



Scots Language Centre

Crack Aboot Politics



Document 5

A
Copy of a LETTER
From A Country Farmer
TO
His Laird, a Member of Parliament
[ab. 1706]

Background

Atween 1705 an 1707 commissioners fae England an Scotland trokit a Treaty o Union atween the twa kintras, syne confirmed in baith pairlaments. For a wheen o reasons the maiter becam the crack o the nation, but at the hinnerend it wis the threit o a weir that gart the feck vote for the Treaty. The document ablow wis wrutten as pairt o the debates an gies the threaps o maist ordnar Scots o the day. Outside the pairlament fowk wis fasht, even beelin, sennin 90 peteetions in anent the Treaty, ilk ane o them agin it, an in a puckle airts the Treaty wis brunt.

Document

The text wis wrutten aboot 1706, prentit up, an pit aboot as a haun blad for tae gie the reasons whit wey Scotland shuidna hae a union wi England. It wis common in thae days tae write political tracts either as a twa-haundit crack or in the style o a letter. *The Scottish Antiquary* (1898) jaloused that it wis wrutten wi a Wastland man, aiblins a body belangin Clydeside, an he writes as a fermer til his MP. Whiles, tho, the langage appears mair norland in style, an whiles it mibby reads like a Soothron text turnt intae Scots. The screivar hisel is sair agin haein ony union wi England an threaps that England will skaith Scots tred (makkin mention o Darien as *the Caledonia Business*), trauchle her wi mony taxes, an ding doun the Kirk o Scotland. The'r muckle here that mirras threaps in the 2014 campaign. Documents o this ilk wad'a fund thair wey aboot the kintra maistly throu the chapmen that traivelt an sellt guidis or throu booth-hauders at mercats. Fowk wad'a gaihert roond a body tae hear the blad read oot an syne crack aboot it.

Langage an Style

It's weel seen that the document is grundit in the tradeetion o prent-buik Soothron – wi spellings an a wheen maks conform for ordnar tae the conventions o the Soothron buik mercat – but nanetheless the screivar's ettle is tae speak throu Scots, wi mony saws an words that wad'a been weel kent bi the common fowk.

But it isna aye appearant hoo tae read it, for the reasons gien abuin. Sae the'r a screed o words that the reader wants tae tak tent til. For instance, the spellings *about*, *down*, *ground*, *now*, *our* an *soundly* shuid be soondit as about, doun, ground, noo, oor an soondly wi the 'oo' soond. In thae days it wis common custom tae interchenge the spellings ou/ow but pronoonce them as 'oo'.

In samelike mainer we shuid keep in mind that the spellings *bread*, *dread* an *head* is pronoonced as breid, dreid an heid wi an 'ee' soond, an the spellings *minister* an *well* as meenister an weel.

The spellings *ald*, *cald* an *hald* (the 'l' wis, in actual fact, a vowel length marker) Scots speakers kent tae pronoonce as auld cauld an haud. Twa-three ither words is kenspeckle an-aw: the spellings *heght*, *not*, *slight* an *thought* wis pronoonced as hecht, nocht, slicht an thocht (wi a 'ch' soond as in loch) while *have* wis soondit hay-v (giein us the modren hae).

It is intrassin that the screivar uses *mack*, *wee*, an whiles *gee*, whaur nooadays we wad write mak, wi an gie (Inglis *make*, *with* an *give*).

The spelling *to* unstressed wis soondit as 'tih' or 'teh', an stressed as 'tay' or 'too'. Nooadays we wad write tae.

Whiles the text isna conseistent. For an instance, we read baith ald/auld, had/hald, hae/have, tack/take, which/whilk. This micht be doun tae the prenter, but we canna be shair.

Whiles the screivar uses words that wad'a been uncommon in speech, tho kent weel eneuch fae readin texts. Ane is *foreigners*, a word taen fae Frainch, but aiblins mair fowk wad'a said strangers, ootlins or mibby fremmit fowk. Anither word is *puzzle* used in the sense o confoond or confuse, tho Scots haed, an haes, sindry eediams for this. We find the words *convenient* an *independen* forby. Again, baith o thir words wis mibby uncommon in speech.

