotland have traditionally lacked is paid-up members. Those who might have supported the realignment of constitutional powers have long been reluctant to shell out even a few shillings to join nationalist organisations. Nor have they been keen to come out for the cause. The 100,000-strong petition of 1898 was no match for the monster rallies gathered by O'Connell in the 1830s or 1840s or for the eighty-five MPs who pledged their support, and that of their constituencies, to Parnell's home rule cause in the 1880 general election and his activities until 1891. The present author has argued elsewhere that an analysis of Scottish national identity and nationalism focusing on parliamentary activity and political membership, while valid on its own terms, is able to provide no more than partial explanation of the phenomenon in the nineteenth century. From that, the concept of unionist-nationalism was coined to root the language of identity and nationalism in its sociological moorings.¹⁴ Being neither political nor cultural in essence, Scottish nationalism is best understood through such a construction.¹⁵ To précis the argument against which that and the present text contends, because there was very little in terms of a nationalist movement to model, explanations were instead sought for what was not occurring; explanations were sought for 'failure'. It was mooted that a stage had not been followed, a step had not been taken, and that therefore national identity had not become nationalism, had not advocated independent nationhood, as it should or could have done. Likewise, it was posited that Scottish

¹³ *The Scotsman*, 24 June 1893. Clark was returned to parliament as the crofter candidate for Dingwall in 1884.

¹⁴ Graeme Morton, *Unionist Nationalism: Governing Urban Scotland, Scotland 1830–1860* (East Linton, 1999).

¹⁵ David McCrone, *Understanding Scotland: The Sociology of a Nation* (2nd edition; London, 2001).

national identity was pushed off the correct trajectory by nefarious means, be it Anglicisation, reformism, abdication by its hegemonic leaders, with the bourgeoisie and intellectuals being the first targets in line, or, by worker concerns that were British, and later international, but resulting in a cultural politics with no desire to push for a Scottish parliament with lesser or greater devolved powers.

The need to look beyond Scottish nationalism as a party political movement striving to match nation and state must deal with an apparent quandary. As it developed from the second half of the nineteenth century, the nationalists focused on the most important political event in Scotland's history—the Union of 1707; moreover it was a political event which placed the people (read nationalism) against the actions of its political leaders (again nationalism). It is no surprise that commentators have taken nationalism as their focus, and they have come up against the problem identified: there were smatterings of republicanism, of advocacy for local-national parliaments, and of a home rule movement in the final two decades of the century, but few shibboleths were slain in the cause of independence by party or extra-parliamentary groups. Instead, the institutional differences which gave Scotland its independence within the Union were made to mark the nation through the highest political events of modern Scotland.¹⁶ This quandary is all the more acute because the Union became fundamental to Scotland's independence, not by its removal, but by its re-statement.¹⁷ The wrongful use of 'England' when 'Britain' was meant struck out at this principle. Whenever realignment in the constitutional structure reached the agenda of Scottish nationalists, the product of the sociological structure of their day meant they used the Union of 1707 to mark their freedom. At this time, to these people, Scotland is Britain: the Union of 1707 made it so.

II Union in Politics

The Union settlement was debated at length and with no little agitation in the years leading up to parliamentary reform in 1832. 'Give Scotland a

¹⁶ Graeme Morton, 'What If? The Significance of Scotland's Missing Nationalism in the Nineteenth Century' in Dauvit Broun, Richard Finlay and Michael Lynch (eds.), *Image and Identity: The Making and Re-Making of Scotland through the Ages* (Edinburgh, 1998), 157–76.

¹⁷ The best analysis of the reasons for union is C. A. Whatley, with Derek J. Patrick, *The Scots and the Union* (Edinburgh, 2006).

