

HIGHLAND SCOTCH COSTUME

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By

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## Chapter I

### INTRODUCTION

Many studies have been made in an attempt to find the reasons for the changes which have occurred in costume from time to time. Writers have advanced many theories as the causes for change in fashion. The influence of world events, historical research and discovery, expositions, art exhibits, and even the visits of personages of influence have inspired new fashion ideas.

John S. S. Stuart (26) in his Costumes of the Clans states that with few exceptions there has not existed in any country a national dress entirely original or local and that those generally considered so were the remains of an obsolete period. The fact that most so called modern styles have been merely adaptations of earlier periods would seem to verify his opinion. Other authors have shared his view and one wrote:

"Fashions that are now called new  
Have been worn by more than you,  
Other times have worn the same  
Though the new ones get the name." (19)

For the past few years designers of the fabrics and styles of sportswear have been influenced to an appreciable extent by the Scottish costume. This particular trend may be attributed chiefly to the ascension of a Scottish queen to the throne of England and her subsequent visit to Canada and the United States. A desire to trace the development of Scottish influences on modern costume, together with a



curiosity to know more about the historic background of the kilts and tartans of the Scottish Highlands have been responsible for this survey of the subject.

Although the costume of the Highland Scots was developed in ancient times, the search for authentic information has been difficult because the literature on the subject has been hard to secure and the accuracy of some statements might be doubted. The information included here was gathered from a variety of sources ranging from the poems and novels of Sir Walter Scott to copies of the records from the office of Thomas Innes, Advocate, Albany Herald in Edinburgh where most of the existing historical data pertaining to Scotland has been placed. Much of the literature consulted was not accessible to the general public since most of the books and manuscripts were from the private library of Mr. Robert L. MacFarlane, Dean of Men, Kansas State Teachers College of Emporia, Emporia, Kansas.

The illustrations were copied from authentic originals by R. R. McIan from The Highland Clans of Scotland by George Eyre-Todd (5). The photographs were made from the hand painted illustrations in The Costumes of the Clans by John S. S. Stuart (26) which were made from oil paintings of famous Scottish men of the various periods. The tartan samples were secured from the Botany Worsted Mills, Passaic, New Jersey where there has been extensive research on Scottish costume and where one of the largest collections of authentic tartans in existence has been accumulated.

A brief picture of the Scottish people and the Highland

country has been included in order to give a background and to show how the costume was developed to suit the needs of those who wore it, for:

"Here's to it;  
The fighting sheen of it;  
The yellow, the green of it;  
The white, the blue of it;  
The dark, the red of it;  
Every thread of it;  
The fair have sighed for it;  
The brave died for it;  
Foemen sought for it;  
Honor the name of it;  
Drink to the fame of it--  
Gentlemen--The Tartan!" (6)

## Chapter II

### HISTORIC BACKGROUND

The earliest reference to the British Isles was found in A Treatise of the World which has been generally credited to Aristotle who lived in the fourth century B. C. (8). In this work he wrote of Albion (Great Britain) and Ierna (Ireland). Historians have agreed, however, that the island called Great Britain was inhabited long before that time as evidence of a very ancient culture has been discovered (10).

The original inhabitants of Britain, of whatever race they may have been, were overcome long before the Romans began their invasions (8). The Celts, Albans, and Gaels, who advanced from the East and spread themselves over the greater part of Europe, had arrived long before the Romans started their conquests (10). The Celtic migration was followed within the Christian era by the Huns, Goths, Vandals, Franks, and Scots who drove the Celts to the western coast and mountainous regions where they were able to defend themselves (16).

The Romans first invaded England in 50 B. C., but not until after a second invasion in 78 A. D. did they establish enough authority to gain any control (10). At that time all England and all Wales as well as the south of Scotland as far as the Wall of Antonius, which extended from Forth to Clyde, formed provinces of the Roman Empire. That portion situated to the north of the wall was called Caledonia (8). The name, however, was not Roman, but was derived from the Pictish word coille, meaning a wood, and the term Caledonians meant men of

woods (10).

During the next century Caledonia was visited by many other invaders among whom the Scots from Ireland, or Scotia the name given Ireland by the Scots, were the most successful in establishing themselves (17). Exactly how these Scots came to be on the neighboring island has long been disputed. According to their own tradition, they derived their name from Scotia, daughter of one of the Pharaohs, whom one of their leaders married when they passed west-ward through Egypt as they migrated to Spain. According to Gaelic tradition, the Scots migrated from Spain to the south of Ireland from where they began their invasions of Caledonia in the sixth century (15).

The Scots were Christians and were called Gall-gael, or Gaelic Strangers, by the Celts. They established their first Capitol at Dun-add and the district where they first settled has retained the name Oire-Gaidheal or Argyle, the land of the Gael (21). Another warlike race which soon made its appearance on the western coast was the Norsemen, worshippers of Woden and Thor. At first they were fierce enemies of the Christian Celts and Scots, pillaging and burning buildings and churches and destroying historical records (14).

From the sixth to the fifteenth centuries, usually described as the middle ages the people of Caledonia slowly advanced beyond barbarism after the introduction of Christianity. However, it was not until the eleventh century that anything remarkable occurred in connection with Scottish national life (21). About 1066 Malcolin Ceann-Mor, King of Scot-

land, moved the capitol from Scone in the Highlands to Dumfermline in the Lowlands. That move, according to historians, was really the beginning of the Highland clan system (8). There was also a great addition of Saxon and Norman-French refugees to the population of Scotland during this period. The refugees were welcomed by the King who granted them large holdings of land and many privileges (24).

Few traces of the earliest inhabitants of Scotland have survived. Some tangible evidence has remained, however, in the ruins of hut circles and lake villages. Several burial mounds have been discovered in which skeletons, implements, and primitive pottery were preserved and these, with a few scattered and badly defaced sculptured crosses and stones, make up the authentic ancient history of these people (9).

Authentic proof that once great forests covered that part of Scotland called Caledonia by the Romans and referred to today as the Highlands has been found.(7). The part of the land composed of bulky massed hills furrowed and trenched by deep glens through which flowed rapid torrents and cataracts was the home of the mountain Scot. The rugged mountain crests which formed natural battlements and turrets and the deep glens, craggy peaks, lovely moors and beautiful lakes which echoed to the din of Highland battle have been made famous by Sir Walter Scott.

