# John Prebble

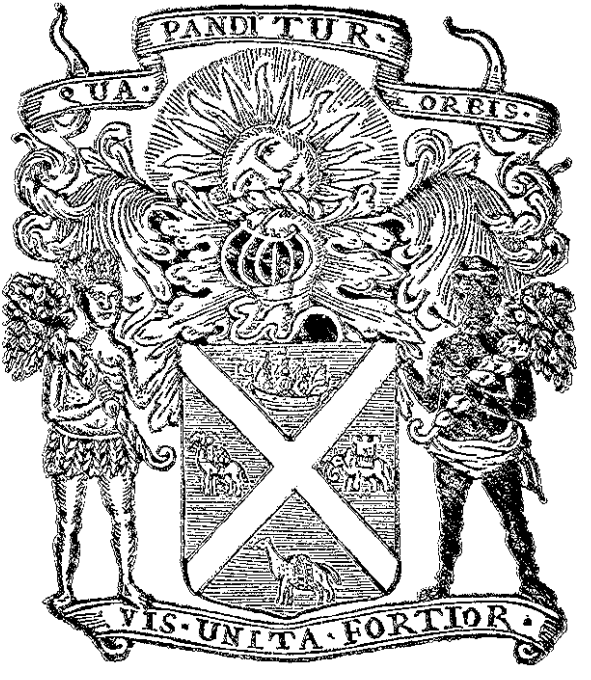
Author of *Culloden*

# The Darien Disaster

PENGUIN BOOKS

THE DARIEN DISASTER

John Prebble was born in Middlesex in 1915 but spent his boyhood in Saskatchewan, Canada. A journalist since 1934, he is also a novelist, filmwriter, and the author of several highly praised plays and documentaries for B.B.C. television and radio. During the war he served for six years in the ranks with the Royal Artillery, from which experience he wrote his successful war novel, *The Edge of Darkness*. His other books include *Age Without Pity*, *The Mather Story*, *The High Girders*, an account of the Tay Bridge Disaster, *The Buffalo Soldiers*, which won an award in the United States for the best historical novel of the American West, and *Culloden*, a subject he became interested in when he was a boy in a predominantly Scottish township in Canada. *Culloden* was subsequently made into a successful television film. Its natural successor, *The Highland Clearances*, was published in 1963 and *Glencoe* in the spring of 1966. All these books are available in Penguins.


PANDITUR
QUA
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JOHN PREBBLE

# THE DARIEN DISASTER

*'Door of the seas . . . key of the universe'*

PENGUIN BOOKS
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# I

## THE NOBLE UNDERTAKING

*'Then England for its treachery should mourn'*
Edinburgh, April 1705

THE savage voice of the people could be heard on the walls of the Castle. The sentinels in the Half Moon Battery, the escort company of the Town Guard drawn up in Palace Yard, had been listening to it since dawn. From the embrasures of the battery, down through blue peat-smoke and thin sunlight, over tall chimneys and craw-step gables, they could see a violent torrent from the Landmarket to Abbey Close: men, women and children, horses, coaches, and overturned stalls, a foam of white faces at windows and forestairs. The incessant cry of 'No Reprieve!', on a carrier wave of screams and obscenities, was losing its meaning by repetition, but its throbbing menace still remained. In the vaulted prison below the Great Hall of the Castle there may have been nothing to hear but a man's heart-beat or the restless footfall of a gaoler, nothing to disturb Thomas Green's confidence. He smiled at the Keeper and said that he and his companions would not die that day. Her Majesty's express would arrive from London to save them, even at the foot of the gallows. Since sentence had been passed, by the Judge and Assessors of the High Court of Admiralty, since his *Dying Speech* had passed through improving hands to the printer, the young man had allowed no one to speak of his hanging as inevitable.

But hanging was that morning synonymous with justice, and was plainly demanded by a mob which filled the main artery of the city, fed by sixty capillary courts and wynds. All roads that led to the six gates of Edinburgh were also crowded, by some who had come on foot for fifty miles, armed with clubs and

swords to enforce payment for the wounded pride and spilt blood of the nation. Those who were not fighting to get into the city were struggling to get out of it, by the College Kirk in the north and the Water Gate in the east. Here two roads embraced Caltoun Craigs and led to Leith, and each was choked with commons and gentility. Along the eastern road, past mud-walled parks and fields pricked by the green of young oats, the crowd was thicker, ineffectively controlled by scattered foot-soldiers and dragoons. By this way condemned pirates were customarily taken to the links at Leith, and on the grassy dunes, pointing north above the flood-mark, the gallows had been waiting two weeks for Captain Thomas Green, his mate John Madder, and his gunner James Simpson, of the English merchantman *Worcester*. Their last sight before they were hanged, if they were to be hanged, would be the white houses of Burntisland five miles across the Forth where their ship lay aground, its hold and cabins gutted, its masts stripped of canvas and yards.

In the palace of Holyroodhouse, behind the closed and guarded gates of Abbey Close, some of Her Majesty's Privy Councillors had gathered soon after dawn. They had come by coach from their town-houses in Cowgate and Canongate, or from their estates in the country, and they were shortly to travel up the Royal Mile to their Council Chamber in the Laigh Parliament House, there to decide whether the three seamen should be reprieved as the Queen advised, or should hang for piracy as the people demanded. None of them was anxious to make the journey, their arrival at Holyrood had been terrifying enough. The broad way of the Canongate, between splendid grey houses of square-hewn stone. had been full of angry men and women, surrounding the coaches, catching at bridles, hammering on varnished panels, thrusting inflamed faces through windows and leather curtains and spattering the Councillors with spittle as they shouted 'No Reprieve!' There was now the unendurable thought of that odorous stretch of the High Street between the Netherbow Port and Parliament House, the heaps of timber, peat and dung that were the mob's traditional weapons of persuasion. It was not an

atmosphere in which the Queen's principal servants could make a dispassionate decision.

Of the thirty members of the Council, nineteen had chosen to absent themselves and make no decision at all, as they had been absent from most of the Council's meetings since the trial a month before. The Marquis of Tweeddale, hot-tempered where his honour was concerned and proud of his general popularity, said that private affairs kept him on his estates but he was sure the Council would find a quorum without him. Lord Belhaven, a roaring patriot who liked to sing descant to the music of the mob, had previously pleaded prior duties to a house full of guests, and now, perhaps not inconsequentially, said that a course of diet kept him to his bed. The Earl of Crawford, also ailing, had 'a violent cold and hoarseness' that prevented him from speaking. The Earl of Roxburgh, one of Her Majesty's Secretaries of State for Scotland, had written to say that had he been able to walk downstairs he would have been in town, but 'I have got such a sprain that I don't know when I shall be able to travel'. The Lord Justice Clerk, Cockburn of Ormiston, showed less imagination than might have been expected in an advocate. His son had recently gone to the west country, he said, and had taken all the horses. By such lies did great men protect public office and private reputation, and neglect their duty.

From hindsight that duty, in both law and common humanity, is now clear. The root of the evidence against Green and his crew was a drunken boast over a bowl of punch, the prosecution's case was enmeshed in medieval Latin and legal Doric, irrelevant and unintelligible to the accused and jury. The seven eminent advocates who acted for the defence appear to have presented no evidence, they did not submit their speeches for customary publication after the trial, and they left Edinburgh immediately in apparent fear for their safety. There is no record that the Judge either summed up, or gave direction in law to the jury beyond brief answers to some of their doubts as to the meaning of the prosecution's wordy quotations from the Law and the classics. None of the jurymen, five sea-captains and ten merchants, could be regarded as wholly impartial and disinterested, indeed it

would have been difficult to find such a man in Scotland at that moment. Even so, a minority of them, closing their ears to the mob outside the court, could not agree with a verdict of guilty. All this the Privy Councillors had known for a month. Moreover, they now had before them affidavits sworn in London by sailors of the Scots ship *Speedy Return* which Green was accused of looting and burning. They clearly exonerated the crew of the *Worcester*, but the Councillors had set them aside on the specious excuse that they were 'only attested copies'. At the express wish of the Queen, but under emotional protest, the Councillors had already postponed the execution until today, 11 April. Although they had entreated Anne that 'no further reprieve might be granted', they had themselves voted for one yesterday, but, to their relief perhaps, had failed to secure the proper majority. Unlike their nineteen absent colleagues, these eleven men at least believed themselves obliged to make a decision, but they were held between conscience and expediency, between the knowledge that an express from London might arrive this morning with a full reprieve, and the realization that the mob outside would be satisfied with nothing less than a hanging.

The mob had no doubts, no obligation to rationalize its passion in terms of duty and law and conscience. Its temper, always quick to ignite, had been further inflamed by a ballad written, or inspired, by Roderick Mackenzie, the embittered Secretary of the Company of Scotland, owners of the *Speedy Return*. In ugly verse, irresponsibly imaginative, it described how the brothers Robert and Thomas Drummond, captain and supercargo of that ship, had been bound and beheaded before they were thrown into the Indian Ocean. That innocent Scots should be so foully murdered by Englishmen was bad enough, worse that the victims should be two men who were heroes of Darien, survivors of Scotland's noble colony on the Isthmus of Panama. And that too, the mob was reminded, had been destroyed by the English.

Copies of the ballad fluttered among the raised fists and clubs when the gates of Holyrood were opened shortly before nine o'clock. Out came the Lord Chancellor's mace-bearer, bravely pacing the way as if he were to be welcomed by the respectful

huzzas that normally greeted such a procession. Forty musketeers of Captain Robinson's Town Guard marched with bayonets fixed on either side of the nervous horses and gilded coaches. In the first rode the Chancellor, James Ogilvy, Earl of Findlater, Earl of Seafield, an unostentatious, beautiful man with a serene face and a gentle smile. He used both as curtain and outworks to the fortress of a dissembling mind, the greatest strength of which, it was said, was the faculty of knowing, without any exercise of reason, what should be done to please his sovereign. Yesterday this had naturally guided him to place a casting vote in favour of reprieve, but on the other hand he was aware that by respecting the Queen's present wishes he might be risking her future favour. 'We are all sensible that it would do a vast deal of prejudice to Her Majesty's affairs in Parliament,' he had written after an earlier meeting of the Council, 'for all I speak with say that since God in his providence had discovered this barbarous murther, it will be hard if they be not allowed to put so just a sentence in execution against those who have taken the innocent blood of their fellow subjects.'

With the Almighty thus involved as a witness for the prosecution, or at least an *ad hoc* member of the Privy Council, Seafield knew how this morning's business must go. That is, if the mob allowed him to reach the Laigh Parliament House. His courage, if cynical, was nonetheless resolute. Sitting back against the brocade and leather of his coach, his face pale and calm, he knew that there was not a man between Abbey Close and St Giles who did not believe that he had conspired with the English, eight years before, to destroy the Company of Scotland and its colony, and in that sense was a greater villain than Green or Madder or Simpson.

The appearance of his livery, the Ogilvy lion on his arms, enraged the people outside the gates. All the way up Canongate they surged against the musketeers, clinging to Seafield's coach and yelling 'No Reprieve!' In this wild, undignified manner, with the clang of hooves on the paving, Her Majesty's principal servants passed through the Netherbow Port and into a larger, more violent mob. Here men climbed over the dunghills and the kail-

wives' stalls to reach the coaches, to pelt them with stones, vegetables and dung, while women screamed abuse and encouragement from the windows and forestairs. The mace-bearer was brutally clubbed to his knees, and would have been killed had he not staggered into Milne Square and the offices of the Company of Scotland. The mob held the horses of Seafield's coach, struck its emblazoned panels with sticks, fists and swords, thrust savage faces against its windows and yelled 'No Reprieve!' to the calm face inside, until the swinging muskets of Robinson's men beat them away. Slowly the coaches were able to move on, past the Tolbooth and Market Cross to Parliament Close. Here the buildings were the tallest in Europe, some of them newly-raised since the Great Fire, fourteen reaching storeys and each of them housing twenty families or more. At every window, on every stair, there were men, women and children crying 'No Reprieve!'

When the doors of Parliament House closed on the Councillors, the mob entertained itself with songs and brawling, by hammering on the doors and shouting exhortations to the Council. Those who could not get into the close went up to the Castle ditch and shouted across the drawbridge. Within the Castle the Governor, Lord Leven (whose private opinion was that the accused should have been hanged without further debate) decided to damp down the anger of the mob by ordering away a battalion of Foot and a squadron of Horse to Leith sands. They came out of the Portcullis Gate by beat of drum, shining bayonets and ringing harness, down the Royal Mile to the Water Gate and the Leith Road. Some of the mob followed, singing and capering, but the greater part, distrusting great men behind locked doors, stayed where it was.

In their chamber below the great hall of the Estates, surrounded by the thumb-screws, the knives and pincers by which their predecessors had determined guilt or innocence, the Councillors debated for two hours. The noise of the mob, above their heads and beyond the doors, was a gentle rushing murmur. There was nothing to say that had not been said, the delay came not from fresh discussion but from the need to stifle old doubts. The decision, when it was taken, was inevitable, and was made less by

noble men in scarlet and ermine than by the foul mouths and hot temper of the people. 'We came to be convinced,' wrote Seafield, 'that there was no possibility of preserving the public peace without allowing some that were thought most guilty to be execute.' Green, Madder and Simpson were to hang that day as soon as they could be carried to the links at Leith, the rest of the *Worcester*'s crew were reprieved for another week.

When a messenger had been sent to the Castle, the Councillors went in a body to tell the people, and Seafield spoke for them, standing at the open doors of Parliament House. What he said was called back through the mob, out of Parliament Close and down the Royal Mile. There were shouts of joy and cheers, and in this sudden, sunlit mood the Councillors hurried discreetly away. Seafield's coach had scarcely left the close when there was a shout that he had lied, that it was all a trick, that the murderers had been reprieved again. He bent forward behind the window, shaking his head, calling soundlessly to the mob, telling it to be patient for it would have satisfaction. Stones broke the glass and scattered him with splinters, hands clawed the coach to a halt, and angry voices yelled through the broken window. They would have Thomas Green and his bloody crew brought to execution or they would storm the Castle and burn the pirates alive. Seafield turned the handle of the door, pushed it open and stepped down into the street. Astonished by this arrogant act of courage, the mob parted to let him through. He walked calmly and slowly to the house of a friend.

And from Castle Hill, the beating of a drum. The Town Guard, led by Captain Robinson, was bringing the seamen down. As they came into the Landmarket there was a baying roar and then silence. Joseph Taylor, an English tourist, said that the appearance of the condemned men, their courage and their composure, moved many men to tears, and this may well have been so, for the enjoyment of all emotions was part of the public spectacle, and men who behaved well in face of death deserved and received some sentimental acknowledgement of a good performance.

Thomas Green's composure, as he walked between the bayonets,

came less from courage, however, than from a continuing belief that he would yet be reprieved. He was innocent, he said, and why should this not be the truth when no man could hope to see God in mercy if he persisted in a lie? He was a strange young man, reserved, uncommunicative, and dedicated to duty. His *Dying Speech*, written some days before, sold by the same hands that circulated Mackenzie's ballad, declared that he had injured no man.

> What the custom of pirates is, I thank God I know not, but I understand my accusers and persecutors will have you believe I think it is unnecessary to confess before men. Take what I have said as good Christians ought to do. If you have no charity you wrong yourselves and cannot hurt me.

He was twenty-five. He had been given command of the *Worcester* when he was twenty-one. And his sad weakness was an addiction to strong liquors.

John Madder was no older than his captain, and was perhaps the more tragic figure, for he was a Scot, and might have escaped arrest had he not loyally surrendered himself. He knew that he was to die, and had no patience with Green's pathetic hope for a reprieve. His *Dying Speech*, like that of the silent gunner Simpson, had been written for him, and what either man thought, or truly said, cannot now be known.

Captain Robinson was counting heads as he marched with sword and sash. He said afterwards that there were 80,000 armed men gathered outside the city, and so close together that one could have walked on their heads from Edinburgh to Leith sands. There were no tears now for the condemned, there was no compassion. That scene had been played in sequence, where best for dramatic effect, and the last act was evil confounded and virtue triumphant. The author of *A Letter from Scotland*, published three weeks later in London, said that the seamen were

> . . . huzza'd, in triumph as it were, and insulted with the sharpest and most bitter invectives. Being come to the place of execution, good God what a moving sight was it to see those men stand upon the very varge of life, just launching into eternity, and at the same time see the whole multitude transported with joy. Some with pleasure asking:

'Why their countrymen did not come and save them?' Others, loading them with Scotch prayers, told 'em their old master would have 'em immediately. All of which they bore with invincible patience, like innocent men, English men and Christians, and made no other returns than by forgiving them, and desiring their charity.

Green's hope for a reprieve lasted almost until the end. Twice when the hangman tried to place the hood over his head he pushed it aside, looking anxiously along the road to Edinburgh. And then he understood. He stumbled on the ladder and would have collapsed but for Madder, who frowned at him, and by his own stoic resignation gave Green the courage to accept death. 'The tragedy was completed,' said the *Letter*,

> and from many points of hilly Edinburgh the bodies of the victims might be seen swinging on the sands of Leith. The national vengeance was more than satiated, and many of those who had been foremost in the strife were afraid to think of what they had done.

Many, but not most. When the dead men were cut down, Robinson took Green's body to Mrs Bartley's lodging-house, where the seaman had stayed before his arrest. He helped her to strip it, wash it, and coffin it, and later did the same for Madder and Simpson. But as he escorted the coffins for burial a flame of riot burst out again, and he fought the mob with a drawn sword at the door of the church.

Although the Council pardoned the rest of the *Worcester*'s crew, without protest, there was little forgiveness or shame in Scotland. Too much was bitterly remembered. Ten years before, the nation had created a noble mercantile company, and three years later a colony on Darien that could have been the trading hub of the world. Nine fine ships, built or bought for this enterprise, had been sunk, burnt, or abandoned. Nearly half a million pounds sterling had been freely offered from Scotland's meagre purse, and that which had been taken was now without hope of return. Over 2,000 men, women and children had left the Forth and Clyde for Darien, and never returned. They were buried on Panama, drowned in the Caribbean, rotting in Spanish prisons, or lost for ever as indentured servants in English colonies. There was scarcely a family in Scotland below the Highland Line that

had not lost a son, or a father, a cousin, nephew or friend in this disaster. This was why Scotland hanged Thomas Green, Madder and Simpson, and this was why there could be no forgiveness.

Some weeks later, from the printing-house of James Watson in Craig's Close, there came another ballad, rejoicing in the confusion of England and the punishment of her pirates. It was called *A Pill for the Pork Eaters, or a Scots lancet for an English Swelling.*

> Then England for its treachery should mourn,
> Be forced to fawn, and truckle in its turn:
> Scots Pedlars you no longer durst upbraid
> And DARIEN should with interest be repaid.

## *'Trade will increase trade, and money will beget money'*
## London, May 1695

HE was the original Scots Pedlar, the taunt first made in a sheet of English doggerel, adopted as a sneer against all his countrymen, and later accepted by them in defensive pride. His only known portrait is an illustration to one of his many pamphlets, and it is grotesque enough to be taken for a caricature. Since it was published while William Paterson was still alive it may well have been an honest attempt at a likeness, and even in its crudity there is something of the character more fully drawn by his words and actions: a beaked, determined nose, mouth open to release the passionate conviction of his thoughts, eyes melancholy with disappointment. Like many men who respond to the instinctive spirit of their age he appeared to be in conflict with his, a conscientious abstainer among great drunkards, tolerant in a stifling atmosphere of bigotry, an advocate of national wealth rather than private fortunes, an upstart deferred to by birth and privilege, albeit never for long. What may be regarded as his enduring monuments are also bizarre in comparison, the Bank of England and a weed-choked ditch on Darien.

Idealistic, tactless, impatient with the turbid reasoning of his contemporaries, it was not unnatural that the man should withdraw from the Bank at a moment when it was plainly certain to succeed, but stubbornly serve the Darien undertaking in the face of bitter and inevitable failure.

Much of his life is a mystery, unrecorded, unmentioned in the thousands of words he wrote, and we have only the ribald scandal of his enemies. Tradition places his birth at Skipmyre, in Dumfries, the son of a wealthy farmer, or a poor earth-breaker. He grew up in the killing time, when Episcopacy rode a dragoon's saddle at night against the conventicles, when families were dispersed, when good men of the western shires were transported or went into exile for the glory of God and the preservation of their skins. The same tradition says that his father gave him a good schooling to prepare him for the Kirk, that at seventeen he was carrying food and news to outlawed ministers in the hills above the parish of Tinwald. He is also said to have been at Bothwell Brig on the Clyde, when Monmouth's bright cuirass and the Graham's red plume came down on the Covenant, and that during the bloody persecution which followed he fled to England.

'He came from Scotland in his younger years,' said his contemptuous enemy Walter Herries, 'with a pack on his back, whereof the print may be seen.' To Herries, Paterson was always the Scots Pedlar, once a real huckster and thereafter a trickster hawking the bright ribbons of his dreams to his countrymen. Whatever Paterson's youth was, it made him no ordinary man in vision or education. He wrote a good hand and reasoned clearly in it. He was an historian who had read widely, a theologian who understood that a faith without compassion was no religion at all. He had a practical knowledge of engineering, mathematics, finance and business, and was a diligent student all his life. Herries said that he abandoned his pedlar's tray after some years in England, and

> seated himself under the wing of a warm widow near Oxford, where, finding that preaching was an easier trade than his own, he soon found himself gifted with an Anadab's spirit. Prophets being generally despised at home, he went on the *Propaganda fide* account to the West

Indies, and was one of those who settled on the island of Providence a second time.

Less colourfully, tradition says that he lodged with a relation in Bristol until he was nineteen, and when she died in 1674 she left him some small property which he used to buy himself a passage to the Caribbean. If this were so, it makes nonsense of the brave story that would have him standing in the ranks of the Lord at Bothwell Brig, five years later.

What he did during those seven or eight years in the West Indies is obscure, and he never wrote of them, except to give the authority of experience to his proposals for a colony. It is true that he built a reputation there for honesty and integrity, and it is possible that he traded as a merchant. Not unnaturally, it was said that he had spent some time as a buccaneer, an associate of Morgan, Avery and Sharpe, Dampier and Wafer, and those other forgotten men who beached their long-boats on crescent sands, smoked bull-hides beneath the palms, sacked Portobello and crossed the Isthmus like ancient heroes. When he returned to Europe, Herries said, his head was 'full of projects, having all the achievements of Sir Henry Morgan, Batt Sharp and the buccaneers in his budget.' That he knew such men was more than likely, it was easy enough to meet them, or those who sailed with them, at Blewfields or in Port Royal. Robert Alliston, a veteran of Sharpe's raid on Portobello in 1679, was certainly his friend. And it was from Alliston perhaps, or Wafer, that Paterson first heard of Darien, the green and beautiful country on the northern coast of Panama, where the earth yielded fruit without cultivation, where noble, naked Indians knew the secrets of unmined gold, and where lush mountain valleys led to the Pacific sea. There is no record that Paterson ever set foot upon Darien, or upon any part of the Central American mainland, and it might have been better for his countrymen if he had.

From the stories told by buccaneers he created his vision of a mercantile colony astride the Isthmus, a free-trading *entrepôt* of factories and forts where goods from the West could be exchanged for goods from the East, a trading road between the Atlantic and Pacific, anticipating the Panama Canal by two hun-

dred years and making the long voyage about Africa unnecessary. In one splendid paragraph he was to explain this later to his countrymen:

> The time and expense of navigation to China, Japan and the Spice Islands, and the far greatest part of the East Indies will be lessened by more than half, and the consumption of European commodities and manufactories will soon be more than doubled. Trade will increase trade, and money will beget money, and the trading world shall need no more to want work for their hands, but will rather want hands for their work. Thus this door of the seas, and the key of the universe, with anything of a sort of reasonable management, will of course enable its proprietors to give laws to both oceans, without being liable to the fatigues, expenses and dangers, or contracting the guilt and blood of Alexander and Caesar.

It is a character sketch of the man, imaginative, energetic, compassionate and naïve.

By the middle of the 1680s he was in Europe, hawking this dream. Robert Douglas, a Scots merchant who conducted his business in London, and who thought that Paterson was a garrulous bore who might become dangerous if taken seriously, later remembered that he was a familiar figure in Amsterdam coffee-houses, always talking about Darien. 'He endeavoured to make a market of his wares in Holland and Hamburg,' said Herries also, 'but without any success. He went afterwards to Berlin, opened his pack there, and almost caught the Elector of Brandenburg in his noose, but that miscarried too.'

From somewhere, the West Indies, Holland or Hamburg, Paterson acquired a small fortune, or at least the foundation upon which to build a small fortune, and when he set himself up in 1687 as a merchant in London, he was soon both successful and influential, the associate of other Scots merchants and of rich Jews like Joseph Cohen D'Azevedo. In London he also met Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun, the noble-minded Scots patriot who saw the inspired idea behind Paterson's lamentable habit of talking his audience into bored indifference. According to Dalrymple's *Memoirs*, Saltoun told Paterson to abandon his hope of European interest and to 'trust the fate of his project to his own

countrymen, and to let them have the sole benefit, glory and danger of it.' But Paterson had been too long away from Scotland. He rightly remembered it as poor in capital and resources, and, moreover, he was an internationalist, believing that no one nation could finance the scheme, or should enjoy its benefits.

