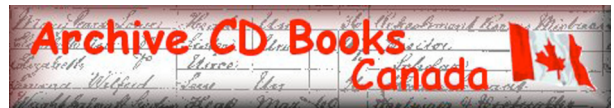


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- A “Gleanings” Product -

The Scotch-Irish of Kentucky.

by: William Lindsay

Original published by: Methodist Episcopal Church, South Barbee & Smith agents.

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THE SCOTCH-IRISH OF KENTUCKY.

BY JUDGE WILLIAM LINDSAY, OF FRANKFORT, KY.

Mr. President, Ladies, and Gentlemen: I most sincerely regret that it has fallen to my lot to speak for the Scotch-Irish people of Kentucky. It was expected that a son of one of the leading Scotch-Irish families of the State, a family that represents the highest element of the Scotch-Irish people of this State, would have been here to deliver the principal address upon this occasion. He would have been a fit exemplification of a Scotch-Irish Kentuckian, because he is a representative of the highest order of culture, of intelligence, and of record, a man of whom every Kentuckian is proud. I refer to my friend, the Hon. W. C. P. Breckinridge [applause]; he has been kept away [so much applause the speaker could not be heard]. You lose a treat because of his absence, and I have thrust upon me a duty which I feel altogether unable to discharge. I find that I have been assigned a subject, and I thank the management for their kindness in that regard, because I was utterly unable to make up my mind as to what to speak about, and I expect this morning to say just as little upon that subject as the occasion will permit. I have not been keeping up with the proceedings of the two previous meetings of this Congress, and when I was invited to talk upon the Scotch-Irish—speak about the Scotch-Irish people—I felt that the broadest imaginable field had been found; I went back to my Scotch grandfather, and thought of his Scotch-Irish wife; I felt that now I would have an opportunity to bring the past in review, and to speak of the grand people from whence they sprung and with whom they live. While I found the harvest was plentiful, the laborers also had been plentiful. They had scaled every hill, they had traveled through every vale, and I found that nothing was left for me to say; and if any thing had been left out, when I sat here and listened to my friend from Illinois, when I listened to the distinguished gentlemen from all over the country, and when I saw in the publications yesterday that the Pacific coast had been appropriated, my heart sunk within me. I congratulated myself, however, that Georgia was still left; but when I came here last night it was not left for me, and I want to say here one thing in

reply to one of the gentlemen from Georgia, rather in the way of correction than reply, and that is this: I was thankful to him for his compliments to Kentucky; I was thankful to him for all he said; I was particularly gratified when he conceded that Kentucky women exceeded all other women in grace and beauty; I was sorry, however, that he did not claim for his own State equality in that regard, but I was selfish in that particular, because I have a Georgia wife [applause]. In addition, I was surprised at one other thing in reading of the two previous meetings, and I have been struck with the same fact while I have been here: that in all that has been said we have spoken well of ourselves and those who have gone before us. Now there is nothing so embarrassing to a lawyer as to have an absolutely one-sided case, and it has occurred to me that it is a little singular that in a Scotch-Irish assemblage a case should be all on one side. My information about the Scotch-Irish is that each side has a disposition to take absolutely good care of its own side. Now, then, I am troubled about another thing: I have a divided allegiance this morning. Down town, four or five squares off, another Scotch-Irish assemblage is being conducted, and I have a Scotch-Irish friend there who wants an office, a very singular thing for a Scotch-Irishman [applause], and he compliments me with asking me to appear in that assembly and present his name to the convention, and I have in my pocket now a note saying, "Come, the crisis is upon us, the exigency has arrived; thy services are demanded;" and whilst I feel gratified in being allowed to talk to this assembly, if, because of my being here, a Scotch-Irishman loses an office, the Kentucky people of that race will never forgive me.

Now, the Scotch-Irish of Kentucky. Why, Kentucky is Scotch-Irish itself. I can't speak of Kentucky without speaking of the Scotch-Irish, and I can't speak of the Scotch-Irishmen that have lived in Kentucky without recalling the history of Kentucky. When the Revolutionary War was closed, and Kentucky was opened for settlement, it is not a singular fact that from Pennsylvania down the Ohio River came the Scotch-Irish, because they had found out that this was a land literally flowing with milk and honey. The Scotch-Irish of the Virginias had scaled the Alleghany Mountains and found the road down the Kanawha into the eastern portions of Kentucky, and from that time forward there was a constant stream of Scotch-Irishmen into this territory from those and other sources, and it is another singular fact that scarcely had three or four Scotch-Irishmen come together until they immediately organized themselves into a public meeting and commenced demanding their rights. We did not have any thing to do with the