A. R. Hope Moncrief (22) has described the country as "mountain giants clad in nature's own tartan of green and purple, checkered by brown and grey, with bare knees of crag, and streaming sporran of cascade and feathers of fir-wood. Sentinels, often wrapped in a plaid of mist, or hidden in a mackintosh of drenching

rain."

The very nature of the country demanded that the inhabitants be strong bodied, strong willed, and fearless. They had to be frugal and ingenious in order to survive in the rigorous climate.

## Chapter III

### THE CLAN SYSTEM

The Scotch Highlanders were a bold and hardy race of men filled with a romantic attachment to their native mountains and glens, cherishing their independence and firmly bound together by a very strong sense of national pride (6). Because they had little contact with the rest of the world and had been pent up for many centuries within their almost inaccessible mountainous territory, they acquired a peculiar character and adopted habits and manners differing widely from any other people. The origin of the clan system no doubt was due to the mountainous nature of the country in which the people lived (8).

The idea of the clan system may have evolved in the eleventh century when King Malcolm Ceann-Mor moved the seat of the government to the Lowlands and married a Saxon bride. Thereafter the Highlanders were unable to contend with the overpowering number of strangers who were being encouraged by the king to come into Scotland. Their desire to preserve their independence led the Highlanders to develop the system of clans (12).

The word clan or clanna simply meant children. In the middle ages law and custom did not deal with individuals but with groups (17). The earliest groups were personal and pastoral but as soon as a group settled, the effect of the territorial influence of the land which it had occupied began to be felt. In the community all members were regarded as being

related by blood and when surnames came into being, the group generally took that of their most famous early leader with the prefix Mac (son) or in Ireland where the system also prevailed, of O' (Ua; grandson or nephew) (9). The land also was named for the chief who in theory was actually owner of the whole group with absolute power over every member (21).

The head of the strongest family usually was chosen as the chief although a vote of all men old enough to bear arms was required (8). In later days when great combinations of related clans were formed, the chief of the strongest branch became Captain of the Confederacy. Every district was an independent state though in general the same characteristics were common to each (8). Plate I shows the distribution of the more powerful Highland and Border clans in 1500 when the system was at its height. Each clan had a stated meeting place where the members gathered at the summons of their chief. Each had its own war cry or slogan, and its badge of pine, heather or some other evergreen plant. The sett or pattern of the tartan enabled each clansman to easily recognize his friends or enemies (14).

The clan system, which flourished from the eleventh through the seventeenth centuries, finally was crushed out after 1748. Because of revolts and uprisings in the Highlands, the English king passed laws forbidding the carrying of arms, gathering in council and wearing any part of the Highland dress on the threat of death for doing so (1).

From about 1745 there had been a decline in the arts, commerce, and wealth among the clans. By this time they were





a broken, empoverished, and dispirited people; their character had been almost completely destroyed (15). The great era of the clans was past and even when the oppressive laws were repealed, there was general confusion. Two generations of Scotsmen had been forced to forget, records had been lost or destroyed, chieftainships were disputed, and even the sett of the clan tartan had been lost or forgot (1).

Recently there has been a growing interest in clan relations and many clan societies have been established even in the United States. In Canada, as well as in the United States, reunions of the descendants and adherents of Scottish clans have been held. These, with the memberships and gatherings of various Scottish societies, which were organized for purely social, literary, and benevolent purposes, have helped to keep alive the history and memories of the homeland, especially the deeds of clan chieftains (11).

## Chapter IV

### TARTAN

According to both Pliny and Diodorus Siculus, the Gaels in France and Britain used fine wool dyed purple, scarlet, saffron, and other bright colors (17). The Celts also were known to have been fond of bright clothing and, according to Livy and Virgil, they appeared before the Walls of Rome in flaming tartan dresses as early as 121 A. D. (11).

The word tartan probably was derived from the French tiretaine meaning crossed or barred (15). The material may have been the original of the varigated cloth used for the principal portions of Highland costume, although to the Celts the word tartan was unknown. The true Gaelic name for this colored material was breacan, which was derived from breac meaning checkered or speckled (17).

The original use of tartan was not to show the tribe or clan to which the wearer belonged as in present use, but was a distinctive emblem of rank or position he held (8). The earliest tartan probably was made simply of black and white yarns, since these were the colors of the wool from the native sheep. This ancient tartan probably resembled very closely the present day Shepherd's check (15). Later, however, the women, who had full charge of making the material, discovered how to produce other colors from the native plants and became very proficient in the art of dyeing. Yellow was obtained from the crab-apple tree or from bracken root; green from ripe privet berries mixed with salt; magenta from the dande-

lion; violet from watercress; while purple came from a lichen called cudbear (21).

At first tartan probably had no distinct pattern or sett and the number of colors that might be worn was carefully regulated according to the rank of the wearer. Servants were allowed one color only, or no tartan; rent paying farmers might wear two colors; officers were permitted three, and chieftains wore five. More important than any of these were the Bards or poets with six colors and the king with seven (15). The priest, when officiating, wore a robe of eight colors indicating that as a representative of God he was superior even to the king. The eight colors were yellow, blue, white, green, brown, black, red, and purple. The clergy also had a special quiet tartan devoted to their use which was called Breacan-nan-Cleireach (1).

The use of different setts or patterns of tartan as a distinguishing mark of the clan or family began to take form during the latter part of the eleventh century after the clan system was well developed (13). Generally a single clan inhabited a district, but, where two or more clans inhabited the same territory some method of identification became necessary, so that finally whole families adopted the same pattern and the number of colors worn lost the former significance of rank (15).

Tartan cloth was of two grades: The breacan which was of finer quality, and worn as full dress tartan and by the women, and the cath-dath (from cath, war, and dath, color) which was thick, coarse cloth worn by the men when they were

at work or engaged in war (6). Tartans also were classified according to the occasion or purpose of use as follows: Clans, special weaves for hunting, dress, mourning, and the chief; Families, where large families inhabited whole districts, especially the islands; Septs, usually the cath-dath, worn by small dependent families or by foreigners who had professed allegiance to a chief in return for his protection (6). The women usually wore tartans of their own setting which differed from the men's by being woven on a white ground (12).