He prospered in London. His industrious and enterprising mind, as well as his political principles which the Revolution had now made popular, brought him in contact with great men and new ideas. He helped to found a company, which lasted two hundred years, for supplying north London with piped water from the Hampstead hills, and later a similar company in Southwark of which he became treasurer. He is said to have been associated with Sir Theodore Janssen in the property development of the west, a scheme for noble squares and streets marching away from Lincoln's Inn Fields toward the village of Kensington. He wrote an intelligent proposal, which was ignored, for restoring a deplorably clipped coinage to its proper value. In 1693 he appeared before a Committee of the House of Commons on behalf of a mercantile group, explaining, with considerable skill, its scheme for credit upon Parliamentary security. When the Bank of England was formed next year upon this basis, he was one of its first directors, but he quarrelled with the others and resigned in 1695. Although men respected his intellect and his genius, few can have liked him. He was humourless, tiresome, and depressingly serious about all things. 'When he appeared in public,' said Herries,

he appeared with a head so full of business and care, as if he had Atlas's burden on his back. If a man had a fancy to be reputed wise, the first step he took to make way was to mimic Paterson's phiz. Nay, some persons had such a conceit of the miracles he could perform that they began to talk of an engine, to give the island half a turn round, and send the Orkneys where the Isles of Scilly stand.

Only a man like Saltoun could have admired Paterson's rigid honesty, his contempt for the corruption upon which politics, religion and trade flourished. He hated

bribery, cheating, designed cheating, wilful bankruptcy, and fraud and likewise theft, and so far from being a lesser or inferior degree

thereof, they are the worst and most heinous of all. It seems strange that those who invented the hanging of thieves did not begin with this sort first.

He lived in Denmark Street, a pleasant terraced house in the parish of St Giles and on the edge of Soho fields. The name of his wife, her character, descent and appearance are lost in the darkness that fills so much of Paterson's life. Herries said that she was 'a red-faced coffee-woman, a widow in Birchin Lane'.* Whether she was or not, she was loyal to her husband, took his pedlar's pack as a burden for her own shoulders, and what remains of her lies some yards inshore from Caledonia Bay on Darien.

The Spring of 1695 began as it had begun in London most years since the Revolution. King William went to Gravesend by coach through a flurry of gunfire and cheers, embarked on his yacht and joined his fleet for Flanders, there to re-open his annual tourney with Louis XIV. At the sessions of the Old Bailey thieves, coiners and footpads, murderers, cut-purses and stealers of bread were once more sentenced to death, burning or whipping. Lord Cutts' Regiment, in new scarlet, exercised in Hyde Park before following the King, and the nation was informed that there would be another day of General Fast during which the Lord would be implored to preserve His Majesty's person and confound those of his enemies. About the middle of May James Chiesly called on Paterson in Denmark Street. He was one of many Scots merchants, like David Nairne, James Reith, Robert Douglas and James Foulis, who enjoyed greater freedom and higher profits by trading in London rather than in Edinburgh. All of them were occasional guests at Denmark Street, and while most of them found Paterson's garrulity tedious, and probably regretted his abstemious hospitality, they respected his original mind and organizational skill. Chiesly had come from his house in the City parish of Allhallows Staining, to talk of the news from Scotland. On Thursday, 9 May, the Scots Parliament had opened its fifth session. There was, at last, to be a Commission of Inquiry into the Massacre of Glencoe, and the event of the

*Herries also said that she was Paterson's second wife. Who was the first is unknown, unless she was the 'warm widow near Oxford'.

session promised to be an acrimonious debate upon its Report. But what particularly excited Chiesly, and other Scots merchants in both London and Edinburgh, was one paragraph in the opening address given by the King's Commissioner to Parliament, the Marquis of Tweeddale. He had told the Estates that

> if they found it would tend to the advancement of trade that an Act be passed for the encouragement of such as should acquire and establish a plantation in Africa or America, or any other part of the world where plantations might lawfully be acquired, His Majesty was willing to declare that he would grant to his subjects in Scotland, in favour of their plantations, such rights and privileges as he was accustomed to grant to the subjects of his other dominions.

It was as if a window had been opened, flooding the grey and impoverished rooms of Scotland with the sunlight of the Indies, promising a future prosperity as great, if not greater than that exclusively enjoyed by the East India Company, the African Company, and other English companies trading with America and the Levant. It was no more than was expected of the King. Though he had accepted the Crown of Scotland, when it was brought to him in London, he thought of the conntry as a recruiting centre only, a storehouse for supplies, and was impatient with its Parliament and its peculiar pride. For two years Scots merchants, with their friends and their bought men in the Estates and Privy Council, had been lobbying and conspiring for such an opportunity as this. In June, 1693, the Parliament of Scotland had passed a general Act which gave permission for the formation of joint-stock companies to trade with countries not at war with the Crown. It had remained on paper, and neither the King's principal servants in Scotland nor the trading companies of England wished it to become anything else.

Yet it had been one indication of a change in the spirit of the Scottish people. For six decades the nation had wasted itself in the fratricidal agony of religious and political wars, squandering its intellectual and physical resources, and covering its rags with the bright banners of the Scots Brigades when its young men went to continue these bloody quarrels in the service of France and Germany and Holland. Now it was to take its first

real step away from a past of warriors and martyrs, toward a future of commerce and industry. That it would stumble and fall, and bring upon itself as sad a tragedy as any in its history, would not take its eyes from that future. What greatness the broadsword or the Bible had failed to secure for the Scots, might be found in something else. Fletcher of Saltoun, who could use a sword as well as any of his countrymen and had proved it against the Turks, recognized this new stirring of his people's imagination:

> All their thoughts and inclinations, as if united and directed by a Higher Power, seemed to have turned upon trade, and to conspire together for its advancement, which is the only means to recover us from our present miserable and despicable condition.

The misery was bitter. Scotland's trade and industry were paltry, and their disappearance would have made little difference to the commerce of Europe, and none to the rest of the world. The union of the kingdoms in 1603 had not given the parity and equality of opportunity it might have implied. Ninety years later Scotland felt herself to be the subordinate nation. As theologians once debated how many angels might comfortably stand on the head of a pin, as Spanish priests once argued whether or not an Indian was a human being in the eyes of the Church, so English jurists whetted their wits on the problem of where and when a Scot might be considered an English subject, with the rights and privileges thereof. Though there were two economics, two parliaments in the island, there was one king, and since the second Stuart he had been primarily and sometimes exclusively an English king. Nor was this all a matter of mood and emotion. Scotland had not recovered from the poverty of the Commonwealth when she had carried the heavy weight of an English army of occupation. In the earlier years of the century she had enjoyed something like free trade with England, and by the imposed union of the Commonwealth this had been legally acknowledged. Under the restored Stuarts she recovered her political independence but lost the one-nation advantages of free trade when the Navigation Acts of 1660 and 1663 were inexorably enforced.

The clauses of these Acts hung on Scotland's commerce like ignoble fetters, and increased her economic dependence upon England. No goods could be transported from the King's possessions in Africa, Asia or America except in the ships of England, Ireland, Wales and Berwick-on-Tweed, or in ships whereof the master and three-quarters of the crew were English. No foreign goods could enter England except in the bottoms of English ships, or ships of the country of origin. Scots shipping was thus limited to trade with Scotland, and the vessels themselves were largely Dutch- or German-built. No more did Scots yards create great warships and merchantmen for European kings as they had done a century before, or Scots architects work in the royal yards at Copenhagen. The Scots Parliament passed retaliatory Acts of a similar character, but this was the petulant response of a child who, rejected by his companions and having neither bat nor ball, declares that no others may play with him.

All of Scotland's meagre industries, cloth, cattle, fishing, coal, salt and lead, suffered from English competition or English legislation, and from a dispirited malaise. Her exports of grain, which in good times earned her a worthwhile income, particularly from Norway, could fall to the minimal in unpredictable, uncontrollable years of famine and drought. With no strong, reciprocal export trade she depended largely upon what England imported and sold to her across the border, paying for it in sterling. Her nobility and middle classes wore clothes made from English woollens, and equipped their kitchens with English copper and brass. Their smiths used iron from Sweden, and their coopers bought their hoops already made from England or Flanders. The best of their beer was brewed from English hops, their spices and sugars, their Levantine fruits, had come in the bottoms of English merchantmen. They rode in saddles of English leather, ate bread made from East Anglian grain when their own harvests failed, fought their quarrels with foreign muskets and Dutch powder, and treated their wounds with drugs sold to them by England.*

*A brilliant and scholarly account of the state of affairs at this time can be found in *Scottish Trade on the Eve of Union, 1666–1707*, by T. C. Smout.

Since the Revolution there had been a growing feeling that these ills might be cured by a willing political union with the southern kingdom, or at least by a favourable customs union. But a wider, stronger hope, and one that answered a stubborn pride, was that Scotland might become as great a mercantile and colonial power as England. Not as a country of interloping merchants, poaching the grounds of the East India or African Companies, but as a free and independent nation, competing in ships, men and colonies.

Scotland's attempts at colonization had so far been sad and disastrous. Sixty years before, a brave settlement on the Bay of Fundy had become a casualty in the war between England and France, and all that remained of it were the descendants of those Nova Scotia baronets who had bought their titles cheaply, each contributing six men and a thousand merks toward the colony. More recently a Quaker settlement in New England, a Covenanters' refuge in Carolina, had both failed, the one swamped by the English, the other destroyed by Spanish fire and sword. Yet there were Scots by the thonsands in Africa and the New World. They had gone, roped and chained more often than not, as transported victims of lost causes. A thousand were sent to Virginia and New England after Cromwell's crowning mercy of Dunbar. After another such mercy at Worcester, fifteen hundred, many of them Highlanders, were sold on the coast of Guinea. The miserable failure of the Highland rebellion against Cromwell in 1654 gave the newly-acquired English island of Jamaica more bonded servants and plantation workers. Seventeen hundred Covenanters were transported to America after Bothwell Brig and during the Graham's furious dragonnade. And in 1685, when the Earl of Argyll made his abortive rising in support of Monmouth, his Campbell clansmen were taken to the colonies by Scots and English shipmasters who made handsome profits from the speculative gamble.

With all these, as part of a sad Diaspora that was to continue for another hundred and fifty years, went the thieves and beggars, gipsies, whores, paupers and dissolute persons whom Scotland's own government found too much of a nuisance to keep and

too valuable to hang. The Scots, said the English colonists, were good and reliable servants, and the Governor of one plantation wished that he might have more, three or four thousand perhaps, promising to pay their passage and give them their freedom after a year's bondage.

Some years before the Revolution Scots merchants had become dimly aware that their counting-houses, and not the bloody banners of the Scots Brigades, could be the future glory of their nation. In December, 1681, eighty-two of them, aping the English, formed themselves into The Company of Merchants of Edinburgh. Their badge was a stock of broom, the yellow-flowered native shrub of astonishing growth, and they toasted it at every meeting. Their constitution ruled that none but those who joined the Company could conduct business in the city. Acknowledging the God of Battles in his *alter ego* as Lord of Trade, they began all their business with a supplicatory prayer: 'Almighty and eternal God, the sea is Thine, and Thy hands formed the dry land. Prosper us in our present undertaking with the fruits of both.'

By 1691 the Company had indeed prospered, though the same might not have been said of the country. From the legacies of dead members it had built a school for the education of the female children of those who had nothing to bequeath but orphans. For £670 Sterling it had bought Lord Oxenford's quadrangular house by Magdalen Chapel in Cowgate (his lordship's preference for a Stuart king preventing him from disputing the sale), hung its meeting-hall with one hundred and nineteen skins of black Spanish leather stamped with gold, and turned the waste ground to the rear into a pleasant bowling-green.

It was the dogged efforts of the members of this company that secured Tweeddale's promise to the fifth session of the Scots Parliament. They had been in sympathy with Glasgow merchants in 1691 when the latter urged the need for a Scots colony upon the Convention of Royal Burghs. With the passing of the Acts for Encouraging Foreign Trade in 1693, they were among the forty-eight signators to a bond which stressed 'the great advantages that may redound to this nation by promoting a trade to

the coast of Africa, America and other foreign parts', agreeing to work diligently for this until the Crown granted a patent for such a trading company, and each contributing three guineas toward the expense. Among those signators, too, were Paterson, Douglas, Nairne, Chiesly and other Scots merchants in London, and it is probable that these men, with their wider experience and shrewder brains, were the inspirational and organizational centre of the agitation.

For it was from them that came the first real response to the King's gracious invitation. Eight months later, standing before the bar of the Commons in Westminster Hall, and not at all sure that he might not be taken from thence to prison, Paterson made it seem a casual affair to which small thought had been given. Mr Chiesly had called one day in May. Mr Chiesly had said that there was talk at home of new measures to encourage trade. Mr Paterson had given him 'a scheme for erecting an East India Company', which Mr Chiesly had carried into Scotland some days later.

There had been more to it than that. Long hours, days, months, a year or more perhaps. Coffee and chocolate in Denmark Street, or the welcome change of Hannah Chiesly's hot punch in Allhallows Staining. Discarded wigs hanging on the corners of chairs, blue smoke from long clay pipes, the squeak of a knife cutting a new quill, and Scots voices from all the Lowland shires, debating and disputing. Robert Douglas so contemptuous of Paterson's Darien dream, so ready to squash all talk of it that Paterson suspected him of treachery. David Nairne, who acted as a London banker for Scotland's nobility and their improvident sons, reporting that he had written to Lord Leven, to Lord Tarbat, entreating their support. Paterson urging that the company must be a joint venture of the two kingdoms, that its directors should include men like Cohen D'Azevedo and the Huguenot Paul Domonique, English merchants like Robert Lancashire and Thomas Skinner who were jealous of the East India Company's monopoly, who wanted a more profitable exercise for their capital than fitting out interlopers which must wear ship and run as soon as an Indiaman's topsails broke the horizon.

The scheme was written in Paterson's good hand, and was the creation of his lucid mind and ambitious imagination. It said nothing about Darien, but it drew the framework and determined the rights and privileges of an incredibly powerful trading company with a sovereignty subordinate only to the Crown. It lay in Paterson's writing-desk against the day when good news came from the north. Chiesly took it to Edinburgh, and from it, in great haste and excitement, was drafted one of the most noble, vainglorious and disastrous Acts ever passed by the Parliament of Scotland.

## *'Yea the Body of the Nation longing to have a Plantation'*
## Edinburgh, June 1695

THE MARQUIS OF TWEEDDALE, an ageing but conscientious man much troubled by rheums and agues, lodged in the palace of Holyroodhouse. The fine windows of his apartments looked out on the Physick Garden, the treeless park about King Arthur's Seat, and the squalid debtors who took sanctuary in St Anne's Yard. As the King's Commissioner to Parliament he was allowed £50 a day to keep a good table, whereat most Members of the Estates dined at least once during the session. Escorted by a troop of dragoons in blue and steel, he travelled each morning to Parliament Hall in a coach drawn by six horses, another coach-and-six for his attendant gentlemen, and more for the Lord Chancellor, the Secretary for Scotland, the Lord Justice Clerk and other Officers of State. This solemn progress of patched, powdered and periwigged old men was watched by disrespectful crowds by the pillory outside the Tron Church, by the kail-wives and by women drawing water from the fountains, while the Town Guard stood to arms with drums beating. Looking up from his coach-window, the King's Commissioner could see the greystone vanity of the city's new skyline, gabled thistles, roses and fleur-de-lys, and on the walls of older houses the sober admonitions of earlier centuries. *As you are lord of your tongue, so am I of my ears . . .*

In Parliament Hall, forty yards long and sixteen wide, beneath the black cross-braces and hammer-beams, Tweeddale filled a lonely throne, his commission on a velvet cushion before him. Lords and Commons sat in banked tiers, sharing one chamber but preserving the distinctions of birth and privilege. Dukes, marquesses and earls were closest to God in high rows to the right of the throne, viscounts and barons to the left, and below them, descending, the knights of the shires, burgesses and commons. The fall of colour, scarlet and blue through brocade to black, ended at a long table upon which lay the Crown, the Sceptre and the Sword of Scotland, a cold fire of gold and silver, rubies, amethysts and garnets, blue enamel and pearls, diamonds, emeralds, velvet and ermine. Here, on Wednesday, 12 June 1695, before a large crowd of strangers who stood inside the doors holding the white sticks that were their tickets of entry, the Estates listened to a first reading of An Act for the Encouragement of Trade. Without debate they referred it to the Committee of Trade which, within two days, had renamed it *An Act in favour of the Scots Company Trading to Africa and the Indies.*

There was scarcely a literate man in the Lowlands who did not know what it proposed. On 22 May, shortly after James Chiesly's arrival in Edinburgh, a short pamphlet appeared on the streets and in the coffee-houses and taverns. It was called *Proposals for a Fond to Cary on a Plantation*, and it is easy to believe, by deduction rather than evidence, that it was a printed version of Paterson's scheme. It was a concise, orderly plan for the creation of a joint-stock company with powers to trade, to establish colonies in America, Asia or Africa, and to hold them in the name of the Crown of Scotland, to purchase ships, and to open a bank in Edinburgh. It began without preamble, and to the point:

> There is no need to take up any time in setting forth the usefulness of plantations in general to all places, or to the Kingdom of Scotland in particular, seeing now at length persons of all ranks, yea the Body of the Nation are longing to have a Plantation.

The pamphlet's first condition for the establishment of the com-

pany reflects Paterson's simple idealism, his appeal to what was noblest in man. The company should be

> a Body of Trading Men of the nation (not excluding either nobility or Gentry from furnishing their shares unto) incorporated under such reasonable and lasting rules as may carry on the design, and neither leave it in the power of the Managers to misapply, nor of passionate and peevish Members either to break the company or carry off their shares.

Though this pamphlet, and the Bill before the Committee of Trade, provoked argument and enthusiasm, public interest was really excited by something much more dramatic. The Commission of Inquiry into the Massacre of Glencoe, three years before, had begun its sittings in the Long Gallery of Holyroodhouse, and at the other end of the Royal Mile the Estates were waiting for its report, declaring that they would delay all other business until they had it, though they might have no right to debate the matter before the King had given his opinion. Their impatience was due less to a respect for justice than to a realization that here at last they might pull down and destroy the King's Secretary of State, the Master of Stair, upon whose orders the slaughter of the MacDonalds had taken place. Each day was thus another blaze of colourful pomp, the Officers of State going by gilded coaches to Parliament Hall, the members of the Inquiry coming by theirs to Abbey Close, the gates of the palace opening and closing upon scarlet and tartan. In the taverns, the broad thoroughfare of the High Street, by the coach-houses of the palace, could be seen some of the witnesses to the Inquiry: officers of John Hill's Regiment down from their garrison in Lochaber, and keeping close to their worried colonel; catlike clansmen in the tail of their chief, John MacDonald, and his brother Alasdair. And there was one riotous morning when the Earl of Breadalbane, the slippery Highland eel whose involvement in the massacre was suspected but not determined, was carried in his coach to the Castle, a prisoner by vote of the Estates.

In the noisy atmosphere of accusation and recrimination, Tweeddale required more mental and physical energy than he had shown when he changed his loyalties at Marston Moor, fifty

years before. As President of the Inquiry and Commissioner to Parliament, he was sometimes needed at both ends of the Royal Mile on the same morning. A servant to both King and nation, he found it difficult to obey one without angering the other. Testy dispatches from Flanders demanded that he bring the session to an end, and from the lower tiers of Parliament Hall he was told that Members would sit until they received satisfaction. He bowed before immediate pressures and hoped for understanding from those more distant, begging the King for further time 'that your service may be done with cheerfulness and alacrity'.

To the merchants of Edinburgh, the responsibility for the murder of three dozen Highland savages was of small consequence at this moment. Their concern was to speed the passage of their Bill through the Committee of Trade and back to the floor of Parliament for a vote. Two of them were principally concerned in sweetening the members of the Committee, answering questions, providing information, and making promises. Both had been ardent advocates of a trading company since the 1693 Act, keeping careful note of their tavern expenses against future repayment, and both had been correspondents of Chiesly, Nairne and other London Scots. James Balfour was a solid man of business with hopes of the Caribbean trade, a decent body with a modest ancestry of Lowland lairds whose fortunes and lands had been first secured at the end of a reiver's lance. His surname was respected in Scotland for honesty and plain-dealing, and would become wider known when his descendant gave it to the hero of *Kidnapped*. Robert Blackwood was a woollen merchant, a director of the Newmills Cloth Company, jealous of the privileges of his English competitors in Africa where, it was said, a single plaid would secure many times its weight in elephants' teeth and gold.

Such men represented the emergent aristocracy of wealth in Scotland, pious supporters of the Kirk, and politically potent in the Estates. William Arbuckle, a merchant of Glasgow and one of the first to dip into his purse for the company, was able to subscribe more stock than peers whose estates spread across three shires. The Lord Provost of Edinburgh, at present a kinsman of

James Chiesly, was by custom a knighted merchant who sat by right on the King's Privy Council. These trading men were as proud of their counting-houses, their factories and their town houses, as nobler men were of their castles and regiments. The Englishman, Joseph Taylor, once dined at Brandfield in the Edinburgh suburb of Fountainbridge, the home of the leather-merchant Sir Alexander Brand whose skins of black and gold had been hung in Oxenforde's hall. Brand's daughters put aside their father's breeches, which they had been mending, offered Taylor brandy and champagne, and played the spinet for him beneath a splendid ceiling upon which the family's sturdy politics were displayed in a carving of one crown and two sceptres, and the ironic Latin motto: 'This has been left us by one hundred and eight forefathers.' It was Brand who offered to clean the streets, courts and turnpikes of Edinburgh, largely at his own expense, because it was 'the nastiest city in the world'.

For two weeks following the first reading of the Act, Balfour and Blackwood tirelessly entertained the secretary and members of the Committee of Trade, not forgetting to tip the doorkeeper of the Exchequer House where the Committee met, or to buy ale for Tweeddale's servants in return for the news they might bring from the Commissioner's table. During one exhausting evening, when the two merchants dined with Committee members at the Ship tavern, they nobly dispatched a lambshead and bowls of mutton broth, herrings and a sleeve of mutton, three ducks, three chickens with gooseberries, fruit, cheese, bread and ale, French wine and brandy, followed by tobacco and pipes. All of which, Mr Balfour meticulously recorded, would cost the future company £33 5s. Scots, including two shillings for the cook and fourteen for the serving-boys. The next evening, with heroic fortitude, Blackwood joined the secretary of the Committee at the Ship, consuming a dish of fowls with gooseberries, two lobsters, cutlets, sparagrass, bread, ale and wine, tobacco and pipes. There were also endless dishes of coffee at Maclurg's, ale at Peter Steel's, more dinners at Widow Graham's, copies of the Act to be printed and circulated, a meeting of merchants and baillies at William Ross's, and the staggering expenditure of £11 17s. on

'coffee and otherwise' at the Sun before Balfour and Blackwood went to give evidence before the Committee of Trade.

None of this was self-indulgence. Without relentless pressure, without liberal hospitality, the Committee might well have dallied over its business and decided nothing by the time the session ended. But by 25 June, all amendments to the Act had been finally agreed and it was once more brought before the Estates. Again it was remitted to the Committee, in order that the names of the patentees or promoters of the company – ten resident in England and ten in Scotland – might be inserted. Lord Belhaven, president of the Committee, was also advised to consult with the Lyon King of Arms upon what seal, what emblazon the company should be given. There was no doubt about this, all men agreed that nothiug could better illustrate the nation's longing and its glorious future than a golden sun, rising from the waves.

Clerks worked overnight to make the amendments, and the next morning, Wednesday, 26 June, the Bill was once more brought before the Estates. It was read, voted and approved, without debate and dismissed almost casually. A week before, the Glencoe Commissioners had finished their Inquiry, and their Report was already on its way to the King in his camp before Namur. Tweeddale had reluctantly submitted a copy to Parliament, and for five days Members had been hotly debating it, with no interest in, and no time for anything else. They could feel the Master of Stair's neck within their grasp, and today they wished to vote upon whether or not an Address should be sent to the King, demanding the punishment of those found guilty of bloody slaughter in a Highland glen. There was no objection when the Bill's supporters asked that it be given the Royal Assent that day. Tweeddale had not the strength or courage to delay this, though he must have known that implicit in the promise he had given on 9 May was the King's wish to study any act for a company before it was passed. Nor was it clear – and no argument later would satisfactorily determine this – whether or not he had the power to give the Royal Assent without royal permission. But he was old, and he too, perhaps, was caught up in the surge of patriotic emotion. The Sceptre was carried to him, a

silver and gilt rod thirty-four inches in length, hexagonal, richly decorated with pearls, oak leaves and golden dolphins, enamelled images of the Virgin Mary, Saint James, and Saint Andrew in a Highland bonnet. Tweeddale took it in both hands, lowered its crystal globe, and gently touched the Act.

