

**TARTAN** (from F. *tiretaine*, "linsie-wolsie," Sp. *tiritaña*, a kind of woollen cloth, perhaps so called from its thinness and lightness, cf. Sp. *tiritar*, to tremble with cold), a worsted cloth woven with alternate stripes or bands of coloured warp and weft, so as to form a chequered pattern in which the colours alternate in "sets" of definite width and sequence. The weaving of particoloured and striped cloth cannot be claimed as peculiar to any special race or country, for indeed such checks are the simplest ornamental form into which dyed yarns can be combined in the loom. But the term tartan is specially applied to the variegated cloth used for the principal portions of the distinctive costume of the Highlanders of Scotland. For this costume, and the tartan of which it is composed, great antiquity is claimed, and it is asserted that the numerous clans into which the Highland population were divided had each from time to time a special tartan by which it was distinguished. After the rebellion of 1745 various acts of parliament were passed for disarming the Scottish Highlanders and for prohibiting the use of the Highland dress in Scotland, under severe penalties. These acts remained nominally in force till 1782, when they were formally repealed, and since that time clan tartan has, with varying fluctuations of fashion, been a popular article of dress, by no means confined in its use to Scotland alone; and many new and imaginary "sets" have been invented by manufacturers, with the result of introducing confusion in the heraldry of tartans, and of throwing doubt on the reality of the distinctive "sets" which at one time undoubtedly were more or less recognized as the badge of various clans.

Undoubtedly the term tartan was known, and the material was woven, "of one or two colours for the poor and more varied for the rich," as early as the middle of the 15th century. In the accounts of John, bishop of Glasgow, treasurer to King James III., in 1471, there occurs, with other mention of the material, the following:—"Ane elne and ane halve of blue Tartane to lyne his gowne of cloth of Gold." It is here obvious that the term is not restricted to particoloured chequered textures. In 1538 accounts were incurred for a Highland dress for King James V. on the occasion of a hunting excursion in the Highlands, in which there are charges for "variant cullorit velvet," for "ane schort Heland coit," and for "Heland tartane to be hose to the kinge's grace." Bishop John Lesley, in his *De origine, moribus, et rebus gestis Scotorum*, published in 1578, says of the ancient and still-used dress of the Highlanders and Islanders, "all, both noble and common people, wore mantles of one sort (except that the nobles preferred those of several colours)." George Buchanan, in his *Rerum Scotticarum historia* (1582), as translated by Monypenny (1612), says of the Highlanders, "They delight in marled clothes, specially that have any long stripes of sundry colours; they love chiefly purple and blue. Their predecessors used short mantles or plaids of divers colours sundry ways divided; and amongst some the same custom is observed to this day." A hint of clan tartan distinctions is given by Martin Martin in his *Western Isles of Scotland* (1703), which work also contains a minute description of the dress of the Highlanders and the manufacture of tartan. "Every isle," he observes, "differs from each other in their fancy of making plaids, as to the stripes in breadth and colours. This humour is as different through the mainland of the Highlands, in so far that they who have seen those places are able at the first view of a man's plaid to guess the place of his residence."

The following lines give a brief description of the colours of the tartans of the principal clans. The kilt-tartan colour is given in each case; the plaid-tartans vary in slight particulars.

*Campbell of Breadalbane*, light green, crossed with darker green, the stripes broad with narrow edging of yellow. *Campbell of Argyll*, light green crossed with dark green, narrow independent cross lines of white. *Cameron*, brick-red with broad chequered cross of same colour, edged white and with broad centre of ground colour, two independent cross lines of green. *Forbes*, yellow green, crossed with broad dark-green lines, centred black, independent cross lines yellow. *Fraser*, red ground, main cross lines red with deeper red centre edged with blue, independent cross lines blue. *Gordon*, dark blue-green ground, with broad cross lines of lighter green, narrow centre line yellow. *Graeme*, light green ground, crossed with darker green in small chequer, independent cross

lines dark green. *Grant*, scarlet, with broad black-edged scarlet crossings, black independent cross lines. *Macdonald of Glengarry and Keppoch*, red, with open broad blue cross lines, and two independent blue crossings. *Macdonald of Glencoe*, green with broad dark-green crossing, the whole covered with fine red lines. *Macdonald of Clanranald*, light green with broad dark-green crossing, covered with fine red lines. *Macgregor*, scarlet, with narrow scarlet cross lines, edged and centred blue, widely spaced. *Mackintosh*, red with blue-edged and centred crossings of red; and independent blue cross lines. *Mackenzie*, blue-green, broad crossing of same colour with darker edges, independent cross lines, alternately red and white, over the main crossings. *Macleod*, green, with dark-green crossings, over crossings, every other square, a red line. *Macpherson*, pale grey, four darker grey bars at crossings, the whole covered with red double independent lines. *Munro*, red with broad green stripe and narrow lines forming a check of black and yellow. *Murray*, green, close crossings of darker green, independent lines red. *Stewart*, scarlet, deep coloured crossings with scarlet centre, fine widely spaced dark independent lines.

See W. and A. Smith, *Tartans of the Clans of Scotland* (1850); J. Sobieski Stuart, *Vestiarium Scoticum* (1842); R. R. M'Ian, *Clans of the Scottish Highlands* (1845-46); J. Grant, *Tartans of the Clans of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1885).