To most readers, especially in the United States, the word tartan has no significance since the word plaid has grown to mean any pattern in which colored threads have been crossed. But to the Highlanders tartan meant a material woven in a certain pattern or sett, while the plaid was a garment, a large blanket-like mantle (6).

The setts were not left to the fancy of the weaver. The women took great pains to preserve an exact pattern on a piece of wood by winding the correct numbers and colors of the yarns in every stripe on it. Such a guide was called a measuring stick (12).

In 1725 when General Wade was sent to Scotland to try to restore peace in the Highlands, he gave orders that his six companies of men should adopt a uniform tartan of a dark color. This action called for the creation of an entirely new tartan since no MacPherson would ever wear the colors of a hated MacTavish. The result was the Black Watch, probably the best known of all Scottish tartans (11).

When Charles Edward Stewart called the Highlanders to his service in 1745, wearers of tartans of all colors and setts responded. But after the battle of Culloden in 1746 and Prince Charlie's defeat, anyone seen wearing tartan was liable to be shot on sight. For many years the wearing of tartan was prohibited and by the time the laws were repealed many of those who had known the secrets of dyeing and weaving were dead. Setts had been forgot; measuring sticks had been lost. The result has been great confusion since many of the setts were made up from memory and were not entirely accurate (15).

The tartan, however, did come back and royal approval was given Highland dress by Queen Victoria's adoption of the Royal Stewart tartan. She even introduced a new tartan designed for her by King Albert, and named it Balmoral for her Scottish castle (15). During her reign, plaid, shawls and dresses of tartan were the very height of fashion and even bed and window curtains and pincushions were made of the material (18).

Not every Scottish name can be associated with a tartan since tartans were distinctively Highland and many Lowland or Border families never have been associated with the traditions and dress of the "Wild Heiland Men" (6). The question as to who may wear the tartan often has arisen.

Frank Adams (1) has given the answer by saying that one may wear any tartan associated with his name or the name of any ancestor, paternal or maternal, or, if no tartan associated with one's name can be found, any of the Royal, Regimental,

or purely imaginary modern patterns such as Caledonia, Jacobite, or Dollar College may be worn. These three tartans as well as a few of the authentic clan tartans are shown in Plates II to VI.

There can be no question as to the suitability of tartan material for the purposes of the hunter and the warrior to whom it was important to be as inconspicuous as possible on a moor or mountain side. It was also of value to the clansman in battle to be able to distinguish readily between friend and foe. And, though the Highlander may have left his homeland behind, he never has forgot his love for the native costume and may be found almost any where wearing his tartan kilt. Sir Walter Scott (25) gave immortal expression to this sentiment when in his The Heart of Mid-Lothian the Duke of Argyle and Greenwich exclaimed to Jeanie Deans,

"MacCallummore's heart will be as cold as death can make it when it does not warm to the tartan."