That evening in Michael's tavern, and for what seems an unusually cautious expenditure of £2 15s., Mr Balfour and Mr Blackwood, with 'the Londoners and the Glasgow men', toasted The Company of Scotland Trading to Africa and the Indies.

As defined by the clauses of the Act there had never been anything like this Company, nor would there ever be anything like it again. Its promoters, its supporters in the Estates, had been like children left by an open larder door, encouraged by the imagined approval of an absent parent. For the next thirty-one years it had the monopoly of Scottish trade with Asia, Africa and America, and for twenty-one of these all goods imported by it, with the exception of sugar and tobacco, would be free of duty. For ten years it had the right to equip, freight and navigate its own or hired ships, 'in warlike or other manner, to any lands, islands, countries, or places in Africa, Asia or America, and there to plant colonies, build cities, towns or forts' with the consent of the natives of such places, and provided they were not part of the possessions of any European sovereign or state. It had the right to furnish its forts and towns with magazines, stores and the weapons of war, and the powers to defend them against attack, to seek reprisals, to make treaties of peace and commerce with the native princes, governors and rulers of the lands they settled. And if injury were done to the Company, its possessions and its people by a European power, then the King and the King's men must guarantee and secure reparation.

All officers and servants of the Company in its colonies, with those of other nations who might settle with them and accept its rules, were to be free citizens of the Kingdom of Scotland, with all the rights and privileges thereof. No officer of state, civil or military, could arrest, impress or detain any member or servant of the Company, and if this were done then the Company had the right to release the men with the unquestioning assistance of

the King's magistrates and officers. And all members of the Company were to be free

> both in their persons, estates and goods employed in the said stock and trade, from all manner of taxes, cesses, supplies, excises, quartering of soldiers, transient or local, or levying of soldiers, or other impositions whatsoever, and that for and during the space of twenty-one years.

No part of the capital stock, or of the real or personal property of the Company could be liable to confiscation or arrest, and creditors of members of the Company were to have lien over their profits only, and no rights over their stock.

Thus was the Company a nation in itself, with the right to make governments and wage war, to grant freedoms and impose punishments, to trade where and with whom it wished. It could challenge the mercantile and colonial empires of England, Holland and Spain, fly its flag and the saltire of Scotland in any port and on any sea, and answer insults to both with fire and sword. The crystal globe of the Sceptre, catching the June sunlight from the windows of Parliament Hall, had ended a century of deprivation and despair. To the King alone did the Company own allegiance, and in token of this, and in gratitude, it promised him and his successors one hogshead of tobacco every year.

Twenty men were named in the Act as promoters and patentees, with powers to join with others, to form a Council-General and a Court of Directors, to issue stock, to determine the rules, ordinances and constitution of the Company. Ten of them were Londoners, two Englishmen, the Jew D'Azevedo, and seven resident Scots including Paterson. In Scotland there was John Hamilton, Lord Belhaven, rewarded perhaps for his noisy advocacy in the Committee of Trade, the Lord Justice Clerk Adam Cockburn of Ormiston, the Lord Provost of Edinburgh Sir Robert Chiesly, Balfour, Blackwood, two other merchants from Glasgow and Edinburgh, and three Lowland lairds who had also been members of the Committee of Trade.

That week James Balfour gathered the scraps of paper upon which he and Blackwood had kept a careful note of their

expenses during the past two and a half years. He copied them ont neatly on a scroll and called it 'An Accompt of Mony spent in Procuring the Act of Parlement for the Afrecane Tread'. The lobsters and cutlets, sparagrass and mutton broth, duck and chickens with gooseberries, cheese and ale, French wine and brandy, pipes, tobacco, coffee and tips, the charges of printers and clerks, the cost of the best Lombard paper, fees to the Lord Chancellor and the Keeper of the Seal, and a curious entry 'for Mr Robert Blackwood and my own trouble and attendance', amounted to £2,119 12s. 8d. Scots.

The key of the universe had been cheaply bought.

## *'We must not act apart in any thing, but in a united body'*
## London, July to December 1695

AND then it was seen that the Company had two heads, each turned to the other in suspicion. Whatever might be the intentions of the promoters in Scotland, those in England proceeded on the assumption that the Court of Directors must be established in London, and during the next five months the childish havering and unexplained silences of the Edinburgh promoters persuaded them that they were right. Even Paterson had not thought it necessary to go to Scotland to support the passage of the Act through Parliament, though he had cannonaded Balfour with letters of advice which were dutifully read aloud to the Lord Provost and the Baillies of Edinburgh at the Ship ('to coffee and otherwise, £3 15s.').

For their part, Balfour and Blackwood acted as if their colleagues in London had suddenly and obligingly drowned themselves in the Thames. As soon as the Act had been touched by the Sceptre they recruited twenty-eight of their fellow-merchants of Glasgow and Edinburgh as members of the Company, each contributing £3 Sterling toward immediate expenses and promising to subscribe stock to the total value of £13,600. This placed them ahead of the Londoners who had not yet decided to

establish themselves as a Court of Directors, or opened a Subscription Book. Nor could they, for no one in Scotland seemed willing to send them a copy of the Act. Behind these pettish differences lay wider antagonisms. The Scots saw the Company as a colonizing power that would release them from the political and religious tyrannies of the past, and bring them a rich, commercial future based on the forts, towns, magazines and navies granted them by the Act. The Londoners, with the exception of Paterson, were less interested in plantations than in the exploitation of the Spice Islands and the Indian sub-continent, too long the jealous monopoly of the East India Company.

Paterson was accepted as the spokesman of the Londoners, or made himself so by the sustained power of his lungs and his indefatigable capacity for hard work. He decided that Sir Robert Chiesly was the responsible member of the Edinburgh promoters, and for the next three months he carried on an urgent, and usually one-sided correspondence with the Lord Provost, pleading for a copy of the Act and arguing that some of the Scots should come to London without delay. He understood his countrymen's demoralizing vice of prevarication by committee, and he demanded action, action. 'For if anything go not on with the first heat, the rising of a fund seldom or never succeeds, the multitude being commonly led more by example than reason.'

This London summer was exceptional, the days hot and still, broken by spectacular thunderstorms which at least kept down the dust and the stench as Paterson walked or took a hackney to the City, to sup with James and Hannah Chiesly, to dine with James Foulis in St Mary Woolnoth or Thomas Coutts in St Dionis Backchurch. The London Scots were aware of a growing impatience among those English merchants who had been persuaded to take an interest in the Company. The traditional English contempt for the Scots, and the Scots' long envy of the English, their religious and political differences, could destroy the Company before its first whimper of life. Paterson rightly suspected that these prejudices might be stronger in Edinburgh than in London. He pleaded with Robert Chiesly to ignore them,

and his letter suggests that someone had perhaps raised an eyebrow at the inclusion of the Jew D'Azevedo.

It's needful to make no distinction of parties in this noble undertaking, but that of whatever nation or religion a man be (if one of us) he ought to be loked upon to be of the same interest and inclination. For we must not act apart in any thing, but in a firm and united body, and distinct from all other interests whatsoever.

Chiesly and his colleagues probably resented the patronizing tone and pedagogic style of such letters. They made irksome reading for proud men who could not see what Mr Paterson had done in this affair, beyond the scheme he had drawn up, that he should so cock his hat and teach them their business. There had been talk of a company, and proposals for an Act, long before his voice had been heard in Denmark Street, as Mr Balfour's account of money spent could show. And so, a copy of the Act was not sent. When it did leave Edinburgh, about mid-August, it was dispatched by news-writers and was circulating in the taverns and coffee-houses of Fleet Street before Paterson and his friends had read a word of it. 'We are much surprised,' he complained, 'to see some of the printed Acts of Parliament in the hands of some who are not very well wishers to us, before we who are concerned can have them.' The ill-wishers were the directors and stock-holders of the East India and African Companies, their friends and place-men in Whitehall. Worse still, to Paterson's tidy mind, was the deplorable mistake made in the names of the London promoters, eleven being given in the Act instead of ten, though Scots clerks and Scots printers might have been excused for turning Joseph Cohen D'Azevedo into two strangers called Joseph Cohaine and Daves Ovedo.

What letters Paterson did get from Chiesly were vague and discouraging, promising little except that one of the Scots might visit London at some unspecified date. Paterson replied that at least three should be sent, and that immediately. 'Since the people here are already as much awakened as they are like to be, it becomes us to strike while the iron is hot and hasten our pace.' All would go well as soon as a Court of Directors was properly established, and there should be no doubt that London was the

place for it. 'Because without the advice and assistance of some gentlemen here it will not be possible to lay the foundation as it ought, either to counsel or money.' The best heads, the best purses; by the enlistment of these in both England and Scotland would the Company prosper.

In the end, without waiting for the Scots, the Londoners held their first formal meeting of business, on Thursday, 29 August. It was a dull, cold day, with the promise of an early winter in the mists above Soho Fields. Great fires were burning in Cheapside and at Charing Cross, and the streets were noisy with drunken crowds. That morning Mr Fry, the King's Messenger, had arrived from the Low Countries with news of the fall of Namur, a bloody affair in which three thousand of William's fusiliers had marched stubbornly on the outworks under the command of that salamander Lord Cutts, losing a third of their number by musketry and the stones which the French rolled down upon them. There were rumours that the King himself had been killed, and some days ago a mad officer of the Earl of Oxford's Horse had ridden through the City, waving sword and pistol, threatening to kill any who denied that Dutch William was dead. The mob pulled him from the saddle and took him to Newgate along with the Frenchman Pontack, who owned the fashionable eating-house in Abchurch Lane, and who had started the rumour for reasons he had so far kept to himself.

The meeting was brief and orderly, efficiently controlled by a young scrivener called Roderick Mackenzie who had been engaged as Secretary. His Highland ancestry is obscure, his Christian name common enough among his clan, but he had pretensions to gentility, sometimes sealing his private letters with a harp, and sometimes with the stag's-head of the Seaforths. He was likeable and friendly, and was quickly called Rorie by the other Scots exiles. He wrote a clear, cursive hand, kept proper minutes with the aid of two clerks, and was to be the Company's loyal and passionate servant from this day until its sordid extinction twelve years later, and would in time be so jealous of its honour that he would lie for it, take up arms for it, and see innocent men hang for it. This evening, as candles were lit

against an early dusk, he wrote down the first resolutions recorded by the Company.

*Resolved*, that all persons who are desirous to be incorporated into this Company do give their names together with the respective sums for which they are willing to subscribe, in writing, to Roderick Mackenzie, who is to keep a list thereof.

*Resolved*, that the said Roderick Mackenzie do not discover the said names, or any sums, or any part thereof, to any person or persons whatsoever, without special direction of at least a majority of the members now assembled.

*Resolved*, that a sum be raised for defraying all necessary charges, till the constitution of the Company be settled.

There were seven members present, all of them Scots, and no reason was given in the minutes for the absence of D'Azevedo and the two Englishmen. It was agreed that each should give £25 against those necessary charges, the cost of ink, paper and candles, clerks and the Edinburgh post, wine and ale, tobacco and pipes. James Foulis was elected treasurer and was instructed to advance £20 to Mackenzie for petty cash. And then they put on their cloaks, called up their link-boys, and went home through the smoke.

Paterson sent news of the meeting to Scotland, and again asked that delegates be sent, 'all the Gentlemen here do seriously press it.' And again a few days later, 'We find ourselves daily more and more obliged to press the coming of these persons who shall be deputed from you, the reasons still increasing for us to get our business here dispatched before the approaching Sessions of Parliament.' For when William came home from his war, when Commons and Lords sat that autumn, all the trading companies of England would conspire to crush the upstart, malapert, interloping Company of Scotland.

If they were not doing so already. The East India Company, it was said, was considering a petition to the King, begging his gracious consideration of their troubles. These did not include, publicly at least, the Scots Company, but were nonetheless grave. French privateers, which lay off the Scilly Isles like waiting cats, and could sometimes be seen from Plymouth or Wight, had

recently taken two great Indiamen, the latest of many such expensive losses to all the English companies. Great men were withdrawing their support from the East India Company, and its shares had fallen from ninety-four to seventy-four. When the Londoners met on 26 September, this time with D'Azevedo, they were uneasy. Tavern rumours, probably started by agents of the English companies, said that they were a conspiracy of wild men, of Jacobites even, who gathered to plot against the Crown and to slander the English people and their Government. The only business done that day was the passing of a motion upon this matter.

*Whereas*, upon information, it appears that some enemies to this Company do industriously spread abroad surmises, as if some of the persons concerned in this Company did openly speak reproachfully and contemptibly of the Power of the Government and People of England, in relation to this Company, *Ordered*, that Members of this Company do, upon all occasions, speak with due respect of the Power of the Government and People of England; and that they endeavour, with all imaginable candour, to obviate and satisfy the objections of any person, or persons, without heat or reflection. *Ordered*, that Roderick Mackenzie do signify the contents of this resolution to absent Members.

The wording of the motion suggests that it was composed by Paterson, and its tone implies that there may have been a small truth in the rumours; that unable to hold their tempers before English jibes some of the Scots had spoken too boldly in defence of their country and its Company. It was hard for proud and ambitious men to walk softly and speak circumspectly.

Autumn, and still no assnrance from Scotland, though the Lord Provost seems to have been writing more frequently. 'We wonder that some of you should still be of the opinion that this matter may be transacted by correspondence,' Paterson tartly told him. There was a strong feeling in Edinburgh that there should be different riders in the saddle, and a different journey undertaken. The Londoners should send a deputation to Scotland. Paterson would have none of this. The Company would fail without the strong support of English capital.

It's impossible to lay the foundation anywhere but here. We've already pressed you to hasten by our former letters more than modesty would admit, and we must now tell you that if you neglect coming up but a few days after this comes to hand, it will endanger the whole matter.

The Scots should be in London by the first day of November at the latest.

Both Houses of the English Parliament had already met, and had been prorogued until the end of the month. Agents of the English companies had been seen in Westminster Hall, catching at the coats of Commons and Lords, and it was no secret that by the year's end they would have taken this Scots child by the throat and throttled it before it could be weaned. The King came home from Flanders on 10 October, landing at Margate and riding in slow triumph to London with a gathering train of nobility, knights of the shires, gentlemen and merchants of the City. None could say what his humour was on matters of State and the affairs of Scotland, and since the death of his faultless Queen, nine months before, he had been more than usually aloof and withdrawn. He wore a lock of her hair, in a ring tied to a black ribbon above his left elbow, and he was happiest away from England with his army. When he came back from killing Frenchmen he preferred to divert himself by killing a stag at Windsor, or by watching his horses run at Newmarket. He left the bonfires and the bells of London behind him, and went to his lonely palace at Kensington. There he told his Privy Council that he was satisfied with their prudent administration in his absence, and instructed them to dissolve Parliament, and to call a new one on 22 November.

The Londoners could expect no interference until the new Parliament sat, and before then they must establish themselves as a Court of Directors and open a Subscription Book, with or without the presence of a deputation from Edinburgh. They gathered now at a regular meeting-place, a red brick, three-storeyed house in Clement's Lane belonging to a sympathetic City merchant called Nathaniel Carpenter. The ticking of his great pendulum-clock, the noise of his four young children, and the bells of St

Clement's in Eastcheap were a background to their worried anxiety. On 22 October, when they met at three in the afternoon, there was the louder noise of shouting and brawling in the streets. Four members of Parliament for the City were being elected at the Guildhall. On this day, too, the King's horse won the Town Plate at Newmarket, the East India Company heard that it had lost another ship to French privateers, and its stock fell from seventy-six to fifty-four.

The Directors finished their business quickly, anxious to be away home before the crowd in the streets turned to a mob, but it was the most important meeting they had held so far. Once more they agreed, in view of the growing rumours, to keep secret 'all discourses and transactions passed here'. And they passed two major resolutions. The Subscription Book of the Company was to be opened on 6 November. The capital fund was to be set at £600,000 Sterling, one quarter of which would be taken up upon the opening of the Book.

Paterson's heart was lifted, at last something was being done. During the next few days it was resolved that the government of the Company should rest in the persons named in the Act, who could now describe themselves as its Court of Directors, with the right to increase their number to fifty. Further, there would be thirty 'Proprietors' of the Company, being those who subscribed £1,000 or more in stock. In a mood of restored confidence, the ten Directors were probably pleased to hear that the East India Company's stock had reached its lowest yet. Many of its investors were making discreet inquiries about the potential of the Scots Company, and so serious had become the withdrawals from the East India Company that its Governors had called a General Court, frankly acknowledging the grave losses of ships, goods and men to the French, and declaring that only a call of £25 per cent would keep the Company in business.

The preamble to the Subscription Book of the Scots Company, written in Mackenzie's clear hand, indicated that Paterson was at this moment the most important member of the new Court of Directors. Because he, and others concerned with him, had been 'at great pains and expense in making several considerable

discoveries of trade and improvements, in and to both Indies, and likewise in procuring needful powers and privileges for a Company of Commerce,' he was to receive two per cent of the money first subscribed, and three per cent of the profits for the next twenty-one years. It was an incredible gift, and it is almost impossible to understand how nine sober and experienced merchants could agree to it. In all probability Paterson himself suggested it, and it shows the mesmeric power he could sometimes exert over others, if never for long.

Mackenzie's clerks had scarcely ruled the first pages of the Subscription Book and entered the first names when unannounced, and by now unexpected, three of the Edinburgh promoters arrived in London: Balfour, Blackwood, and that patriotic rhetorician Lord Belhaven, whom the English spy, John Macky, described as 'a round, fat, black, noisy man, more like a butcher than a lord'. None of them was in a good humour when they attended their first meeting in Clement's Lane on 9 November. They had all read the Preamble, and were all unhappy about it. They were astonished by the size of the proposed capital, and doubted whether Scotland's purse was deep enough to provide the required half of it. Paterson's simple eloquence was no match for a practised speaker like Belhaven, who tuned his oratory by printing his own speeches, and who now dominated the meeting by his rank, his presence, and his inexhaustible supply of metaphors and similes, apologues, parables and perorations. The Londoners quickly understood that the Scots regarded Edinburgh as the proper base for the Company, and they realized that Paterson's influence there might be less than was claimed by him in London. Although they persuaded the Scots to accept the need for so large a capital subscription, they agreed that Paterson should write to Edinburgh, explaining this need, and that copies of all their journals and records should also be sent to Scotland.

Now the Court of Directors met almost every day, and usually in disharmony. Mackenzie's minutes tersely indicated the wrangling that burnt away Mr Carpenter's candles: *Upon some objections offered. . . . Several debates arising concerning the management. . . . Several objections made by the persons deputed from*

*Scotland*. . . . The Scots' principal objection was to the terms and wording of the Preamble, arguing that some patentees in Scotland might withdraw when they realized how great was to be the capital fund. There was also one other matter which profoundly disturbed them, and although they had not yet brought it into the open it lay behind every other objection they raised. This was the rich reward granted Paterson, before the Company had begun trading and before any man could see security in its profits, and Balfour may have reflected that there had been no proposal to repay him and Blackwood for all those dinners and suppers, sealing-wax and paper, the expenses due them for their attendance and trouble.

On 11 November the East India Company took public notice of the Scots. It voted that no member of the Company could be associated with them in any way without breaking his oath. Three days later it petitioned the King at Kensington, placing before him the grave state of its affairs, its bitter losses in the war, the unfair and possibly illegal competition of the proposed Scots Company. The King accepted the petition without comment, and went off to hunt at Windsor, to attend an electoral chapter of the Garter.

The warning was clear to the Scots, though none seems to have recognized it, or acknowledged it in the minutes of their meetings. They argued on, sometimes over trivial matters, sometimes acting like sober, intelligent businessmen, and when the latter was the case it was usually due to the London merchants D'Azevedo, Nairne and Chiesly. They admitted eight new directors, all of them Englishmen and ready to subscribe stock on their own or others' behalf, and they rightly decided that a majority and quorum of the Court should not consist of the original directors but of new men, appointed directly by the stockholders and exercising their right of proxy. Now Mackenzie's minutes were nobly and properly headed 'At a Court of Directors of the Company of Scotland Trading to Africa and the Indies . . .'

Robert Douglas, the London Scot who was Paterson's sour and sceptical critic, was admitted as a Director on 22 November, and Paterson was later to claim that he was an agent of some

cabal in Scotland that wished him ill, and had joined the Company to destroy him. It was a day of events. The London Subscription Book was closed that morning, having reached the agreed sum of £300,000. There was also published a small pamphlet called *Some Considerations upon the Late Act of the Parliament of Scotland,* and it reads as if written by Paterson. It was the Company's only acknowledgement of English hostility, and its only attempt to ward off the disaster that threatened. It lightly argued that the English had nothing to fear from the Company, if they wished to keep their commercial superiority they should relax their own trading laws and not waste their energies in an attack upon the Scots.

That morning, too, the new Parliament of England assembled in Westminster Hall. The King went to the Lords and asked the Commons to choose a Speaker. From the Throne, at eleven o'clock the next morning, he spoke of the war, his soldiers' courage and his people's contribution in coin. It was unfortunate that he must again ask for recruits and money to continue that war, and he urged his Parliament to think of new means of raising both. He suggested that merchant shipping should be increased, and that the East India trade should be encouraged. There would, he hoped, be a speedy dispatch of all business before the House, for the French would be early in the field next Spring.

On Friday, 29 November, William Paterson's influential role in the Court of Directors was abruptly ended, and that by himself. Twenty men met at Mr Carpenter's under the presidency of Belhaven. Six of them were new English directors. Two more were Paul Domonique the Huguenot, and Daniel van Mildert a Dutchman. These, with Robert Douglas and the three delegates from Edinburgh, made a majority upon whom Paterson could rely for little sympathy or support. The business of the day began at three o'clock with the reading, by Roderick Mackenzie, of an agreed oath *De Fideli Administratione* as enjoined by the Act.

We, whose names are herunto subscribed, do severally, in the presence of Almighty God, and this Company, declare and promise, *That,* during our being jointly, or severally, concerned in the Company of Scotland Trading to Africa and the Indies, we shall not disclose any

thing that, from time to time, shall by the President of the Court be given us in charge to be kept secret; but shall in our respective stations, endeavour, to the utmost of our power, to promote the Profit and Interest of the said Company.

Following business included agreement on a similar oath to be taken by the Company's servants, and a resolution to acquire a ship, or ships, that could be sent to trade in the East Indies. A Committee of Trade was elected to manage this.

When Paterson rose, asking Belhaven's leave to address the Court, it was without prompting, but stress and pressure were implicit in all he said, an awareness that the majority of those present resented the special favours granted him, and had made that resentment plain. He said that he had insisted on the royalties and profits, not doubting the justice and generosity of the Company, or his usefulness to it, but because he had had bitter experience of man's ingratitude. He had spent nearly £10,000 of his own and other men's money on this noble undertaking, though he did not say how, or where, or when. There had also been 'ten years of pain and travel, six years whereof were wholly spent in promoting the design of this Company', and again he did not say where or when. The claim that he had been the suffering and impoverished creator of their Company was listened to in silence by Balfour and Blackwood, who knew that they had spent four years and more in the same service, and had their scroll of expenses to prove it, which was more evidence than Paterson was offering.

'This Court,' said Paterson extravagantly,

being filled with so many excellent persons, in whose justice and gratitude I have entire confidence, I resolve to take hold of so glorious an opportunity of showing the generosity and integrity of my heart. I freely and fully renounce and resign the two per cent and three per cent mentioned in the Preamble of Subscription, back again to the Company from whom I had so brave and noble a concession.

And the Directors took it back, and thanked him for it. They gave no sign of suspecting that this bold renunciation, wrapped in flattery, might be an invitation to confirm him in the grants.

Years later, when men fought over the corpse of the Company, eager to snatch up a penny where they had placed a pound, Paterson regretted his noble gesture. By then a poor teacher of mathematics in a Soho room, he said that his release 'was only given in trust', that he had been prevailed upon by the lie that the two per cent had already been promised to others, to great men in Scotland who wanted payment for their support in the Estates. And this may well have been true, but again he offered no proof.

It was almost the last meeting held by the London Directors. On 3 December, the Lords debated the state of the nation. 'Particularly upon the Scotch East India Company,' wrote Narcissus Luttrell in his annals that night, 'which they think will be prejudicial to our trade; and after long debates resolved that divers English merchants trading to the East Indies, as also the Commissioners of Customs, attend them on Thursday next about it.' The minutes of the Directors' meeting the next day contain no mention of this danger, although they once more warned each other that all their proceedings should be kept secret. They urged the opening of a Snbscription book in Scotland as soon as possible, and instructed Belhaven, Balfour and Blackwood to prepare a preamble. The English Directors, out of patience with the Scots' habit of arriving any time they chose at Mr Carpenter's house, insisted that there should be strict rules on punctnality, with fines for absentees and late-comers.