Representative Government' declared the Chancellor of the Exchequer and Leader of the House of Commons Lord Althorp when plans were formulated in 1830 for reform throughout Britain.¹⁸ Afterthought, irritation or obligation, when reform for Scotland was entrusted to Lord Advocate Francis Jeffrey (1773–1850) and Solicitor-General Lord Henry Cockburn (1779–1854), a related but in many important ways separate activity held sway from England, Wales and Ireland—made necessary by the distinct legal systems. Gordon Pentland shows that the Scottish MPs' main concern was the kind of reform that could be achieved rather than opposition to electoral expansion, although Tories such as Archibald Alison (1792–1867) and Walter Scott (in his final months, he died in September 1832) were critical.¹⁹ It was part of a debate in which Scotland's political élite could and did employ an appeal to the Union settlement in matters of national concern. It could be done as a good moan just as N.T. Phillipson has argued reform of the Court of Session met 'noisy inaction' to enable only change that was regarded as being in the interests of Scotland to pass.²⁰ In 1807 the Court of Session debated the 'great evil' which resulted from the number of cases dealt with from Scotland and asked whether a Court of Review would be contrary to the eighteenth and nineteenth Articles of Union.²¹ The process, and the re-statement of the 1707 agreement, was a claim to 'semi-independence' status.²² While debating the English reform bill, Lord Gower (1758–1833) argued that even the federalist Fletcher of Saltoun or those who rioted in the burghs at the conclusion of union would have been in favour of the kind of political reform under discussion. Reflecting on the insoluble links between Ireland and England the next year, Alison concurred that 'all the prosperity of Scotland has been owing to English influence: how has it that the *same* influence at the *same* time has been the cause of all the misery of Ireland?' His answer was that Scotland had gone into union as independent whereas Ireland was won by the sword.²³ It was not that the Union had replaced the now defunct institutions of Scotland that made it so successful. Even for

¹⁸ Gordon Pentland, 'The Debate on Scottish Parliamentary Reform, 1830–1832', *The Scottish Historical Review*, 85 (2006), 101.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 102.

²⁰ N.T. Phillipson, 'Nationalism and Ideology' in J.N. Wolfe (ed.), *Government and Nationalism in Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1969), 186.

²¹ *Glasgow Herald*, 27 April 1807.

²² Phillipson, 'Nationalism and Ideology', 168–9; Morton, *Unionist-Nationalism*, 10, 17.

²³ Archibald Alison, *Essays. Political, Historical and Miscellaneous* (Edinburgh, 1850), 243. Essay first published in *Blackwood's Magazine*, January (1833).

opponents of parliamentary enfranchisement, it was this sense of nationality, wherein Scotland equated its independence with its status in the Union settlement, which made Britain.²⁴

Parliamentary reform opened up reflections on Scotland's constitutional heritage. It was an opportunity to revisit the number of MPs sent to Westminster with Scotland's wealth having increased, to end the Union being 'violated' by unfair representation.²⁵ Similarly, in *Scotland's Appeal to her Sons*, a bill posted in Edinburgh in June 1832 and addressed 'to all Scotsmen, *whether Whigs or Tories, Reformers or Anti-Reformers*', the number of MPs allocated to Scotland was condemned: 'Because Scotland was cheated at the Union, does that afford any good reason for her being ALWAYS cheated?' it wailed.²⁶ Street literature is a useful indicator of how complex constitutional debates could be essentialised. As the first reform hustings got under way, support for William Aytoun in Edinburgh (prior to the withdrawal of his candidature, and note his colour was the 'livery of nature') built the benefits of reform upon the newly expanded Britain: 'Let them boast of the Shamrock, the Thistle and the Rose/I sing of what is fairer than any of those—/Of the cause of Reform and the Garland of Green.'²⁷ Here, parliamentary reform was to make union all that it should be; reform was to give Scotland access to the institutions and representativeness that had been missing in 1707, or had been undermined since.²⁸ The electors of Haddington were told that franchise reform would give them the kind of equality with England that had not happened in 1707, a 'real' union rather than 'one of humility'.²⁹ When the parliamentary franchise was to be opened up for a second time in 1867 the speeches advocating the benefits of constitutional stability noted that good government had been the result of 1832 and that it was time to spread the privilege of voting to others of substantiated loyalty. With pro-reform rallies in Glasgow and Edinburgh attended in the tens of thousands, the pro-reform banners spoke of liberty that was both Scottish and British and invested in the state. In 1884, when the country franchise was to be enacted, workers' justice was commensurate with

²⁴ *Blackwood's Magazine*, 36 (November 1834), 672, quoted in Michael Fry, 'Alison, Sir Archibald, first baronet (1792–1867)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* [Accessed 7 January 2008].