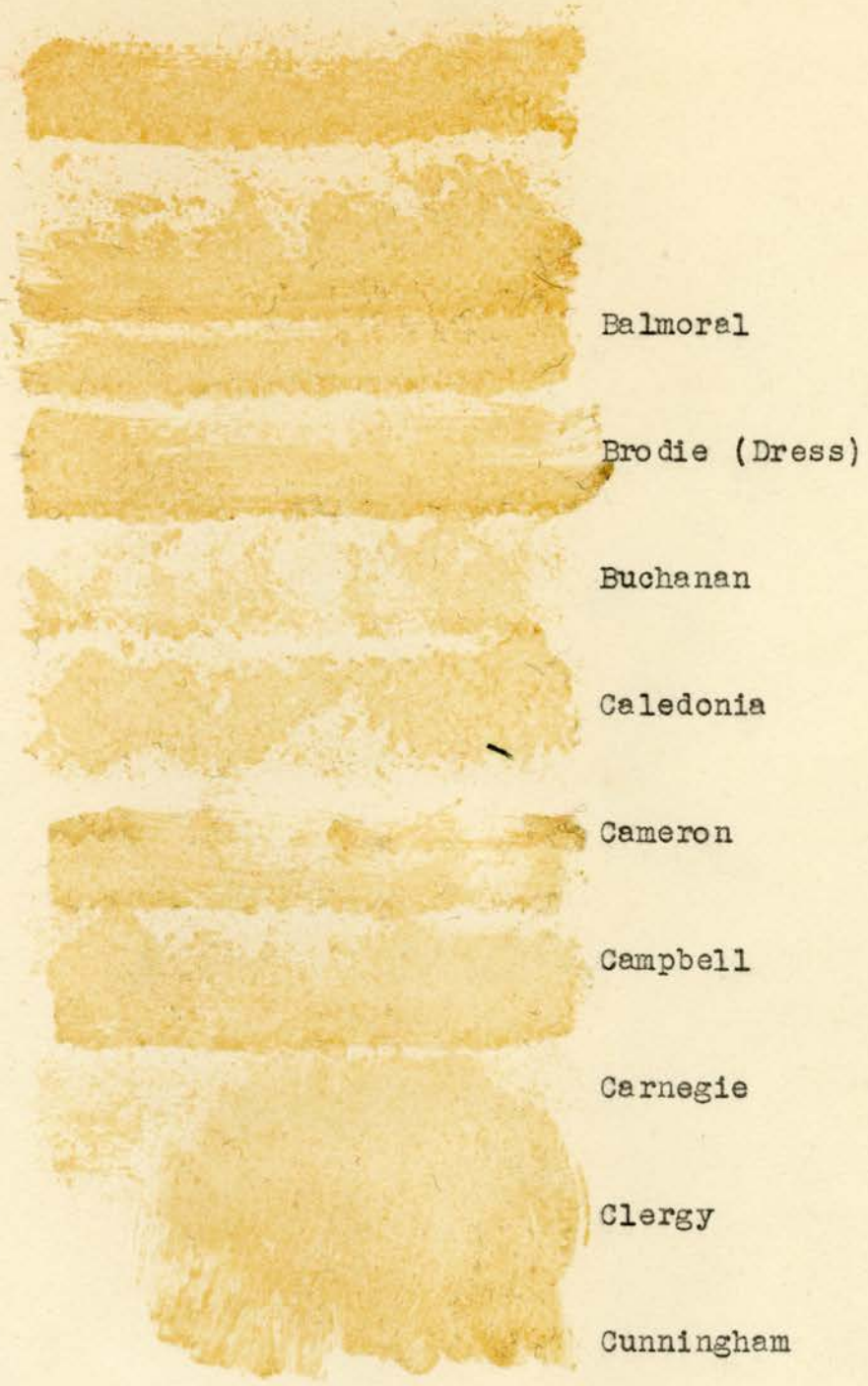


PLATE II

Clan Tartans



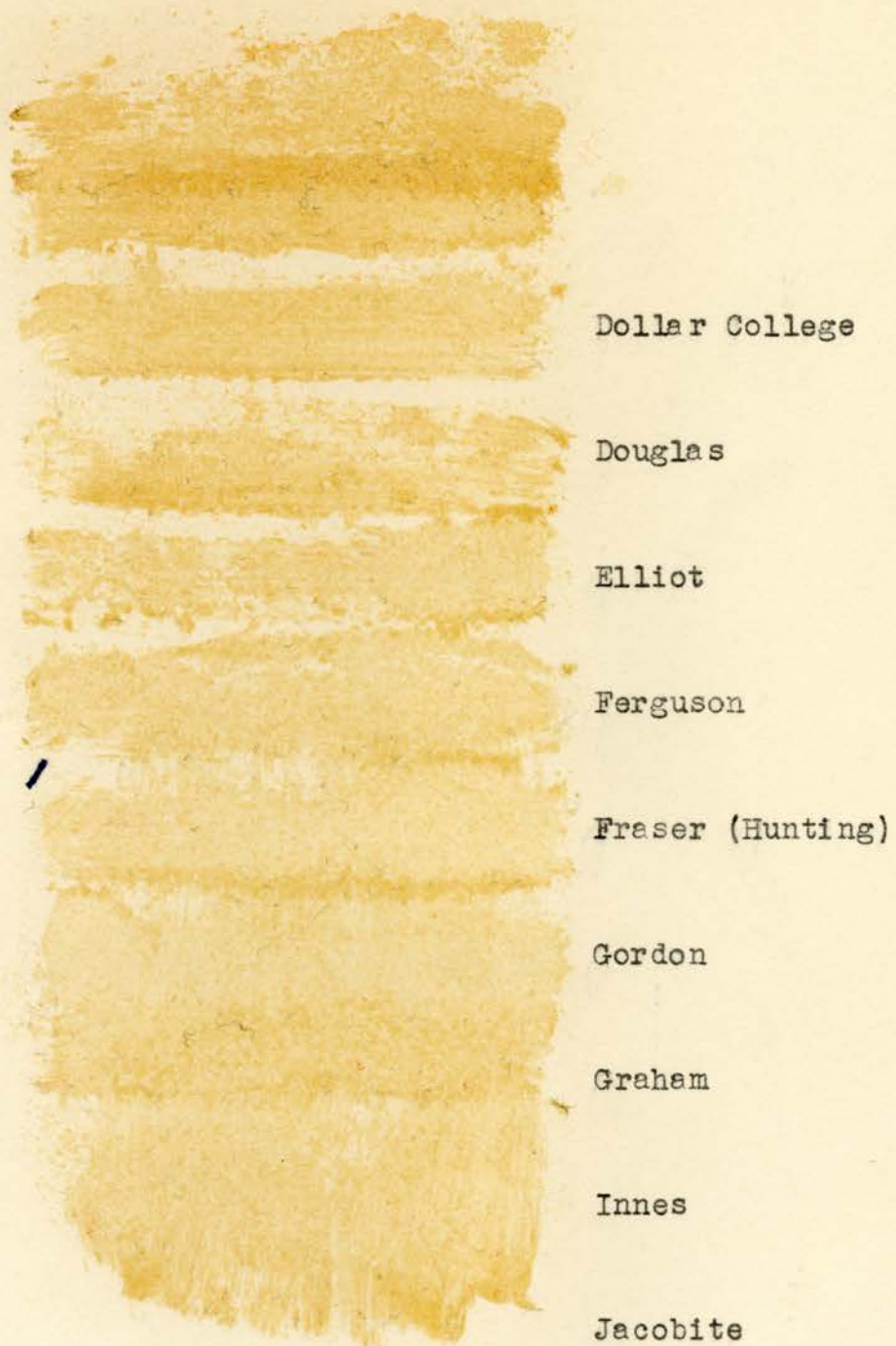


PLATE III  
Clan Tartans



Leslie (Dress)

Logan

MacAlpine

MacBeth

MacDonald

MacDonald (Hunting)

MacDougall

MacDuff (Hunting)

MacGregor

PLATE IV

Clan Tartans



MacKinzie



MacLachlan



MacLeod (of Lewis)



MacMillan



MacMillan (Dress)



MacNaughton



MacNeill



MacPherson



MacPherson (Chief)

PLATE V  
Clan Tartans



Malcolm

Murray

Napier

Ross

Royal Stewart

Royal Stewart (Dress)

Urquhart

Wallace

Weir

PLATE VI

Clan Tartans

## Chapter V

### HIGHLAND DRESS

When Caesar first led his army into Britain fifty years before the Birth of Christ, he found an interesting race of people. These tall, strong, blue-eyed people were the Celts, the earliest race to inhabit the island to any extent (21). For clothing they wore the skins of animals, and to make themselves more frightful in battle, they painted their bodies with a blue dye made from woad, a native weed (24). They never cut their reddish blonde hair and beards but converted them into a natural head-dress which served either as a helmet or mask, as was deemed necessary. For a weapon they carried a small bronze or iron hatchet called a celt. For protection a small round or oval shield covered with leather was used (8).