On Friday, 6 December, the day after officers of the East India Company and the African Company had been heard at the bar of the Lords 'as to the inconveniences arising from the Scotch Company', the Directors considered a draft of the Preamble to the Scots Subscription, imposed a fine of half a crown for unpunctuality or non-attendance, and agreed that the only correct time was that shown by Mr Carpenter's pendulum-clock. They closed their business late, resolving to meet again on Friday, at ten o'clock in the forenoon.

It was the last entry in their minutes. The next morning the Lords ordered seven of them, all named in the Act, to appear before the bar.

## *'Impeached of the said High Crimes and Misdemeanours'*
## London, December 1695 to February 1696

IMPROVIDENT Sawney, aping gentility while he scratched at fleas, had been a ribald jest since that clamorous train of hungry Scots came south with James I in 1603. By then England had exhausted its ridicule of the Welsh, and had not yet discovered how contemptible were the Irish. Scotland was to be its buffoon for the next two hundred years, and the joke would be kept alive by witty contributions from Johnson, Lamb and Sydney Smith, with illustrations by Hogarth, Rowlandson and Gillray.

Poverty and pretension were the usual themes, and at the end of the seventeenth century it was said that there were but Eight Commandments in Scotland, since its people had nothing to covet and nothing to steal. All Scotsmen met with abroad were men of sense, said Dean Lockier, clumsily anticipating Johnson, it was those who remained at home who lacked it. English travellers reported that the meanest Scots pedlar would have himself taken for a gentleman, wearing a sword and scattering himself with snuff. John Macky said that the park, so-called, about Holyroodhouse, was very comical, having neither trees nor deer. And the Scots were disgusting hypocrites. 'As they are nasty,' wrote that fastidious young barrister Joseph Taylor, 'so I found them profane and vicious as other people, notwithstanding all the pretended sanctity of their kirk.' Their ministers, hammering on the pulpit, were more like drummers than parsons. Though they put scolds on a Stool of Repentance, talked of brandiug the noses of their many whores, their washwomen were without shame or modesty as they stood in the High Street of Edinburgh, petticoats kirtled to their naked bellies, treading out clothes in a mixture of water and cow-dung. Scots lice, said Taylor, were omnipresent, and he never went to bed without wearing gloves and stockings. For all its august houses, the state of the Royal Mile was deplorable. 'In a morning the scent was so offensive that we were forced to hold our noses as we passed the streets, and take care where

we trod for fear of disobliging our shoes, and to walk in the middle at night for fear of an accident on our heads.'

Now, as the Directors of the Scots Company were called to the bar of the Lords, here was Sawney caught up by his breeches again. London's amusement was encouraged by a two-paged, ink-smudged flyer that was sold for threepence in the Admiralty Coffee-house at Charing Cross. Called *Caveto Cavetote*, it took the usual form of a letter to a friend in the country, and was signed 'by an impartial hand *Tarpallian in Querpo*'. It ironically related the rumours then current, particularly that the affair was the result of information laid against the Scots. The informer could not be an Englishman.

> Some say . . . a certain Scotch native of the tribe of Judas Iscariot, who with his natural gaiety of temper and affected humility, has stoop'd down to take up the honourable office of informer behind the curtain, with design to have the Scotch Company and the promulgators thereof impeached before no less a tribunal than King and Parliament.

Some said, also, that complaints against the Company were 'only from the teeth outwards, to serve other ends', a plot to embarrass Government and Throne. Some said that the Company was a mongrel with many fathers, one of them the East India Company, since there were proprietors in the Scots Company who were also committee-men in the India Company, and conversely.

> Some say, that we have other fish to fry than to trouble our heads with any of these Companies or their fiddle faddle Indian goods, the retailers of them being generally no other than decoy ducks for alluring our nieces and daughters to the fluttering beaus of the Town, who have got such a trick of raffling that they commonly end with ruffling and rifling etc., and that when we are busy getting estates, our wives too may be under an Indian Umbrealla purchasing Indian babies to inherit them.

But among the trading companies there was no laughter. A war prolonged beyond the limit of a fair mercantile gamble became less profitable than peace. The King's demand for more

Horse, Foot and Ordnance, the theatrical re-enactments in Hyde Park of his wasteful battles, the Days of Fast and Prayer that were the prelude to yet another of his campaigns, were no encouragement when it was clear that though his regiments might win more laurels his merchants would certainly lose more ships. Before the Lords lay petitions from the Honourable East India Company, the Hamburg Company, the Royal African Company and the Levant Company, from the Associations of Merchants Trading with Jamaica, with Pennsylvania and New England, with Barbadoes and the Leeward Isles. Each was a piteous threnody against the vulgar paean for victory.

In one year the nine principal companies had lost 103 ships by storm, hurricane and shipwreck, to French warships and French privateers. The total loss was £2,262,550 in ships and cargoes, of which one million and a half had been borne by the East India Company alone. The French had taken six of its great vessels, fully laden and homeward bound from Bengal and Surat, all of them between the Scilly Isles and Ireland. The Barbadoes merchants were almost bankrupt, having lost forty small ships between September 1694 and September 1695, three-quarters of them to French privateers, and the losses to the other companies had been proportionally hard. In their petitions they gave the names, burden, crew and armament of the fine ships now gone – *Prosperity, Adventure* and *Providence*. . . . *Sarah, John* and *Joan*, . . . *Swan, Pelican* and *Phoenix*. . . . *Antelope, Wolf* and *Loyal Steed* . . .

Though they asked for cruisers to protect their merchantmen, though they said that they could not defend their forts and factories without guns, their principal complaint was against the Scots. 'This Scotch Act,' said the Royal African Company, 'is nationally so pernicious to us that when once they have colonized themselves our commerce will be utterly lost.' English merchants and seamen, said the East India Company, 'will remove themselves, their families and estates into the kingdom of Scotland, and thereby carry away a considerable part of the stock and hands that support the trade of this nation.' The Hamburg Company said that all Englishmen, and all men resident in

England, should be prohibited from association with the Scots. Some of the other companies saw that here might be an opportunity of curbing the power of the East India Company, and acquiring some of its monopolies. The Jamaica merchants said that the best way of stopping the mischievous Scots would be to make trade easier for all. And the Leeward merchants told a small parable hy way of illustration. One of their association, recently in India, had bought a chicken for a halfpenny and had told the Hindu from whom he bought it that he was grateful to the man's religion, since it forbade the eating of the bird and thus made it cheap to buy. 'You are mistaken, Sir,' he was told, 'for, did we eat chickens, everybody would breed them, and they would become much cheaper.'

On Monday, 9 December, seven of the Directors named in the Scots Act appeared before the bar of the Lords, together with others of their Court who were called to give evidence. The day was dank, chill with mists from the river, and the House sat late beyond candle-time. Since their last meeting on Friday, the Directors had been immobilized by shock, and over the week-end many of the two hundred English subscribers to the Company had withdrawn their names in panic. Only Robert Blackwood had been alert to the probable dangers ahead. He collected the Subscription Book from Mackenzie, and sent it to Scotland by his manservant.

Two principal questions were put to the directors: why had they incorporated themselves into a company likely to be prejudicial to England, and who were that company's subscribers? They answered uniformly, and with innocent wonder that it should be thought they had meant any ill. They did not think it prejudicial for them to be so incorporated in Scotland, and as for the subscribers, the Book was closed. Where it was, they did not know. They were asked if they had solicited this Act before the Parliament of Scotland, or had been asked to solicit it, and James Chiesly's answer was the model for all.

I know not anybody in England that was applied to directly or indirectly. The people in Scotland knew us, and that is the reason they put in our names. At Mr Paterson's request it was that this Jew and

another was put in it. I have heard five or six years since that Scotland had a design for such an Act.

And where was Mr Paterson? The Lords called for him late in the afternoon, and although the Serjeant-at-Arms shouted his name down the corridors of Westminster Hall, above the heads of their lordships' footmen, and out into the courtyard where there were more footmen and coachmen, there was no answer. He had not been seen all day, and had sent no message why he would not or could not come. James Smith, his friend and fellow-director, was asked where the man lived, and replied that it was in Denmark Street by Soho. Testily, the Lords sent a messenger to summon Paterson forthwith.

Past dusk, the House was told that Mr Paterson was at the door, and he was brought in and sworn. When he was asked the same questions he answered boldly, and with a note of truculent bitterness, a memory of hard work and ill rewards.

I have been conversant in foreign trade. I solicited abroad for a Company. In 1691 I returned to England and I had a proposal to the Bank of England, but I was not rewarded. In May I was solicited by a Scotch gentleman that if I would give my opinion as to the Scotch Act I should be rewarded. From my opinion the Act was drawn. As to the passing of it, I know nothing.

And what of the Subscription Book? It was in Scotland, he believed. And shares promised as rewards to supporters of the Company? 'I know of none, but what was promised me.' He was dismissed, but told to hold himself ready for further attendance.

The examinations went on through the week, the Lords looking down upon every Director and every witness above a mounting pile of papers, the depositions of witness, the petitions heavy with the black and scarlet seals of the trading companies. Had Mr Blackwood got the Subscription Book? No, he had not. When did he last see it? 'It was Friday last, and I gave it to my man to send it away. I know not whether he went on Tuesday or Wednesday. I don't know where it is, but my man is gone to Scotland.' Mackenzie was asked the same question, and he agreed that the Book had left London, but when or where he could not say. But

he admitted, under pressure, that he did have a list of the subscribers' names. And Balfour, when he was called, offered the Lords a copy of the Preamble to the Subscription Book.

When they were finished with the Directors, the Lords listened to the reading of a paper from the Commissioners of Customs who declared that there was no doubt that the Scots Act would have a grave effect on the trade, revenue, and navigation of England. If it could not be repealed, encouragement of a similar nature should be given to English merchants. In any case, severe penalties should be imposed upon those Englishmen, and residents of England, who persisted in an association with the Scots Company.

It was Saturday. The Lords had spent six days on this examination, longer than many of them thought it was worth. They appointed a committee to draw up an Address to the King, and they sent word to the Commons (at that moment considering the Army Estimates and voting William £2,700,000 for his next campaign) inviting the Lower House to join them in presenting it. The whole business had pushed other matters aside. One cancelled motion had been a ray of light from a not too distant future wherein the principals and the enemies of the Scots Company would be bitterly involved. '*Moved*, that a day may be appointed to receive what may be proposed in order to have a Union between England and Scotland.' Nothing came of it, the Lords had had their fill of the Scots for the moment.

Until this moment the Commons had taken no formal notice of the Scots Company, but were ready to join in the pursuit of it. They elected twenty-eight of their number, led by the Attorney-General and the Solicitor-General, to meet with the Lords' committee in the Painted Chamber, and there agree upon the terms of the Address. That it was done quickly, that the written Address was before the Commons on Saturday evening, argues earlier knowledge and previous discussions. It was twice read and approved unanimously. It gave a brief but precise account of the passing of the Scots Act and the trading advantages it granted to Scotland.

When once that nation shall have settled themselves in plantations in America, our commerce in tobacco, sugar, cottonwool, skins, masts, etc., will be utterly lost. . . . The Kingdom must be the magazine for all those commodities, and the English Plantations, and the traffic thereof, lost to us, and the exportation of our own manufactures yearly decrease.

It warned William that the Act obliged him to secure restitution and reparation for any injury done to the Scots Company, to employ English men-of-war in its defence and at the public cost, which could only be to the great detriment of England. The wording sometimes slavishly copied the phrasing of the petitions presented to the Lords, and although no remedy was suggested it was nonetheless implicit. The Act should be repealed, and the Company crushed.

Between three and four in the afternoon of Tuesday, 17 December, in fair weather for the time of the year, there was a great gathering of carriages outside Westminster Hall, a mob of shouting footmen and swearing coachmen, all waiting for the Members of both Houses to take the Bath Road to Kensington. The Commons had been sitting since nine. They had begun by giving leave to a Bill to prevent theft and rapine on the borders of England and Scotland, and they were now coming to the end of a debate on a petition from the Governor and Members of the East India Company. This reported that the Company had nineteen ships outward bound, all laden with English manufactures valued at more than a quarter of a million pounds, the trading profits of which were in danger of being lost 'by reason of the great privileges granted to joint stocks of neighbouring nations'. Four more Indiamen lay in the Downs awaiting a favourable wind, another four were fitting-out downriver from London Bridge, and fifteen now loading off Surat and Bengal would be home within a year. All this was in jeopardy. The Company asked

that leave may be given to bring in a Bill for establishing the Company with such privileges and immunities as the House shall think fit, and as may preserve the joint stock, and enable them to carry on the trade to the honour and advantage of the nation.

Properly impressed, the Commons appointed a committee to inquire into the Scots Act, with powers to send for and examine all papers and persons connected with it. And the persons concerned were those Scots and English gentlemen who had recently spent a worrying week at the bar of the Lords.

The Commons then voted themselves into a committee of the whole House, left the Hall and joined their lordships in an undignified struggle to find their coaches in the uproar of the courtyard.

The long procession of horsemen, coaches, outriders, running footmen and clattering troopers went by way of Petty France to the frosted fields of Pimlico, and on to the Kensington Road through Hyde Park, followed by a cheering crowd. The meeting with the King was brief. The audience chamber of the Palace was airless and suffocating, a crush of silk and brocade, ringlet wigs and powder, silver buckles and scarlet heels, body sweat and pomander. Lords and Commons craned their necks to see the lonely figure at the end of the chamber, its heavy cheeks and great eagle nose, the star of the Garter on a black coat, and a mourning band on one arm. William listened politely to a reading of the Address, punctuating it with his dry, asthmatic cough, and when it was over he nodded to the bowing Speaker and said, 'I have been ill-served in Scotland, but I hope some remedies may be found to prevent the inconveniences which may arise from this Act.' He rose and left.

Both Houses were satisfied. They had expected no passionate emotion from this reserved and grieving man, and they sensed the anger behind the shutter of his words. Though he had given no promises, though what he had said had been ambiguous enough not to offend his Scots Parliament too deeply, his impatience with it and the northern kingdom was nonetheless plain. By giving the Royal Assent to the Act, Tweeddale had exceeded any warrant granted him by his commission, and the arrogant assumption of rights and privileges denied his English subjects was an impudent impertinence. He had also, perhaps, more than this in mind when he spoke of being ill-served in Scotland. Five months ago, in his camp before Namur, he had received the Re-

port of the Commission of Inquiry into the Massacre of Glencoe, and an Address from the Scots Parliament upon the same matter. Though the Report had naturally exonerated him, it blamed his favonred Secretary of State, the Master of Stair. The Address, more indignant in tone, had also accused Stair of being 'the original cause of this unhappy bnsiness', implying that he should be punished, and bluntly demanding that the King send home for trial those officers and soldiers of Argyll's Regiment who had carried out the slaughter. Moreover, many outraged people in Scotland and England were encouraged by Jacobite hacks to believe that the King was in fact primarily responsible for the killing of the MacDonalds. Had he not subscribed and superscribed the original order sent by Stair?

For five months William had acknowledged neither the Report nor the Address, and had taken no action beyond regretfully accepting the resignation of Stair. But two weeks ago, in this same chamber, he had called before him all those Scots Privy Councillors then in London. He astonished them by saying that he had known nothing of the matter until eighteen months after the massacre. This shameful, and probably dishonest confession, made to the empty faces of cynical men, betrayed William's anger, his choking impatience with ministers who could not keep his honour and reputation clean. And now, here was more insufferable incompetence, bringing both Houses of the English Parliament clamouring to his throne.

He had given no promise that the Act would be repealed, even if that were possible he relied too much npon the Scots Parliament for recruits and supplies to so antagonize it, but his evident displeasure made it possible for England to crush the mushroom Company in London. Three days later the Lords, sitting as a committee of the whole House, agreed to a Bill by which all Englishmen, and all traders in England, would be prohibited from joining the Company. They agreed that all English and Irish seamen and shipwrights should be discouraged, under severe penalties, from serving in, building, or repairing the ships of the Company. They agreed 'to establish an East India trade in England by Act of Parliament, with such powers, privileges and

immunities as may obviate the inconveniences that may arise by the late Act passed in Scotland.' There was, of course, an immediate outcry from the lesser trading companies, who had not asked for the young behemoth of Scotland to be destroyed so that the East India Company might grow into a greater leviathan. The Lords grew tired of the wrangling, forgot their Bill, and passed on to other matters.

But the Commons did not forget. When Christmas was past, and January two-thirds gone, they set aside their debates on the case for reform in the sale of spices, the erection of unlawful weirs on the River Wye, the eternal need to restore a clipped coinage, and listened to a report from Colonel Granville, chairman of the Committee which had been examining the Secretary and some of the Directors of what the House called the Scotch East India Company.

Young Mackenzie had appeared first, and had been as bland, polite, and as fundamentally unhelpful as he had been before the Lords. He knew nothing of the Company's accounts, he kept the minutes only. He knew nothing about the passing of the Act, though he had heard, only heard, that the fees for it amounted to £150. Where was the Subscription Book? He did not know, he had given it to Mr Blackwood on 6 December, since all the Directors had agreed that gentleman should have it. True it was carried into Scotland, but here was a list of the subscribers' names. As for the oath, *De fideli administratione*, here was a copy of that too.

Paterson again told his story. He had been approached by Mr Chiesly, and had given Mr Chiesly a scheme for a company in Scotland. He had been granted a considerable royalty, 'which I have since, out of my mere generosity, released.' He had not solicited the Act and knew not how it was passed. He agreed that there were 200 subscribers to the Company, and that its proposed capital was £300,000 Sterling. There had been, yes, a proposal to fit out a ship of 400 tons and send it to the Indies as an interloper, but he did not know where the vessel was to be chartered or its cargo bought. He was questioned closely about the oath, and asked if he thought it prevented him from answering ques-

tions here. By some peculiar rationalization that may have quietened his own doubts, he said, 'I do not reckon myself obliged to conceal anything from this Committee.' And he was dismissed, with a warning to remain in London and be answerable to the Committee.

The English Directors, and those subscribers who were called, answered all questions with an embarrassing candour that revealed their fears. Robert Lancashire said that he was a member of the East India Company as well as a Director of the Scots. He had subscribed £3,000 to the latter, because he had been told that if he did not there were many others who would. He had always thought that the royalties granted Paterson were excessive. A subscriber called Glover honestly said that he had supported the Company because 'he thought it better that an Englishman should have the benefit of it than a foreigner.' And another, Bateman, admitted that he had subscribed £2,000, but had loyally withdrawn from the Company when 'he heard that Parliament had taken it into examination.'

The Committee had been unable to question Lord Belhaven, or Blackwood and Balfour, though messengers had been sent to summon all three. Once the scare was up in Parliament, that burly lord had left for Scotland, quickly followed by the merchants.

When Granville finished the reading of his Committee's report, the Commons agreed to hear another long and pitiable petition from the East India Company. It was late, and they called for candles, while outside in the courtyard their servants huddled about braziers, blowing on their fingers. After so much reading, so much evidence of impudent conspiracy and treason, of threats to the trade and prosperity of the kingdom, the Members were savagely excited. There were shouts for a vote and cries for impeachment. The resolutions were drawn, put, and approved.

*Resolved*, that the Directors of the Company of Scotland Trading to Africa and the Indies, administering and taking here in this Kingdom an Oath *De Fideli*, is a High Crime and Misdemeanour.

*Resolved*, that the Directors of the Company of Scotland Trading to Africa and the Indies, under colour of a Scotch Act of Parliament,

styling themselves a Company, and acting as such, and raising monies in this Kingdom for carrying on the said Company, are guilty of a High Crime and Misdemeanour.

And there followed twenty-two further resolutions, each naming a Director of the Company, and each declaring that he be 'impeached of the said High Crimes and Misdemeanours'. One final motion resolved that a committee be appointed to prepare the impeachments, and to meet the next day for that purpose, at four in the afternoon in the Speaker's Chamber.

Yet nothing came of it. The articles of impeachment, if drawn, were never presented. The up-ended pyramid of procedure rested upon the evidence of one man, Roderick Mackenzie, and he did not answer a summons sent him by the Committee for Impeachment. The Serjeant-at-Arms reported that his lodgings were empty, and although a proclamation was issued for his arrest on 8 February, he was never found. He was in Edinburgh some weeks later, with a bitter hatred of the English that was to sustain him for the rest of his life.

The failure to impeach the Directors made little difference. There was no hope now of a joint undertaking by English and Scots capital. The subscribers had withdrawn their names before Christmas, and since their appearance before the Lords and Commons the English Directors had been making peace as best they could with the trading companies of their own country. But a fear of the Scots remained, the risk that their pestilential Company might re-emerge in Edinburgh and menace the prosperity and possessions of England.

Edward Randolph thought so. He was Surveyor-General of the Plantations, and since he had lately returned therefrom he was listened to with respect. In March he told the Lords that if care were not taken the Scots would plant colonies in America to the great mischief of England. He suggested that all proprietors, planters and others, from French Canada to the Caribbean, should be told that the giving of aid to the Scots would be high treason, 'the whole tract from 32° to 44° being His Majesty's dominion and annexed to the Crown of England.'

Mr Randolph had no love for the Scots. Their merchants were

interlopers who twisted the Navigation Acts or scandalously avoided them by pretending to be Englishmen. 'They have a long time tasted the sweetness of trade to our Plantations, they paying no duties to His Majesty for the goods they import to the Plantations, nor for the tobacco they carry from thence to Scotland.' And he reminded the Lords, with the smug satisfaction of a civil servant teaching legislators their business, that the Commissioners of Customs had acted sensibly in this matter weeks before the Commons had demanded impeachment. Letters had been sent to the Governors of all the King's colonies in America, to New York and Jersey, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Maryland and Carolina, to Jamaica, Nevis, Bermuda and the other islands of the Caribbean. Each had been sent particulars of the Scots Act, and each had been reminded of his obligations under existing laws for the security of the Plantations, 'which will be found sufficient to prevent the inconveniences and mischiefs which may arise from this Act.' But like most self-satisfied public servants, Mr Randolph overestimated the prescience of his tidy mind.

That Spring the King gave his English Parliament their sacrificial victims. He dismissed his Commissioner to Scotland. Since Tweeddale was close to death the old man may have regarded this as a kindly release from thankless office. William also discharged his sole Secretary of State for Scotland, James Johnston. There was some irony in this. Until a few months before, Johnston had shared the office with Stair, but coveting it for himself alone he had intrigued to bring the Master down over the Glencoe business.

Abandoned by those who had once joined with him in a great and noble undertaking, William Paterson went home to Scotland.

# 2

## THE RISING SUN

### *'They came in shoals, from all corners of the kingdom'* Edinburgh, January to July 1696

HE did not travel alone. There was his wife, of course, and perhaps a child or two, we cannot be sure. A manservant and a maidservant, and two Londoners who were his friends, he thought, though one was to prove himself a rogue and the other a cipher.' Paterson was able to see the villainy and self-interest of men who opposed him, but was sadly blinded by flattery. Walter Herries, who had a penetrating eye for a fellow rascal, claimed to have been undeceived by both men.

He brought a couple of tutors, or nurses, along with him, who passed for partners in the project, though in effect a couple of subtle youths whose office was to put Paterson's crude and indigested notions into form. One of these was a Walloon by birth, whose native name was Le Serrurier, and his English one James Smith. He was a master of most of the European languages, and particularly of the English. He formerly acted as secretary to the famed Italian prince who put as many tricks on the Hollanders with his philosophers' stone; but at this juncture he passed for a considerable London merchant. The other's name was Daniel Lodge, born of Yorkshire parents in Leith in Scotland, per accident, bred a merchant in Holland, but cracked and turned to his shifts in England. This was a pleasant, facetious fellow, and acted his part in this tragicomedy to a miracle.

It could not have been all lies. Herries knew both men, and was writing for others who might know them too. A good caricature must have a recognizable feature, a nose, an eye, a manner of dress that is a familiar signpost to inner character. Smith had

been the first outside director accepted by the London Scots, taking his place at their second meeting on 26 September. This was probably on Paterson's recommendation, a return for aid or friendship during those fruitless months in Holland and Hamburg, and he continued to trust the man, even after Smith hastily supplied the Commons with that address in Denmark Street by Soho. Perhaps Smith had nothing to lose in coming to Scotland, one man's coat-tails being as good as another's at that moment, and Paterson's the closest. Edinburgh accepted him and Lodge because they came with Paterson, and within the week all three were made burgesses and gild-brethren of the city without payment of dues. Paterson discovered that he was the nation's darling, the victim of English treachery, the architect of future prosperity, larger than life when seen by eyes glazed with emotion. Men turned to smile at him in the Canongate, to call his name, and after the bitterness of London the praise of the ballad-writers was pleasing to his simple vanity.

> Come, rouse up your hearts, come rouse up anon!
> Think of the wisdom of old Solomon,
> And heartily join with our own Paterson,
> To fetch home the Indian treasures.