The oreeginal punctuation o the text (whiles wantin an apostrophe) haes been keepit, but the text haes been brukken in paragraphs for tae mak easier readin, wi twa-three photies eikit forby.



A
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From A
Country Farmer
TO
His Laird, a Member of Parliament
[ab. 1706]

An't like your Honour,

I Mack bauld to send this Line to your Honour; Necessitie has nae Manners: I grant I'm no Book-learn'd; and therefore ye mannee look for sic well-buked Language, as the Gashgabbed Pamphlet-men set aff their Tales wee. But I hope yee'l tack my honest Meanen in my awn hamelie fasson of Moubanden what I wad say. Sir, theres's mickle dinn in our Countrie-edge, about an Union of our Kingdom of *Scotland* wee *England*; this is a Tale of twa Drinks; I find the maist part of Fock here-awae very sair against it, and sayen wee greeten Faces, They're fly'd at the heart, it'l be a black Bargain for poor *Scotland*; for the *Engleses* are owr auld farren for us, and there's little Ground to think, they'll gee us a seen Vantage wee their will, they neer liked us sae well; and its nae forgotten yet, the foul Plisk they play'd us about our *Caledonia* Business; *Brunt Bairn Fire dreads*.



And its strange, that they wha slighted our Commissioners sae meickle nae lang since, whan they were up at *London* upon the sam Errand, and they that by Act of Parliament made us Foreigners about a Year syne, that a' of a sudden they shude

seem to change their Mind; *I fear there's a Hook beneath the Bait*, and there's mair Policy nor Reality in their new appearand Kindness; *It's nae a' Goud that glitters*. It's said ye're gane to pit down our Parliaments, and mack us nae mair a Kingdom, and gee us up to be at the *Engleses* reverence, to be ruled and guided in a' things be them; and we may luik wee *New Lords to hae new Laws too*. This will be very odd, for a *Scots* Parliament to do this, or *Scotsmen* to play their own Country sic a Tod's

turn; Fy, fy! whare's the bauld and bra Spirits of our Fore-fathers, wha wad as soon a shoot their Head in the fire, as pit too their hand to onny sic discreditable Bargain, by whilk we'll *Get baith Skaith and Scorn*: Fy shame! what daft unnatural Bairns is they that wad quate with their awn Mother, in hopes of getten a Stap-Mother; I fear, an anes the *Engleses* had us on their Haunch, they'll skult us to purpose, for they hae mair pith to lay on, nor we to had aff; and it were well ward, that we were soundly belted for our Daffen.

Dear Sir, hae nae hand in sick an ill Turn, as ye wad nae hae your Bairns to ban your Banes when ye're gane; and for ought I hear, an ye gee your Vote the wrang gate, ye need nae look for a blyth Blink frae ony in this Country, e'en your awn Friends will turn their back upon ye. I grant I'm nae Politian, but we cannee guess here-awae what Vantage our Land can get be this Bargain; I hear few speaken for't but a wheen Chapmen and Pedlers, that fancies they'll get *Goud in Goupens. As the Fool thinks the Bell clinks*: But *Engles* Merchants is better Stocked nor ours, and I doubt nae, an there be onny Gear gaen, but they wad *Lick the Butter aff our Focks Bread*. But let me tell you Sir, that People here-awae are sae far frae lippenen to be made Rich be *England*, that they're fly'd they wad be herried by this Union; for its little Gear we have, to pay our awn Stents and Cesses, that we man pay in our awn Fasson, but ilkie Bodie tells us, we'll be garr'd pay Taxes amaist upon ilkie thing; no our very Reek and Sindens but will be Stented; By this means we wad soon hae *A cald Coal to blaw at*. And mair they say, our Yeal is to be rais'd to twa Groats the Pint, and our Salt to ten or twal Shillen the Peck, that will be saat Saat indeed; and a' this it's said, to pay a scare of *England's* Debt, which is unco great; it seems they crack mair o' their Wealth nor they hae cause, whan they man hae our help to pay their Debts: Dear Sir, whare wilt

come frae to pay a' this? And I trow, ye that thats Lairds may look for ill paid Rents, an ye get onny at a'; this'll be a Laed aboon a Burden, that will gar monny a honest Man's back crack; in troth Sir, they may e'en as well flea the skin aff our Faces, as gar us had up with



thae payments; a Year or twa wad herrie us; *a scad Man's head is soon broken*, wee reverence o' your Honour.