In 1822, some workmen, digging in a peat bog near Castle Blakeney in Ireland, uncovered at a depth of ten feet, the body of a man dressed in the ancient costume. The anti-septic quality of the peat moss had perfectly preserved the body which was wrapped in a cow's hide tied at the neck with a leather cord (14).

The simple leather cloak of undressed hide formed the dress of the ancient British, but when the Romans returned to the island in 78 A. D., they found an entirely different type of costume. Another race, the Dalriad or Irish Scots, had invaded the country, brought Christianity, and introduced their style of dress. Some features of the new cos-

tune were truis or trousers, a long cota or tunic, the breacan or mantle, and the brogues or shoes (14).

Manuscripts prepared by the Welsh Bards in the sixth century and still preserved, described the costume worn by superior persons in Scotland from 400 A. D. to 800 A. D. or during the Dark Ages, as consisting of a tunic open at the neck, with close sleeves extending to the wrist. For young men the tunic reached half way to the knee, but for older men it was fuller and longer, reaching nearly to the calf of the leg. Over this tunic sometimes was worn a short cota reaching only to the waist with sleeves reaching only to the elbows. Beneath the tunic the truis were worn. These garments were of plain or checked material and usually were tied about the ankles with leather thongs (29). The predominating color of both tunic and trousers was red, while the mantle was dyed saffron yellow, a custom said to have been introduced from eastern countries (12). For centuries this saffron linen tunic or leine-chroich (yellow shirt) was the most distinctive feature of ancient Scottish dress.

The upper garment worn over the body garments was a rectangular mantle measuring about three by five feet and called breacan, meaning spotted or diced (11). These garments may have been made of tartan at this early date, but they were more often of solid colors such as blue, black, or crimson. Those worn by the chieftains or leaders usually were longer and lined with fur (17).

The brogues or shoes worn with the costume were simple sandals with no heels. They were first made from the dried

skins of beasts, but later half tanned leather was used. They were fastened on by leather thongs wound round the foot or the ankle. In some types the leather covered the toes and arch only (26). Shoes, however, were by no means common in ancient Caledonia. While the Celts usually went bare headed with their long unkept hair and beards in wild disorder, they sometimes wore a small conical skull cap of metal called a capa or biorraid to which they attached a sprig of some evergreen plant which had been chosen as a badge (18).

Though written references to Highland dress before the eleventh century have rarely been found, ancient sculptured stones found at Dupplin, Perthshire, Forres, and Nigg have proved the costume of the Highlanders to have been developed at a very early date, possibly toward the end of the eighth century (21). The earliest authentic written reference to Highland costume was made in the Norwegian Saga of Magnus Olafson, King of Norway, who adopted the style of dress during his expedition through the Hebrides. On his return home, because his legs were left bare from his ankles to his knees, the people of Norway called him Magnus Barefoot (15). Thus it would appear that in the Highlands, the ancient long truis had been discarded for every day wear in favor of a loose garment falling to the knees and belted around the waist. This garment, the saffron shirt, really was an ample belted plaid of yellow linen usually made of twenty-four yards of material (1). Plate VII, Fig. 1.

The Highlanders much preferred going barefoot, though they sometimes wore shoes called buskins which were made



Fig. 2



Fig. 1

Eyre-Todd

PLATE VII

Ancient Forms of Highland Dress



from undressed red deer hide and worn with the hair turned outward. Because the buskins sometimes reached the knees and were laced up the front, the wearers were contemptuously called red-shanks (26). At this period also, the round leather covered shield was studded with brass and iron and the small hatchet or celt was discarded for a double edged sword or Claymore, and small knives or dirks (18). Warriors wore shirts of ring mail and copied the uniform of the Danes and Norsemen (12).

From the eleventh to the fourteenth century, the general features of the costume of the Highlanders remained about the same. Both nobles and people of lower rank wore mantles which were long, full and gathered into folds. The rest of their garments were simple truis, a woolen jerkin, and a very large linen tunic with very wide sleeves which reached to the knees (26). Plate VII, Fig. 2.

No mention of Highland Scotch costume has been found from the reign of Alexander III in 1249 until the reign of Robert II in 1371, at which time a great change in fashion took place in the clothing of nearly all countries. The new introductions were the hat, the cloak, and the surcoat from which grew the doublet (11). The Highlanders, however, were slow to accept the new costume and adopted it only in part. They did not discard their old style of dress. Instead, the new ideas were merely added to the old, and when the doublet was used, it was worn over the tunic (26). The Highlanders never accepted the hat or cloak, but continued to wear the bonnet, the jacket, and the brogues (18).

Not until early in the sixteenth century did the dress of the chiefs begin to acquire the splendor that has become legendary through song and poem. Mention of the doublet and the use of ostrich plumes and jewels in the bonnet was made for the first time. The jacket for persons of high rank was of velvet lined with taffeta, the hose of tartan, and the tunic of very fine linen embroidered with silk and tied at the waist with ribbons (26). At the close of the sixteenth century, the full costume of the clans was a short woolen jerkin, generally of a single color but sometimes of tartan, cloth hose and truis combined, a linen tunic and a plaid of tartan. The shoes of this period were shaped to fit the feet for the first time (18).

The leine-chroich, which had been the most striking part of the costume, began to be discarded about 1600, and the dress in general seems to have evolved into three forms: the breacan-feile or belted plaid, so named from the fact that it simply was made of a piece of tartan unsewed and fixed round the body with a belt; the feile-beag, or little kilt, resembling very much the garment worn today except that the pleats were unsewed; and the truis, jacket, and small plaid for wear on horseback, when traveling in the Lowlands, by the clergy, and by old men (26).

When in 1620, at the command of James VI of Scotland who was also James I of England, young men of the Highlands were required to be sent to school in England to learn "Civilitie, Godliness, and Englische," the tunic was discarded, though the doublet and under shirt now trimmed with ruffs, bands,

and ruffles, the plaid, and the bonnet were retained (1). Soon the VanDyke style of the time of Charles I began to affect Highland dress and as a result, the tabbed doublet, the short round jerkin, and the erect bonnet decorated with tall plumes were adopted by the Gaelic chiefs (26). A Highland chieftain of the period directing his men in battle is shown in Plate VIII. His costume consisted of a doublet of blue velvet, gold embroidered, truis and bonnet of crimson cloth, and the breacan-da-sgaithach or double winged plaid of scarlet tartan fixed to the right shoulder by a brooch and to the left by a gold clasp.