In the cooler air of their fine houses, however, the city's merchants remembered that this Solomon had demanded a high payment for his wisdom. Though they needed his advice, his knowledge of the Caribbean trade, and the inspiration of his presence in Scotland, they resented a popularity which gave him more credit than he deserved. Letters from their friends in London encouraged this view. 'I think Mr Paterson talks too much,' wrote David Nairne, 'and people's expectations are raised too great from him. People that did concern themselves here did not always depend upon his management of the affair.'

But Scotland needed a hero and a deliverer, for times were hard. The Lowland fields promised a poor harvest for the second year in succession, plagne and famine seemed inevitable. 'We voted His Majesty a standing army,' remembered Fletcher of Saltoun,

though we had more need to have saved the money to have bought bread, for thousands of our people that were starving for want afforded us the melancholy prospect of dying by shoals in our streets, and have left behind them reigning contagion, which hath swept away multitudes more, and God knows where it may end.

By its gentle nettle-touch, the King's cautious complaint that he had been ill-served in Scotland brought up a rash of pride. The Scots Parliament, it was claimed, had greater powers than England's, and what it offered to the touch of the Sceptre the King could not refuse. 'Have not the Scots,' asked Saltoun,

ever since the Union of the Crowns been oppressed and tyrannized over by a faction in England, who will neither admit of an Union of the Nations, nor leave the Scots in possession of their own privileges, as men and Christians?

Scotland needed a hero and a deliverer. Though he was no Wallace, for a brief while there seemed to be no better man than William Paterson.

The Edinburgh promoters were probably relieved by the dismal failure of their Company in London. They had been lukewarm for a joint venture, and Belhaven's speedy retreat with his two companions had not been entirely due to a fear of the Commons. Home was best, and freed from the domineering superiority of the Londoners Scotland would now create its own Company, raise Scots money, fit out Scots ships with Scots crews and Scots cargoes, and plant good Scots shoe-leather upon whatever part of the earth a Scots Act did so permit. Great servants of the King might now draw back their ermine skirts from a venture they had once welcomed, and Tweeddale might tell his friends that he thought it his duty to stop this heat from burning up his countrymen (and would have tried had not the King dismissed him), but Balfour, Blackwood and the others decided to open a Subscription Book as soon as possible. Though they had once been alarmed by the £300,000 asked of them by the Londoners, they now called for £400,000 Sterling, an astonishing sum which was perhaps half the available capital in Scotland. The increase had been made necessary by the withdrawal of

the English, but it was announced like a defiant challenge.

The Book was opened on Wednesday, 26 February, at Mrs Purdie's coffee-house, by the Cross on the north side of the High Street. The minimum amount which could be subscribed, by individuals or by associations, was £100 Sterling, and nobody who could honestly guarantee it would be turned away before the Book was closed. There was a great and immediate surge of emotion, a unity unknown since the National Covenant sixty years before. Though most of the subscribers were greedy for profit, for a share in those Indian treasures which Paterson was supposed to fetch, none was entirely free from a fevered patriotism, or unaffected by the excitement of united purpose. The uniqueness of the political, religious and social structure of the country, outside the Highlands, made it possible. The principles of the Presbytery had established the idea that men of all ranks could be equal in common dedication. The tradition of 'ane band', by which Scotsmen promised to aid each other in defence of their rights, was an old one, and it was easy to see Rorie Mackenzie's Subscription Book as such a Bond. The response was national from the Tay to the Tweed, a wave flooding over the old and bloody barriers of feud, religion and politics.

It did not, however, cross the barriers between the Highlands and Lowlands. Though the promoters called it the Company of *Scotland*, it was in fact a peculiarly Lowland affair. The Highlanders, a large part if not the majority of the population, gave it little or no willing support. With a few exceptions, like MacFarlane of that Ilk and Campbell of Argyll, the clan chiefs stood arrogantly aside from this shopman's venture. No Cameron, MacDonald, Macleod or Fraser gentleman, no Appin Stewart, Chisholm, Maclean or Grant is to be found in the Subscription List. Many of them had lately been at war with William, and where they were not exiles they were subdued rebels, Jacobite in sympathy, suspicious of the Lowlands and resentful of the Government. It does not appear that the Company ever thought of support from the chiefs, apart from those who had recently fought for William. Nonetheless, hundreds of ordinary Highlanders would share the bitter hardships of the colony to come.

'They came in shoals,' said Water Herries, a grudging admiration showing through his threadbare derision, 'from all corners of the kingdom, rich, poor, blind and lame, to lodge their subscriptions in the Company's honse and to have a glimpse of the man Paterson.'

Three women were the first to sign their names in the Book Mrs Purdie's little coffee-house was filled as soon as its door opened with the silk of society and the broadcloth of commerce, merchants and soldiers, the law and medicine, while the High Street was noisy with coaches, horses and a yelling crowd. Mackenzie's clerk sat on a high stool with a freshly-cut quill and wrote the first words in thin, curving strokes: *We Anne Dutches of Hamilton and Chastlerault &c doe Subscrive for Three Thousand Pounds Sterling....* He handed her the pen and she signed, and was followed by the Countess of Rothes who subscribed a thousand pounds for herself and a thousand for her son the Earl of Haddington, and by Lady Margaret Hope with a thousand pounds for herself and two thousand for her young son the Laird of Hopetoun. Sir Robert Chiesly next, for two thousand, then others, pushing back cuffs and sword-hilts, pressing close to the Book regardless of rank or precedence. Balfour and Blackwood, Fletcher, of Saltoun, Cockburn of Ormiston, Baillie of Jerviswood, Belhaven and Lord Basil Hamilton. And Mr James Byres a merchant of Edinburgh who signed for £500, and whose consequent hopes of preferment in the Company's colony were to be disastrously realized. By the end of that first day there were sixty-nine names in Rorie Mackenzie's Book, and a subscribed total of £50,400.

Throughout the Spring and Summer, in Glasgow and Edinburgh, the subscriptions continued. From lords and ladies, soldiers, sea-captains and merchants, brewers, maltsters and tailors, lawyers, surgeons, physicians and apothecaries, ministers and printers, bookbinders and glaziers, tanners, vintners, wrights, hammermen, beltmakers and weavers, farmers and Senators to the College of Justice, Writers to the Signet, goldsmiths, schoolmasters and widows, postmasters, skinners and harness-makers, gunsmiths sword-welders and fencing masters. Not individuals

only, but associations also, the Faculty of Advocates, the Incorporated Cordiners of Edinburgh, the Coopers of Glasgow. Masons, tailors, saddlers and shipwrights, not rich enough alone, but strong in a body and able to find £100 or £300 for their joint subscription. The 'good towns' of Edinburgh, Saint Andrews, Glasgow, Paisley, Selkirk, Inverness (a Highland exception), and more, subscribing in the name of their cities, so that even the poor and landless, the thieves, whores and beggars could think themselves a part of the noble undertaking.

Sensing an imminent end to the King's war, and an uncertain future on half-pay or no pay at all, officers promised their prize money, the rewards of loot, or loans from more provident relations. From Flauders honest Captain John Blackader, though sanguine enough in print about a soldier's life and always confident that the Lord stood at his side, took out insurance against a crippling ball or an unlucky sword-thrust. He wrote to his brother Adam, a merchant of Edinburgh, asking for £100 to be put down in his name. Eleven officers – two majors, six captains, two lieutenants and an ensign – all of John Hill's Regiment at Fort William, subscribed £1,900 between them. Because no other unit made so large a contribution, theirs is intriguing. They had been involved, with the Earl of Argyll's Regiment, in the Massacre of Glencoe four years before, and many of them had been in Edinburgh for the Inquiry when the Company's Act was pushed through Parliament. They may have been caught up by the enthusiasm for it, or they may have hoped that in this way they would redeem some of their honour. More probably one of them persuaded the rest, Major James Cunningham of Eickett, for like Byres he was ambitious for office in the colony, and could have argued that by bringing such support he had earned preferment.

As it had put a thousand broadswords at the service of William in 1689, Clau Campbell now offered the money they had secured and protected. Its great chief, *MacCailein Mor*, Archibald the 10th Earl of Argyll, subscribed £1,500, his brother James £700, and in their tail were twenty-two gentlemen and merchants, all of Clan Diarmaid's name and allegiance. There was

Campbell of Ardkinglas the Sheriff of Argyll, and there was Campbell of Aberuchil the Senator of the College of Justice. There were Campbell lairds and tacksmen of Soutar, Monzie, Boghole, Calder, Cesnock and Kinpoint, as well as Mungo, Matthew, Daniel, Archibald and more, who kept merchant houses in Glasgow and Edinburgh. Between them they subscribed £9,400, and this though some of them had scarcely recovered from the terrible raid which the Jacobite clans had made upon their lands and stock ten years before.

A Glasgow Subscription Book was opened on 5 March and closed on 22 April. When the Edinburgh Book was also closed on 1 August, the full £400,000 had been subscribed. There were over 1,400 entries in both books, but since many were for associations and incorporations, for towns and burghs, the number of people involved could be counted in tens of thousands, and all men now spoke proudly of their Compauy, their African Company, their India Company. When the first twenty-five per cent call for money was made on the subscribers in June, the respouse was just under £100,000 Sterling, and there were no defaulters.

Paterson was busy throughout the Spring and early Summer, writing note after note upon a proposed constitution for the Company, which he submitted to the promoters and which were politely read and set aside. The Company took shape without him. There was now a Council-General of great men, and there was a Court of Directors to which were appointed many of those whose ardent support and shrewd bargaining had carried the Act so triumphantly through the Estates. The ultimate number of Directors was set at fifty, to accommodate all who should be so rewarded and to provide enough members for the various working committees. It was a time for honouring pledges and returning favours, but Paterson had to wait until May before the Court, reluctantly almost, admitted him as a Director. Upon a promise that James Smith would subscribe the £3,000 he had underwritten in London, he became a Director too, and the Court was later to remember that the promise had been made by Paterson, and that it had been upon Paterson's recommendation that Smith was then sent to London as the Company's agent.

There was a hiring of clerks and tellers, cashiers and accountants, doormen and messengers, and no proper building as yet to house them all. Roderick Mackenzie's office was a valise of papers, quills and ink-horns which his clerk carried behind him, up the High Street to the Laigh Parliament House where the Court and Council-General occasionally sat, or down to Maclurg's coffee-house where the Committee for Improvements gathered less formally. The five members of this Committee included Balfour, Blackwood and an intense, dedicated Perthshire laird, John Haldane of Gleneagles, who had sat in the Estates since the Revolution, which he regarded as the salvation of the Protestant faith and the promise of prosperity for Scotland. Upon these men rested the responsibility for stores, equipment and trade goods, the discovery of where ships might be bought, built and docked. Paterson flnttered like a moth about the bright flame of their work, and they treated him with good-natured tolerance, sending him once to Glasgow, to study the shores of the Clyde as far as Dumbarton, to find a good run of deep water where the ships of the Company might anchor and load. It was the first real work he had been given since he came back to Scotland, and if he submitted a report no attention was paid to it for three years.

The Committee drew np contracts that wonld have excited the envy of the King's Master of Ordnance or the Commissioners of Supply. Once a week they assembled in the Patern Chamber of Parliament House where tradesmen from all over the Lowlands brought examples of their work and honest estimates of their costs. The Committee ordered firelocks and cartridge-belts, powder and ball, pistols and broadswords. They signed contracts for whip-saws, cross-saws, machete knives and bill-knives, shovels, felling-axes and spades, door-nails, window-nails and tacks, for bowls, platters, spoons and smoothing-irons, candle-sticks, lanterns and hogsheads of tobacco. They ordered tartan hose and stockings, shoes at 600 pairs a time. They bought a warehouse at Leith, and there merchants and tradesmen were told to deliver the goods ordered, every Tuesday and Thursday between eight and six. They bought second-hand stockings, seventy-nine dozen at a time, and sent them to a workman's wife, Isobel Bickerton,

for darning, and from her to a dyer for colouring. They looked for Bibles at bargain prices, and found them in the store-room of Agnes Campbell, relict of Andrew Anderson, printer. They discovered that Jeremy Robertson would make them as many periwigs as they desired (and they desired an extraordinary number), and they decided that the monnting piles of serge they were buying should be dyed 'one fourth part black, one fourth part blue, one fourth part of several sorts of reds, and one fonrth part of several sorts of cloth colours'.

By Jnly the Company had offices fitting the solemnity of its title and the grandeur of its intentions. No longer a stool by Mrs Purdie's window or Roderick Mackenzie's valise, the depressing Privy Council Chamber in the Laigh House or a corner in a Leith warehouse, but a tall, grey building in Milne Square opposite the Tron Church. Paterson found it. He had been invited to arrange the purchase of a suitable property when he was appointed to the Court, and although he may have considered this a small use of his abilities he went about it diligently with the help of two other Directors. Milne Square was a large, three-sided building about a small paved court, its rear windows looking north to Leith over a fleshers' market aud the green marsh of the loch. It had been built six years before by Robert Milne, whose ancestors had been Master Masons to the Crown for seven generations. It was grand, dour, and dark, and its inner windows seldom caught the sun, but it was quiet, and its narrow entrance was easily guarded by a doorman. The Company took one side only at first, paying its owner, the lawyer John Eidington, £395 17s. 9½d. Sterling, and later buying another side from Mackenzie of Broomhill for £455 11s. Roderick Mackenzie moved his wife and family into the upper floor, and scattered his clerks and tellers, cashiers and acconntants abont the rest.

Here a quorum of the Court of Directors met almost every day, resolving the general bnsiness of the Company, receiving reports from the Committee for Improvements, for Foreign Trade, and of the Treasury. Here the Council-General and the Court followed the advice given in Paterson's scheme and in the *Proposals for a Fond*, without perhaps acknowledging it. Tbey established a

Fund of Credit, which soon developed into a bank with splendidly-designed notes and agents in Glasgow, Dundee, Aberdeen and Dumfries. It was illegal from its inception. The young Bank of Scotland, now twelve months old, had been given a monopoly for twenty-one years, but if its directors resented this piratical invasion by the Company they had the good sense to hold their tongues and wait for the Fund to collapse. Which it soon did. As it sank into the morass of its colonial disasters, the Company was to have no money for Funds of Credit.

Having sent James Smith to England, to discover what trade goods were now needed in Africa and the Indies (and with the incredible hope that he might persuade some of the London subscribers to make a first payment on their subscriptions), the Court gave a warrant to two other Directors, Alexander Stevenson and James Gibson, to

> repair beyond the seas . . . where you shall inform yourselves of the best and most expeditious way of purchasing or building five or six ships of about 600 tons each, well and sufficiently built, and such as are fit for voyages to the East Indies.

They left for Holland and Hamburg.

All that now remained was for the Company to decide where to plant its colony – when the ships were bought, the cargoes loaded, the leaders chosen, and the settlers engaged.

Thus William Paterson was once more remembered. One day in late July he and his young friend, Daniel Lodge, were appointed to the Committee for Foreign Trade, and were invited to lay before it any schemes, any proposals which Paterson might have for a settlement or settlements 'upon some island, river, or place in Africa or the Indies or both.' Paterson's imagination, capable of soaring beyond Europe and beyond his own age, was impersonal, and he never dramatized himself. It is unlikely that he felt anything more than eager satisfaction when he received this invitation. Yet a dream had become a wondrous reality, the ten years of pain and disappointment, of ridicule and rejection, were now to be rewarded, the future of this noble undertaking depended npon his labours. On 23 July he came to Milne Square

with the vast paper accumulation of those ten years – manuscripts, books and journals by his own or others' hands, maps, charts and soundings, readings by the stars and by astrolabe, the recorded conversations with shipmasters aud buccaneers, the drawings of savage Indians and strange plants, translations from the Spanish and from the French, the discoveries of priests and pirates, all that was needed to turn the key of the universe and push open the door of the seas.

The papers lay on a table before the Committee as Paterson talked of the great *entrepôt* which should be established on Panama, and the fact that he had never been ashore on the Isthmus, nor could have seen it from the island of Providence 300 miles away, does not seem to have been important. The evidence he had brought was overwhelming. Now and then, by way of illustration, Daniel Lodge handed a journal to Sir Francis Scott, a map to Mr William Wardrop, a letter to Sir Archibald Mure. They would have been odd men, grown strangely far from boyhood, not to have been excited. Here they could read of Indian kings who wore gold in their nostrils as casually as Scots gentlemen wore lace at their cuffs. Here were descriptions of valleys, rivers, and harbours beyond their imagination. They could turn the pages of a journal kept by lantern-light in the cabin of a buccaneer ship, while rare and beautiful moths danced about its glass. They could study charts drawn beneath the compassionate shade of palm-trees, and could imagine the sailor-artist looking up from the stiff parchment to the blue of the Caribbean and the crystal glitter of sand. But it was the simple logic of Paterson's proposal that convinced their counting-house minds, a merchant colony between the Atlantic and the Pacific, the natural hub of the world, the central point of the shortest bridge across the seas.

When the meeting closed the Committee asked Paterson if the Company might keep these papers, and he gave permission with spontaneous, uuconditional generosity. At the request of Sir Francis, presiding, he gathered them into one large bundle, securely bound and sealed. It was handed to Rorie Mackenzie who was told that it must be further sealed by four other Directors,

and was not to be opened except by instructions from the Court. All this was properly ordered and entered in the minutes, and then

*Resolved*, that it is the opinion of this Committee that the pains, expense, and damage of the said Mr Paterson in promoting the said design, and the means to enable and encourage him freely to bestow all his pains and time henceforward in prosecuting this undertaking, ought to be taken into consideration by the Company.

The Company duly took it all into consideration, and since whatever was given to Paterson would, by this resolution, be re-employed in the Company's interest, the gift was not over-generous. He was granted £7,500 of the Company's stock.

This said design, this undertaking, was a colony on Darien. A decision to settle there was undoubtedly made that week, although no hint of it was allowed to appear in the minutes or records. By such secrecy, which was to prove as useless as it was melodramatic, the Company hoped that the English Parliament would not be alarmed before it was too late to prevent the settlement. Thus the Committee for Foreign Trade passed a vague and deliberately misleading resolution, proposing the settlement 'with all convenient speed' of some island, some river, some place in Africa, the East or West Indies. Paterson's passionate advocacy of a colony on Darien had strongly influenced the Directors, but what may have finally persuaded them was a fat manuscript among the papers he surrendered the Company. He had borrowed it from his friend William Dampier, and probably had no right to part with it, since its author did not know that he had it. It was the copy of a journal written by a young buccaneer and surgeon, lately of the *Batchelor's Delight*, and recently returned to England from the Spanish Main.

His name was Lionel Wafer, and no man in Europe, not even Dampier, had a greater knowledge of Darien.

## *'Valleys watered with rivers, brooks and perennial springs'*
## Edinburgh, July 1696

'THOUGH there are some matters of fact that will seem strange,' the Directors read, 'yet I have been more especially careful in these to say nothing but what, according to the best of my knowledge, is the very truth.'

Indeed, Lionel Wafer was an honest, careful man. No one, not even Herries, spoke ill of him, and when William Dampier wrote of his own voyages in the Caribbean he said little about Darien because 'Mr Wafer, who made a longer abode in it than I, is better able to do it than any man I know.' Copies of Wafer's book were later carried in the baggage of many Scots who went to the Isthmus, and when they wrote home of what they found and saw they disputed nothing he had said, and occasionally used his words as if they were their own.

All that is known of him, his background and origins, is limited to what he chose to say about himself. He said that he had some knowledge of Gaelic, and that he lived in the Highlands of Scotland as a boy. He knew Ireland, too, and his father may have been one of Cromwell's buff-coats garrisoned in Ulster, and later sent with Colonel Fitch's Regiment to Lochaber. There are traditions of Huguenot descent of a name that was originally Weaver, or Delawafer, but of this the young man said nothing, believing it, perhaps, of no importance. In 1677, when he was sixteen or seventeen, he went to sea as a loblolly-boy, a surgeon's assistant serving that water-gruel to the ship's sick. He served on merchantmen trading in the Spice Islands, and learnt his master's business well enough to practise as a surgeon himself. And then to Jamaica, to visit a brother who worked on a sugar estate to the north-west of Spanish Town. Here he joined the buccaneers, to whom a lancet and a bleeding-cup were sometimes more important than another cutlass. He gave no reasons for choosing this dangerous, unpredictable life, but he was young, and therein is an explanation.

He sailed in the company of Cook and Lynch, Coxon and Bartholomew Sharpe, Alliston and Thomas Maggot, sharing their sea-fights, their savage raids upon the Isthmus in search of gold or Spanish throats to cut. He survived while others died from pistol-shot and sword-cut, from fever and nostalgia, from old age or impetuous youth. His companions fought and traded, drank and sang, content with a life of sudden action and quick profit, and he may have done all this too, but he also looked and remembered. His eye for detail was incredibly sharp, and the prose he used to record what it saw was simple and evocative, free from the convoluted style of men with a better education. He modestly asked his readers not to expect anything like a complete journal.

My principal design was to give what description I could of the Isthmus of Darien. . . . I was but young when I was abroad, and I kept no journal, so that I may be dispensed with as to defects and failings of less moment. Yet I have not trusted altogether to my own memory; but some things I committed to writing long before I returned to England.

The land he described lay between Latitudes 8 and 10 North, on the Caribbean side of Panama where the isthmus bends toward the shoulder of South America. Here were the numberless bays and inlets of the Darien coast, smooth shores of white sand, tiny islands like green jewels, where the buccaneers had traditionally watered and careened their ships since the days of Drake, where they planned and sometimes executed insane raids on Portobello to the west and Carthagena to the east. For three years Wafer was the shipmate of Dampier, and was one of the 300 men who followed that excellent hydrographer but third-rate buccaneer on a march across the isthmus in May, 1681, over two mountain ranges in an abortive attack on the Spaniards at Real de Santa Maria. While drying gunpowder one night, on a silver plate over an open fire, Wafer's leg was badly scorched by a flash-ignition, and he was left behind in the care of the Indians. He lived with them for two months, admiring them and adored by them, regretting only the loss of his salves and plasters when a Negro slave ran off with his knapsack ('Yet I preserved a box of instruments, and a few medicaments wrapt up in an oil cloth').

This idyllic period gave him time for observation, reflection and discovery, and the recording, perhaps, of those notes which he later turned into a book. He had no skill at drawing like Dampier, but his pen was capable of more graphic descriptions. All about him was a thick, green-dark jungle, unexplained silences and bewildering sounds, animals to which no man had yet given a name, and others that reminded him wistfully of home. There were mountain-heads capped with mist, and 'valleys watered with rivers, brooks and perennial springs', and there was the sndden, unexpected meeting of sea and land where palm-fronds idly fingered the Caribbean.

As they read the manuscript, the Directors of the Company were transported from the grey escarpment of Edinburgh, the stench of its streets and the clamour on its cobbles, to what must have seemed a paradise, a rich and compliant land awaiting rape by Scots energy and Scots industry. So heady were the hopes inspired in them by Wafer's book that none saw its implicit warnings. Certainly Darien was a land where bnccaneers had beached their boats, raided the Spanish and taken to sea again, but nowhere did the young snrgeon suggest that it could be planted, settled and colonized like North America. It was only in a preface to a second edition of his book, published in 1704, that he allowed his good sense to be influenced by pnblic opinion and proposed an English settlement. Even then he was suggesting a military, strategic occupation, cutting the cord which held the Spanish American empire together.

But as the Directors read, so they saw what they chose to see, and Wafer did not disappoint them. The soil inland, he said, was generally very good, a rich, black and fruitful mould. 'I believe we have nothing that grows in Jamaica but what would thrive here also, and grow very luxuriantly.' Westward there were wide savannahs, dry and grassy meadows studded with conical hills, but from the sea nothing could be seen bnt trees, a pleated green blanket stretching away to the south and over the mountains. Inland from the tropical palms that bent to welcome the buccaneers were great glades, tall groves without undergrowth where a horseman could gallop for miles without hindrance, pro-

tected from the heat by a roof of leaves. Some of these trees were twenty or thirty feet in girth, and among them was the fabulous Nicaragua wood, exotic in fragrance and wonderful in colour, and as remote and as unattainable as El Dorado. Though he was never sure where it was to be found, and the Scots were never to discover it, Wafer later claimed that 300 men could fell enough of this fabulous wood in six months to pay for an entire expedition to the Isthmus. This the Committee for Improvements remembered, as they ordered axes, hatchets, planes and saws by the hundred.