²⁵ Lord Lindsay quoted in Pentland, 'Scottish Parliamentary Reform', 109, 113.

²⁶ *Scotland's Appeal to her Sons*, NAS, Buccleuch Muniments, GD224/507/31, printed in Pentland, 'Scottish Parliamentary Reform', 114.

²⁷ *Huzza for Reform and the Garland of Green! A New Song* (1832), NLS, RB.m.143(172).

²⁸ Pentland, 'Scottish Parliamentary Reform', 121.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 122.

a strong constitution where liberty was guaranteed through the success of union, linking the rights of men with their privileges as citizens ‘animated by the spirit of sincere patriotism’.³⁰

III Origins of a Concept

The most explicit nationalist use of union-created Britain to better secure Scotland’s independence came two decades on from the creation of the £10 franchise with the campaigning of the National Association for the Vindication of Scottish Rights (NAVSR).³¹ This short-lived organisation grew from a challenge issued through the letters page of the *Edinburgh Advertiser* on the eve of the 1852 general election, exhorting the prospective candidates to resist any further centralisation of the function of government within the civil service in Whitehall.³² The plea came from John Grant, but it was his brother James who would carry the movement forward. The public reputation of James Grant (1822–87) had been established with a fast-paced historical novel based on the Peninsular War (1808–1814) *The Romance of War, or, The Highlanders in Spain*, first published in 1846. It developed Grant’s fascination with the romantic historical memory of Scotland but in this inaugural novel he focused on the Spanish people, the pride and earnestness of their men, the beauty of their women, the patriotism of General Espoz y Mina (1781–1836) and of the Basque *guerrilleros*. It compared the straightforward and plain, yet successful and admired, military strategy of General Wellington with the noble instinctiveness of General Mina, just as others had contrasted Wellington with Napoleon.³³ Grant’s father served during that war while Grant himself took up an appointment as ensign in the 62nd Foot Regiment in Chatham, Kent. In 1843 he turned to writing, producing *The Romance of War* from his father’s experiences. While working on his second novel *Jane Seton*:

³⁰ Graeme Morton and R.J. Morris, ‘Civil Society, Governance and Nation, 1832–1914’ in R. A. Houston and W.W.J. Knox (eds.), *The New Penguin History of Scotland: From the Earliest Times to the Present Day* (London, 2001), 390–3.

³¹ Morton, *Unionist Nationalism*, 133–54.

³² *Edinburgh Advertiser*, 13 April 1852. The challenge was first picked up by the Free Church liberal Charles Cowan who was returned to parliament along with Thomas Babington Macaulay in the July election.

³³ B.J. Dendle, ‘*The Romance of War, or, The Highlanders in Spain*: The Peninsular War and the British Novel’, *Annals de Literatura Española*, 7 (1991), 59–60; Iain Pears, ‘The Gentleman and the Hero: Wellington and Napoleon in the Nineteenth Century’ in Roy Porter (ed.), *Myths of the English* (Cambridge, 1993), 216–36.

Or, The King's Advocate, a Scottish Historical Romance (1853) Grant identified the need for the NAVSR.