In the middle and latter part of the reign of Charles I, the doublet decreased in size and finally supplanted the long pointed VanDyke style. Plate IX, a picture of the Marquis of Montrose dated 1644, shows him dressed in the full habit of the clans.

In Plate X, a Highland chieftain is shown in a still different costume of the period. Here the tunic with long sleeves, a holdover from an earlier period, was of yellow silk. The jerkin of blue and scarlet cloth was decorated with gold and silver, and beneath the tunic was a sleeve of an under garment of decorated scarlet cloth. The plaid of blue and green tartan was worn as the breacan-thaobh or shoulder plaid. The shoes were the old-fashioned leather buskins.

The period represented by Plates VIII, IX, and X, from 1630 to 1700, has been called the most distinguished era of Highland costume. The jacket had become a slashed doublet;



Stuart

PLATE VIII

Double winged plaid of 1629



Stuart

PLATE IX

Full habit of a chief in 1644



Stuart

PLATE X

Highland costume showing ancient saffron shirt worn with the shoulder plaid

the truis were even made of silk and worn under the belted plaid; the bonnets were of various colors, those of superiors being of scarlet while those of chiefs were plumed with eagle's feathers.

During the next few years the fashions of other countries again influenced Highland dress and persons of rank either laid aside the woolen undershirt or wore over it the linen chemise with ruffles and very wide sleeves gathered at the wrists. This costume is shown in Plate XI in which may be seen the breacan-feile, or belted plaid, and the gun which had replaced the large two handed sword.

In Plate XII the simple riding dress is shown. This was the breacan-spreighte, or shoulder plaid, with jerkin and truis of tartan which in 1703 was the general dress of all ranks. The long truis or trousers, which had again come into favor after years of disuse, were of two kinds depending on the means of the wearer. One style was knitted and of a single color, while the other was made of tartan cloth cut bias. Both styles were fitted to the shape of the body and were tied with a belt (12).

The breacan-feile or belted plaid was worn for hunting or travelling on foot. It was worn with truis in winter, but without them in summer. This garment consisted of seven to twelve yards of tartan sewed up the middle so as to form a plaid varying from four to six yards long and two yards wide (15). To put the garment on, the Highlander first laid it out on the ground with his belt under it. Using the belt as a guide he then pleated the plaid except for a half yard



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PLATE XI

Belted plaid and ruffled chemise  
showing French influence





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PLATE XII

Simple riding dress of 1703  
showing tartan truis

at each end. Next he lay down in position, crossed the two unpleated portions, and buckled his belt. When he got up, the upper part formed the plaid and was fastened on the left shoulder, while the lower part formed the kilt (11).

Since the garment contained no pocket, a purse called a sporran, was fastened in front. This was usually made of leather, badger skin or goat skin with a brass or silver mouthpiece having a secret clasp. The sporran was divided into several compartments. One of these held a watch, another coins and occasionally shot or even food (8).

The coat or jacket worn with the belted plaid was sometimes of green, blue or black cloth decorated with silver buttons, lace, tassels, or embroidery according to the wearer's taste. The bonnet of this period had changed from the ancient conical form to the flat Flemish type which, during the time of Anne of Cleves, had found its way into England (18). Garters originally were a prominent part of the costume, often measuring a yard in length and being wound repeatedly around the leg. They were fastened outside the hose in a particular knot called the snaoin-gartain or garter knot. The colors were very brilliant (11).

In considering any early costume it must be remembered that the weapons carried formed an essential part. Thus, the equipment of the Highlander at this time included a broadsword, a pair of pistols and a dirk or dagger which hung in a scabbard with a knife and fork beside the sporran in front. A large powder horn was hung from a small belt worn over the shoulder. He still carried the small shield studded with brass.

The costume, as shown in Plates XIII and XIV, was worn until the beginning of the eighteenth century (26)

After 1700 a great many changes affecting both the country and the costume occurred. Among these were the revolution of 1715, the passage of laws prohibiting the wearing of any part of Highland dress especially the tartan, and the introduction of the feile-beag or little kilt (11).

The rebellion of 1745 was very unfortunate for the Highlanders who had rallied to the cause of Charles Edward Stewart or Bonnie Prince Charlie. As a consequence, oppressive laws were enacted against all who had taken part. The bearing of arms and the wearing of Scottish dress in the Highlands were prohibited. Finally, however, in 1782, through the efforts of the Duke of Montrose, George III was persuaded to repeal these laws and, in spite of the length of time which had elapsed, the wearing of the Highland dress soon was resumed (8).

With the reintroduction of the costume several changes were made. The ancient breacan-feile or plaid and kilt in one piece was entirely abandoned in favor of the feile-beag or little kilt. This new garment was nothing more than the separation from the belted plaid of the pleated part which hung below the girdle, and the sewing of the folds permanently in place. There actually was no change in appearance because the plaid continued to be worn, thus giving the same effect as the breacan-feile (15).

The wardrobe of the completely equipped Highland chief of 1782 consisted of the following: Full trimmed bonnet; tartan jacket, vest, kilt and waist belt; pair of cloth stock-



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PLATE XIII

Highland costume of later part of the  
seventeenth century



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PLATE XIV

Highland costume just before its  
proscription in 1746

ings with yellow garters; two pairs of brogues; silver mounted purse and belt, target or shield with a spear; broadsword; pair of pistols and bullet mould; and a dirk, knife, fork, and leather waist belt (15).

During the latter part of the eighteenth century, because of increased relations with England, Highland costume began to lose favor as the common dress, although as shown in Plate XV, it has been worn by a few Highlanders even down to the present time. The costume worn today, while it has remained essentially the same as that worn in 1782, has undergone a few changes. Comparatively recent additions have been the large silver buckles on the shoes, the highly ornamented sporran made of goat's hair, and the gaiter. The last named article has been added in memory of the great hardships suffered by the Highland soldiers under Sir John Moore during the retreat at Corunna in the Peninsular war. These brave men, after wearing out their shoes, tore up their shirts and wound them around their feet for protection (11).