There were cotton-trees, their pods as big as a nutmeg and full of short wool, but their wood was useless except for canoes and the dug-out which the Spanish called a piragua and the French a pirogue. There were cedars standing like redcoat regiments, macaws with egg-shaped, scarlet fruit, and the strange bibby-tree, tall, leafless and prickly. Its wood was black and of no value, but the Indians tapped and drank its wheyish sap, and made an anointing oil from its berries. The mammee grew sixty feet toward the sun, and the sapadillo's round fruit were like sweet, russet pippins. There were calabash trees, and ash trees that burst into flame with yellow flowers, their bark so tough and stringy that it could be made into ropes and rough textiles. The lightwood was weightless, and a man could carry a whole tree upon his shoulder without strain. From it the Indians made their best canoes, and the buccaneers carved tompions for the muzzles of their guns. Nor were these all. The whitewood, thought Wafer, would be excellent for the inlaying of fine cabinets. The logwood, rich and scarlet, seemed to bleed when cut. 'I tried a little of it, which upon boiling two hours in fair water turned it red as blood. I dipt therein a piece of cotton which it dyed a good red, no washing could fetch out the tincture. Twas a bright and glossy red, very lively.'

By the rivers, by the shoreward swamps, bamboos grew in trembling clusters, and mangroves stood high on naked roots that were grey where the earth was dry, or red where they were washed by tidal floods. Cinnamon and tamarind, sugar-cane and prickly-pear, locusts and peppers, all were there. The Directors

must have thought that a man need do no more than harvest, leaving the planting to the prodigality of God. Sweet-flowered tobacco, and plantains that could be cut from their green and sappy stems by one blow of an axe. White and purple yams, and two kinds of cassavas, one that could be eaten like a potato, and another that gave flour for bread once its poisonous juice had been squeezed from it. Wafer had gathered pine-apples as large as a man's head, weighing six pounds or more, without stone or kernel, ripening all the year round and so joyous to the taste that he thought it was like all the most delicious fruits he could imagine mixed together.

In this waiting Eden there were also wondrous birds and beasts, many to support a man and few he need fear. The flesh of the wild hog, black and nimble on its short legs, kept well for several days, even in that climate, 'and is very good, wholesome meat, nourishing and well-tasted.' Timid red deer moved like shadows among the cedars, and although the Indians would not eat them, the buccaneers barbecued them at great triumphant feasts. Rabbits as large as English hares lived under the roots of trees, and their flesh was sweeter, moister than any cony Wafer had tasted in England. There were wild dogs, rough, wild-haired, snarling beasts which the Indians tamed for hunting, and coursed in packs of two or three hundred. The tall trees were full of noisy monkeys, some white but mostly black, bearded like old men, fat with fruit and good to eat. There were snakes, but no rattlesnakes that Wafer had seen, and although the leaves, the roots and the grass swarmed with spiders none were poisonous. In the rivers were alligators and thick-tongued iguanas, both of which could be eaten, and Wafer particularly recommended the tail of the alligator. On the shore were land-crabs, larger than anything he had seen in the booths of London, and turtles that were rich, sweet and easily caught. 'They have frogs and toads, and other smaller insects, but I took no particular notice of them.'

The dark green of the forest groves flamed with the bright colours of incredible birds. Parrots and parakeets in Joseph coats of glistening feathers. Macaws with hook-bills and streaming tails of red and blue. They could be tamed like magpies and they

called their own reveille at dawn, a hoarse, deep cry 'like men who speak much in the throat'. He saw pied woodpeckers climbing up and down the trees on strong claws, and although their flesh was unpleasant and earthy to the taste he had eaten it without harm when hungry. The strange chicaly-chicaly, carrying its bright tail upright like a banner, reminded him of an arrogant dung-hill cock. The quam was a fat, fruit-eating bird, as pleasing to the palate as partridge, and the black curassow had a fine comb of yellow and a sweet and delightful voice. By the sea were web-footed, grey-feathered pelicans which the buccaneers clubbed to death after a floundering chase along the shore, making tobacco-bags from their leathery pouches. Black cormorants fished from the rocks, and surprised Wafer by perching on trees and shrubs inshore. Wheeling gulls were shot in flight by the buccaneers and then buried in hot sand for eight or ten hours, to roast them and to make them palatable. So many birds, remarkable for their beauty and the good relish of their flesh.

There were bats as large as pigeons, mosquitoes, wasps, beetles, and fireflies like rising sparks in the thickets at night. Wafer marvelled at the bees, some red and fat, others that were long, black and slender. They made sweet honey and fine wax, and a man could thrust his arm into their tree-hives without any fear. 'I have had many of them at a time upon my naked body without being stung; so that I have been inclined to think they have no stings, but that's a thing I never examined.' The ants, however, could sting, and a wise man did not hang his hammock too close to their fortress hills.

In the sea were sharks, dogfish and barracudas, swordfish with sapphire scales, and pike with mouths like a rabbit's. On the rocks were periwinkles and limpets, and in the pools were crayfish as large as small lobsters, conch-shells shimmering with mother-of-pearl. 'And many others, probably, that I have neither seen nor heard of, for 'tis a sea very well stored with fish.'

The Cuna and Choco Indians who lived on the Isthmus were a dark-skinned, black-haired and friendly people, little changed in the 180 years since they were first seen by Balboa (climbing that Pacific peak upon which Keats would later place stout

Cortes). Wafer admired them, respected them and, one suspects, loved them in a wistful way, though he thought them a poor and naked people too content with their lot.

The size of the men is usually about five or six foot. They are straight and clean-limbed, big-boned, full-breasted, and handsomely shaped. I never saw among them a crooked or deformed person. They are very nimble and active, running very well. But the women are very plump and fat, well-shaped, and have a brisk eye. The elder women are very ordinary; their bellies and breasts being pensile and wrinkled. Both men and women are of a round visage, with short bottle noses, their eyes large, generally grey, yet lively and sparkling when young. They have a high forehead, white even teeth, thin lips, and a mouth moderately large. Their cheeks and chin are well proportioned; and in general they are handsomely featured, but the men more than the women.

They were a clean and sober people, and if they ate noisily, all dipping their fingers into one gourd, they had their own delicacies of behaviour that were as obligatory as any European's modish manners. Everything about them was simple and expedient, their sparse clothing, their habits, their weapons and their ornaments. They were vainly proud of their lank, long hair, combing it for hours, rarely cutting that which grew on their heads but allowing their women to pluck other parts of their bodies with two sticks. Sometimes a warrior would cut off his hair, or paint himself black, as a mark of honour, and this after he had killed an enemy or a Spaniard, the two being synonymous. Wafer was entranced by the sheen of their oiled, unblemished skins, tawny orange in the sun and rich copper by firelight. Among them were a few albinos who were sluggish and dull during the day, but at nights they would run in the woods like wild bucks. They were not pink but 'rather a milk-white, and much like that of a white horse'. These sad, ostracized mutations were ridiculed by the buccaneers, and regarded as monsters by other Indians.

Both these and the copper-coloured Indians use painting their bodies, even of the sucking children sometimes. They make figures of birds, beasts, men, trees or the like, up and down in every part of the body, more especially the face, but the figures are not extraordinary

like what they represent, and are of differing dimensions, as their fancies lead them. The women are the painters, and take a great delight in it. The colours they like and use most are red, yellow and blue, very bright and lovely. They temper them with some kind of oil, and keep them in calabashes for use; and ordinarily lay them on the surface of the skin with pencils of wood, gnaw'd at the end to the softness of a brush. So laid on, they will last some weeks, and are renewed constantly.

Wafer idly indulged his own vanity, and pleased the Indians, by sitting cross-legged and patient while his body was so painted. The women wore aprons of cloth or leaves, tied about the waist and hanging to their knees or ankles. The cloth they got from the buccaneers or Spaniards, and they were childishly excited by fine colours. Wafer and Dampier once 'prevailed with a morose Indian' by giving his wife a sky-blue petticoat. The men, too, were delighted by an old coat or a discarded shirt, but they were usually naked except for one extravagant ornament which amused all Europeans who had forgotten the cod-pieces of their own ancestors. This was a curving cone like a candle-extinguisher, worn over the penis and held to the waist by a cord, and no man removed it without first turning his back. It was cunningly made from leaves, or from gold and silver if the wearer was rich and important.

Both metals were rare, and obviously prized by the Indians. They hammered out thin, crescent plates and hung them from their nostrils over their mouths. 'Such a one I wore among them,' said Wafer proudly, 'was of gold.' Each man might have several, varying the size of them according to the importance of the day or the event, a council, a hunt, or a war-party. The women wore circular rings in their noses, the thickness of a goose quill. 'Neither the plates nor rings hinder much their speaking, tho' they lie bobbing upon their lips.' But when they ate, the Indians removed both plates and rings, polishing the metal before restoring it to their noses. They also hung themselves with necklaces of shells and beads, sometimes three or four hundred strings, and it was a poor woman who did not carry twenty pounds weight in this manner, the men much more.

The Indian kings and captains, as Europeans called the tribal leaders and village headmen, wore gold at their mouths and ears, heart-shaped plates of gold, richly painted, on their chests and backs. Wafer thought that one called Lacenta was the most powerful on the Isthmus, and remembered how he once came to a great council in the forest. In addition to his nose-plate, his ear-rings and his cuirass of gold, he wore a diadem of the same metal, eight or nine inches broad and mounted on a framework of cane. His armed bodyguard also wore crowns, but of cane only, painted scarlet and decorated with the feathers of parrots, parakeets and macaws.

Their villages were simple, the huts no more than roofs of plantain leaves. In the centre of each village was a long warhouse where young and unmarried men were trained in the use of weapons and the duties of manhood. More than a hundred feet long, ten high, and twenty-five broad, this house was also the defensive fort of every village, its walls pierced for arrows, its doors held by club and lance. Though an armonred man conld have pushed his way through the plantain leaves, the Spaniards never attacked a long-house by assault. They set fire to it. And they shot down the Indians who ran from the flames.

The round, bright-eyed faces of the Cunas peered at the Directors from the simple framework of Wafer's prose, their guttural voices clacked in the words and sentences he wrote down phonetically. He said that his knowledge of Gaelic had helped him to learn the language. *Pa poonah eetah caupah?* Woman, have you got the hammock? ... *Cotcha caupah?* Will you go sleep in the hammock? ... *Aupah eenah?* What do you call this? ... As well as painting his body and wearing a nose-plate, he got drunk at their weddings, filled his lungs with the smoke of their great cigars, danced with them, and sang their strange songs. After their feasts he lay helpless in his hammock like other men, while women sprinkled him with water to cool his over-indnlged body. He respected their uncomplicated religion. He said that although the women were drudges, he never knew an Indian to beat his wife, or speak harshly to her. Even when drunk and quarrelling, the men were always gentle to their women and their children.

He admired their love of noise, the music they made by humming or by fingering slender flutes made from reeds. They were able to dance from dawn until sunset, and would then plunge into a river to wash the dust and sweat from their bodies. They walked from the water with naked dignity drying their hair and skins by long, caressing strokes of their hands.

They gave directions by the simple method of pointing, the height of the hand indicating the time of day a man might expect to reach his destination. They kept no hours of the clock, made no particular distinction of days and weeks, and took their month from the moon. They could count up to a hundred and no further, for numbers beyond that they shook a lock of their hair. Their laws were short and expedient. They killed adulterers and thieves, and recognized no other crimes. They swore upon their eye-teeth and were faithful to the oath. They indulged their children until the age of puberty, when a girl put on the clout and a boy the funnel and both began the long training to be an adult.

They hated and feared the Spaniards, though many of them had worked in the mines or served as native levies of Spain against other tribes. But they rarely opposed the buccaneers and repaid the rough kindnesses of these men with love and loyalty. When one of Lacenta's wives was ill, Wafer was allowed to bleed her, drawing off twelve ounces until the fever was gone. Lacenta bent on his knee and kissed the surgeon's hand.

> Then the rest came thick about me, and some kissed my hand, others my knee, and some my foot, after which I was taken up into a hammock and carried on men's shoulders . . . and lived in great splendour and repute, administering physic and phlebotomy to those that wanted.

The Directors of the Company did not ask themselves why, if Darien were such a paradise, Spain had not already settled there, having occupied and planted lands to the east, west and south of it for nearly two centuries. They chose, instead, to regard this as a stupid oversight by the Dons, and to believe that the country could be rightly claimed by any nation. They had heard of Pope Borgia's bull, of course, but it had been ignored by Protestants

and Catholics alike for two hundred years, and was only taken seriously by the Spanish and the Portuguese. Wafer did not dispute that Darien was a province of Spain, though he could not see why someone should not take it from her if possible. The Spaniards had garrisons, forts, towns and villages all along the Isthmus of Panama, but they were wise enough, and had been in America long enough not to waste time and men on the swamps of Darien. There were three thousand men, said Wafer, in the forts above the narrow streets and fine harbour of Portobello, with outposts at Nombre de Dios. To the east, on the coast of South America, was the powerful garrison and naval base of Carthagena. On the southern side of the isthmus the stockaded town of Santa Maria was held by 200 infantrymen, and thousands more were stationed in the great city of Panama, the seat of the provincial governor. Since 1671, when Henry Morgan's bloody cut-throats sacked and burnt the old city of Panama, taking gold, silver, slaves and women, the Spaniards had built a new one, and made it virtually impregnable. Northward from its white walls ran the road to Portobello, the jugular vein of the Spanish empire, the mountain track for mule-trains loaded with the wealth of Peru, and for this reason alone Spain could tolerate no other European nation on the Isthmus. She kept two fleets of warships in American waters, one off the Main and the other in the South Sea, and there was not a bay or an inlet on the Darien coast that had not been visited and named by a galleon or pinnace from the northern fleet. The Indians of Darien were the reluctant vassals of His Catholic Majesty, their chiefs were given Spanish names, were forced to supply levies or mine-workers when needed, and were paid for their loyalty with an old musket or a rusty hauberk.

If the Scots did not understand this, and if they did not see that there was more to Darien than rich meat and sweet honey, it was not Wafer's fault, for he was honest about the risks, the dangers and the discomforts. But they were blinded by the startling colours of his narrative, and excited by their own greed. They heard the sound of axes in groves of fragrant wood, they saw strong forts and green plantations, great merchantmen anchored in broad bays. What they should have read again, and again, and

yet again, was what Wafer had to say about the weather. So much rich vegetation, so many forests, swamps and marshes, bright brooks and rivers, so abundant a life growing on its own putrefaction could mean one thing only. The land wept more than it smiled.

It rained. Wafer remembered how it rained, how he had lain in an Indian hut with a burning knee and listened to the unending sound of water. The rains began in April or May and continued with increasing violence until September. 'It is very hot also about this time, wherever the sun breaks out of a cloud, for the air is then very sultry, because then usually there are no breezes to fan and cool it, but 'tis all glowing hot.' In October the storms slackened, but it was sometimes January before they stopped, and thus a third of the year, perhaps only a quarter, was entirely free from rain. The seasons began with brief and sudden showers that reminded Wafer of Spring in England, a cooling rustle on leather leaves and the earth running with singing streams. Then, in one day, there would be two or three violent storms, a rolling cannonade of thunder, a black sky stabbed with lightning and a smell of sulphur beneath the trees.

After this variable weather, for about four or six weeks, there will be settled, continued rains of several days or nights, without thunder or lightning but exceeding vehement considering the length of them. Yet at certain intervals between these, even in the wettest of the season, there will be several fair days intermixed, with only tornadoes or thunder-showers; and that sometimes for a week together. These thunder-showers cause usually a sensible wind, by the clouds pressing the atmosphere, which is very refreshing and moderates the heat.

Cooling though these powerful winds were, they also pulled down trees, dammed rivers, and turned the swamps and westward savannahs into green and stinking lakes. In the brief intervals between the storms there was no compassionate silence. 'You shall hear for a great way together the croaking of frogs and toads, the humming of mosquitoes or gnats and the hissing or shrieking of snakes and other insects, loud and unpleasant; some like the quacking of ducks.' Fairer weather came with

Christmas, but from the swamps at night, the rotting shores of the floodwater, there rose throbbing clouds of newly-hatched mosquitoes. Wafer called them 'uneasy vermin'. That they were also lethal would be unsuspected for another two hundred years.

"Tis a very wet country,' said Wafer. Yet there is no indication – in the minutes of their meetings, the inventories of their ships, their lists of clothing, equipment and trade goods – that the Directors gave serious thought to his warning that Darien was one of the wettest parts of the torrid zone, or concluded from it that Europeans who settled there might suffer terribly from fevers, ague, and the rotting of the spirit that comes from wretched idleness.

## *'I must bear these as I have done the rest of my troubles'*
## Edinburgh and Hamburg, July 1696 to June 1697

WISE PATERSON, the ballads were now calling him, judicious Paterson, creator of wholesome laws and the architect of Patersonion Government. Men would have found it hard to define this government, or name one of the healthy statutes it might enact, but all agreed with the ballads: where it was established, upon some future colony in Asia or America, there would be no cause for discontent, no factions brawling and complaints. Within three years the savage Indians would cry 'God bless the Scottish Company!', their souls nplifted by trade, their bodies liberated, and their simple hearts full of gratitude. Extravagant though the street-songs were, they did reflect the selfless emotion which gave the Company much of its early impetus.

> To Scotland's just and never-dying fame,
> We'll in Asia, Africa and America proclaim
> Liberty! Liberty! – nay, to the shame
> Of all that went before us.

And now, it seemed, the Company could not do enough for Paterson. Within a fortnight of his appointment to the Com-

mittee for Foreign Trade, and a week of the generous surrender of his papers, it was agreed that he and two other Directors should leave as soon as possible for Amsterdam and Germany. There they were to 'engage such foreign merchants and others as may be needful to be concerned in this Company, as also to make and conclude such negotiations and agreements as may be found beneficial to the trade thereof.' It was a belated acknowledgement of his stubborn belief that the Company could not survive without 'the best heads and purses for trade in Europe', and it was a wise employment of his peculiar talent for persuasion. He should have been reassured, but he was not. Ten years of disappointments had worn his armour thin, and he was hypersensitive to criticism. He became suspicious and petulant. He saw malice behind every compliment, and spite behind every smile. In London he had believed that a cabal in Edinburgh was intent on ruining him, and now in Scotland he suspected the London Scots, who had once been his friends, of plotting his disgrace. He was convinced of this when Robert Douglas arrived in Edinburgh, at the request, it would appear, of some cautious Scots who wanted his experienced judgement on the Company's proposals for a colony.

Paterson remembered the candle-lit bickering in Mr Carpenter's house, and that terrible afternoon when the envy and distrust of his colleagues had compelled him to renounce his royalties. He became almost hysterical with indignation, and appealed for the sympathy and aid of great men on the Council-General of the Company. Douglas had come to slander him, he told the Earl of Annandale, and not only him but the Company and the country as well, just as in London he had tried to 'turn out me and my party, as he calls them, and set up himself and his own', and this though Paterson had always treated him with patience and civility. Now there was vicious gossip, accusing Paterson of seeking office and profit. If the Council-General truly believed this it was free to cast him out and put another in his place, perhaps one of those gentlemen who vilified him. Did he not put the Company's good before his own, he would gladly make room for such a man.

This I must say, that in all the course of my life my reputation was never called so much in question as about this matter, and it is no very easy matter to me, reputation being the only thing I am nicest in; and no doubt but malicious stories of me will fly like wildfire in England at this time; since I, in a special manner, lie under a national hatred. But patience; I must bear these as I have done all the rest of my troubles. I doubt not but your lordship and all my friends will discountenance malicious stories behind a man's back.

It was a sad and childish letter, and it probably wearied Lord Annandale, who spent much of his public life in the service of his own interest, and would accordingly believe that a man who made such a noise about his own unselfishness ran the risk of being thought a fool or a liar.

Douglas went south to his home in Surrey, sending his friends in Edinburgh a long and reasoned disapproval of what he rightly concluded were the Company's plans for a colony. Nobody had openly admitted that this was to be planted on Darien, but he had found the nation besotted with Mr Paterson, and he remembered the fellow's coffee-house prattle in Amsterdam nine years before.

I heard accounts of his design, which was to erect a commonwealth and free port in the Emperor of Darien's country, as he was pleased to call that poor miserable prince, and whose protection he pretended to be assured of from all who would engage in that design.

Douglas was shocked by the innocence of his countrymen, by their stupidity in abandoning all thought of the East India trade and committing the Company's resources to a ridiculous Fund and a Caribbean adventure that could only end in disaster.

My friends give themselves up blindfold to another at his pleasure . . . He deceives the Company, and imposes upon them (and, indeed, the nation, which is generally concerned in it) that he puts them upon attempting so hazardous and costly an undertaking with their little stock. Whereas it is reasonable to believe that if they were able at last to accomplish it, after a long war with the Spaniards, and to make themselves masters of both seas – without which it

would be no ways profitable – it may cost more millions than they have hundreds of thousands.

This prescient, and tragically accurate warning was undoubtedly circulated privately in Edinburgh, but while it may have caused some men to temper their enthusiasm, and others to thank God they had ventured no silver in the Company, the Directors ignored it. As they had ignored the implicit warnings of Wafer's narrative. They were busy, and being busy were far too involved with plans, schemes, contracts and agreements to concern themselves with the sour opinions of one envious merchant.

The Committee for Foreign Trade had taken into the Company's employ – as Supervisor-General of Medicaments and Provisions (such as might be needed by 1,500 men for two years) – a Highlandman from the far north, Dr John Munro of Coul. Though he was later to be accused of peculation by some of those who survived the lack of proper medicines in Darien, he was a resolute and active worker. He was also a tireless traveller. He was here, there and everywhere that summer, in Dundee, Montrose, Aberdeen, Inverness and Wick, buying salt beef and dried cod, ordering pistols and firelocks, Cheshire cheese and butter, instructing four surgeon-apothecaries of Edinburgh to prepare vast quantities of powders, potions, salves and plasters. What he was not doing, or had no time to do, was being done by others. Biscuit was ordered, baked, bought and casked (James Balfour was told to find 300 tuns of it). Two hundred oxen were driven to Leith and there slaughtered in one bloody day, and barrelled within the week. Ten tuns of black and yellow rum, five of crimson claret, four hogsheads of musket flints, suet and pork by the oaken cask, spades, mattocks and hoes, horn-spoons and white-iron candlesticks, fish-hooks and plaiding hose, thus was the Leith warehouse being slowly filled.

On 30 September the Committee was clearly gifted with cynical foresight. Two thousand reams of paper were ordered for the colony, and the Scots in Darien were to use much of it in libellous complaints against each other.

In Holland and Germany the Company's ships were already bought or building. James Gibson had early acquired a 46-gun

trader from an Amsterdam merchant, a gilded, broad-beamed vessel called *Saint Francis*, gentle to the helm and sweet to handle. In a rush of British rather than Scots patriotism, which would not be shared later by the Directors, he renamed her the *Union*. A rough and brutal man, he had spent a lifetime at sea as mate and master aboard the ships of his brother Walter, the Provost of Glasgow. The money they made, often by the transportation of bonded servants and prisoners to the Plantations, had enabled them to become rich and influential, subscribers and directors of the Company, and James Gibson's ambitions now included office and profit in the colony. On 29 September, in the red-brick, canal-side house of a Scots merchant in Amsterdam, over pipes and glasses of Hollands, he signed a contract for a second ship, larger than the *Union*. When built by Willem Direcksone, shipwright, she would be as stout and as seaworthy as any Dntch Indiaman, with an upcurving beak, clinker-laid bulwarks of scarlet and green, a great whipstaff on her quarterdeck, and a baroque stern heavy with lanterns, cupids, caryatids and the golden orb of the name already chosen for her, the *Rising Sun*.

In Lübeck to the north of Hamburg, Alexander Stevenson had placed orders for the building of four more ships, and the rounded ribs of one had already risen above the Baltic. Though both men were empowered to commission the ships, the completion of the contracts, the final payments, were the responsibility of Paterson and his colleagues.

And it was mid-October before any of them left for Amsterdam. Colonel John Erskine of Carnock, the Governor of Stirling Castle, and Haldane of Gleneagles had been appointed as Paterson's companions, and James Smith had been instructed to join them from London. Like Haldane, Erskine was sternly dedicated to the political and religious principles of the Revolution, jealous of the honour and prosperity of his conntry. In his youth he had been a law student, but had abandoned advocacy for a buff-coat and sword when Argyll rose in the West against James II. He escaped from this pathetic disaster with little more than his life, lying in the bilge of a ship off Bo'ness until a fair wind took him to Holland. He returned four years later with William of Orange,

to that preferment and favour guaranteed by exile. He had a particular and personal interest in the success of a colony. In 1684 his brother, Lord Cardross, had led a mixed company of transported Covenanters and free colonists to a miserably unsuccessful plantation in Carolina (aboard a ship owned by Walter Gibson and commanded by James Gibson). Erskine went to Gourock to say good-bye to his brother and his friends, and he never forgot the sweet sound of the ship's trumpet, calling farewell across the Firth of Clyde.

He and Paterson left Leith together for Amsterdam, it being agreed that Haldane should follow later by way of London, bringing Smith with him. Paterson was glad to be gone from Edinburgh, although the trust the Company now placed in him was absolute. He had been given £25,000 – a quarter of the first call on the subscribers – for the purchase of ships and stores, and upon his own responsibility he had sent £17,000 of this to James Smith in London, with instructions that it be used to honour all drafts issued by himself or others abroad. He was anxious to open books in Amsterdam and Hamburg, and had assured everybody that his friends there, merchants, senators and princes, were waiting to subscribe. Gossips still troubled him, particularly the retelling of Douglas's sneer that he had been bribed by the East India Company to ruin the London venture, but he had now decided that the reason for such malice was envy, as he explained in a valedictory letter to Annandale.