From the off, its protagonists took great care to establish that its aims, the 'national rights' of Scotland, could and should be established only by the proper working of the Union relationship with England. Grant was co-secretary of the NAVSR with his brother John, and their chosen figurehead was Archibald William Montgomerie, 13th earl of Eglinton and 1st earl of Winton (1812–61). Lord lieutenant of Ireland (1852), rector of both Marischal College in Aberdeen (1851–3) and Glasgow University (1852–4), Eglinton served with Lord Derby's governments in 1852 and 1858–9. Like Grant, who toyed with the Jacobite sympathies of his father, Eglinton was an intellectual romantic, living in a Gothic castle in Ayrshire and noted for organising the grandiose chivalric tournament in 1839 that took his name.³⁴ His conviction that he would not have joined the NAVSR if the Union were in any way to be threatened was aired at their first public meeting. Hugh Scott of Gala denounced accusations that the movement posed a threat to the Union, suggesting that was 'a "got up" affair'. Claiming to be the first national movement since 1708 he declared: 'We take our stand upon the Treaty of Union, and by that Treaty do we stand or fall'.³⁵ They complained that Scotland's rights had been infringed by public offices under English Board control, most notably Customs, Excise, Stamps and Taxation.³⁶ The Lord Provost of Perth proclaimed at a meeting of the movement held in that town in March 1854, that 'the object in view was to defend the rights given to Scotland by the Treaty of Union'. On the same platform, the political theorist and Free Churchman Patrick Edward Dove (1815–73) moved the resolution that 'the Union provided for the national laws and institutions of Scotland, and any attempts to place these under English control, under centralisation, was against the principles of the Union'.³⁷ In 1857, 150 years after union, the benefits of the English county system applied to Scotland were advocated for 'all friends of the national rights of Scotland—the admirers of Wallace—the welcomers of

³⁴ M.S. Millar, 'Montgomerie, Archibald William, thirteenth earl of Eglinton and first earl of Winton (1812–1861)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* [Accessed 20 December 2007]; I. Anstruther, *The Knight and the Umbrella: An Account of the Eglinton Tournament 1839* (2nd edition, Gloucester, 1986).

³⁵ Hugh Scott, *Progress of the Scottish National Movement, No. II* (Edinburgh, 1853), 4, 5.

³⁶ 'The Scotsman versus Truth, to the editor of the Caledonian Mercury' (NAVSR, c.1853).

³⁷ *The Times*, 10 March 1854.

the brave Hungarian exile' (Louis Kossuth).³⁸ In the same week, the writer and politician Sir Edward Bulwer-Lytton (1803–73) proclaimed to great applause that 'every English victory was to be a Scottish triumph and every Scottish glory an English boast'.³⁹ The words were spoken on the occasion of his installation as Rector of Glasgow University.

IV Rhetorical Balance

The language of unionist-nationalism was a fine line to tread, making it open to misinterpretation. In all their public utterances the leaders of the NAVSR made it clear that their loyalty was to the current monarchical line and to the constitutional arrangements established in 1707. It appears to have been an argument developed in the period between the initial call to form the association and its first public meeting in Glasgow chaired by Eglinton. But in an unpublished essay which Grant dates as being 'Written about the time we formed the Scottish Rights Association' he struck a much more ambivalent stance on the benefits of union. He took the unionist-nationalist line that it was not for the present poor level of government that his ancestors had signed the Treaty of Union, yet continued by suggesting that in so doing, they had 'designated the ancient kingdom of Scotland to the rank of an English county'. His earliest musings suggested that no-one could argue that Scotland owed its prosperity to union, for only now was the country recovering from the immediate effects of 1707 when there was starvation and misery, towns that fell into ruin, villages that disappeared and old established families that decayed. Anticipating local government participation in the movement he formed, Grant identified how the immediate passage of the Union had weakened the Scottish burghs: Falkirk was now a 'shambles', the fleet of merchant ships which had operated out of Kirkcaldy was reduced to 'one coasting slope of sixty tons and two ferry boats', a similar fate befell the boats operating out of St Andrews, while Culross lost its great salt pans. Glasgow's population was estimated to have dropped by 3,000 people and the grass grew green on Edinburgh's High Street, such was the effect of depopulation on its once renowned bustle.⁴⁰ Grant raised the prospect that the office of Commissioner to the General Assembly, and even the General Assembly itself, would be

³⁸ The NAVSR's James Begg writing in the *Elgin Courant*, 16 January 1857.

³⁹ *Glasgow Herald*, 16 January 1857.