Today rules have been made regarding the wearing of Highland dress. Regulations governing levees or court functions, everyday wear, and evening occasions have been issued. Directions issued by the Lord Chamberlain's Office, St. James Palace, London, regarding Scottish national dress stated that for full dress a gentleman should wear a black velvet full dress doublet with silver crest buttons, a fine tartan full dress kilt, short tuis, full dress tartan stockings, long shoulder plaid, white hair sperran silver mounted with tassels, silver mounted dirk with knife and fork, silver shoulder



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PLATE XV

Highland costume in its present form  
with kilt and plaid separated

brooch and kilt pin, lace jabot or black ribbon tie, full dress brogues with silver instep buckles, sword, silver mounted dirk for stocking, and Glengarry or Balmoral cap with crest (15).

For everyday wear the costume should be simple and dignified. It should consist of a tweed jacket and vest with plain horn buttons. The kilt should be of heavier tartan than that worn for evening and should reach to the center of the knee in length. The sporran should be either of plain leather in a small round pattern or made of the head of a fox, badger or some other animal. Stockings should be of ordinary hose material and not of tartan. Foot wear should consist of thick soled brogues with gaiters to match the stockings. The bonnet should be of the Balmoral type and a bow tie should be chosen. A plaid of tartan about four yards long and one and one half yards wide should be worn if desired. The skeandhu or small dagger placed in the right stocking should be the only weapon worn with everyday dress (15).

And so, The Scottish Highland costume has come down to the present time. Today, just as dress in all other countries has been changed so has Highland dress been changed and simplified. The costume was evolved to meet conditions of the country. Men had to climb mountains, move swiftly, and conceal themselves from the enemy in the mountains or heather covered moors. These activities required complete freedom for the arms and legs, while concealment depended on the colors and patterns of the dress (16). Of all ancient costumes none was more practical, more graceful, or more picturesque than the old costume of the Highland Scots.



## Chapter VI

### THE DRESS OF HIGHLAND WOMEN

The dress of Celtic women in ancient times was little different from that of the men (13). Their tunic was longer, reaching to the ankles, was bound around the waist, and seldom had any sleeves. The women generally left their arms bare, though those of higher rank sometimes wore a second short sleeved tunic made of checkered or plain material embroidered and called a gwyn, or gown. Over the gown was worn for warmth a large mantle or plaid of coarse heavy material or fur fastened with a pin or brooch. The chief ornaments were bracelets, brooches, and necklaces and the women wore no head or foot covering (12). Plate XVI, Fig. 1.

The ancient style of dress was common until the twelfth century when another style called the Arisaid was adopted. In the new style the plaid, almost invariably white with a pattern made by a few small stripes of blue, black and red yarns, reached from the shoulders to the feet, was fastened at the throat in front with a large gold, silver or brass brooch, and was held in pleats around the waist by a long leather belt decorated with silver and precious stones (15). With the tunic were worn sleeves of scarlet cloth, having cuffs decorated with gold lace and silver buttons like those on the coats worn by the men (11).

The headdress, worn only by married women, was a kerchief of fine linen called a Currae, or Breid, which was tied under the chin in front and hung loose in back. On



Fig. 4



Fig. 3



Fig. 2



Fig. 1

Eyre-Todd

PLATE XVI

Costumes of Highland women

either side of the face a large lock of hair tied with ribbons was allowed to hang down. In bad weather and in winter the plaid was worn over the head, thus serving as a hood as well as a coat (12). Plate XVI, Fig. 2 and 3.

In the sixteenth century, the large belted plaid was discarded by the women in favor of the tonnag, or quailleachan, a small square of silk or fine woolen tartan, worn over the shoulders in the manner of a mantle and pinned in front with a large silver brooch (1). At this period also the women wore over the tunic, which now had become an under-garment, two long gathered skirts, the lower one white and the upper one of a bright color. With the skirt was worn a jacket or waistcoat which opened down the front (12). Plate XVI, Fig. 4.

A very peculiar part of the costume was the stockings. These were of woolen material laid in fine pleats from the ankles up to the calf of the leg (1). The Breid had largely been discarded. No covering for the head was the general rule although young girls sometimes tied a band of red or blue ribbon across their foreheads (12).

In some parts of the Highlands even today this last type of costume may be found though for modern wear most of the women have adopted the kilted or pleated skirt worn with a tweed jacket and low heeled brogues or ghillies (13).

For evening, a costume composed of a skirt of tartan silk worn with a blouse decorated with Celtic embroidery and a silk shawl worn like the old Arisaid has been developed (11).

The women of the Highlands have been given credit for

keeping alive the old Scottish costume. Queen Victoria especially liked Scottish things and wore tartan dresses whenever possible (19).

## Chapter VII

### INFLUENCE OF SCOTTISH COSTUME ON PRESENT DAY STYLES

"Fashions change with every changing season  
Regardless quite of money, rhyme or reason." (19)

Elizabeth Hawes (30) has said that fashion is spinach and countless others have ridiculed each new idea as it has been introduced or each old idea as it has been revived. However, each generation has laughed at the old fashion and eagerly discarded it for the new. Scottish influence on clothing has been felt off and on for a great many years. As early as 1820, tartans which had been worn for the previous five years by a few women, became the most fashionable materials, even for evening dresses. Very fashionable too were Caledonian caps of white satin and Ivanhoe caps of black tulle and geranium satin. Both of these head-dresses were designed for evening wear, and the latter was named in honor of Scott's romance which had just been published in Edinburgh (19).

Queen Victoria, always a lover of Scotland, adopted the Highland suit of Scotch tartan for the English Princes on a visit to Balmoral Castle in 1854, and the Highland dress, especially the kilts, soon became popular for boys from five to ten the world over (19).

When Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon became England's Queen in December of 1936, she was the first British woman to sit beside a British king since James II married Anne Hyde, the daughter of his Lord Chancellor, in 1660. She also has been called the Scottish Commoner Queen although there is a dis-

tant connection with Scottish royalty through a daughter of Robert II, Princess Jean, who married Sir John Lyon, Thane of Glamis, in the fourteenth century (20). And to Elizabeth has been given the credit for the current popularity of the Scottish influence in modern dress, especially the interest in tartans and tweeds.