> Envy usually attends the prosperity of any man, and my own natural defects, as well as those of some of my countrymen, will doubtless lay me open, as well as others, to the usual treatment in such cases, and as I have always found, so I find now, that the best remedy for these things is patience. I hope this Company, like Hercules in the cradle, shall strangle all these snakes.

Once he was gone, this Hercules instructed Roderick Mackenzie's clerks to employ their spare time in making fair copies of all the manuscripts, journals and papers which Paterson had lent to the Court.

In Amsterdam the Commissioners found that James Gibson

had prepared some of the ground for them. The Company's Act had been translated into Dutch, printed and bound, and distributed among the independent merchants of Holland. In the beginning the Dutch were attracted by the thought of joining with the Scots in the Indies trade, but their warmth did not last long. It was first chilled by a tavern rumour claiming that Paterson had privately boasted that the Company was empowered to give favourable commissions to anybody, provided they sailed under Scots colours, made a token call at a Scots port, and gave the Company three per cent of the twenty they could thus earn by underselling the English and Dutch Companies. The Commissioners hotly denied the rumour, and might have been believed had not the powerful Dutch East and West India Companies awoken to the sharp danger of this thistle that had appeared in their orderly tulip bed. Less spectacularly than the English East India Company and without any public show, by the whispered threat of their displeasure they squashed all interest in the subscription book. Still Paterson and Erskine remained in Amsterdam, reluctant to leave lest their miserable failure be too obvious, and give too much satisfaction to the enemies of the Company. As winter came on, canals froze over and windmills turned swiftly before the fierce gales that blew in from the polders, they got what comfort they could from the *Rising Sun*, the final contracts for its equipment and stores. They visited Direcksone's frosted yard, heard the encouraging noise of hammer and saw, smelt oil, resin and turpentine, and watched the argosy of their dreams take shape in a fine round hull and carved sterncastle.

Haldane came to Holland in December, and with him a strangely furtive and hangdog Smith who was protesting innocence and shame in one breath. He behaved like a prisoner, and in a sense that is what he was. When Haldane had arrived in London he had been first uneasy, then suspicious of Smith's conduct of affairs, and finally alarmed by the discovery that £8,000 was missing from the money Paterson had sent to London. Smith had a ready explanation. The deficit, he said, was covered by bills which Paterson had drawn, and seemed unconcerned by the fact that he was thereby accusing his friend and patron of em-

bezzlement. Haldane was an honourable man, and he was reluctant to think ill of Paterson before he had been given an opportunity to explain. In the presence of two of the Company's London agents, Smith's papers were bound and sealed, and were then carried to Holland in Haldane's baggage. By some unknown means, it may have been the threat of arrest, Smith was persuaded to accompany Haldane.

Paterson was shocked by the news. Erskine and Haldane later described 'how much he was surprised and afflicted when he heard of this disappointment, and how earnest and careful he was to get Smith to make a discovery of his effects, to the end the Company might be secured therein.' They also believed in Paterson's innocence. A dishonest man they said, with more generosity than logic, would certainly have deserted them and the Company at that moment.

Throughout December and January, in their lodgings close to Direcksone's shipyard, the three Commissioners sat in melancholy examination of Smith, confused by his changing moods of defiance and abject submission. His guilt, which he seems to have finally acknowledged, was the least of their difficulties, the recovery of the money, or some of it, was primarily important. They also believed that if the affair were made public, so soon after their failure to open a book in Amsterdam, it would do irreparable damage to their hopes of success in Hamburg. It is not clear when they informed Edinburgh, but the Directors also agreed that any public action the Company took against Smith, or Paterson or both, should be postponed until the Commissioners returned to Scotland. They did, however, pass one curious resolution, declaring that 'without the help of considerable foreign subscriptions this Company is not at present in a condition to put Mr Paterson's said design in execution.' The said design, of course, was still Darien, and the intent of the resolution may have been to confuse the English, as it must have confused everybody, since a second resolution paradoxically reaffirmed the Company's determination to found a colony in America. More probably it was an oblique warning to Paterson. His future share in the credit for a colony, as much as his pre-

sent reputation, depended on his success with the Hanseatic merchants.

In February he and Erskine left by ship for Hamburg, Haldane remaining in Amsterdam to watch the building of the *Rising Sun* and to subject the wretched Smith to closer and closer examination. What had he done with the money? What were his assets in London and the West Indies? How soon could they be realized and surrendered to the Company? Were there other incriminating papers in the trunk he had left behind at his London lodgings?

The Hamburg venture was also a failure, more disastrous than Amsterdam because it promised well at the beginning. This time England stretched an arm across the North Sea and snuffed out Paterson's hopes. The inexorable hand at the end of this arm was Sir Paul Rycaut, English Resident at Hamburg, a dry, dull man, a willing civil servant whose letters reveal the spiteful pleasure he got from obeying his master's voice. Since August he had been sending reports about 'a certain crew of Scotchmen' who had come to buy and build ships for the India trade. He had not met them, he said, nor did he desire their company. Their leader was an 'active and cunning person', and when he and Stevenson came face to face in the house of a mutual acquaintance, the Scot was exquisitely snubbed. Rycaut was delighted to hear – from William Blathwayt, Commissioner of Trade, and Sir William Trumbull, Secretary of State – that the King would be displeased if the Scots established themselves in the Hanseatic ports. With God's help and grace, he said, they would get no footing in his province.

> I have been, and shall be very watchful over all their motions and am very sure and confident that the business is yet gone no farther than to the building of ships. . . . I do not believe as yet that there have been any motions, the which in all probability may be reserved until the coming over of the Scotch Commissioners, who can never conceal themselves here without my knowledge, nor any of their negotiations without my particular inspection.

He sent pompous letters to all the Hanseatic towns, threatening them with England's disapproval and King William's anger.

He summoned the members of the Hamburg Senate before him to say the same thing in sharper words, and to make trebly sure he ordered his secretary to write another letter, in Latin this time, which was delivered with proper solemnity to the Magnificent and Noble Lords, Great Men and Citizens of Hamburg, Bremen and Lübeck, warning them against any treaties or agreements with the Company. All this 'to leave no stone unturned which may defeat the Scotch design'.

He waited like a cat for the arrival of the Commissioners. One of them, he said with thin-nosed contempt, was 'the son of a lord, or at least a laird', and the other, Mr Paterson, was a poor liar who had failed to dupe the Dutch with his promises of riches and a golden age. On Monday, 13 February, he was astonished, and probably annoyed, to be told that Erskine and Paterson were at his door, within two days of their arrival in Hamburg. Instead of hiding from him, as he had said they would, they had called to let 'me know that out of duty and respect to His Majesty they were come to pay their civilities to me who am his Minister.' He turned an ill day into some good by asking them searching questions about their intentions. Paterson declared that he was well affected toward England, and had always believed that Scots and English should be one nation under the name of Britain. He frankly admitted that they intended to open a subscription book for the Company as soon as possible. Rycaut told Trumbull that he did not think they would get far with that, 'the merchants not seeming fond of so dark and doubtful a design'.

But, to make sure, he reminded the Hamburg Senators of the warning he had given in October, and he was childishly pleased, three days later, when they sent one of their syndics to assure him that they would permit no treaties or agreements with the Scots without the consent of the King of England.

In fact, however, the Hansa merchants were willing to listen to Paterson, giving profit its proper priority, and his hopes rose. He and Erskine had told Rycaut that they would not open their subscription book before some of their ships were launched, and now, despite the worst Baltic winter within memory, the Lübeck

shipwrights finished two of them on time. They were launched in the second week of March, when there was still snow on the roofs and ice on the shores of Lübeck Bight. Saint Andrew's cross and the rising sun of the Company snapped in the wind above the yard, evergreen boughs hung from the golden galleries of the ships, casks of Canary were broached, and hired trumpeters splintered the frosty air with bright calls of joy. The vessels were called *Caledonia* and *Instauration*. Fine names, said Rycaut sarcastically, by which the Scots hoped to seduce the Hamburg merchants into parting with their money.

The Resident was depressed for some days after this small Scots triumph, and then was cheered by news from Amsterdam. One of the Scots Company called Smith, wrote his correspondent there, had been arrested for embezzlement, and Paterson was rumoured to have been his confederate. 'Though there were nothing more to it than a report,' Rycaut told Blathwayt, 'yet it is sufficient to break the whole credit of the Company in these parts.' By which he no doubt meant that he would make it his business to give the rumour the widest circulation.

And then he was depressed again, alarmed to hear that Paterson was holding 'several conferences with the most rich and monied merchants of this city, at which several articles were agreed which as yet are not made public.' He was writing this to Trumbull when his secretary informed him that the Scots were at his door again. There were three of them this time, a Mr Haldane (whose name Rycaut could never spell) having just arrived from Amsterdam. There was a fourth, too, Mr Smith, but he was wearied from his journey and begged leave to call on the Resident some other day. Rycaut swallowed his curiosity, and did not trouble to explain to Trumbull how a man who was said to be in an Amsterdam gaol one day could the next be asking for an audience with him in Hamburg. He was much more upset by what these troublesome, straight-faced Scots had to tell him. They had finished the articles for the Company's subscription book, and intended to publish them in Bremen, Hamburg, Leipsic, Dresden and Frankfort, as well as other great cities, and that they would employ men there to take up subscriptions. More-

over, they were confident of the support of such eminent men as the Dukes of Cell, Brunswick and Wolfenbüttel.

Rycaut did not believe a word of that. He was assured by Mr Cresset, English Envoy to the Court of Lüneburg, that it was all lies and quite contrary to ducal humour, but he decided that this might be the moment for another warning blast from an English trumpet. He told his secretary, Mr Orth, to write, print and distribute a pamphlet in High Dutch, warning the Germans that investments in the Scots Company would be a hazardous venture, with little or no hope of profit. And when Mr Orth had done that, he was told to do it again, this time in French. For a day or so Paterson thought of writing an answer, but rejected the idea as a waste of time. Instead, the Scots announced that they would open their Subscription Book on Thursday, 8 April, in a room above the Hamburg Exchange, and they asked the Senate for permission to place a bold sign above its door: *This is the House of the Scots Company*. Rycaut was indignant.

> I applied myself to the chief Burgomaster, giving him to understand that such a concession would be a downright owning of this Company, against which I have by the order of the King my master given them so many cautions.

For once the Senate, tired of his arrogant bullying, refused to say whether the Scots would or would not be allowed to put up their sign.

On the evening of 5 April Paterson called on Rycaut, apparently expecting dinner, and that without invitation. The Resident received him civilly, or said he did – 'as I do all other strangers who come to me' – doubtless thinking that though this way of obtaining information was an irritating embarrassment, it was perhaps cheaper and more reliable than his spies. It is probable that Paterson was making a sincere, albeit naïve attempt to enlist the Resident's sympathy, and to assure him that the Scots had no wish to prejudice the interests of the English trading companies in the Baltic. Rycaut reported only the information which Paterson honestly gave him. Erskine, Smith and Haldane (whom Rycaut was now calling Walden of Coneguy)

were gone to secure support for the Company's book in Lübeck, Gluckstadt and Tormingen. Whatever was laid on the table, the dinner cannot have improved the Resident's digestion.

On 7 April he decided that it was time to finish with the Scots. He and Cresset summoned deputies from the Hamburg Senate and bluntly ordered them 'not only not to bestow on this new Company any privileges in this city, but not so much as to grant them licence to write over the door any motto for the house.' The meeting was followed that afternoon by a memorial to the Senate, written in French and signed by the Resident and the Envoy. It said that the presence of the Scots in Hamburg, the encouragement given to their Company, was an affront to the King of England which he could not fail to resent. The Senate was asked to remedy this unhappy state of affairs before it disturbed the good relations which should exist between the City of Hamburg and the Kingdom of England.

The arrogant threat was successful. Paterson opened the book but nobody came. A few bolder merchants did subscribe later, but for small sums, and without a wide and generous response their names were a mockery. The Scots remained in Hamburg for another fortnight, watched the launching of two more ships at Lübeck, published a sadly ineffectual reply to Rycaut's pamphlet, and then accepted defeat. Erskine, Smith and Haldane left for Holland on Friday, 23 April, followed the next day by Paterson. 'I am glad we are quit of 'em,' said Rycaut. He heard that they intended to lodge a complaint before the King, against the obedient Mr Orth,

> For writing the German paper . . . of which they cannot prove him to be the author, yet if they could, he and I are too well satisfied in having done this duty that we are both without fear of having gained His Majesty's displeasure thereby.

In Amsterdam there was no need now to keep up the degrading pretence that Smith was a trusted member of the Commission. How the others had prevented him from escaping is a mystery, unless he had chosen to be a willing prisoner, hoping to earn some remission. Haldane had him committed to a Dutch

gaol, for greater security, and against the day when he could be carried to another prison in London or Scotland. Smith broke down, writing tearful letters to Haldane in which he threatened to kill himself if it were not believed that he had had no intention of cheating the Company. He offered to repay £5,000 over eighteen months, offering his shares in the Hampstead Waterworks as part security, and saying that the rest might be got by fitting out a merchantman for a running adventure in the Caribbean or the eastern seas. But if it were known in London that he was in prison now, he would have no hope of raising a penny.

> If you do upon these terms release me, and it should afterwards be disapproved of by those concerned with you, or the Company, I do solemnly promise you to deliver myself up as your prisoner where you shall require, until they are satisfied.

Haldane's generous heart relented, and he let the man go to London, to raise what money he could.

Paterson went home to Scotland with a heavy heart. All things that he had touched, the London Company, Amsterdam and Hamburg, had turned to sour failure. A new ballad, welcoming him from the walls of Edinburgh's coffee-houses, was a bitter irony.

> Amongst the many visiting everywhere,
> Judicious Paterson, with many more,
> Fraught with experience, back again do come,
> Striving to propagate their skill at home.

He waited throughout summer and autumn for an opportunity to clear himself from the suspicion of fraud. He was rejected and ostracized, and street-rumours soon stopped the flattering tongues of the ballad-writers. Though Haldane had recovered some of the money by a sale of Smith's property, the greater balance of the default was still outstanding. Had all of it been returned it would not have cleared Paterson. In November the Company finally appointed a committee to examine him. It consisted of two Directors only, Robert Blackwood and William Dunlop, the Principal of Glasgow College. Both were reasonable and compassionate men, anxious to help him without

dishonouring their obligations. They asked him if he could repay the money, and he said he had no funds at all. He was almost destitute. By leaving his business affairs in London he had lost more than was now owing to the Company. If the Court would release him from service he would endeavour to raise the money in some commercial venture. If he could not be released, then perhaps the Company would take what was owing from the profits of his work. Though he had not himself cheated the Company, he took responsibility for the thief whom he had so highly recommended.

In their report, Blackwood and Dunlop exonerated him of anything more than stupidity, and they reminded the Council-General of the time when 'Mr Paterson did merit very well at the Company's hands.' They generously urged the Company to keep him in its employ, to allow him to go to the colony when it was founded and there work off the debt he had taken upon himself. His knowledge and reputation, his skill and arts should not be foolishly thrown away.

The Council-General wanted no more of him. He was expelled from the Court of Directors. Though his papers and journals were not returned to him, his share in the Company's stock was withdrawn, and the committee's recommendation that he should be allowed to go to the colony was rejected. He became a shadowy figure on the periphery of great events, and had he turned his back on Scotland few men would have blamed him and many might have been relieved.

But he stayed.

## *'Scotch hats, a great quantity; English bibles, 1500 . . .'*
## Edinburgh and London, July 1697 to July 1698

SUMMER came, sunless, once more a blighted harvest and bitter hunger. It was the second of seven terrible years. What was now harsh privation would soon be bitter famine. Each year snow would come early and linger late, summer rains would rot the

feet of sheep and cattle, blacken the hopeless field of young grain. Men would sell some of their children to the plantations so that they might buy bread for those who remained. Before the century was out it would be impossible to count those who had died of starvation. Already the diseased and dying, begging in the streets, filled more fortunate men with anger, not against misfortune but against the English from whom they must buy meal to keep alive. In the streets, too, along the highways, were other reminders of a payment made to England and a debt owed in return. The King's war was ended, his Scots regiments disbanded, and home had come the survivors of Strathnaver's Foot, of Leven's, Mackay's and Argyll's. In coffee-houses and taverns, junior officers quarrelled over points of honour and bragged of their conduct in worthless battles. Their men became beggars and thieves, or clung to their coat-tails asking for bread and employment. Fletcher of Saltoun would remind his countrymen of a great imbalance, of the contribution their sons had made to King William's long war: ten or eleven thousand seamen in the English and Dutch navies, twenty battalions of Foot, and six squadrons of Dragoons. Every fifth man in the King's armies at home or abroad had been a Scot or Scots-Irish. And yet, he said, the English 'vilify us as an inconsiderable people, and set a mean value on the share we have borne.'*

As they filled the courtyard of Milne Square, offering their idle swords, the returned soldiers gave a renewed impetus to the Company. In the face of famine, destitution, unemployment and an emptying purse, the Noble Undertaking now seems like a sick man's delirium. To the people then it was hope, it represented their fevered longing for freedom and prosperity, and it symbolized their defiance of England. Roderick Mackenzie fed this

*For 150 years England fought her wars with armies that were increasingly recruited in Scotland and Ireland. By 1840, according to Sir William Butler (*A Plea for the Peasant*, 1878), nearly sixty per cent of the infantry rank and file were Scots and Irish. As late as the Crimean War it was still forty-four per cent. There was probably no fair balance until the introduction of conscription in the First World War.

feeling with his own hatred of the English, secretly publishing a copy of Rycaut's memorial to the Hamburg Senate, that Scots might know how inexorable was England's determination to destroy their one hope of bread, trade and glory. The King's ageing Chancellor, Lord Marchmont, was so incensed by this impudence that he had the printer laid by the heels, and would have sent young Mackenzie to the Tolbooth too, had he dared.

All the King's principal servants in Scotland were alarmed by the growing anger against their master, fearing the loss of his favour as much as they expected riot and burning. It was a time for great men in great office to choose between King and country, and they hastily made that choice known to William Carstares, the fat, smiling Presbyterian minister who was the King's secretary and adviser on Scots affairs. Since he was always at William's side, in camp or court, a letter to him was the same as nudging the King's attention, and his unpriced sympathy was more valuable than the services of a bought man.

From Holyroodhouse the young Duke of Queensberry wrote anxiously to Carstares. A genteel, black-haired Douglas, he held the office of Commissioner vacated by Tweeddale, and although he usually preferred to face trouble by turning his back on it, he now found it all about him. The Councillors of the Company, he said, intended to address the King in protest against the Hamburg Memorial. 'I wish that something may be done to quieten the people who make a great noise about it and other prejudices they think are imposed on them by England.' He admitted that he was deeply involved in the Company, but would do only what was pleasing to the King, if someone would be good enough to tell him what that might be. The Lord Advocate, Sir James Stewart, an affable old man who was never certain of the King's trust, was badly frightened by a rumour that he had given a licence for the printing of the Memorial. He wordily denied it. It was a malicious lie started by the printer's boy. And being more of a lawyer than a moralist he saw no sin in proving his loyalty by acknowledging his countrymen's hatred. 'My relief is to be attacked where all see my innocence, for I have no dealing with our African Company, and many of them reckon me an un-

friend.' Sir James Ogilvy, whose services to the Throne as Secretary of State would soon be rewarded with the viscountcy of Seafield, also told Carstares that he had put no money into the Company, neither had any member of his family. His fellow Secretary was Lord Tullibardine, a young man of choking passion who had deserted his family and King James at the Revolution, had been given an earldom taken from his Jacobite father, and who was never sure that he was doing the right thing. He had subscribed £500 to the Company, but explained to Carstares that this was a trick whereby 'I shall have the more influence to hinder any designs that may prove uneasy to His Majesty.' When the Company appealed to the Privy Council for support in their Address to William, both Ogilvy and Tullibardine argued against it, carrying the Council with them by a narrow majority of four.

The Company sent its protest to the King. Now that the matter was of no real consequence, William replied (in his own time) that he would order his Resident at Hamburg not to use his name or authority for obstructing the Company in the prosecution of its trade with the inhabitants of that city.

The Directors kept up the façade of secrecy, deluding themselves with the belief that England did not know where they intended to settle their colony. And the English Government, which knew very well that it was to be Darien, pretended that it did not. The slow dance of ignorance and counter-ignorance was performed with comic gravity. When the Lords Justices of England wished to ask Ogilvy's advice on the Directors' plans, William Blathwayt persuaded them against it, and the Secretary – loyally declaring his non-involvement with Milne Square – would not have been pleased to know why. 'It might be expected,' said Blathwayt cynically, 'he would own no knowledge of what the Company intended, and underhand intimate to them to forward their expedition so much the more, since notice of it was begun to be taken here.'

Blathwayt's information about Darien had come from Rycaut and Orth in Hamburg, whose spies had got it from the loose-tongued sailors whom the Company had sent to bring their ships

to Leith. 'I was informed,' reported Orth, 'that the two Scotch East India Company's ships now lying in this river were designed for the south coast of America, at the Isthmus of Darien.' He had been to see the ships, and reported that each carried fifty-six guns, 12-pounders and 8-pounders on their lower and upper decks, and he had heard that they would be loaded with fine linen, lace and other goods for the Spanish and Indian trade. Hamburg merchants were also admitting that Paterson and Erskine had talked frankly of the intended colony on Darien. 'It is in my opinion,' said Orth, 'not to be doubted but that this is their real design.'

He wrote so much that his imagination took over his pen. He said that the Scots were recruiting pirates from John Avery's ship, lately returned to Ireland. Some person had told him, and this person had also said that the Scots would be willing to try a little piracy themselves if they saw a profit in it. A handful of Avery's men were accordingly dragged out of ale-houses in Dublin and Cork, imprisoned and interrogated, and since some of them were later pardoned they may have had the wit to lie in support of Orth's person, once they realized the purpose of their examination.

The Lords Justices and the Commissioners for Trade were particularly concerned with the steps which should be taken to make the Scots colony impossible, or at least untenable, but they were also anxious that everything should be done within the law, English law that is. They were greatly helped by Mr James Vernon. He was the middle-aged Member for Penryn, a scholar of Oxford and Cambridge, a onetime political agent in Holland, now an assistant in the Secretary of State's office and soon to be Principal Secretary. A tall, thin man with a brown face and a hanging lip, untidy in dress and brusque in manner, he was a superb and dedicated civil servant who lived and died an untitled gentleman, having been particularly unfortunate in his choice of patrons. John Macky said he was a drudge to office, no man ever wrote so many letters. His habit of working all day and half the night at his desk, Macky explained, was due to an ill-tempered wife whose company he desperately avoided.

He gave the Lords Justices and the Commissioners their ruling

in what came to be known as 'Mr Vernon's Line'. It was based on four questions put to the Attorney-General and the Solicitor-General. Both gentlemen declared that the Scots colony would be against the laws of England, and the King had thus the right to prohibit his English subjects from giving it aid and assistance. All magistrates and officers, in England or the Plantations, would have the right to search any Scots ship going to the colony, and to take from it any English subjects they found aboard. There was no doubt that the colony would be prejudicial to His Majesty's allies and to the trade of England. When Vernon became Principal Secretary a few months later, he used this minute as the legal justification for the Royal Proclamation which he composed and sent to the Governors of all English Plantations, warning them against giving so much as a cask of pure water to any ship flying the sunburst standard of the Company of Scotland.

He also listened patiently to anyone who could give him information about the Caribbean and the Main. Thus Captain Richard Long of Jamaica found a welcome in his office and before the Lords Justices. This leathery seaman was said to be a Quaker, but one without a troublesome conscience, no doubt, since he was a hard master and a foul-mouthed roisterer. He wanted £200 and a vessel, he told their lordships, and if given both he would bring the King £500,000 in gold plate salvaged from Spanish-American wrecks. They debated his petition, considered his further request for a sixteenth of the treasure, and took no action. But they did not forget him.

Toward the end of November London heard from Orth that the Scots ships had left the Baltic, and on the day that Secretary Trumbull endorsed his letter 'Recd Read 22nd Nov. 1697', the *Caledonia* was sailing up the Forth. In clear, winter's light she anchored off Burntisland and took in all sail. Her beak and stern were a glory of gold and scarlet and blue, and as pennants flew from her main-top and mizzen her bow-chaser fired a signal salute to the cheering crowds on both sides of the firth. It was joyously answered by a white thunder from the walls of Edinburgh Castle. She had been brought from the Baltic by seamen of

*H.M.S. Royal William*, the flagship of Scotland's little Navy, although there is no record of anyone asking the permission of royal William himself. A week later the second Lübeck ship, *Instauration*, came bravely by the Bass Rock and into the firth, firing her signal gun as she dropped anchor à cable's length from the *Caledonia*. Before sunset she had lost her equivocal name, the Directors toasting another in their panelled chamber at Milne Square, and resolving 'that from henceforward it shall be called *Saint Andrew*, and that the usual ceremony be executed tomorrow, it being Saint Andrew's Day.' Both were clinker-built, 56-gun Indiamen of 350 tons, three-masted and rigged with stay-sails on fore and main, a lateen on the mizzen, and a steep, square-sailed sprit above a golden prow. When the *Union* came over from Amsterdam the distasteful implications of her name, too, were quickly rejected, in favour of *Unicorn* and in honour of Scotland's ancient heraldic beasts. Though a silver unicorn now supported one side of King William's arms, every nursery child knew that it was in spirited and relentless defiance of the English lion opposite.