But than another Wrack will fallow, whan we hae it nae to pay, they'll send Dragoons to quarter on us, and tack awae a' we hae, and that will raise great Murmurs and ill Blood, and wha kens what this may drive poor Fock to; *Tramp on a Snail she'll shoot out her Horns*; and a wiser nor ony o' ye a' said, *Oppression will mack a wise man mad*; and after this, we'll get our Castles and strang Halds Garisond wee *Engles* Sogers; its better hadden out nor putten out. But in the mean time, I wonder what the Ministers is doen, theres no monny o them in our Country browden for this Union, yet they say, theres some o the Ministers in the East for it; But an I may speak wee reverence to their Wisdoms, their Tribe has least cause o ony to be for't; I confess I hae nae meickle skill, but I fear they wad nae be lang safe under the Tutory of the *Engles* Bishops, that will hae mair of the Court and Parliament's Ear and Hand too, nor our honest Ministers; and its well kent the Church of *England* has ay been worken Wrack to our poor Kirk, and studed what they coud to pit down our Kirk



Government, as being contrar to theirs, and to get our Kirk made like theirs, I fear the ald Sprit, is still to the fore with them; And what will come of us an we get some new sort of Aiths amang us that honest Fock will startle to take, and something or other that will puzzle our learned Ministers themselves what to do about it? I wiss my Een may nae see the ald Episcopal Wark of Hangen and Headen and Persecuten come in fasson again, the *Engleses* will neer bear wee mony things that our awn Fock

thought fit to wink at: For the auld word of homologaten the Supremacy, and homologaten Episcopacy, is not out of our Country Focks head yet; yea this word's comen in Fasson agen, for now our Country Fock are callen the Union a homologaten the breaken the Solemn League and Covenant, a burien the Wark of Reformation, and openen a Door for *Engles* Prelacy and Ceremonies: For a *Britain* Parliament may come to think it neither proper nor convenient, to hae twa not only different, but contrar Kirk Governments, baith settled by Law within one Kingdom.

I fear I hae fashed your Honour wee sayen sae meickle and therefore I man leave aff: only I beseek you, (*For a Fool may gee a wise man a*

Counsel at a' time) keep your Fingers free of sic a foul Bargain, sae little to either the Honour or Profit o' the Nation, and not only sae, but do what ye can, to keep us, as we hae been ay, a Free and Independen Nation, an a cleanly Kirk: And to end Sir, whatever some Clatter of our bein Scarers of *Englands* Trade, whilk is the takin Bait in this Business; there's mony wiser than I am, that says, we'll nae ruise our sells meickle this gate; *Fair Heghts maks Fools fain*; for the *Engleses* will surely gull us some gate or other do our best; Tack things in time that ye prove nae your sels Scotsmen, *To be owr mickle wise behint the hand*; but come o' World's Gear what will, I am sure, we hae far better and surer Riches than they, that has the Gospel in purity, and GOD's Worship without Man's Mixters, beyond ony other Kirk in Christendom, the whilk GOD in his Mercy continue lang wee us; it will be but a bach Bargain, an we quate wee Pearls for Pebles, we'll be *Penny wise and Pound fools*. I wiss GOD may guide ye a', and gee ye the Grace and Wit, to be baith True-hearted *Scotsmen*, and honest Presbyterians; it will be a lasten Brand of Infamy on a Presbyterian Parliament, an a' the Ruines that's like to come, be under their hand in bringen them on: My Saul shrinks to think of the dismal Effects of this blind Block; I wiss Slavrie, rank Poverty, Disgrace and Snares, be not the Bounteth of the Bargain: I'm neither Prophet nor Prophet's Son, but I speak out what mony Fock thinks, *A' is like to gae to the Pot together*: GOD forbid.



Springheid: the text wis prentit in *The Scottish Antiquary or Northern Notes and Queries*, Volume XII, Januar 1898, No.47, pp.99-101.