Being very proud of her Scottish descent and also very eager to promote home industries and native crafts, the queen has been busy encouraging the native craftsmen. One of her first acts as queen was to offer a prize for the finest hand woven tweeds made from home dyed and spun yarns (2). These materials were all bought by Helen Cookman, a young American designer, and brought to the United States where they were quickly sold to be made into practically every type of garment from hats and shoes to evening wraps.

Again, in 1939 when the queen with King George VI visited Canada and the United States, designers began to stress Scottish ideas in their creations. Men, as well as women, adopted plaids in such articles as socks, ties, handkerchiefs, and suspenders. And in a short time the small black and white or brown and white Shepherd's Plaid was the favorite pattern for suits (23).

Manufacturers were quick to take advantage of the public's interest and a veritable shower of tartans, authentic or purely imaginary, rained down on the public. Practically every issue of the fashion magazines during 1939 was filled with advertisements for tweeds, tartans, or other articles of Scottish design or manufacture. In the March 1, 1939

issue of Vogue which featured the Paris openings and spring shopping guide, were to be found a hat shaped like an enormous Balmoral bonnet made of large red and yellow plaid gingham and designed by Lilly Dache; ghillies, hand made of tartan and especially designed by Vevier for a prominent eastern society woman; an evening purse shaped like a sporran with beautifully hand engraved silver mountings; another purse shaped like a bagpipe with the small pipes forming lip stick, eyebrow pencil and other beauty aids; imported Harris and Yarrowvale tweeds, some with companion plaids, by the yard; tweed coats and evening capes by Charles James and Creed; while the thistle, the emblem of Scotland, appeared as applique or embroidery on many garments and as a design for numerous printed materials. Thistle purple was the most popular color of 1939 and Mainbocher featured a thistle colored wool dress with plaid petticoat and matching gloves (3).

In other magazines, advertisements featured candy boxes, scarfs, ribbons, parasols, rain coats, luncheon sets, bed spreads, bathing suits with matching towels and even carpets and small rugs, all made of authentic clan tartans. Tartans also were reproduced in inexpensive ginghams as well as very expensive hand woven woolens and silks.

In 1940 plaids, tweeds and the design of the Scottish costume in general were still as popular as in 1939 (26). Plaids were in every collection. Everywhere plaids were shown used as jackets with plain pleated skirts or the plain tweed jacket was worn with the pleated or circular plaid skirt. A new idea was the reversible reefer coat made of

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gabardine and lined with plaid. With it was worn a fitted skirt of the lining material and a soft wool sweater. In 1941 the Scottish idea has continued to find favor with designers. Recently tartans used as drapery and upholstery materials have been introduced, and those used for dresses and coats have been made with the white background like the ones originally worn by Highland women (4). One well-known manufacturer of a popular automobile has featured tartan upholstery in all of his sports type cars.

The modern woman's demand for comfortable and practical clothing, especially for sportswear, has largely been responsible for the great popularity of the costume composed of the very full pleated skirt of plaid, the tweed jacket, and the low heeled ghillies. This costume has been adapted from the kilt and plaid of the Highlander. During the winter of 1940 college and high school girls even deserted their long favored ankle socks for the knee-length Scotch stocking of heavy ribbed cotton or wool. And, since their circular or pleated plaid skirts came just to the knee and a shawl of soft woolen tartan often was worn over the shoulders, the Scottish effect was complete (5). Little girls were dressed in an almost entire costume of pleated skirt, ruffled blouse, velvet jacket, knee-length hose, and Tam-O-Shanter or Glengarry cap.

Thus it would seem that even though in Scotland the short pleated kilt and darker tartans were worn only by the men, they have become one of the favorite styles of present day American women.

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Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 1



Fig. 4



Fig. 5



Fig. 6

PLATE XVII

Modern adaptations of Scottish costume

## Chapter VIII

### SUMMARY

If as some writers claim the costume of a country may be called the mirror of that country's soul, several very interesting reflections may be found in the costume of the Scottish Highlands.

Aristotle, who lived in the fourth century B. C., first mentioned the British Isles which he called Albion and Ierna in his writings. But the identity of the peoples of whom he spoke has never been definitely established.

Several races, each contributing an important part to the development and culture of the people, preceded the Romans who began their invasion of Albion in 50 B. C. And it was not until after the Roman conquests that most of the known history of the island began.

The northern mountainous half of the Island of Britain in pre-historic days was covered by dense forests. It was to this portion of the island that the Celts retreated when the Romans came. Here, shut off from outside influences, they developed a system of clans or societies based primarily on blood relationship so as to preserve peace and order among the large groups.

Tartan, so closely associated with the Highland people from ancient times, was without doubt the outcome of the Celtic love of color. Not all natural materials used to produce dyes were available in each locality. Therefore, the way in which the colors were combined was responsible

for the different patterns or setts produced. Later these patterns grew to be regarded as symbolic of rank and finally to represent clans and families.

The original Highland costume was the direct result of environment and necessity. Conditions of the country demanded a costume suited to the rigorous and dangerous life of men who had to cross bogs, swim streams, climb mountains, and spend days and nights in the open without shelter. These activities demanded complete freedom of arms and legs while concealment depended upon the color and pattern of the dress.

The costume, after outside influences began to be felt, followed very nearly the same stages of development as the dress of other countries. The Highlanders were slower to accept the new ideas, but eventually they added the elaborate embroidery, the laces and ribbons, the ruffles and jewels that were being worn elsewhere. Eventually, however, the costume again became simplified and more practical and developed into a form much as we know it today.

Among the different costumes which have been worn by the peoples of the world it is not easy to find one that can stand comparison with that of the Highland Scot for gracefulness. Its use as a costume for ordinary wear, now that such a complete change has come about in the manners and conditions of the people, may be questioned. But it must be admitted that a dress more suitable for the time when it was used could not have been developed.

And it is because of its simplicity and beauty, its comfort and practicality that it has lent itself to adapta-

tion by modern designers, especially for sport costumes for women.

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