⁴⁰ NLS, MS 8878–85 (iv).

threatened in the same way as the Court of Session and the Convention of the Royal Burghs had been undermined. He argued that Catholicism and Puseyism had made such inroads into British public life of late that ‘a time may come when the Moderator shall be dragged from his Chair and the assembly dispersed by sound of trumpet as in the days of Cromwell “the blasphemer”’.⁴¹

Grant’s unpublished criticism of the Union was one of blame, with emphasis on the ills that followed its immediate passage and being decidedly apocalyptic on how its current operation would impact on the burghs and institutions of Scotland. Yet publicly the Union was the nation’s future. Grant had already formed an argument blaming administrative centralisation for undermining the otherwise beneficial local independence established through the institutional separateness of union-created Britain. It is noticeable that it was the provosts and councillors from burgh and county councils who were to bulk out the office bearers of the NAVSR, arguing for greater powers of operation to be directed to them.⁴² If the principle of union was right, but its operation had been undermined, then there were grounds for a common cause with the localities. But if the principle of union was flawed, then it would be uncertain whether local government would benefit from legislative power returning to Edinburgh—that, after all, was centralisation, too.⁴³

Grant’s castigation of the Oxford movement and more generally the Roman Catholic Church as part of the centralisation threat was also less than straightforward. If the British state was no longer the guarantor of Protestantism, but instead a means by which Catholicism could be promoted within Scotland through its ‘infiltration’ of Westminster, then all the more reason to curtail the ever growing power of the British state over an administratively emaciated Scotland. Yet Grant’s fictional work was more ecumenical. Despite writing of Scottish Presbyterian soldiers who would ‘sooner hearken to the devil than the Catholic priests’, Grant’s primary character in *The Romance of War*, Robert Stuart, is brought closer to God through the experience of assisting at Mass in the Cathedral of Mérida.⁴⁴ Yet, in the NAVSR, Presbyterianism was identified as a central pillar of the Scottish nation, one which centralisation would

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Scottish Rights Association, *Address to the People* (Edinburgh, 1855), 8–18.

⁴³ The argument that even centralisation of government within Scotland, through parliament or a Scottish secretary, would produce poor legislation is analysed in anonymous, *Scottish Rights and Grievances: A Letter to the Right Honourable Duncan McLaren, Lord Provost of the City of Edinburgh by A Scotchman* (Edinburgh, c.1854), 12–13.

⁴⁴ Grant, *The Romance of War*, 174; Dendle, ‘*The Romance of War*’, 60–1.

offer nothing but harm. How, Grant mused, can we maintain the faith of the sovereign and ‘maintain inviolate a Treaty which every year is deliberately broken’. He went on: ‘Even though we are all Presbyterian, and staunch as Knox himself’ the threat was a ‘body of 600 men, belonging to a country proposing laws and religion so diametrically opposite’.⁴⁵ Yet as with his fiction, it is not straightforward: Grant converted to Roman Catholicism in 1875 and his son Roderick became a Roman Catholic priest.

In the 1880s James Grant completed his ambitious *Old and New Edinburgh*. Originally a periodical, it was later collated and published by Cassels in six volumes. It gave him the opportunity to weave tales of Scottish history with those of his beloved Edina, and offered another platform to reanalyse the effects of the Union on Scotland’s long-term development. Grant included engravings of the pre-1707 Scottish mint and of some of the tools used in the production of money to make plain what had been given up in the bargain.⁴⁶ He identified ‘the great national tragedy which the Parliament House witnessed in 1707—for a tragedy it was then deemed by the Scottish people’.⁴⁷ It was assumed to be ‘a matter of common history that the legislative Union between Scotland and England was carried by the grossest bribery’. He made plain it was signed under mob threat in the Union Cellar of 177 High Street, with the clear implication that it was a nefarious rouse upon the Scottish people.⁴⁸ It was a much more anti-union rhetoric than that found thirty years earlier. Grant even suggested mischievously that the city’s Union Club would undoubtedly fold because of the unpopularity of its name.⁴⁹ Despite selecting words written at the time of the formation of the NAVSR he talked no longer of a workable union, but of a union failing now, and by extrapolation, which had always failed.⁵⁰ The ruin and stagnation that resulted in the towns was confirmed with the words of the capital’s mid-Victorian Lord Provost William Chambers “‘In short, this may be called, no less appropriately than emphatically, the dark ages of Edinburgh’”.⁵¹ Yet Grant talked of the great growth that had taken place in Scotland in the Victorian age, increasing its revenue to the Exchequer, but increasing its national revenue to a much greater extent:

⁴⁵ NLS, MS 8878–85 (iv).

⁴⁶ James Grant, *Old and New Edinburgh: Its History, Its Peoples and its Places* (6 vols., London, 1881–3), II, 268, 269.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, I, 162.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, I, 163–4.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, V, 122.

⁵⁰ ‘Scotland: Ex Picturesque Europe No. 44’, Fragment of NLS, MS.8882 (c.1878).

⁵¹ Grant, *Old and New Edinburgh*, I, 164–5.

‘Scotland rose to what she is today, by her own exertions, unaided, and often obstructed’.⁵² Grant’s public view had now shifted; the Union could no longer be endorsed as a good deal undermined by developments of modern government, but was to be considered as a flaw which Scotland had had to overcome. He concluded the sixth and final volume of this history by confirming this national struggle. The ‘dark shadow cast by the Union has long since passed away’. But while he had once argued that Scotland benefited from administrative neglect at Westminster, now that neglect was a hindrance: ‘it is owing alone to the indomitable energy, the glorious spirit of self-reliance, and the patriotism of her people, that we find the Edinburgh of today what she is, in intellect and beauty, second to no city in the world’.⁵³

V Invisibility of Union

From the 1880s the unionist cause was that of 1801 in the British parliament’s debates over the Irish question.⁵⁴ This concern would frame attempts by the Scottish Home Rule Association (formed in 1886) to campaign for legislative control on Scottish matters within the Empire.⁵⁵ In England, union maintained its military cache. The Union Jack Club was established in 1904 for soldiers and sailors staying in London while in transit. Ethel McCaul, a Red Cross nurse during the Boer War whose public work grew in influence, proposed the idea to help returning soldiers avoid the ‘debauchery and wickedness’ of the city.⁵⁶ It officially opened in 1907 in the presence of King Edward VII, the queen, and the prince and princess of Wales.⁵⁷ But there is otherwise remarkably little comment on the Union, or use of union terminology, to be found when surveying the *Times*, *The Scotsman* or *Glasgow Herald* newspapers.⁵⁸ The

⁵² Ibid., I, 165.

⁵³ Ibid., VI, 368.

⁵⁴ I. G. C. Hutchison, ‘Anglo-Scottish Political Relations in the 19th Century, c.1815–1914’ in Smout (ed.), *Anglo-Scottish Relations*, 264.

⁵⁵ SHRA, *The Union of 1707 Viewed Financially*, reprinted from the *Scottish Review*, October (1887).

⁵⁶ *The Times*, 26 February 1903. McCaul’s *Under the Care of the Japanese War Office* (London, 1904) was the result of a visit to the Red Cross Society of Japan sanctioned by Alexandra, queen consort to Edward VII; *New York Times*, 18 March 1905.

⁵⁷ *The Scotsman*, 15 June 1903.

⁵⁸ The *Glasgow Herald*’s collection of bi-centenary essays were edited by P. Hume Brown. see his ‘The Union of the Parliaments of England and Scotland, 1707’, *Scottish Historical Review*, 4 (1907), 121–34 and, in the same issue, ‘William Law, “The Union

invisibility of union, then, is a final variant of unionist nationalism: did it no longer focus the nationalist cause? There is some evidence for this. On 1 May 1907 *The Scotsman* marked the bicentenary with a thoughtful essay by James Mackinnon. It was subtitled 'The Inauguration of the Union' and made mention of the not altogether immaculate diary of events kept by Sir John Clerk of Penicuik and the sermon preached that day by the Lord Bishop of Oxford. Mention was made of the musical composition to provide thanksgiving and the ringing of church bells at banquets and illuminations in London, and here Clerk is quoted, 'at no time were Scotsmen more acceptable to the English than on that day'.⁵⁹ Fletcher of Saltoun and J. G. Lockhart were cited for 'their vexation in angry outbursts and predicting the ruin of their country', but the article is dismissive of, if bland about, any contemporary opposition.⁶⁰

