

THE DECLARATION OF SCOTTISH INDEPENDENCE

THE DECLARATION OF ARBROATH

1320

From a translation printed along with the Latin original, in 1703, in Edinburgh, for circulation to the Scottish People when the Incorporating Union was under discussion.

To our most Holy Father in Christ, and our Lord, John by the divine Providence chief Bishop of the most holy Roman and Universal Church, your humble and devoted sons: Duncan Earl of Fife, Thomas Randolph Earl of Murray, Lord of Mann and Annandale, Patrick Dunbar, Earl of March, Malise Earl of Strathern, Malcolm Earl of Lennox, William Earl of Ross, Magnus Earl of Caithness and Orkney, William Earl of Sutherland, Walter, Steward of Scotland, William Soulis, Butler of Scotland, James Lord Douglas, Roger Mowbray, David Lord Brechin, David Grahame, Ingelram Umfravil, John Monteith, Warder of the County of Monteith, Alexander Frazer, Gilbert Hay, Constable of Scotland, Robert Keith, Marshal of Scotland, Henry Sinclair, John Graham, David Lindsay, William Oliphant, Patrick Graham, John Fenton, William Abernethy, David Wemyss, William Muschet, Fergus of Ardrossan, Eustace Maxwell, William Ramsay, William Mowat, Allan Moray, Donald Campbell, John Cameron, Reginald Cheyne, Alexander Seton, Andrew Leslie, Alexander Straton, and the rest of the Barons and Freeholders, and whole Community, or Commons of the Kingdom of Scotland, send all manner of filial reverence, with devout kisses of your blessed and happy feet. Most holy Father and Lord, we know and gather from ancient Acts and Records, that in every famous nation of Scotland hath been celebrate with many praises.

This nation having come from Scythia the Greater, through the Tuscan Sea, and the Hercules Pillars, and having for many ages taken its residence in Spain in the midst of a most fierce people, could never be brought in subjection by any people how barbarous soever; and having removed from these parts, above 1200 years after the coming of the Israelites out of Egypt, did by many victories and much toil obtain these parts in the West which they still possess, having expelled the British and entirely rooted out the Picts, notwithstanding the frequent assaults and invasions they met with from the Norwegians, Danes, and English; and these parts and possessions they have always retained free from all manner of servitude and subjection, as ancient Histories do witness. This Kingdom hath been governed by an uninterrupted succession of 113 Kings, all of our own native and Royal stock, without the intervening of any stranger. The true nobility and merits of those Princes and people are very remarkable, from this one consideration (though there were not other evidence for it) that the King of Kings, the Lord Jesus Christ, after His Passion and Resurrection, honoured them as it were the first (though living in the outmost ends of the earth) with a call to His most holy faith; neither would our Saviour have them confirmed in the Christian faith by any other influence than His own first Apostle (though in order the second or third) St. Andrew, the most worthy brother of the blessed Peter, whom He would always have to be over us, as our patron or protector. Upon the weighty considerations of these things our most holy Fathers, your predecessors, did with many great and singular favours and privileges fence and secure this Kingdom and People, as being the peculiar charge and care of the brother of St Peter; so that our nation hath hitherto lived in freedom and quietness, under their protection, till the magnificent King Edward, father of the present King of England, did under colour of friendship and alliance, or confederacy, with innumerable oppressions infest us, who had in mind no fraud or deceit, at a time when we were without a King or Head, and when the People were unacquainted with wars and invasions. It is impossible for any whose own experience hath not informed him to describe, or fully to understand, the injuries, blood and violence, the depredations and fire, the imprisonments of Prelates, the burning, slaughter and robbery committed upon holy persons and religious houses, and a vast multitude of other barbarities, which that King executed on this people, without any sparing of any sex or age, religion, or order of men whatsoever. But at length it pleased God, who only can heal after wounds, to restore us to liberty; from these innumerable calamities, by our most Serene Prince, King, and Lord Robert, who for the delivering of his people and his rightful inheritance from the enemies' hand, did, like another Joshua or Maccabeus, most cheerfully undergo all manner of toil, fatigue, hardship, and hazard. The Divine Providence, the right of Succession by the Laws and Customs of the Kingdom (which we will defend till death) and the due and lawful consent and assent of all the People, made him our King and Prince. To him we are obliged and resolved to adhere in all things, both on account of his right and his own merit, as being the People's safety in defence of their Liberties. But after all, if this Prince shall leave these principles he hath so nobly pursued, and consent that we or our Kingdom be subjected to the King or People of England, we will immediately endeavour to expel him, as our enemy and as the subverter both of his own and our rights, and will make another King, who will defend our Liberties; for so long as there shall but one hundred of us remain alive we will never subject ourselves to the dominion of the English. For it is not glory, it is not riches, neither is it honour, but it is Liberty alone that we fight and contend for, which no honest man will lose but with his life.

For these reasons, most Reverend Father and Lord, we do with earnest prayers, from our bended knees and hearts, beg and entreat Your Holiness that you may be pleased with a sincere and cordial piety, to consider that with Him Whose Vicar on earth you are there is no respect nor distinction of Jew nor Greek, Scot nor English, and that with a tender and fatherly eye you may look upon the calamities and straits brought upon us and the Church of God by the English; and that you may admonish and exhort the King of England (who may well rest satisfied with his own possessions, since that Kingdom of old used to be sufficient for seven or more Kings) to suffer us to live at peace in that narrow spot of Scotland beyond which we have no habitation, since we desire nothing but our own, and we on our part, as far as we are able with respect to our own condition, shall effectually agree to him in everything that may procure our quiet. It is your concernment, Most Holy Father, to interpose in this, when you see how far the violence and barbarity of the pagans is let loose against Christendom for punishing of the sins of the Christians, and how much they daily encroach upon the Christian territories. And it is your interest to notice that there be no ground given for reflecting on your memory; if you should suffer any part of the Church to come under a scandal or eclipse (which we pray God may prevent) during your time. Let it therefore please Your Holiness to exhort the Christian Princes not to make wars betwixt themselves and their neighbours a pretext for not going to the relief of the Holy Land, since that is not the true cause of the impediment. The truer ground of it is, that they have a much nearer prospect of advantage, and far less opposition, in the subduing of their weaker neighbours. And God (Who is ignorant of nothing) knows, with how much cheerfulness both our King and we would go thither, if the King of England would leave us in peace, and we do hereby testify and declare it unto the Vicar of Christ and all Christendom. But if Your Holiness shall be too credulous of the English misrepresentations, and not give firm credit to what we have said, nor desist to favour the English to our destruction, we must believe that the Most High will lay to your charge all the blood, loss of souls, and other calamities that shall follow on either hand, betwixt them and us. Your Holiness in granting our just desires will oblige us in every case where our duty shall require it, to endeavour your satisfaction, as becomes the obedient sons of the Vicar of Christ. We commit the defence of our cause to Him Who is the Sovereign King and Judge, we cast the burden of our cares upon Him, and hope for such an issue as may give strength and courage to us and bring our enemies to nothing. The Most High God preserve your Serenity and Holiness to His Holy Church.

Given at the Monastery of Arbroath in Scotland, the sixth day of April in the Year of Grace 1320, and of our said King's reign the 15th year.

FINIS