Mecklenburg declaration; we were not there to take part with the Scotch-Irish people of Virginia; but straightway we called a Constitutional Convention and made Samuel McDowell Chairman, and demanded that we be admitted into the Union as an independent State. We were not admitted: we could not settle terms with old Virginia. We held another convention and made Sam McDowell President again, and called it up year after year until we had held nine conventions at which Samuel McDowell, a Scotch-Irishman, was President; and finally, in 1792, we held another, and to get rid of us and to keep us quiet, they admitted us into the Union, and we have gotten every thing ever since that we were entitled to.

I was a little troubled the other day in taking up a newspaper to read an article in which a gentleman started out to prove that there was no such a race of people as the Scotch-Irish at all; I thought that if he established his point my speech would be gone, and I would be compelled to change my remarks to this mistaken assemblage that I find here to-day, but I was gratified with his method of proving his case. He did not deny that under James the First the Scotch had come over in Northern Ireland and appropriated the best part of the country; he did not deny that sixty-five years afterward there were a hundred thousand Scotch and their descendants in Northern Ireland, and that the bishops were compelled to turn their eyes away whilst these people went on following the teachings of John Calvin and John Knox; nor did he deny that about the year 1715 these people commenced coming to America; but he proves his case this way; and that is, about three centuries before the Christian era the Irish went over to Scotland and ran the Northern people out of the country, and that they are not Scotch, but Irish. I accept his explanation. I was not prepared to disprove his point; but I concluded that if our people had lived in Scotland for the period of 2,000 years they were good Scotch-Irish, therefore I laid his paper down with a feeling of gratification, and I am here to-day to talk to you about the Scotch-Irish of Kentucky—I believe it is that I am to talk about. Now, as I said, I cannot individualize. There are too many Scotch-Irish people in Kentucky to talk about; and if I commenced to hold up one family for your admiration, my life would not be safe when I leave this house. A distinguished gentleman, of a literary turn of mind, undertook a few years ago to write a book upon the representative families of Kentucky. He wrote a book as big as both volumes of the reports of the Scotch-Irish Congress, and he exhausted only four families; he left, however, a note at the close of his book saying that at some other time, under some other circumstances,

when he had time, he would continue the representative families of the State of Kentucky. Now I want to say to you that all four of those families were Scotch-Irish families. Now if my friend Breckinridge was here, he has all this at the tip of his tongue, because he belongs to one of those representative families. One of the distinguishing traits of the Scotch-Irish people is that whenever a good thing is to be found there a Scotch-Irishman will also be found, wherever a good deed is to be done you will find Scotch-Irishmen leading in doing it, and the result is this little colony in Ulster has almost created the civilization of the modern world. We have been told that the doctrines of Knox with the Church were the embodiment of a religion some of the features of which were unrevealed when considered from an abstract stand-point, but if we will take this point into consideration, those unrevealed features with the necessities of the age, they have so far reformed the civilization of the world as that the unrevealed features cannot now be lost sight of. John Calvin and John Knox built wiser than they knew. They did not intend at the outset, possibly, to establish civil liberty; their great desire was for religious freedom, but when they laid the foundation of religious freedom they laid also the foundation of civil liberty, and religious freedom and civil liberty have since, under all circumstances, traveled hand in hand. They did not fear to speak the truth to kings, they did not hesitate to speak the truth to queens, and it is quite a remarkable fact, to which the attention of the world is called by Green, that when these progressive peasants sat as members of the General Assembly they compelled nobles to come before them and make their defense when they did wrong. The foundation of civil liberty was then and there raised in the declaration that under certain conditions and certain circumstances all men are equal. Now this is all I care to say of the Scotch-Irish people of Kentucky, because I have another duty to perform. I want in conclusion to express my gratification in having met this distinguished assembly, of having heard these distinguished gentlemen here, and to express for the Kentucky people that which I know they feel, the pride that they have a right to feel, on account of your presence amongst them, and I wish to say that this session of the Congress of the Scotch-Irish people will be an era in the district of Kentucky, and especially of the people of Louisville.

Now I want to apologize for this poor presentation of the Scotch-Irish of Kentucky; I want to apologize because a better selection was not made, and I wish to apologize because of the very imperfect and incomplete way in which I have attempted to discharge the duty imposed upon me. I thank this audience for their close attention, and go to report to my duties elsewhere.