Others, including the Convention of Royal Burghs, were also reluctant to give the approaching anniversary much priority on their agenda: 'The subjects to be discussed include the bi-centenary of the parliamentary Union of Scotland with England, the regulation of ice cream shops and places of refreshment other than hotels and public houses, school history books, the treatment of consumption. . .'.⁶¹ The day itself proved problematic to organise. With the Lord Mayor of London unable to attend, the Convention sought to remove the toast to 'The United Kingdom' since no Englishman would be present to reply. It was noted that few if anybody knew that the bicentenary was to be celebrated and that a great many 'entertained difference of opinion of the matter, because they believed Scotland had not been treated well at the hands of England in the matters of legislation and public grants'. Compromising on it being no celebration, just the marking of a great historical event, it was decided that when the Under Secretary of the Colonies proposed the toast of 'The United Kingdom', he would be on his guard not to give away either the Convention or Scotland.⁶²

Having been sidelined by the Irish question, was the Union, then, 'Our Only Game'?⁶³ This *Scotsman* article chose to ask what point there was in debating the Union on its bicentenary—it was, at the time, the only game in town. Was it failure, the author asked, if it 'gave to Scotsmen, equally with

of 1707: Its Story in Outline', 249–61; James Mackinnon, *The Union of England and Scotland* (London, 1907).

⁵⁹ *The Scotsman*, 1 May 1907.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ *The Scotsman*, 14 March 1907.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ *The Scotsman*, 1 May 1907.

Englishmen, the government of a great Empire, bounded by distant seas, not the narrow limits of an insignificant island’?⁶⁴ While admitting that there had been disputes about the Union articles covering free trade, friction over the payment of the Equivalent and the loss of the Scottish Privy Council, and while the Jacobite threat had been there to exploit the initial discontent, the underlining assumption was that Union was a reality and its removal would only be detrimental to Empire.

In the century between the first and second centenary of 1707, commentators had offered alternative interpretations but still regarded the Union as inviolate, because it created Britain. Through the sometimes difficult semantics employed by James Grant and those whose views he reflected, union was first the means for Scotland’s institutional independence, and then a hindrance but not an obstacle to Scotland’s growth, and then a fixture as Empire reached its pinnacle.⁶⁵ It was why ‘England’ failed as the label for the constitutional basis of Scotland in the nineteenth century; no longer could the name be proffered as David Hume had famously used it.⁶⁶ Scotland was part of Britain, not England, and commemoration fell on ‘the “steady virtue” we owe the settlement of 1707’. Recalling the words from Viscount Tarbat (1630–1714) in the lead up to 1707, the importance of Britain to Scotland’s future was restated:

Unless we be part of each other, the Union will be a blood puddin’ to breed a cat—that is, till one or the other be hungry, and then the puddin’ flies. May wee be Brittains, and down goe the old ignominious names of Scotland and England. Scotland or England are words unknown in our native language. England is a dishonourable name imposed on Brittain by Jutland pirates and mercenaries usurping on their lords.⁶⁷

It was perhaps a curious quote to dredge up as the bicentenary day approached, but it indicates the continued importance of nomenclature to Scotland as Britain.

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⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Even with the demand for a Scottish parliament, maintaining the integrity of Empire was one the ABC’s of Home Rule, ‘The Union of 1707 Viewed Financially’.

⁶⁶ David Hume, *The History of England, from the Invasion of Julius Caesar to the Revolution in 1688* (6 vols., London, 1754–62).

⁶⁷ *The Scotsman*, 3 April 1907.