Two smaller ships also arrived before the year was out, both of them to be tenders for the others, and neither of them much more than a coastal vessel. The *Dolphin* was a two-masted, snub-nosed snow, a French prize which James Gibson had bought from her captors in Holland. In strong seas she would stubbornly bury her head in the waves and run with water from stem to waist. Her companion, the *Endeavour*, was a pink which the busy Dr Munro purchased at Newcastle, indicating that one English ship-owner, at least, was indifferent to the wishes of his government. She was high-sterned, with a great rudder and a round hull that bellied out from the water-line and in again to her narrow deck. Seaworthy enough, she was quixotic and hard to handle, rolling with sickening rhythm as she dipped her yardarms to the sea.

The Company had its fleet. The *Rising Sun* should also have come, but without topmasts and rigging she was locked in the ice at Amsterdam, where Peter the Great took wine in her cabin with Direcksone and Gibson. Yet she, too, would come. The pro-

mise that she must come was already there in five splendid ships, etched in beauty against the white hills of Fife.

All winter, when tide and weather permitted, ferries bounced across the Forth from Leith to Burntisland, emptying the warehouse and filling the ships' holds. There was now a Committee for Equipping Ships, which met under William Arbuckle at the coffee-house owned by the nieces of James Maclurg, a merchant member of the Committee. It loaded hogsheads of beer from Thomas Whyte the brewer of Leith, bread from Ninian Hay the baker, clay pipes from David Montgomery, and dye from Ephraim Roberts. In one day, packed in dry water-casks, there were loaded 380 Bibles, 51 New Testaments, 200 Confessions of Faith and 2,808 Catechisms, all printed by Widow Anderson and all intended to sustain the settlers and inspire the Indians, if the latter could be taught English. Three Edinburgh hatters, as the first instalment of their contracts, delivered 1,440 hats (at two shillings each), and Jeremy Robertson sent boxes of his bob-wigs, periwigs and campaign wigs. With derisive hindsight, Walter Herries would find these very amusing, though his humour grossly exaggerated the number.

Scotch hats, a great quantity; English bibles, 1500; periwigs, 4000, some long, some short; campaigns, Spanish bobs and natural ones. And truly they were all natural, for being made of Highlanders' hair, which is blanched with the rain and sun, when they came to be opened in the West Indies they looked like so many of Samson's fireships that he sent among the Philistines, and could be of no use to the Colony, if it were not to mix with their lime when they plastered the walls of their houses.*

*Macaulay, later, was equally derisive, accepting Herries as a reliable authority and jeering at men who carried wigs to the Tropics as trade goods, forgetting that they were probably intended for use by the settlers. But Fletcher of Saltoun, answering Herries, attempted to justify their trading value. 'The cargo of cloth, stuffs, shoes, stockings, slippers and wigs must needs be proper for a country where the Natives go naked for want of apparel, and fit to be exchanged for other commodities, either in the English, Dutch, French or Spanish Plantations.'

The total value of the goods loaded on all five ships was £18,413 5s. 0½d. Sterling. The *Caledonia* and the *Saint Andrew* carried the largest cargoes, as they were to transport the greatest number of settlers. There were axes, knives, mattocks and hammers, tools for coopers, carpenters and smiths, and enough nails in oiled boxes to hold together the doors and windows of a city. Fuses, grenades, cannon and cannon-shell, lead shot and powder, blunderbusses and muskets, pistols and broadswords, cutlasses and pikes, and a thousand cartridge-pouches of good black leather. For parley or triumph, when these had been used, there were brass trumpets and drums. There were men's hose and women's stockings, and more than 25,000 pairs of shoes, pumps and slippers. There was 'cloth in great bulk', bales and bolts of ticking, canvas, linen, serge, muslin, glazed calico, tartan plaiding, hodden-grey and harn. Coloured crepe for flags and bunting, striped muslin for neckcloths, and Holland duck for seamen. Fourteen thousand needles, balls of twine and thread in black and grey and white. Iron frying-pans and pots, basins and jugs of English pewter, 1,000 precious drinking-cups of glass, horn spoons and wooden trenchers. Twenty-nine barrels of tobacco pipes in Mr Montgomery's best white clay. Printing-tools, parchment for treaties with princes, ink and quills, sealing-wax and scarlet ribbon of watered silk. Flints for guns and tinder-boxes, candles uncountable and 3,000 candle-sticks. Buttons of wood, brass, horn and pewter, looking-glasses and 2,000 pounds of pure white soap.

And combs. Remembering Lionel Wafer's idyllic picture of the Cuna Indians, combing long hair with their fingers, the Directors ordered and loaded tens of thousands, large and small, made from lightwood, boxwood and horn. Such small vanities as a wooden comb, inlaid with beads of mother-of-pearl, could buy an imperial foothold.

Three hundred tons of biscuit – coarse, middle, and fine – seventy of stalled beef, twenty of prunes and fifteen of pork, casks of suet, flour and unmilled wheat. Twelve hundred gallons of strong claret, 1,700 of rum, 5,000 of vinegar and 5,000 more of brandy. All carefully tasted. Once a week the Committee for

Equipping went down to Leith with the ships' captains and there dined and

particularly tried the state and condition of both the grass-fed and stall-fed beef, as also of the pork and other provisions, and found the same in extraordinary case and well-cured to their own and the said captains' great contentment.

There were also men. On 12 March 1698, a single folio sheet was posted at the entry to Milne Square, and on the walls of every coffee-house in Edinburgh, Leith and Glasgow.

The Court of Directors of the Indian and African Company of Scotland, having now in readiness ships and tenders in very good order, with provisions and all manner of things needful for their intended expedition to settle a colony in the Indies; *give Notice*, that for the general encouragement of all such as are willing to go upon the said expedition :

Everyone who goes on the first expedition shall receive and possess fifty acres of plantable land, and 50 foot square of ground at least in the chief city or town, and an ordinary house built thereupon by the colony at the end of 3 years.

Every Councillor shall have double. If anyone shall die, the profit shall descend to his wife and nearest relations. The family and blood relations shall be transported at the expense of the Company.

The Government shall bestow rewards for special service.

By Order of the Court,
RODERICK MACKENZIE, *Secy*

The Proclamation carried the Company's device, lately approved by the Lord Lyon King of Arms: Saint Andrew's white saltire on a blue field, cantoned with a ship in full sail, two Peruvian llamas burdened, and a towered elephant, the whole supported by an Indian and a Blackamoor holding goat's-horns of abundant fruit. The crest was a rising sun, upon the tilted human face of which was an expression of peering incredulity.

The political and social structure of the Colony had been determined. Although there were plans for a parliament ultimately, it would be ruled at first by a Council, each member taking his

weekly turn as President (and the proposer of that astonishingly inept suggestion is unknown, to the benefit of his memory). Below the Council, and subject to it entirely, the majority of the settlers were divided into Overseers, Assistant or Sub-Overseers, and Planters. They were all soldiers, the first being field-officers and captains, the second subalterns, and the third, despite the noble promise of the name, were private sentinels enlisted at threepence a day and mustered in companies of forty. The deception was thin, and all called themselves and were referred to by their military rank, but the Company's Act forbade the employment of soldiers as such without the permission of the King's Privy Council, and nobody would ask for that.

There were also to be ministers, surgeons, physicians and apothecaries, clerks and craftsmen, and while military rank cut clear divisions horizontally the expedition was also split vertically, into Landsmen and Seamen. In time these definitions would become bitter pejoratives.

There was no lack of volunteers, and few had waited for Mackenzie's proclamation. Every young and disbanded officer was eager for the venture, and in his tail were a dozen or more hungry men whom he had led in Flanders and the Highlands, and who now saw in him their only hope of bread and employment. Edinburgh blazed with scarlet coats and facings of buff, green and blue. There was a swing of swords above the cobbles, and a high-spirited clamour in the taverns. A forlorn hope well-led before Namur might count as much as an uncle's preferment, and a wound well-healed provide a testament of courage in the scar. James Ogilvy, now Lord Seafield, was in Edinburgh and was embarrassed by men who thought he could secure them service with the Company. 'I have multitudes of broken officers lying about my doors,' he complained to Carstares, 'and I know not what to say to them.' All Directors were plagued with petitions on behalf of this captain and that ensign, of this son or that nephew, of a good sergeant or a brave drummer. No family could claim respect if it had not one young man who was hot to serve the African Company.

Twelve hundred were finally accepted, and 300 of these were

Gentlemen Volunteers, the heirs or cadet sons of good families, with the same rank and duties as Planters but with social precedence over them. A third or more of the Planters were Highlanders, discharged soldiers from Argyll's, Strathnaver's, Hill's or Mackay's, following their officers and answering the same pull of clan loyalties that had taken them into the regiments. Many of them could speak nothing but Gaelic.

The sixty officers selected were chosen with care, twelve captains, twenty-four lieutenants and twenty-four ensigns. Though influence may have brought them before the Directors, all had then to be passed by a special committee which met to 'discourse with them pretty freely concerning the encouragement which they are to expect, and report accordingly concerning their sentiments thereof.' This encouragement was considerable to a young man hoping to restore a family fortune or make one for himself: £150 in the Company's stock to every captain, £100 to a lieutenant and £5 to an ensign. Many of them were Highland too, captains like Lachlan Maclean, William Fraser, John Campbell and Colin Campbell, lieutenants Hugh Munro, Patrick MacDowall, and Colin Campbell, ensigns Alexander Mackenzie, Duncan Campbell and William Campbell. Eight of them were from Clan Campbell, lately officers of Argyll's, and the valour of their regiment, the influence of their chief the Earl, and the loyalty of their clan to the Revolution guaranteed their selection.

Dr John Munro recruited surgeons and physicians for the expedition, interviewing applicants at Milne Square, and putting them through small examinations in anatomy, surgery and the practice of medicine. He was helped by two doctors already chosen, Hector Mackenzie and Walter Herries. When Haldane of Gleneagles went to London in November, 1696, he had unmasked one rogue in James Smith and had been duped by another in Herries. He met this plausible Dumbarton man at Moncrieff's coffee-house, and was so impressed that he took him into the Company's employ and on to Holland. He thought that he was doing an unfortunate fellow-countryman a service by saving him from unjust extinction at the end of an English rope.

Until the year before this, Herries had been a surgeon in the English Navy, having secured the appointment, said Fletcher of Saltoun, by becoming a convert to Catholicism and by pimping for the King's officers. He smartly abandoned this faith a few months later when the Papist on the throne was replaced by a Protestant, but he continued to prosper as a pander. He was hot-tempered, jealous of his imagined honour, and gifted with a corrosive and perceptive wit. His career as a naval surgeon ended one day in Portsmouth when, upon some real or imagined slight, he drew his sword and lunged at his commanding officer Captain John Graydon of the *Vanguard*, the hero of Beachy Head and Barfleur. Graydon recovered from the wound and would have had Herries brought out of irons, before a Council of War, and from thence to a yardarm, had not the influence of a Scots officer enabled the surgeon to escape. Though pricked as an outlaw by Graydon, he was still skulking in London, and protected by other Scots, when he was introduced to Haldane. For the next eighteen months, in Holland and Scotland, he worked for the Company as a supervisor of provisions and medical stores, and now he enjoyed Munro's total trust and respect. He would repay both later by accusing the doctor (perhaps not unjustly) of filling his own purse at the expense of the Company's. 'Save a rogue from the gallows,' said Andrew Fletcher, quoting the old proverb, 'and he shall be the first that will cut your throat.'

In February two brothers, Robert and Thomas Drummond, offered their services to the Company, the one a sailor and the other a soldier. Hard and self-seeking, contemptuous of weakness and stubbornly brave, loyal to their own code and kind but without compassion for others', they were among the few men of decisive action to whom the Company gave responsible office, and they would be principals in its final, melodramatic tragedy. They were sons of an impoverished branch of the Drummonds of Borland and of Concraig, Strathearn lairds who claimed descent from Malcolm Beg, Thane of Lennox, and through their mother they had blood ties with the powerful Hamiltons. Robert was a discharged naval lieutenant when he walked into Milne Square, boldly asking for the command of a ship, and bringing with him

enough family influence to be given the *Dolphin* and £5 10s. Sterling a month. Ship and pay were less than he believed he merited, and he argued the thought persuasively enough, for he was later given the *Caledonia* and five shillings more. He was a good seaman and a stern shipmaster.

Thomas Drummond needed no recommendation, his name was known to all Scotland. As a captain of grenadiers in the Earl of Argyll's Regiment he had served with courage in the Low Countries, leading his company in the van of Ramsay's Scots Brigade when it attacked the French redoubts at Dottignies. But it was not for this bloody slaughter, in which he lost most of his company, that he was well known. He and his grenadiers had also been in Glencoe on the morning of the Massacre, under the command of Robert Campbell of Glenlyon, and to Drummond the duty seemed to be no more than the extermination of a nest of rats. When the sickened Campbell hesitated to kill the last of nine bound MacDonalds, Drummond pushed him aside and shouted 'Why is he still alive? What of our orders? Kill him!' He pistolled the young man himself, and then shot a boy of twelve who was crying for mercy at Glenlyon's feet. After the Commission of Inquiry in 1695, the Scots Parliament demanded his recall from Flanders, for trial and punishment, but he and his regiment were then prisoners of the French. When he did come home, two years later after the Peace of Ryswick, the King had made it plain that he wished to hear no more of Glencoe.

If the Court of Directors debated the shadowed past of this rough and inexorable man they did not make their doubts public. They gave him a commission as an Overseer. He was not, in any case, the only soldier they employed who had been involved in the Glencoe affair. There were private sentinels from Hill's and Argyll's Regiments, and at least two officers from Hill's – Captain Charles Forbes, to whom they gave a company, and Major James Cunningham of Eickett whom they were to make a Councillor. Such men, and others who had had nothing to do with the Massacre, formed Drummond's party during the bitter quarrelling on Darien, and their enemies called them the 'Glencoe Gang'.

Thus the colonists were engaged, by major appointments and small. Mr Hugh Rose to be Clerk to the Colony, on the enthusiastic recommendation of his patron, the Lord President. Alexander Hamilton, a none too successful merchant, offered his services as an Accountant, and was no more successful when he was made Keeper of Merchandise and Goods. The Reverend Mr Adam Scott gladly agreed to go as Minister, with the blessing of the Presbytery, £100 in stock from the Company and £10 for the purchase of necessary books. A similar offer made to the Reverend Mr Thomas James was sadly refused. He was a warm admirer of Paterson, and he could not serve the Company while it so unjustly rejected his friend. Roger Oswald was one of the eager and romantic young men who clamoured to be taken as Gentlemen Volunteers. His father, Sir James Oswald of Singleton, was a Lanarkshire laird, an officer of the Lord Treasurer's department who had recently been in prison for some innocent default in his accounts, and a stern, unforgiving parent who left his son in no doubt that family as much as national honour depended on the boy's conduct in the Colony. John Eison, a Highlandman of Clan Mackay whose name was a clerk's mauling of the Gaelic, was also taken as a Volunteer after he had extravagantly claimed to be an 'absolute master of the several species of mathematics, particularly fortification, navigation, etc.' Though in theory only, he added. James Lindsay, sitting on a stool in Mackenzie's office, grew tired of making ledger entries for broadswords and pistols, hodden-grey and tartan, his elbow brushed by luckier men in scarlet coats and tarpaulin jackets. He was no Gentleman, by social reckoning, but he asked leave to go as a clerk, and was accepted. William Simpson, printer of Edinburgh, offered to work the press that had been loaded aboard the *Unicorn*, and was engaged at forty shillings a month, ten of which were to be paid to his wife at home.

And Benjamin Spense, a Jew, was taken as an interpreter. He said that he could read, write and speak six languages, and was particularly fluent in Spanish and Portuguese, qualifications that were to help him more than the Company. He would be a prisoner of the Spaniards for fifteen months.

Among the lower-deck seamen waiting aboard the ships at Burntisland there was little enthusiasm for the Company or the Colony. Since the end of the war the ports had been full of workless and hungry sailors, and any berth was better than none. The Committee for Equipping Ships had paid off the crews that brought the Company's fleet from Holland and Germany, and had taken on others from the idle men on the quays. This was good business sense, not compassion. Peace had brought lower wages, since supply now exceeded demand, and the first crews had been receiving wartime rates. The seamen accepted this hard bargain silently for some weeks, and then they rebelled. At the beginning of April the ring-leaders of a mutiny aboard the *Caledonia*, John Bowrie and Robert MacAlexander, were brought before the Committee. They were charged with 'going in a tumultous manner to their captain to represent their pretended grievance', with desertion, and with threatening to knock down any who would not desert with them. The Committee wasted no time on the pretended grievance. Between a file of musketeers both men were sent to the Tolbooth, there to stay at the Committee's pleasure, together with a warehouseman, William Turnbull, who had been solving his particular problems by embezzling the Company's stores.

Perhaps as a result of the trouble aboard the *Caledonia*, and realizing that a mutiny at sea would certainly be worse than one in port, the Directors decided to improve the shipboard conditions of the sailors. They did not raise pay or improve rations, but they ordered that for every five seamen there should be one chest for the stowing of their meagre property. Lest this be jealously resented by the young Gentlemen aboard, it was further resolved that every Volunteer should be given room in the hold for one barrel, in which to keep his personal effects or any trade goods he wished to take to the Colony.

The Company also had trouble with James Smith again. It had finally, and incredibly late it would seem, struck his name from the roll of Directors 'for his villainous violation of the trust reposed in him'. He had been in London a year and had been insufferably slow in realizing his assets and repaying the money.

Dr Munro was sent south to encourage him. Smith endured a few days of Munro's nagging, and then put his wife, his family, his relations and his luggage in a coach and set off for Dover and France. Munro pursued him by horse, with officers and a special warrant, caught him on the quayside and took him back to London and prison. The Directors sent Munro £400 to pay for the wretched man's prosecution.

They also sent him orders to seek out Lionel Wafer in London and sound him on the matter of employment with the Company. It was the second attempt to engage the young buccaneer. A few weeks earlier he had dined at Pontack's and discussed the proposal with Andrew Fletcher and Captain Robert Pennecuik, the recently-appointed master of the *Saint Andrew* and Commodore of the Company's fleet. They reported that he was open to persuasion and they advised the Directors to pursue him further. Fletcher held no office in the Company and he acted throughout with disinterested good faith, honestly believing that the Directors wished to employ the surgeon, but their intentions were in fact more subtle, and were motivated by an almost hysterical fear that Wafer was about to place their whole undertaking in jeopardy.

A year before, Wafer and Dampier had been closely examined in London by the Commissioners of Trade, and had been asked whether the Scots, or anyone else, could settle and hold a plantation on Darien. They said that 250 good fighting-men, with the help of the Indians, could secure and maintain a foothold against anything the Spanish might muster by sea or land. Five hundred could settle the country and keep it. Although they were probably thinking of buccaneers, not sluggish Flanders veterans and green boys from English or Scots shires, their confidence was impressive. The Commissioners advised the Lords Justices that a ship should be sent to take possession of Golden Island off the coast of Darien. But nothing came of the suggestion.

Now the Directors heard that Wafer had placed his narrative in the hands of a printer, and they believed that once it was published, once its account of that waiting paradise was common knowledge, the English would order Admiral Benbow's

West Indian Fleet to claim Darien before their own ships could leave the Forth.

Munro called at Wafer's lodgings in early June with James Campbell, the Company's London agent. They discovered that the young man was no ingenuous tarpaulin, that he was a shrewd bargainer and well advised by an Irish merchant called Fitzgerald. When he was offered twenty guineas to postpone his book for a month, he said that for £1,000 he would give the Company all the information it wished. Munro did not tell him that the Directors already had most of that, in the copy of his manuscript which Paterson had given them. He made a counter-offer of considerably less, and they haggled until the articles of a contract were agreed, composed by Campbell and written down by Fitzgerald. Wafer was to withhold publication for a month and leave immediately for further discussions with the Directors and Council-General in Edinburgh. He was to receive £50 for the expenses of this journey and the settling of his affairs in London, and if he entered the Company's service for two years he would suppress the book entirely and receive £700. If no agreement were reached in Edinburgh, he would be free to leave and publish at the end of one month. Wafer signed, and took post-horse for Scotland within the week.

The affair then became a comic farce. He travelled as 'Mr Brown', Munro insisting that secrecy was all. Wafer tolerantly agreed to this, though he may have wondered who could not be in the secret, since the English knew of the Scots' interest in him and Darien. He crossed the Border and rode toward Edinburgh by way of Haddington. At the post-house there, he said in a Memorial he wrote later, he was met by Pennecuik

> . . . who told me that he was sent express from the secret committee of the Company to acquaint me it was not convenient I should be seen or known at Edinburgh for some private reasons, that he was to lodge me at a house about a mile wide of the road.

The house was Saltoun Hall, Andrew Fletcher's home, and the great patriot was there to make him welcome. The next day a coach brought five great men of the Company, the Earl of

Panmure and the new Marquis of Tweeddale, both Councillors, and three Directors, Haldane, Blackwood and Sir Francis Scott. They asked him if he had so ordered his affairs that there was no need for him to return to London, and he told them that he was able to go aboard at a day's notice. This, they said, was good news, for their fleet would be ready to sail in eight or ten days. They left, and returned the next day with Pennecuik.

The subject of this day's conference, as likewise for the next two or three meetings, was to inform themselves of the country of Darien, which I performed faithfully, not suspecting any private design upon me by persons of so great honour, and having unbosomed myself of all the secrets of that country of Darien, as likewise of a treasure of Nicaragua wood unknown to any person in Europe but to myself, they insisted most on this treasure, where it grows, if it were near the sea, or easily shipped aboard. I satisfied them particularly of all and in every question they asked me.

There was too much talk of that fabulous red-wood, too little of his duties with the expedition, too many notes taken by Pennecuik about harbours, soundings, and pilotage. And when the Directors spoke of Darien they used words and phrases that may have reminded Wafer curiously of his own manuscript. He was being treated as a child, he thought, and likely to be dismissed as a child at any moment, with no more than a worthless rattle for his trouble. But the Company had not yet finished with him. Walter Herries was now sent to bring him by night and in secret again to Edinburgh, where he was privately lodged off the High Street and told to keep to the house, 'less their enterprise should take air in England, which they said must inevitably happen if I were known to be in Scotland.' High in this smoke-grained building he saw nobody but Pennecuik and Herries, and had no diversion but what he could see from its greasy windows, until one day he was at last visited by the Committee for Equipping Ships. He was told that since England now knew about the Company's plans for Darien that site for its Colony had been rejected in favour of another. Did he perhaps know something of the River Plate? He did not. Of the Amazon? No. A pity, yet he need not be too disappointed, the Company would think of a fit

gratuity for his pains. That evening Captain Pennecuik brought him twenty guineas and the Directors' good wishes for a safe return to England.

Walter Herries, who took Wafer out of Edinburgh and some way down the post-road, was amused by the whole affair, particularly the night-rides, the lonely rooms at a quiet stair-head. He thought the Directors' last warning that the visit should still be kept secret was unnecessary, since the bitter young man could scarcely talk about it without being laughed at. 'He hath acquired so little knowledge of Edinburgh that if he were to return to that city he could no more find the way to his lodging than the Company could to the Nicaragua wood.'

In one matter the Directors had been honest with Wafer. Their fleet was ready to sail. It would be at sea before the printer had set the first page of his book.

## *'A brave and generous band, inspired with thirst of fame'*
## Edinburgh, July 1698

THERE were fine ships in the firth, but against the broad hills and the wide water they seemed absurdly small to carry a nation's desperate hope of survival. The sun which shone brilliantly, day following day, was a cruel mockery of the emblem the Company had chosen for itself. For every ton of meal or cask of beef taken aboard the fleet there were dry fields and empty byres that promised little in replacement. 'The main difficulty and discouragement,' Lord Marchmont wrote to Carstares, 'is from the bad appearance of the crops on the ground. The drouth has continued long, and the corns are very short and look ill.... Truly the country is in a hardened and straitened condition, and all people are very sensible of it.' What harvest there might be would certainly be late, and this was dangerous in a country where snow could fall on high ground before summer flowers had turned to seed. In the worst year of scarcity yet known, Scotland had stripped its larder to provision the fleet, and was left with